October 27, 2021

Dear Campus Community,

It’s been a busy few months back on campus, and I am honored to share with you two remarkable pieces of funding that have been awarded to UMass Amherst. As part of their recent historic gift to the University of Massachusetts system, Robert and Donna Manning have allocated $18 million to UMass Amherst to endow the newly named Robert and Donna Manning College of Information and Computer Sciences and help propel the college’s vision of Computing for the Common Good. This gift comes at the same time as an extraordinary $75 million commitment announced today by Governor Charlie Baker that will enhance and expand the college’s facilities.

These commitments will allow our computer science program to enroll twice the number of students than it can currently. That’s double the brain power to help solve tomorrow’s complicated societal challenges. From healthcare to sustainability or cybersecurity, computing has the amazing ability to positively impact so many industries, and our goal is to provide students with the tools they need to drive scientific discovery in key areas. As we know, technology plays a key role in the ever-evolving workforce. Since it was established in just 2015, CICS has focused on harnessing the power of technology by preparing our students for the workforce of tomorrow – and has achieved national recognition along the way, ranking among the top 20 computer science programs in North America with the No. 11 artificial intelligence program.

This funding – nearly $95 million combined – will attract top faculty and talent, increase access to our top-ranked undergraduate and graduate programs, and offer scholarships, bridge programs, and peer mentoring to underrepresented communities in the computer science industry. It will also expand the college’s facilities, creating a world-class hub for education, research, and innovation.

As the college’s founding dean, Laura Haas has brought decades of corporate experience from IBM to her leadership role at UMass Amherst, including worldwide responsibility for IBM Research’s exploratory science program. She rose to the level of IBM Fellow, and as a trailblazer known for her foundational research on information integration technology she has helped uniquely mold the rapidly growing CICS program. CICS has built an impressive and diverse faculty team, and increased research funding by more than 40% in just the last
five years. Clearly, under her leadership the program has further evolved as a force to be reckoned with – one that generous donors and the commonwealth believes in.

Please join me in celebrating an exciting day for the Robert and Donna Manning CICS and for UMass, as the hard work of our faculty, students, and staff, combined with the support of our donors, continue to strengthen our university as a revolutionary force driving Massachusetts and society forward.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy

University of Massachusetts Amherst