Dennis Swinford, Director of Campus Planning, began by noting that Associate Vice Chancellor Juanita Holler could not be present, but that she sent her apologies and best wishes. He also acknowledged the fact that he no longer required the crutches he had at his previous presentation before the Faculty Senate, and this presentation would be an update of the Master Plan, which has been presented to the Senate on two previous occasions.

Over the past year and a half, Campus Planning has been collecting ideas and creating alternatives to best fit the needs of its multiple stakeholders. Campus Planning picked its favorite and most practical alternatives to create a combined alternative to explore how to begin creating the future of the campus. The group took a preferred direction to its Executive Oversight Committee and presented it to the Faculty Senate. Through the summer, Campus Planning worked on a draft plan and in the fall, the draft plan was presented to constituency groups. This included three visits with officials from the Town of Amherst, including a meeting with the Planning Board. An invitation has been extended to officials from Hadley, but they have yet to meet. Campus Planning is in the process of taking the draft plan and creating a final document that it hopes to bring to the EOC in approximately one month to have adopted as the key capital planning policy for the campus. Campus Planning has met with constituency groups at over 125 events and it has been a very positive and inclusive planning process.

More detailed plans for the University’s utilities were created over the summer. Campus Planning believes it has created a unique approach for looking at the utilities on the campus. An existing conditions database has been created based on a geographical information system. Consultants have been brought onto campus to help create models for ways to test the utilities systems as the campus grows in real time. This is a key piece of the campus plan that has been incorporated into the plan as a real-time, live tool.

The draft plan, as it exists today, is based on a set of guiding principles that have been shared with the Faculty Senate in the past.

Many discussions have taken place regarding opportunities within the core of the campus, involving Commonwealth Ave., North Pleasant St., Governor’s Drive, and Massachusetts Ave. These are the places where most of the growth on the campus should happen: within the 20-minute walking diameter that presents a great opportunity to create a pedestrian-oriented, residential campus where we can meet, learn, and do research in a learning community.

The plan wishes to create a framework for open space: the spines, courts, and complete streets of the campus that can serve not only cars but pedestrians and bicycles.

Mr. Swinford’s mantra is to “build a campus, not just buildings.” It is much more difficult to build an entire campus, but strong guiding principles make it possible.

The campus plan hopes to untangle the vehicular-pedestrian conflicts on campus. This problem was present throughout the planning process. It is incredibly important to have a safe environment for pedestrians while accommodating automobile traffic.

The campus should be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 12 months a year, in a mixed-use environment. The campus has taken one great step towards this goal with the development of the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Complex in the heart of the campus. Mr. Swinford is excited to see the changes within the campus core after that project is completed.
A unified academic campus is important. Currently, there are outlying academic facilities such as Mark’s Meadow and the Speech and Language building. The plan looks toward bringing those facilities into the heart of campus in order to make them feel like an important part of the campus, and not just buildings on the edge.

Finally, the plan has taken care to respect past planning efforts. Much work has been done on the campus in the past. There has been much good thought about how the campus should work together. Moreover, the buildings that were constructed by past communities must be respected and kept as part of the University’s future.

Campus Planning has created what it characterizes, to some extent, as a cartoon of the future of UMass Amherst (slide #8). The brown buildings are existing spaces, and buildings shown in red represent possible building sites. The map shows a campus at maximum capacity: a campus that could exist in 50 years if the University continues to grow. This model allows the University to think about creating a whole campus and the systems that must be created in order to create a whole campus. A campus cannot be created incrementally. The end result must be considered, taken apart, and built back together. While thinking about campus building, the planners have considered open space, pedestrian circulation, roadways, bikeways, and land use. The development of those systems must all be considered.

The open space system the University currently has is wonderful in places such as around the pond and north of the Campus Center. But they are merely open spaces; they don’t represent an open space system. The plan proposes building and thinking about an open space system that connects the large open spaces with more modest pedestrian corridors, creating larger vistas to the northwest that allow nature to come into the campus and more appealing views while entering campus.

Some pedestrian spines on campus are well developed. Looking to the future, planners have considered how to create a network that corresponds with the open space system and works with where you park and where you want to be on campus.

One interesting aspect of the plan involves looking at ways in which the University can begin to create capacity by building other roads and reducing the volume and demand on Massachusetts Ave. and Commonwealth Ave. Both of those roads have two lanes of traffic in each direction, which is one of the most unsafe conditions on the campus. Planners hope to create a complete street in the corridor including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and travel lanes in each direction. It is a goal of the campus plan to allow transportation to occur more safely in a more visually appealing environment. The plan shows Mullins Way extended, allowing access to the large surface parking lots at the northwest end of campus. It also shows a removal of the north two-lane road of Commonwealth Ave., allowing development within the loop and creating a street that looks more like a 21st century campus street with mixed use on both sides that accommodates not only cars, but bicycles and pedestrians as well.

The red dots on the map represent potential locations for parking structures. Most of the future of the campus exists on what are now surface parking lots within the core. Discussions about this have previously taken place with the Faculty Senate. The plan takes the same amount of spaces that exist on surface lots in the core, relocates them into parking structures, and keeps 70% of parking in a five-to ten-minute walk of all the facilities on campus. If you choose to park in a parking structure, you will be within possibly less than five, but no more than ten minutes walking distance of where you are headed on campus.

An important part of the plan concerning bikeways—and a change that will be seen on campus soon—is the dedicated bikeways through the middle of campus. The plan includes bike lanes in the loop roads. If you are a fast-moving bicyclist and need to get somewhere quickly, it will be possible to ride in the lanes on the loop roads. You will also be able to ride your bike on the multi-use paths through the core of campus. If it is Sunday, the middle of August, and you want to ride your bike at top speed through the middle of campus, you will be able to do that. However, in September, you may not be able to do that because there will be pedestrians and you will be required to exercise safety considerations. The University’s transportation consultant made it clear that that was the safest condition for the campus. Single-use facilities for bicycles through the middle of campus would create multiple points of conflict between pedestrians and bicyclists. Soon, the stripes that are in the sidewalk through the core of the campus will be removed, and that bicycle path—that everyone walks in—will be one of the first manifestations of this proposed policy.
The University’s current land use is very Euclidean. It is zoned into single-use policies of the past. We would like to move toward a more mixed-use approach, with opportunities to go to class, to live, to go to offices, and—as a visitor—to come to UMass and be in the central part of campus surrounded by a college atmosphere. Another important part of the land use policy in the master plan is that the lawn and the pond will act as a Central Park, lined with common-use facilities. Things such as the Library, the Student Union, the Fine Arts Center, and other facilities for community use that we may not even know about today will have a spot on the park. People who come to UMass will be able to enjoy a jewel of the University’s open space system. Moreover, it will bring the community together into the heart of the campus.

In 2010, when the planning policies started to be reconsidered, the campus measured about 11 million gross square feet (10.8 million GSF). The uses were distributed (as illustrated in the pie chart in slide #21) at about 1/3 each between academic & research, residential, and everything else (administration, garages, etc.). That space, at that point in time, accommodated 24,300 students, about 8,000 faculty and staff, and 12,500 residential beds. The planners took the Rising to the Challenge document and asked what programs and space is needed to meet the document’s challenge. In line with that document, they have determined that the campus will need to grow to approximately 12.5 million GSF. At that point in time, there will be 28,000 students, 8,800 faculty and staff, and 14,000 residential beds. This is what the planners are working toward.

Some of the projects that the planners are currently working on, unfortunately, are projects they must undertake because some facilities are not performing as well as they should be. Bartlett Hall, for example, should have lasted much longer than it has, as should have Hills. Both of those buildings are precipitating much investment and time as the University finds new places for their inhabitants and plan their demolitions.

Many of Bartlett’s users will be housed in the New Academic Classroom Building. Some of them will be relocated to other facilities. Many of them, however, will be housed in a planned addition to the back of South College. It is a great spot for all the users and presents the opportunity for what Mr. Swinford calls a “buddy,” where a new building is added to—and can improve—an older building. South College will receive the elevator it desperately needs, it will get updated utilities, and it will become more usable for modern academics.

Some of Hills’ users will be relocated to Mark’s Meadow as part of its renovation to include the School of Education. It is planned that the many users of Hills associated with LARP will be joined with individuals from Art, Art History, and Architecture and Building and Construction Technology in one facility. A permanent site for that has not yet been found. The Faculty Senate will be involved in site selection. One obvious possibility is a site north of the Studio Arts Building that is currently a surface parking lot. Another possibility could be behind French or as an addition to the Fine Arts Center or to Clark Hall.

The New Laboratory Science Building is in phase three of its construction. The Physical Science Building is in consideration, possibly to be attached to Draper. The Totman Addition has recently been sited as well.

In the area of campus life, a renovation or addition to the Student Union is in planning. A disc golf course is planned in the Orchard Hills area. That is something students are quite interested in and that has support. If a new University Health Services facility is approved (it is under consideration by a campus committee), the planners are advocating a site diagonally across Massachusetts Ave. from Whitmore. That site is great for such a project, as it is near many of the University’s students in Southwest and the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Complex. Moreover, it offers easy car and bus access to the rest of the campus. A small surface parking lot is also possible at that location.

Support functions projects include the additions to McGuirk Stadium and the press box, the Champions Center next to Mullins, an alternative energy site near the Power Plant, and pedestrian way improvements to Hicks Way that look to transform the North-South corridor of Hicks Way to make it more sympathetic to pedestrians and less sympathetic to cars. A materials handling facility has been relocated to allow a parking deck to be built in the valley that will be created when the old Power Plant is demolished. This would be the next addition to structural parking on campus: 500 cars in the middle of campus with the opportunity to place a building on top of it. An electrical substation is being considered at Tilson Farm. The Stockbridge Pedestrian Corridor has been created over a series of projects that will hopefully create a mixed-use corridor in a nice open space.
The Hadley Farm Solar Ray project is underway as a sustainable energy initiative, and a pilot project is being considered behind the Visitors Center that could create enough energy to take the Visitors Center offline. Opportunities to use solar energy are very much being considered. The West Lawn may be improved as part of the Student Union improvements, and when Hills is down, that area will be suggested as a surface parking lot that would be a great location for visitors to the Fine Arts Center. The yellow lines in slide #23 represent the wish to completely implement the complete street program and redesign the streets around campus to include bicycle lanes, safer conditions for pedestrians, and a sidewalk on the west side of Commonwealth Ave., which would create a safe pedestrian environment for users of the Recreation Center and residents of that side of campus that will continue to grow.

Mr. Swinford encouraged the Senate to visit the Campus Planning website (umass.edu/cp), where there is an interactive survey known as the Master Plan Explorer that allows visitors to see specific projects and comment on them. There have been many great comments, and Campus Planning anticipates answering those comments in the final Master Plan. The comments will be condensed into common questions, which will be answered in—or may even change—the final draft. A document of the draft plan can also be downloaded on the website. If you prefer commenting on a hard copy, you can download the plan, mark it up, put it in campus mail, and your comments will be incorporated. Finally, of course, you can email or call campus planning directly.