Vice Chancellor Malone thanked the Senate for the opportunity to offer an update on some of the information he presented at the 705th Faculty Senate meeting in April of 2011. He would also discuss the uncertainty of extramural funding, which is a common concern among people following research news from Washington, D.C., as well as the progress of the University of Massachusetts Innovation Institute (UMII) and AdQAD (Administrative Quality Assessment and Development), which last year was in the assessment phase and has now moved into development. Finally, engagement would be addressed.

The third page of the PowerPoint Vice Chancellor Malone presented shows a table of sponsored research awards for the past three years. In 2009, there was not much stimulus money; in 2010, there was a lot of stimulus money; in 2011, there was a little bit, and now there will be no more. 2011 is ahead of 2009, and, excepting the stimulus year, Vice Chancellor Malone would like to see the University continue to increase its research awards, although there is a general understanding that federal research awards have been greatly affected not only by the economy but by recent elections.

The next page presents a comparison of the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a number of benchmark institutions that are recognized by the President’s Office and the Trustees as peer universities. Some of these schools are AAU, research-extensive universities, while others are not. The only campus in which a connected medical school is included in research expenditures is SUNY-Stony Brook, as it was impossible to separate them. The UConn figures do not include the medical school. Vice Chancellor Malone likes to look at research expenditures per tenure-system faculty member to judge research results. There are three groups presented in this graph. There is a group that is lower by a decent margin, a group in the middle, and a group that is at the top. UMass is right in the middle. Part of Vice Chancellor Malone’s mission is to move UMass to the top. UC Santa Barbara is about the same size as UMass, but has much greater expenditures per faculty member. UMass should achieve the same sort of figures. Vice Chancellor Malone did not mean this as any sort of criticism of the faculty; the faculty at UMass are just as good, or better, than the faculty at institutions that are outperforming it. He hopes to accomplish this, in part by freeing up faculty from tasks that are necessary for research but not necessarily scholarly.

The budget for federal funding regarding research, as put forth by President Obama, is “pretty bullish.” In 2011, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the single largest source of federal funds to the University (supplying around 40% of University’s federal funds), believed it was to receive an 8% increase; in fact, its budget was decreased by 1%. Near the end of federal fiscal year 2011, federal funding to the NSF slowed dramatically. The initial vote in the House for NSF funding proposed no increase; the Senate initially proposed a decrease of 2.4%; by a miraculous event in the Conference Committee, the NSF received a 2.5% increase.

There will obviously be difficulty regarding federal funding. Because of the budget pack that was passed last year, OMB has told all federal agencies it directs to plan for two scenarios for 2013: a five percent decrease in funds, or a ten percent decrease in funds. Because agencies often give multi-year awards, a decrease of this sort will have lasting impact. Grants will not get smaller; there will be fewer awards. NIH has already said that, in the worst case scenario, they will be giving 2700 fewer grants. They do not want to decrease grant funding to the point where it will not be effective.
The University has taken a number of actions in preparation for these cuts. It has hired two firms to help it in Washington. One does federal agency relations and the other does legislative relations. They teamed up and made a creative bid on an RSP the University had put out. This sort of action is new for the University. The agencies are generally made up of former NSF, NIH, or DOE staff that have solid working knowledge of what goes on at the ground level in Washington. It is not insider information, but it is expert information. An Office of Research Development was formed two years ago. Last year was the first full year of operation. An explanation of the additions to and reorganization of that office appears later in the address. The University has been supporting legislation that would provide matching capital funds through the state. The bill was filed initially by John Scibak and supported by all of UMass’s local legislators. Vice Chancellor Malone and colleagues from other campuses have given testimony in support of the bill. It has passed out of the committees on Higher Education and Bonding; its next step is Ways and Means. Vice Chancellor Malone believes there to be a good chance that the bill will pass and provide $100 million of bond money to match research grants; 50% of the funds are specifically dedicated to the University of Massachusetts.

Vice Chancellor Malone does not believe that local legislators serving in Washington need much convincing that research and education are quality endeavors to fund, but there are legislators in other districts that may be of different opinions. He encouraged faculty members to support legislative funding with professional societies, although that is something that he avoided for much of his career. The University is active with APLU and AAU to take advantage of the support societies such as those can generate.

Vice Chancellor Malone believes the term “innovation” has been overused. However, defining innovation as a direct and visible impact of the University’s research initiatives in society, it is clear that innovation is an urgent national priority. Previously, it was sufficient for a University to produce graduates and new knowledge; that does not remain the case. The National Academy’s Press website has released a report in revision titled, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm,” a quote from which Vice Chancellor Malone has included in his presentation, and which he believes encourages UMass’s innovative endeavors. He believes that innovation is fully aligned with the University’s Land Grant mission. For many years, the University had an immense influence in agriculture throughout the community. It still does great work in that area, but innovative advancements would expand that influence. Furthermore, Massachusetts is a singularly great place to create initiatives revolving around innovation. The state is often described as having an innovation economy. The University needs to get more involved in these pursuits.

As part of the University’s increased focus on innovation, it has established the University of Massachusetts Innovation Institute (UMII). It is a campus institute focused on applied research that complements the existing research work. Its emphasis is on societal impact. A consulting study and business model were developed over the course of a year. The President's Office has endorsed the UMII and the Faculty Senate is currently reviewing the documents. The UMII will provide a single point of contact for private sector partners with the University. Individuals in the private sector too often note that it takes much too long to work with universities. It does not need to take so long; the UMII should streamline such interactions. Jim Capistran, who has for the past 13 years directed the Center in Polymer Science, the oldest running National Science Foundation-Industry-University cooperative research center (and arguably the most successful in the nation), will serve as Executive Director of the UMII. Working less than full time on the UMII, the University has secured around $1.5 million in new funds and $2 million more in negotiation. The first grant that Mr. Capistran was able to organize was originally proposed as a consulting project; a week and a half later, a quarter million dollar contract was created to support faculty and students.

The Office of Research and Engagement is in the midst of reorganization. Research and Development will not likely undergo any substantial changes, and change is unlikely in Research Cores and Research Administrative Systems, according to the reports of the Research Council, which believes that more urgent changes should be undertaken first. A Director for Research Business Managers Network will soon be hired. That person will coordinate Research Business Managers in
the schools and colleges, who will also soon be hired. These positions should free up faculty members so they will be able to focus on the content of their research and work with their students and not spend excessive time filling out forms. The Office of Research and Engagement is very close to completing the Director search. The Office is down to the finalists in the search for a Director of CVIP. Grants and Contracts will be reorganized as soon as searches are complete. Three people will be added to handle post-award activity. The University hopes to expedite the post-award processes to get the funding into the hands of the faculty. By any national standard, UMass is understaffed in this area. Money will be spent on staff in order to enable faculty to spend time on scholarship.

Research Development provides a number of services including Early Stage Proposal Development, workshops (which have been well attended this year), and help with governmental relations. A few special projects are underway in this area, one in the Life Sciences, in partnership with the Provost’s Office and using targeted funds from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Act of 2008. At the expense of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, Ms. Carter Wall is working with Research Development on a Wind Energy Center. Work on Cybersecurity has just begun.

Vice Chancellor Malone continued by addressing the issue of benchmarking. Academic Analytics is a tool that the University is using to review its doctoral programs, but it is also valuable to study the University’s standing in areas like research development. The program allows the University to define a comparison group and review grant amounts, doctoral funding, et cetera. Rather than use it as an evaluation, Vice Chancellor Malone sees it as an opportunity for advancement. The “Grants Marketshare” graph shows the funding for anthropology departments. The graph on the right shows that the NIH provides about 21% of all anthropology funding; however, the individual department shown on the left did not know the NIH funded anthropology research, and therefore is missing out on some funding opportunities. A page like this for every department for which information is available will soon be distributed to each department chair.

The University is doing its best to lift the burden of compliance from the shoulders of the faculty. However, the NIH has published new conflict of interest rules that will be more burdensome. An announcement will be coming from the Office shortly on issues surrounding disclosure and training. Continued attention must be paid to effort reporting, training and schedule matters in particular. The Office of Research and Engagement is doing what it can either individually or through the Council on Governmental Relations or APLU to get the government to lessen the burden where possible. Many comments have been sent to the NIH concerning conflict of interest and effort reporting issues. It remains to be seen if anything will be done on effort reporting. Concerning conflict of interest issues, however, the NIH final rule did remove some difficult requirements, including one about publishing each conflict of interest report on a publicly-available website and maintaining it for five years. Vice Chancellor Malone has no problem with full disclosure, but he is not in the business of building websites, and noted this change in requirement as an example of how lobbying can make a difference, at least around the edges.

Vice Chancellor Malone ended with a few words about engagement. He has been working very closely with the Research Council of the Faculty Senate. This year, the Council has appointed a communications officer. The Council is a great place to find information and give input that can be put into policy. Although the Council cannot change mandated rules on such issues as effort reporting, it can improve internal policies, although it requires continued faculty involvement to do so.