President Caret noted his appreciation at being both at the Amherst campus and at the meeting of the Faculty Senate. His own administrative career began on the Academic Senate at Towson University. About eight years after beginning his tenure on the Academic Senate, President Caret was on industrial sabbatical, working on flavor and fragrance chemistry in the research and development labs of McCormick Spices, when a newly-appointed Provost asked him if he would like to serve as a dean at Towson. At the time, he was unsure of the exact nature of a dean’s work, but it sounded like something new and interesting, and President Caret felt up for the challenge. This cemented his transition into administration. He suspects that, similarly to the Academic Senate he worked with at Towson, a number of Senators at UMass have been serving for many years, building a great tradition of faculty governance.

President Caret noted that he would speak only briefly, and then have an open question and answer session, during which, he joked, he would be willing to answer any questions the Senate may have, as long as they are not about parking.

About two weeks prior to the meeting, President Caret completed a 400-mile, four-day, 26-stop bus tour around the state. The goal of that tour was to learn more about the state of Massachusetts. Coming from another state, it is important for him to learn the specifics of the organization and demographics of Massachusetts. There is much history and many pitfalls anywhere one goes. President Caret has been meeting with the various campus communities, engaging with governance groups, members of the media, various administrative groups, et cetera. He thought it would be a good gesture to lobby with the business community. Elected officials were also invited, but, as President Caret has already met multiple times with them, the main focus was on businesses and local leaders. The trip was extraordinarily informative. President Caret was most affected by the outpouring of support he and the University received throughout the state. In the entire time, he can only recall one instance of significant disagreement about the direction of the University. At each stop, President Caret asked not what the University does for the community (which he generally already knows), but what more the University could do for the community. What he generally heard was that the communities simply need more of the University. Communities need University representation, they need the programs and economic energy that the University provides. He made it clear that the University cannot do everything everybody wants it to do, but he did get many ideas about how to reach out to the state more aggressively and give the University more state-wide exposure.

The University system has long been trying to create that exposure. In many ways, the creation of UMass Boston was an attempt to expose downtown Boston to the University of Massachusetts. The campuses at Lowell and Dartmouth represent similar attempts. It is common in all states for communities to desire more connection with local schools. Every county in every state wants their own four-year university; unfortunately, we can’t afford to do this. What we can do is help them become part of the University’s larger community. The University should feel good about the level of support it has among the citizens of Massachusetts, even if this support has not shown itself in the state’s complex budgetary process.

There is huge pressure on the discretionary part of the budget in every state. Public higher education in Massachusetts is wrestling with K-12 education, health care, and a couple of other big money items for its share of that money. President Caret is trying to come off aggressively in his negotiations with the legislature without sounding as if the University is whining. The legislature will always think the University should be doing things differently. The legislature may say it doesn’t have enough money, yet then ask how it could give the University more. Given that situation, President Caret
believes that the University should worry about what the right decision is first, and then figure out how to solve the problems—such as a lack of resources—that come with it. This may sound trivial, but it is often done differently. Vice Chancellor James Sheehan has said that you should never let the budget be an impediment to a good idea. Budgetary constraints should never prevent the University from carrying out its mission. The University should set its goals, see what it has to work with, and determine its course of action as a group.

President Caret plans to study exactly how the state runs, and attempt to garner the support that could allow the University to operate at a higher level. In Maryland, about five years ago, Governor Martin O’Malley, whose support of K-12 education was well known during his tenure as Mayor of Baltimore, thought tuition costs at the Maryland public universities was too high. At the time, tuition at Towson University and the University of Maryland at College Park was around $7,400. The Board of Education—which sets the cost of tuition in Maryland similar to the way it sets the student fees in Massachusetts—cut a deal with Governor O’Malley: the Board froze tuition costs for three years and backfilled it with a 4.5% increase in state subsidy, a figure equal to what was lost due to the tuition freeze. At the same time, the Board sold the Governor on an enrollment growth model. Towson, which had the smallest subsidy in the state, became the focal point for the legislation. At the time, the state subsidized the University $4,800 per student. President Caret told the Governor that Towson would not accept new students unless it received $5,500 per student. The Governor gave Towson $6,000. Within a four-year period, Towson’s state subsidy rose by $20-30 million. The Governor gave and guaranteed these subsidies to Towson before cutting the state’s budget, leaving them unaffected. In the face of a declining state budget, Towson prospered, showing how priorities should be set. Make your priority, eat it, and then let everything else fall into place.

Higher education needs to be a higher priority. Some participants in the Occupy Boston movement visited President Caret at his inauguration. They were blaming the University administrators for the financial problems related to education. President Caret understands this: the University sends out the bills. What some participants don’t understand is that the University is not raising fees to fund increased costs at the universities. The fees are being raised in direct proportion to the amount of funding that the state is taking away. When President Caret began his career in higher education, 70% of the budget to public universities came from the state. Four years ago, 50% of UMass Amherst’s budget was from the state. Today, the state provides 30% of the University’s budget. Across the country, student debt has surpassed one trillion dollars. President Caret was able to pay for four years of college by working; loans were unavailable at the time. Now, loans are pervasive, and it seems no one is worrying about the future problems they could present. President Caret has asked state politicians why the University of Massachusetts Medical School maintains the name of the state in its title. The state is only providing four cents for every dollar the school uses. Gillette may give the school ten cents of each dollar if the school were renamed Gillette Medical School. President Caret was not suggesting to actually change the name of the Medical School, or to further privatize it, but he believes it is important that the legislature understand the situation the University is in. Furthermore, this speaks to many concerns of the faculty. He wants to see a more reasonable percentage of state funds subsidizing students. He does not want to cripple more students with large amounts of debt. If there were any positive effect of high tuition rates, it is the four-year completion rate. When tuition is high, students hurry to graduate.

At the community college level in Massachusetts, the three-year graduation rate varies from 9% to 25%. For the public universities, the six-year graduation rate varies from 38% to 65%, with UMass Amherst the highest performer. But President Caret does not believe any of those numbers are good enough. They are costing the citizens of Massachusetts huge amounts of money to subsidize the students who are not graduating. A school in Maryland that President Caret is very fond of, but that has all of the problems associated with inner-city schools such as it is, has a six-year graduation rate of 19%. It is costing the state $300,000 to graduate a student there. At Towson University, the state cost per graduate is about $32,000. It is important to look at the financial side of these issues in order to determine how to make higher education function at a higher level.
The University is doing thousands of things for the state of Massachusetts, and therefore cannot choose the one or two things it is best at and focus solely on them. This is not the nature of a large public university. However, President Caret believes it is important for all the campuses to have common goals in order for the University to have a strong sense of direction as it moves forward. With that in mind, he has chosen six themes that are important for each campus to keep in mind as they progress:

**Student Success:** Of course, student success must always be in the forefront of campus discussions. The University will continue its efforts to improve retention and graduation rates.

**Educated Citizenry:** The University cannot lose sight of the importance of an arts and science-based education. The University must focus on giving students strong critical thinking and communication skills while also preparing them for areas of specific need in the educated workforce. This includes the health professions and information technology. Even in this poor economy, companies are having difficulties filling vacant positions because they are unable to find qualified applicants. Extra energy should be dedicated to alleviating these needs. President Caret was recently at a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) conference where an executive noted that his company had an 11% vacancy rate. Part of the current workforce problem is a mismatch between education and the economy. President Caret cited the University of Texas’s UTeach Program as a positive example of educating students with an arts and science foundation while preparing them for jobs in science and math education.

**Research:** The University of Massachusetts is a research center. The research effort in the system has risen to about $550 million annually. President Caret hopes to increase that number to about $750 million annually in the next five to eight years. The President's Office will do what it can to nurture research activity on the campuses.

**Social Wellbeing:** The University and those associated with it have a responsibility to participate in local communities, whether it be with non-profit organizations, K-12 schools, clinics, or anything else to help build successful communities. The University is already involved in thousands of such endeavors, but the public generally does not recognize these efforts. President Caret thinks it is essential to garner that recognition. Public support is extremely important to the future of the University. He encouraged individuals who are out working for UMass in communities to wear something that connects them to the University or otherwise identify themselves as members of the UMass community.

**Responsible Spending:** It is important to show the state and the communities that the money directed to UMass is not being wasted. The state is not going to be able to offer much extra funding to the University, so it is necessary that the University show the state that it knows how to properly allocate its funds and that further money will be put to good use.

**Telling and Selling the UMass Story:** People need to recognize how important the University is to the state and its future. President Caret’s recent bus tour was titled “Travelling Together: Massachusetts and the University of Massachusetts.” The tagline read, “Massachusetts will never achieve the future it sees for itself without a vital and strong University of Massachusetts.” President Caret strongly agrees with this sentiment. If the University of Massachusetts and its 225,000 alumni were to leave the state, the state would collapse; if the University did not graduate its 13,000 students each year, the state’s economy would collapse. All the other schools in the state play important roles as well, but as one entity, the University of Massachusetts system is absolutely vital. In this instance, bigger is better. The University should be proud of both its size and quality, and it should demand respect. President Caret will not let the University be ignored, or let incorrect statements be made about the University. In this state, the University of Massachusetts has been ignored for too long.

To make advances related to these six themes, President Caret will not denigrate the private institutions, the two-year colleges, or the state universities. All of these entities play important roles in the state’s success. Strong community colleges, strong state universities, strong UMass campuses,
and private institutions are all necessary for a variety of reasons. It is important, however, to know that all the institutions are of the highest quality. Students should never feel like they are at a “default” institution, or feel embarrassed about their education at a public university. These various entities simply represent different pathways to a student’s future. President Caret worked in California for ten years and noted that community colleges are simply a smart option in that state. The easiest way to get into the University of California at Berkeley is to perform well at a community college for two years. The various educational segments need to be built together with support from the state and its communities in order to foster these types of beneficial partnerships.