Priscilla M. Clarkson
(1947-2013)

Priscilla M. Clarkson, 66, dean of Commonwealth Honors College, Distinguished University Professor of kinesiology, nationally recognized researcher in muscle function, and alumna of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, died at her home in Leverett on Aug. 25 after a long battle with breast cancer.

In her 36-year career at UMass Amherst, Clarkson rose to the top ranks in her field, authoring more than 200 scientific publications and becoming a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine, where she also served multiple roles, including as national president and as foundation president. She founded and ran the Muscle Biology and Imaging Lab at UMass Amherst and was well known for her work in muscle function and dysfunction. As a researcher and faculty member, Clarkson mentored countless graduate and undergraduate students.

The campus awarded Clarkson the Chancellor's Medal in 1997 and the university named her a Distinguished Professor in 2008. She was appointed dean of Commonwealth Honors College in 2006. She was a triple alumna of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, having earned her undergraduate degree in 1969, her master's degree in 1973 and her Ph.D. in 1977.

“We are tremendously saddened by the loss of Priscilla Clarkson, particularly as it coincides with the opening of the new Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, for which she was a tireless champion and advocate,” says Kumble R. Subbaswamy, UMass Amherst chancellor. “She fully realized the power of strong collaboration between the academic and residential aspects of a university, and this new complex will honor her work and vision by serving as a model for undergraduate education in both universities and honors colleges nationally. Her spirit and love of learning will be deeply missed.”

Clarkson was known for her incisive mind, creativity, drive, warmth, and tenaciousness, says Daniel Gordon, associate dean of Commonwealth Honors College. “She was absolutely driven to tackle whatever challenge lay before her, and if one approach didn't work, she was more than ready to try another,” Gordon says. “Anyone who ever interacted with her recognized the effectiveness of her engaging personality, her willingness to consider multiple perspectives and her persistence.”

Patty Freedson, chair of the kinesiology department says, “I knew Priscilla for over 30 years. She was a friend and a mentor to me and she was always someone I could count on for encouragement and support. She was an amazing person whose tireless commitment and passion for training countless graduate and undergraduate students who have gone on to outstanding careers in science was second to none. I will always remember her for the grace and dignity she showed in everything she did and her legacy will live on in our department forever. I will always be grateful for having had the privilege of having her as a friend and colleague.”
Clarkson served on the Massachusetts Governor's Panel to improve police training practices to prevent cases of rhabdomyolysis (muscle damage) leading to kidney failure during training. She has served as a scientific advisor to the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), as a member of the Science Working Group at NASA to develop laboratories for Space Station, and as a scientific advisor to the National Space Biomedical Research Institute. She also served as a member of the NCAA Competitive and Medical Safeguards Committee, on the National Commission on Sports and Substance Abuse, and on a subcommittee of the Committee for Military Nutrition at the Institute of Medicine. She served on the Research Review Board of the Gatorade Sports Science Institute, the National Lipid Association Statin Safety: Muscle Expert Panel and the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Cooperative International Neuromuscular Research Group. She was editor of the *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* for eight years, and editor-in-chief of *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews*.

Clarkson received the 1997 American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Citation Award, the 1999 New England ACSM Honor Award, the 2001 Excellence in Education Award from the Gatorade Sport Science Institute, the 2005 National ACSM Honor Award, and the UMass Amherst Graduate School Centennial Award in 2008. In 2007 she gave the keynote Wolfe Lecture at the National ACSM meeting in New Orleans, attended by 5,000 members. She was heavily involved with the New England Chapter of ACSM (NEACSM) and served as its president in 1995. In recognition of her service to the chapter, in 2010 the NEACSM named one of the annual meeting's lectures the Clarkson Keynote Lecture.

She served as associate dean for the UMass Amherst School of Public Health and Health Sciences. She maintained a lifelong involvement in classical ballet, including as a performer, choreographer, board member and president of the Pioneer Valley Ballet, and co-author/editor of books in dance medicine. She also held a deep love of animals, especially her three dogs, two cats and the birds that visited her yard.

To pay tribute to her memory, we are establishing the **Priscilla M. Clarkson Endowed Graduate Scholarship in Kinesiology**. With your help, each year, a scholarship will be given to a deserving graduate student in Priscilla Clarkson's memory. The faculty in the department recently joined together to make a gift to the fund. We hope you will join us in remembering this beloved professor, who had such a profound impact on all of our lives, by making a gift in her memory.