

State of the University Address to the Campus Community
Campus Center, Wednesday, May 6, 2009
(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon, and thank you all for being here. It is so good to see you all.

What a joy it is to celebrate the fifth anniversary of this beautiful Campus Center. It has so significantly changed the face of the university and the atmosphere of the entire campus community. When I invite people to the campus, this building is the vision that they have in mind. In many ways this building has been instrumental in casting the vision for the future of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

I want to thank all of you who helped in putting this event together and offer a special thanks to the campus center staff for all of their hard work over the years. But I want to give special recognition to Geoff Combs, who has been the Campus Center director since its opening. He does not receive nearly the recognition he deserves for all of his hard work and oversight of this facility. Thank you for all that you do. Won't you all give Geoff and all of the Campus Center staff a hand for all that he means to us?

When I last addressed the campus, I indicated that this moment of struggle in our world and our community is, in fact, "Our Time" -- a moment to be seized, and out of which we can emerge stronger, better, greater. It is our time when our community is looking to this campus for excellence and to educate their young people affordably. It is our time when students are turning to this campus for our abiding connections to the world of work, while so many other avenues are being squeezed out by a tightening economy. It is our time when a community struggling to fend off chaos turns to us for direction and help.

In response to the moment, we have moved forward, not retreated.

We as the University of Massachusetts Boston have committed ourselves to a strategic plan with four strategic priorities that are intended to move us toward becoming the premier student-centered research university in the city of Boston.

1. Increase student access, engagement, and success
2. Attract, develop, and sustain highly effective faculty
3. Create a physical environment that supports teaching, learning, and research
4. Enhance campus-community engagement through improved organizational structures

We expect our determination to achieve these goals to be rigorously tested, and we know that if we are to come through stronger and better, our struggle must be fought with our guiding principles firmly in mind. And so we have moved forward with our strategic priorities:

1. We are closing in on the 15,000 student enrollment number for this coming fall – one year ahead of schedule. And, yes, we will have facilities to support these numbers.
2. We have improved our advising systems to ensure the support and success of our students
3. We have succeeded in recruiting more than 40 new faculty members to join us in the fall, and we have recommended 20 faculty for tenure.

We have strengthened our commitment to trans- and international cultural studies through:

The appointment of appropriate faculty

Committees convened to make recommendations

The opening of the center for Gender, Security, and Human Rights on this campus

A general expanding of the study-abroad programs for our students.

4. We have scheduled public forums with candidates for the permanent post of university provost as that search moves toward its conclusion. Twenty-five of our colleagues are working together

to bring you the next academic leader. Please take the time to meet the candidates for this important position.

5. The campus has raised over \$49 million in extramural funding, and we are likely to break the \$50 million threshold this year.

6. Phase 1 of the Master Plan is in its initial stages, with the start this month of some necessary infrastructure improvements. And we are working with DCAM to move forward on the Integrated Science Center, and we are working towards building the Edward M. Kennedy Center for the Study of the US Senate as well.

7. We have significantly strengthened our relationships at key positions in our local, state and federal government.

- Last week I met with members of the Massachusetts congressional caucus in Washington, DC, regarding university priorities.
- We continue to maintain a presence at the State House, and the State House continues to keep a presence on this campus.
- At the request of the mayor, I have been asked to bring you voice as co-chair of the Student Success Task Force to identify strategies for ensuring the success of Boston public school students at the collegiate level.

8. We are building relationships with other local institutions of higher education.

- Last Friday, President Drew Gilpin Faust of Harvard University took the Red Line to join us for the opening of the Venture Development Center. And she gave me her Charlie Card.
- Earlier this year we hosted officials from community colleges to talk about firming up our relationships with them around Title III and other issues.

9. The University of Massachusetts Boston story -- with its high-quality faculty, cutting-edge research, and education for excellence – is being heard, locally, regionally, and nationally.

- You can read about the opening of the Venture Development Center in the *Boston Globe*.
- Go online to the UMass Boston YouTube channel and see Barack Obama's speech to our graduating class of 2006.
- Tune into New England Cable News to witness our live "Affairs of State" news segment every Thursday at 4:15.
- Or download podcasts from iTunes U.

10. We continue to host outstanding events, stimulating forums, and critical programs on the campus

- Most recently we held a wonderful gala celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Urban Scholars Program and raising funds for the J. Keith Motley Scholarship, which provides support for students from the pre-collegiate programs to attend the University of Massachusetts Boston.
- Just last month at the "Forum for Cities in Transition" on this campus, facilitated by University of Massachusetts Boston faculty, 30 delegates from the world's divided cities signed an agreement to maintain a permanent forum for dialogue.

These are just a few examples of what I mean by seizing the moment. These are the realities of the University of Massachusetts Boston that may be missed, if -- as insiders in this process -- we miss our opportunity to achieve a new level of excellence. We have a strong university with a growing reputation and a growing brand that is making real strides locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. You and I have reason to be proud of what we have accomplished, and what will be accomplished in the days to come if we remain focused on our objectives.

As we approach the conclusion of another academic year I remain undaunted in my belief that this is our time.

This conviction is not weakened by the economic realities we have wrestled with, are wrestling with and will wrestle with in the days to come. I know our 401K's have turned to 201K's. To deal with these realities we have adopted an approach of transparency and campus-wide participation. We have sought to keep the entire campus informed and involved through various modes of communication every step of the way. And we have determined to make decisions only after we have all the necessary information to make the right decision for the long-term good of this university.

In mid-October 2008 we were informed that our FY09 state appropriation would be reduced by five percent, which was a \$5.5 million reduction for our campus.

- In response, we quickly developed a strategy for addressing 50 percent of the reduction through the use of reserves and trust funds, and the remaining 5 percent through cost reductions.
 - We solicited input from the campus community and created **four workgroups** to formulate specific recommendations.
 - Our 9C plan did not include staff reduction of core faculty and staff.
 - Instead, we moved many salaries, including that of the chancellor, off of the state appropriation to trust funds.
 - In November we finalized and announced the FY09 9C cuts plans.
 - In late January 2009 we learned that the University of Massachusetts Boston share of the second round of state FY09 9C cuts would be half a million dollars. We decided to use the same strategy to handle this additional reduction in state support as we did with the first round.

The planning process for the FY10 budget process began in December 2008.

- In February 2009, A&F prepared informational materials to help set the context for the FY10 budget process

- Revenue Advisory and Growth Planning Committees began planning for FY10 revenue and resources needed to accommodate anticipated enrollment growth.
- Last month, FY10 budget hearings to discuss 6 percent and 9 percent reduction scenarios submitted by vice chancellors.
- This month, the provost, the vice chancellor of A&F, and I will be meeting to review FY10 revenue projections and expense reduction options to prepare recommendations for a balanced budget in FY10.

While I have set a target date for announcement of May 15, 2009, the budget is changing every day. Rules are changing every day. We will announce budget decisions only after we have received all necessary information and thoroughly understand the rules. I have no intention of moving forward publicly without understanding in detail what the campus is actually working with and what the full impact on the campus will be of making any reductions. We have not made rash decisions to date. We refuse to make any now. We will not be making any in the future. I understand that ultimately I will have to make difficult decisions regarding human resources and other appropriations. We will make difficult decisions regarding this campus when we have to, on the basis of accurate information, not forecasts that are not based in reality.

We are not alone in making difficult decisions. I am very aware of what's happening in our world, in our city, and on our campus. I refuse to put you through what has happened in other communities where there has been a threat of layoffs or closing and the resulting anxiety and tension. We are working and preparing to respond immediately when we have all of the numbers and rules.

- That is why we have asked vice chancellors to submit 6 percent and 9 percent reduction scenarios
- We have implemented a hiring freeze until further notice.
- We've delayed some traditional events, such as our Family Day, until this fall.

We all know – and I certainly know – the decisions we have to make for the future are more difficult than postponing a Family Day. However, we will be making decisions with regard to

our budget after a long, systematic, and painstaking process which will have reviewed several scenarios. Full consideration is being given to the very human impact that decisions regarding reductions in programming or staff have on people. These are difficult decisions created by difficult times, and neither I nor any member of the executive leadership team, which includes our deans, takes such steps as these lightly. We will move forward only in the most humane and caring way possible under the circumstances.

These times call us back to core principles and values, to search for hope in the midst of difficulty.

So today I am inviting the university to cling consciously to our first principles—those principles that have guided us as we have built this great university.

I am inviting you to keep your sights on our student-centered enterprise.

First let's work together to make this the best commencement in our history. If you can help, please do.

No matter the division or department you are connected with, no matter your title, we who are employees of this university cannot allow it to lose its legacy as a place where a sense of community is valued. All that we do in this great institution ultimately relates to the facilitation of student education and the preparation of women and men for leadership in their chosen vocation.

- We build to enhance and extend teaching, learning, and research.
- In our research, we expose students to cutting-edge thinking and procedures in their fields of study to deepen their learning while we extend and advance knowledge.
- Our administrative and fundraising efforts work in tandem to facilitate a transformative academic experience and environment for both students and faculty.

All of our many efforts on this campus must keep in mind the student at the center.

I invite you to keep your sights on our community engagement and our public mission, which is public and impacts the globe.

- There are communities in conflict around the world looking to the University of Massachusetts Boston to navigate a path to accord.
- There are youth engaged in lethal combat on the streets of this and many other cities who need the resources of this university to aid in the development of structures of peace and community.
- There are medical communities groping for effective ways of *caring for people* afflicted with critical illnesses – they need this university’s concentrated expertise to find breakthroughs and give direction in nursing those patients back to health.
- Many students in our urban elementary and secondary schools across the nation are underserved. School systems look to institutions like ours for support and partnership.
- The global environment is sending strong warnings that critical boundaries are being crossed. The world needs the expertise of this and other universities to interpret the signs and provide direction.
- As our world grapples with a global recession, governments and municipalities look for a beacon of the beams of humane and rational policy guidance as they steer the great ship of state through the narrow straights of these difficult times.

So you see that while we must deal with the impact of the economy on our institution, we cannot allow that to usurp the place of our work as a critical intellectual resource for our multi-bordered community. Now, perhaps more than ever, your curiosity, your inquiry, your analysis, your partnership, and your willingness to serve are in demand and needed to aid in the work of helping our public, private, and community-based institutions come through this economic contraction better and stronger for a future that will demand so much more from them.

Finally, I invite you to help fill this university with an ethic of care. It would be very easy for us to become very hard and cold toward one another, to begin to regard one another as competitors for limited resources and to forget that we are actually here for one another. I want to make clear today that the University of Massachusetts Boston is a high-level *service* organization, and if you do not operate from the posture of serving our students, staff, faculty, and community first, then you may actually be in the wrong place. I'm particularly interested in you who administer divisions, manage departments, or run programs – please, remember that the entities you manage are not merely cost centers or a collection of numbers. They are people; people with needs, fears and anxieties; people with families and responsibilities; people with real feelings; people who must under all circumstances be handled with dignity and the same level of care with which you want to be treated. How you treat people as a chancellor, vice chancellor, director, dean, manager, or supervisor will generate the atmosphere for the entire university community, particularly in a time of high anxiety. Yet, each of us, across the entire spectrum of responsibilities in this university should be appropriately cultivating the virtue of compassion in our work; growing in our ability to feel with and for others as we accomplish our assigned tasks.

- Think about what a student needs and how you can help.
- Think about a campus visitor's needs and how you can help.
- Think about a colleague's needs and how you can help.
- Think about your manager's needs and how you can help.

So, we are continuing forward with our strategic priorities. The pace may have changed, but the direction has not. The contraction of the economy has impacted us, and the reduced revenues will likely cause us to make some necessary adjustments, but it will not stop us. Nor will it cause us to retreat.

I see nothing in the present circumstances of our city, of our Commonwealth, of our nation, or of our world – our multi-bordered community - that makes our aim to be **the premier, student-centered, urban public research university of the 21st century** any less of a necessity, any less in demand.

I invite you all as a community – students, faculty, administrators, and staff – whether the waters of the bay that surround this peninsula be placid and calm or heaving with foaming whitecaps – I invite you to strengthen your resolve, steel your will, and encourage your spirits to press forward toward the goal that remains ever before us.

I've said this before; I'm saying it now:

“You are the right people at the right time,

Serving the right institution,

With the right passion,

For the right reasons.

I call you . . . to nobility, in your service to our great public university, the University of Massachusetts Boston.”