The 25th Anniversary of NERCHE, 20th Anniversary of the Higher Education Administration Doctoral Program, and Reflections from Founder Professor Zelda Gamson

After 20 years at the University of Michigan, Professor Zelda “Zee” Gamson, now retired, traveled around the country as a consultant on education reform. Then, in 1988, Ernest Lynton recruited her to apply for a position at UMass Boston directing a new program in higher education. With a PhD in social relations from Harvard, Professor Gamson had studied organizational change in higher education, college curriculum, and the academic workplace. The position was a natural fit. As a result of this recruitment, Gamson, Lynton, and McCormack Institute senior associate Sandra Elman founded the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) at UMass Boston (www.nerche.org). Professor Gamson coined the center’s name. The acronym NERCHE suggested nurture or nurturing, which expressed what the founders hoped to achieve with colleges and universities in New England.

A Question and Answer Session with Retired Professor Ellie Kutz

Professor Emerita Eleanor Kutz has a unique retirement story: she has technically retired twice. Since 1969, Kutz taught in the English Department at both Boston State College and in 1982, UMass Boston, until her first retirement in 2006. She participated on numerous committees at all levels within the university, and held significant administrative appointments during that time. After her retirement as a professor of English in 2006, she began working as an information technology (IT) faculty liaison at UMass Boston.

Why did you choose to continue at UMass after your retirement from the English department in 2006?
I’m often teased about being the retiree who never really retired, and as of last June, I’ve retired twice. While other UMass friends have plunged themselves into new projects like photography or taken their academic work to other countries, I ended up “retiring in

Message from the Provost

A new fall semester has begun, and I would like to share with you some of the developments at UMass Boston since the last newsletter.

Those developments have been varied and many, including the welcoming of new faculty, success under a special grant program from the National Science Foundation, the creation of a new college, the national accreditation of two programs, the successful launch of our undergraduate research program, a new record in extramural research dollars, and an outstanding year of fundraising. In addition, we have begun searches for a number of important positions, filled three significant ones, taken further steps to promote faculty development, and are preparing for our next New England Association of Schools and Colleges review.

In the area of new faculty, we welcomed 45 new colleagues, who have joined us from outstanding research universities. More than 30 percent of them have come from outside the Americas, and
The 25th Anniversary of NERCHE (Con’t from page 1)

NERCHE is committed to collaborative efforts to increase social justice and democracy in our society through higher education.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of NERCHE and 25 years of the center’s continued growth and development. Despite facing significant cutbacks shortly after it was founded, the center devised several creative ways to make a name for itself quickly: organizing a conference at the JFK library with nationally recognized speakers, bringing in funding from foundations for applied research projects, and forming “think tanks” for people in colleges and universities all over New England that still exist today (also in virtual form). In just a few years, NERCHE combined Lynton’s work on faculty professional outreach, with faculty acting as change agents, and Gamson’s work on civic engagement in higher education.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Higher Education Administration doctoral program, in which Professor Gamson was a founding faculty member. After the creation of NERCHE, she and colleagues from across the university focused on designing a higher education program for students who were already working in the field. The design called for each class to work as a cohort in classes held on Fridays during the academic year, and classes held for three weeks in the summer. The design encouraged the development of community and collaboration across campuses in Boston and beyond. The program grew, as it continues to, with graduates from across the region.

“I am very proud of both NERCHE and the Higher Education Administration doctoral program. They are not only still operating, but thriving. Both have changed in wonderful ways that I would have never thought of,” says Gamson, who retired from the university as a professor of higher education and director of NERCHE in 1999. “I am also proud of UMass Boston for allowing these types of programs; I don’t think other universities would have been so flexible and open-minded. Both programs are creative and unusual. The university allowed them to be created, and supported them in tough times.” Shortly after her retirement, the Higher Education Administration doctoral program established fellowships to recognize outstanding students in the program. The Zelda R. Gamson Fellowship provides dissertation support for students in the program. The Sandra Kanter Remembrance Fund recognizes Professor Sandy Kanter, another founding faculty member of the program, and provides support for doctoral student resources, including library materials, research software, and funding for guest speakers and events.

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place,” pursuing my long-term interest in faculty development and my growing interest in educational technology right on campus. I was always interested in pedagogy and in challenges with new technology.

I didn’t exactly plan my first retirement (a mistake, I know), but retired from the English department sooner than I was ready, to join my husband in Sydney where he was a visiting professor. Fortunately, because I was doing a lot of work with educational technology before I retired (having designed, with a graduate student, an interactive website that served our freshman writing and other English courses), I was invited back to campus to serve as the IT faculty liaison, doing outreach to faculty and assisting the IT instructional support staff in developing projects to address faculty needs. For much of this time, I continued to teach, offering online versions of a graduate course on “Teaching English with Technology,” of my upper-level course on “Language and Literature,” and testing out strategies for effective teaching in online and web-enhanced environments. Writing for and editing the EdTech Newsletter gave me an opportunity to learn still more about effective uses of technology for teaching, both on our own campus and at other universities, and to bring what I was learning to a wider audience. And after I was asked to chair the provost’s planning committee for faculty development, I had opportunities to ensure that our faculty development initiatives included attention to the ways in which technology is changing faculty work and how we can use it to enhance our most effective practices as teachers. I felt that my role, as it was gradually defined, filled a need for the campus. Now, with Professor Judith Goleman directing the Office for Faculty Development and Professor Brian White serving as the new Provost Fellow for Teaching with Technology, I feel ready to move on.

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during the coming year, to be submitted to the New England Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow; Ann Bookman, director of the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, by way of Harvard/Brandeis University; and Megan Rokop, associate director of the Honors Program (soon to be Honors College), from the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, and former leader in the training of thousands of Boston-area high school students in biomedical research. We also have Thomas Kane, heading the Jointer Institute, who joined us by way of Princeton.

Our equal commitment to teaching and research, to ensuring that teaching within a research university continues to be of special importance to us, can only be realized when we have senior administrators who can lead in both areas. We are in the process of seeking to find permanent leaders for the College of Education and Human Development, College of Liberal Arts, College of Management, and the Information Technology division. Search committees have already begun their work (with the help of a search firm) in the three colleges, and we are in the midst of forming a like committee for the fourth.

Finally, in the area of faculty development, the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) has continued its fine work, producing the first handbook for chairs in the history of the university, along with its “guidelines for NTT faculty.” Perhaps the most ambitious work undertaken by the OFD is ensuring that our doctoral students who are planning to become professors and our junior faculty members receive the best help possible to become outstanding teachers.

We invite you to visit with us and to share some of your experiences through this newsletter.

To learn more about what’s happening in the Provost’s Office, visit us at: www.umb.edu/academics/provost/

Or contact the office at:
Telephone: 617.287.5600
Location: Quinn Administration Building, 3rd floor, Room 61A
To submit Retired Faculty Newsletter story ideas, please ask for Aimee Ladner.

Upcoming Events
Next Retired Faculty Leadership Council meeting: November 19th

Teaching Opportunities
If you are interested in teaching a course or doing a guest lecture for the Honors Program, please contact Rajini Srikanth at 617.287.5521.
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What were the advantages (and disadvantages) of “retiring in place”? The biggest advantage of “retiring in place” was that I was able to continue working in a university community that I loved, on the projects that most interested me, continuing to learn myself and to share what I was learning. At the same time, I had much more flexibility to take on other projects that involved more time and travel than I could have fit into my full-time faculty responsibilities: working for two years on a grant project out of the University of Southern California to improve literacy education in schools and community colleges, doing teacher training for teachers in schools serving slum children in Bangalore, working with faculty at a Chilean university on implementing a comprehensive faculty development program with a strong focus on using educational technology. Technology facilitated those endeavors, both indirectly (letting me teach my online classes from any wired location) and directly (letting me set up, for example, a wiki to connect students and teachers in California classrooms with students and teachers in Bangalore, so that children could share their worlds and their work). The only disincentive to part-time postretirement work at UMass Boston is a financial one. But for me, it was worth it.

What’s next for you personally and professionally? While I may continue to do some work on the implications of technology for composition and literacy in the 21st century (and am currently working on a proposed book project with two former graduate students), I am now more interested in thinking about how technology can support other activities, especially those that seniors are likely to engage in. For example, I am on the web team for the Mystic Chorale, a wonderful community chorus with singers of all ages. I’ve been working with Shutterfly as a site for sharing artwork with others who have been studying watercolor. And I’ve begun Skyping with my six-month-old grandson in California, appreciating that real-time connection (even as I plan more in-person visits). I am grateful to have had the opportunity to keep working and learning in my first phase of retirement and am confident that I’ll discover other interesting paths in the second.