Thank you to our entire UMass Boston community -- faculty, students, staff, alumni and friends -- for working together during this incredibly difficult time to continue to support each other, to engage in high quality teaching, learning, and research, and to live up to the University’s values and ideals.

Now that the fall semester is well underway, we must look forward towards the new year and the winter and spring academic semesters. As such, we established a Spring Planning Committee that has started to gather information and consider options for the spring term. Our commitment to the health, wellness (both physical and mental) and safety of every member of our community is the number one priority in our decision making and will drive any recommendations the committee makes to the Chancellor. These will be our guiding principles, our beacons, that will guide us into the new year.

**Winter Semester**

Based on current guidance from local and state health authorities, we have decided that coursework in the winter academic session in January 2021 will continue to operate in remote modality. This year we are working to increase course availability for the three week winter session, providing an important opportunity for students to augment their fall and spring semester courses and accelerate their degree progression.

**Spring Semester**
The Planning Committee will build upon the significant work that was conducted over the summer by six fall planning working groups, and will study major aspects of the university’s operations – work, coursework, research, residence halls, athletics, student support services, COVID testing strategy, etc. – to make recommendations on how the university should operate in the second half of the academic year. The committee will consider student well-being, health and mental health wellness and best ways to mitigate the pandemic’s impact on students, faculty, and staff. Given the current public health conditions, it is likely that the committee’s findings will not deviate widely from the status quo. That is, the University is likely to continue largely in remote modality for the spring semester. In addition to reviewing the guidance of public health authorities, the committee will also endeavor to recommend ways to safely increase engagement and enhance the experience for students, faculty, and staff.

Key tasks will include:

- Hold listening sessions for various stakeholder groups to provide input
- Study and utilize the work conducted by the fall planning working groups this summer
- Analyze lessons learned from spring, summer, and fall 2020 semesters
- Seek to examine and understand current pandemic data and projections made by the local, state, and federal public health communities
- Identify ways to deepen engagement to improve student, faculty, and staff experiences
- Conduct rigorous scenario planning
- Ultimately, make recommendations for the spring semester

We ask all community members for their input as we conduct our planning. The Committee will host a series of listening sessions for campus stakeholders, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Zoom Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Monday, October 19</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td><a href="https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/91477022518">https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/91477022518</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Monday, October 12</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.</td>
<td><a href="https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/96086294721">https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/96086294721</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 20</td>
<td>11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td><a href="https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/97620943341">https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/97620943341</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>General (Open to All)</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 20</td>
<td>1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td><a href="https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/97300991543">https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/97300991543</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, this web form is available for all to share their thoughts. Input will be directly shared with the Spring Planning Committee.

As we look forward, we do so mindful of the safety and reopening guidelines established and offered by the university, as well as local, state, and federal health organizations. We also embark on this work acknowledging the deep racial, social, health, economic and accessibility inequities that exist – historically and presently – in our country, which deeply impact our communities.

We must continue to be vigilant, empathetic and supportive of one another in our pursuits to advance the teaching, learning, and research mission of UMass Boston during what will undoubtedly be a significant moment in history. I am grateful to our entire community for their effort and look forward to a productive and engaging year, regardless of modality.

Sincerely,

Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
Chancellor