

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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A day at the University

It all started when an invitation came to my State House office. Michael Hooker, president of the University of Massachusetts, invited senators and representatives to attend a legislative conference on strategic priorities at the Amherst site of the five-campus university system. We would meet the five chancellors and hear presentations about educational initiatives at the different schools. I accepted and, accompanied by 10 other senators and representatives, spent a day packed with enthusiastic presentations about the learning that transpires in our state university system.

President Hooker set the tone for the day in his opening address. Building on the prominence of the UMass basketball team and the new hockey program he stated the goals of his administration with a sports metaphor. "Skate to where the puck is going to be." As the program unfolded before us, we saw many examples of teaching for the future-not where the puck is now, but where the puck is going to be.

Chancellor Peter Cressy of the Dartmouth campus moderated a session on teaching and learning. Speakers explained their focus on environmental studies, defense conversion and biotech, all areas of job growth in our changing world.

Personalizing his view of education in a large institution. Professor Julius Lester, honored nationally as 1992 Teacher of the Year, outlined his methods for individualizing instruction to a large class. His presentation made me envy his students. It reinforced the sense of magnetism Dr. Lester projected to his Longmeadow audience when he spoke at the 1992 Longmeadow High School graduation of my son.

Dr. Aaron Lazare, chancellor of the medical school, illustrated his school's focus on primary patient care. A recent entry in a field long dominated by the private schools of the state, UMass is setting an example for the new world of medicine. It is in tune with the national agenda which accents family practitioners and nursing professionals as the point of access to medical care.

Several students cut short their winter break by reporting back to school a day early so they could tell us of their experiences on the Amherst campus. Some were there because of the cost differential at private institutions, some I for the benefits of a large school. One student was the only minority graduate of a small high school, and she came for the social diversity on campus.

I came away from the day seeing the University of Massachusetts as a unit, one school that has five locations. The voices from each campus are coming together. As a side benefit I saw my Boston-area colleagues experience a commute to Amherst. They now have more appreciation for my regular commute to Boston.

The day ended as it began, with the UMass athletic program. We all attended a basketball game at the Mullins Center and joined the other fans in cheering the Minutemen to victory over Rutgers. The school was victorious that day, both on and off the basketball court.