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2-12-1993

Friday Report - Vol. 02, No. 14 - February 12, 1993

University of Massachusetts Boston

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Recommended Citation

University of Massachusetts Boston, "Friday Report - Vol. 02, No. 14 - February 12, 1993" (1993).
1991-1996, Friday Report. 33.
https://scholarworks.umb.edu/university_fridayreport/33

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WMS 2-56-5

The UMass/Boston Friday Report

Volume 2, Number 14
February 12, 1993

News and information about and for the
University Community from the Chancellor's Office

Events Celebrating Diversity To Take Place on Campus February 17

Students, in association with the administration, have organized a series of events on campus for Wednesday, February 17, to express a renewal of the University's commitment to diversity and tolerance. According to **Foster Hardie**, a member of the committee in charge of "Harmony through Humanity," the students hope that faculty holding classes from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. that day will either bring their students to attend the events, or excuse those who wish to observe them. Here is a schedule of events

Lipke Auditorium: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. **Larry Watson**, former dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a performer in the Nelson Mandela Hatch Shell program, will play jazz and speak about urban issues. For the next two hours, Watson will moderate a forum titled "On Diversity in Our Community: What Can Be Gained? What Holds Us Back?" Panel members include **Louis Elisa**, director of the NAACP's Boston chapter; U. S. Department of Justice official **Larry Turner**, who acted as a mediator during the Los Angeles riots; **Constance Chan** (CPCS); Gaston Institute Director **Edward Melendez**; **Anne Withorn** (CPCS); radio show host **Michael Smith**; Boston artist **Dana Chandler**; and **Ken Heidlberg**.

McCormack Theater: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. **Mary Ann Alexander-Ellis**, associate director of the University's Advising Center, and **Vivian Wu** (American Studies/Sociology) will comment on the topic "Faculty and Staff: A Sharing of Educational Experience and Success Strategies for Students of Color in Higher Education." From 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., **Larry Turner** will speak about the mediation process in community conflicts. And from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., **Estelle Disch** (Sociology) will moderate a forum on "UMB Experiences: The Benefits and Hardships on an Urban University Campus." Contributing to the discussion will be students **Roland Smith**, **Ronald Kahn**, **Anne-Marie Collins**, **Juan Carlos Pons**, **Christine DiNardo**, **Lillian Moore** and **Edwin Dowd**.

Snowden Auditorium: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. A film, "Faces of Racism." From 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. A film, "Faces of The Enemy," will show how the media uses visual images to create certain notions of our enemies. In addition, the Harbor Art Gallery will feature "Multi Media Experiments," an exhibit composed of works representing diversity, and "Anatomy of Bigotry," a slide show/performance art installation by **Sean Mahoney** and **Suzan Baltozer**.

McCormack Institute Study Proposes Strategies For Enhancing Child Immunization Efforts

A report by the McCormack Institute outlines the potential for an epidemic among the nation's children and suggests strategies to assist state governments in immunizing more young people and babies against such infectious diseases as polio and diphtheria. Results of the study are contained in a report called "A Health Challenge for the States: Achieving Full Benefit of Childhood Immunization." It tracks the history of immunization efforts nationwide and focuses on Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, which have highly successful immunization campaigns, as models for the rest of the country. The study was conducted by **Phyllis Freeman** (CPCS); **Kay Johnson**, director of policy and

government affairs for the March of Dimes in Washington, D.C.; and **Janice Babcock**, a researcher and administrative assistant for The Vaccine Project, a UMass/Boston-based organization that focuses on public policy. "We hope that legislators from many states will take advantage of some of the innovative methods that are discussed in the report," says Babcock.

The authors recommend approaches that all states can use to ensure more children are vaccinated. These strategies call for:

- Expanding the delivery of vaccines by assuring that there are enough personnel to administer them.
- Adequately reimbursing private physicians for giving vaccines.
- Mandating that vaccinations be covered by health insurance.
- Developing a data bank that will store immunization records and enable health officials to target children who have not received vaccinations, before they become ill and require more expensive treatment.
- Organizing a promotional campaign that, particularly in low-income areas where vaccination rates are low, will increase awareness of the importance of immunization.

In 1970 the National Centers for Disease Control began a program to provide funding so that states could immunize children against seven diseases -- polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. According to Babcock, while approximately 98% of American children are immunized against these seven ailments by the time they reach school age, efforts to immunize babies have not been nearly so successful. Among children age two and under, only 40% to 60% receive all seven vaccinations, far below the national goal of 90% immunization. The deficiency is most common in poor urban and rural areas, where the number of fully immunized children is as low as 10%. Says Babcock, "The real challenge for this country is to fully immunize children who are under two years old."

Babcock cites several factors why nationwide immunization efforts have not been as successful in the past decade as they were during the 1970s. One of the most significant factors is that state budgets have been unable to keep pace with the added cost of the doses now recommended for proper immunization. For example, according to the report, Massachusetts in 1987 spent \$3 million to purchase vaccine. Half of this cost was covered by the federal government. In 1992, the state spent \$13.2 million purchasing vaccine, but the federal government paid only \$2.5 million of the cost. The report explores several other reasons why immunization efforts have faltered. They include: a breakdown in the delivery system due to declining federal support; an increase in the number of uninsured and poor children; and considerable increases in the cost of vaccines. In 1981, the cost of providing a child with vaccines against the seven diseases was about \$25. Today the cost is \$200.

In addition to recommending new approaches for a successful nationwide immunization plan, the report also provides an historical overview. It traces immunization campaigns back to distribution of the smallpox vaccine in 1796, and covers the highly successful immunization campaign against polio as well as the aggressive but unsuccessful effort in the late 1970s to eliminate measles. Between 1989 and 1991, a measles epidemic in the United States resulted in 55,000 cases of the disease and 150 deaths. Those afflicted, the report states, incurred a total of over \$20 million in hospital bills. "Immunization is a litmus test of how well a society cares for its people," says Babcock. "We have the means, if we have the political will, leadership and perseverance to protect our infants from unnecessary suffering and disease-related injuries. Yet in some parts of this country, we fall to the ranks of underdeveloped nations like Bolivia and Haiti in the number of children we reach with all doses of vaccines timely enough to be effective."