


11-12-1972

Bulletin - Vol. 04, No. 10.1 - November 12, 1972

University of Massachusetts Boston

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Recommended Citation

University of Massachusetts Boston, "Bulletin - Vol. 04, No. 10.1 - November 12, 1972" (1972). 1971-1977, *UMass Boston Bulletin*. Paper 76.

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University of Massachusetts at Boston

SUNDAY HERALD TRAVELER
AND
BOSTON
Sunday Advertiser

PERSPECTIVE

NOVEMBER 12, 1972

Governor Sargent is demanding cuts
in the University of Massachusetts
budget. But President Wood says that
such reductions could be disastrous

Why UMass wants \$23m more in 1973

By PAMELA BULLARD

The president of the University of Massachusetts sees Governor Sargent's efforts to hold down spending as not only a threat to the quality of education at UMass, but as an open attack against the very lifeblood of public higher education.

"The governor's budget cutting reorganization is a direct threat to our objectivity, our effectiveness, and most importantly, our fiscal autonomy," Dr. Robert C. Wood said in an exclusive interview last week.

For several months, Governor Sargent and the state's increasingly expansive public higher education system have waged a fierce battle over money. The governor has served notice that spending for education must be more closely tailored to the state's revenues and balanced by the state's social needs.

In his major reorganization push, Sargent has focused on public higher education as a balky, mismanaged sector.

Both the state colleges and community colleges expect severe budget cuts this year from the governor's office. Sargent has already rejected UMass budget request for \$98 million, a 33 percent increase over last year's \$72 million budget.

UMass has resubmitted the budget unchanged, and President Wood, who emphasizes he is a "personal friend" of the governor, vows he will fight for every dollar in it.

Where the extra money would go

The University of Massachusetts has submitted a budget for 1973 for \$98 million—an increase of 33 percent over 1972. Here is how the extra money would be spent:

	Amount (in millions)	% of total increase
Prior Commitments		
Fixed costs	\$6.5	27.7
Maintenance of new facilities	\$2.6	11.0
Deferred payments and repairs	\$1.2	5.1
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	\$10.3	43.8
Education of Additional Students		
Faculty and staff	\$3.9	16.6
Library and services	\$.7	3.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$4.6	19.6
Financial Aid	\$3.9	16.6
Library Books	\$1.8	7.7
Administration		
Management of expanded facilities	\$1.6	6.8
University Administration	\$1.0	4.2
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$2.6	11.0
Educational Innovation		
Law Center	\$.1	.4
Continuing Education and University Without Walls	\$.2	.9
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$.3	1.3
University Total	\$23.5	100.0

UNLESS UMASS RECEIVES its \$98 million, the 48-year old Washington-trained administrator maintains, the university will miss a once-in-a-lifetime chance to break from the classification of a mediocre academic institution into that elite category of one of the country's top-rated educational centers.

"This university has been coming up from nowhere -- we're now at the point where it has the capacity to attract national attention," said Dr. Wood, a quick, normally gentle-speaking man whose voice grew louder and more emphatic as he went on:

"But we cannot take any clumsy intervention from the executive department of this state without being seriously damaged."

The "clumsy intervention" which Wood refers to is the governor's reorganization plan. According to the university president, the governor's office sees public higher education as "disorganized chaos." The governor reportedly believes that reorganization can make solid progress in the UMass camp.

Wood, who served as Lyndon Johnson's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and later as chairman of Boston's MBTA, said it is a "great and cruel illusion that reorganization saves money."

"We reorganized in HUD and it didn't save money. It's not saving money for Nixon. You cannot make the case it will save money. It will increase productivity and service, but save money . . . no."

WOOD, WHO ALSO WAS head of the Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies before going to Washington, explained that higher education in Massachusetts accounts for only 18.4 percent of the budget -- 3.8 percent goes to UMass.

"Even if you close us down, you're not going to get the budget down. You have to hit the heavier departments, like health, welfare, transportation.

"And it's very sad when men attempt to reorganize education as they would tackle the Department of Public Works. Education is very delicate and fragile."

Governor Sargent has turned his guns on the fact the state's educational system is run by 137 advisory boards and councils. He is striving for the

institution of one major board to oversee the entire system.

Wood, fondling one of the many sets of worry beads always in his possession, said when either the governor or Secretary of Educational Affairs Joseph M. Cronin begins talking about "superboards I get terribly concerned."

"The trustee position is there in order to maintain some type of fiscal autonomy—you take this away, and you've slashed at the heart of public education, you've taken away our independence.

"If my man discovers the Red Tide (as a UMass professor did), I want him to report that to the American people and not have to worry about the political overtones of the possible unemployment of fishermen.

"Or if I have a doctor who is ready to announce a cure, I don't want him to have to wait until a politician can make some mileage with the discovery," said Wood, his voice bearing an angry edge.

"Since the time of Galileo, we've known that the pursuit of knowledge and inquiry must be wrapped in a cotton buffer. A 'superboard' cannot come in and direct a neurotic professor as it would direct a fire department."

WOOD ROSE FROM his leather chair and paced the carpet of the ultra-modern office at One Washington Place that he moved into only two weeks ago. Ironically, the president's new offices served as Sargent's first target in the fiscal autonomy battle.

Sargent's secretary-designate of Administration and Finance, William I. Cowin, refused to pay past leases for the offices of the UMass administration, charging that UMass did not go through the proper procedure of obtaining authorization from the governor's office.

Cowin's action was a direct contradiction of a 1967 ruling by Atty. Gen. Robert H. Quinn that granted the university fiscal autonomy in such matters. The issue, which concerns not only payment for the administration's old quarters at 85 Devonshire st. but also the new offices, will be decided in court.

"You can see the position I'm in," said Wood. "If I can't make a judgment

on how to execute a lease, where is my authority?"

Public education proponents charge that in lunging at the state colleges and universities, the governor is favoring private institutions. For decades, the Commonwealth's prestigious private colleges have overshadowed the state's own higher education system. They point out that Massachusetts ranks 48th in the nation in the amount of money appropriated for operating public higher education.

The per capita public spending on higher education in Massachusetts is \$19.97; the national average is \$42.51.

Public spending per person of college age is \$169.27; the U.S. average is \$364.82.

CRITICS OF the public higher education system say these figures are not important because Massachusetts residents have so many options in private schools.

However, each year the University of Massachusetts and the other state and community colleges turn away 14,000 qualified Massachusetts residents, despite the fact enrollments have grown from 17,180 in 1960 to 90,000 in 1971.

State education officials also point out the actual per pupil cost ranges from a low of \$1400 at the community colleges to a high of \$2400 at the state university -- thousands of dollars less than the student costs at private institutions.

"When you look at what we're doing at half the cost of the private institutions, how can we be looked upon as ridiculously mismanaged and unorganized?" asks Wood. "The argument that the public institutions aren't as efficient as the private, just isn't valid any more."

"The next several years are going to either make or break both public and private colleges and universities," said Wood. "It is not true that all private institutions now in difficulty ought to survive."

Since Wood took office in 1970, he sees the consortia as a possible solution has been working with area academic institutions to develop a public-private



DR. WOOD: "The governor's (program) is a direct threat to our . . . effectiveness . . ."

consortia. Like most educators, Wood to the financial crisis plaguing higher education today. He and his collaborators report progress in plans to consolidate facilities and resources, while still maintaining diversification.

PRESIDENT WOOD finds it strange that Sargent will lecture public educators on the glories of the Carnegie Commission Report involving "open universities" and three-year programs—while never touching on the highly praised solution of the private and public consortia.

"I am bemused that the public and private consortia has received no comment from the governor," said Wood.

"I am also bemused by the governor's white paper that says public higher education should follow the Carnegie Commission recommendations despite the fact the chairman of the Carnegie Commission said a stringent budget

could not apply to Massachusetts and that Massachusetts should take immediate steps to increase financial support for higher education."

Since the beginning of the year UMass President Wood says he has tried to keep his budget down. He sympathizes with the governor on his fiscal problems, but says the UMass budget has been cut as deeply as it can be without seriously damaging the quality of learning.

UMass's major expense this year is the opening of the new Columbia Point campus—entailing \$130 million worth of construction, with facilities for 5000-plus students. The Basic and Clinical Science Building and Power Plant of the Medical School at Worcester will also open next fall.

IF UMASS DOES NOT receive the budget request of \$98 million, President Wood and his finance director predict the following repercussions:

- Columbia Point will not open.
- Enrollment will remain at its present level, unless another option is found.
- Continuing Education programs at Amherst will be eliminated.
- University Without Walls will be closed down.
- The new library at Amherst will go without staffing and adequate supplies.
- Programs for the disadvantaged will be cut down.
- New facilities at Worcester Medical School will not open.

"The Commonwealth has worked hard to build a good public higher education system. For the governor to pull out a hatchet now—well, it's just the wrong place at the wrong time," said Dr. Wood.