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## From the Director

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The Master of Science in Public Affairs graduate program was introduced at the University of Massachusetts Boston in 1984, virtually simultaneous with the creation of the McCormack Institute. From the start, the MSPA found both a formal administrative, and a warm emotional, home in the Institute. The MSPA now boasts over three hundred graduates, many of them employed in the public sector throughout New England. The MSPA reflects the best of UMass Boston's "urban mission" — providing practical, high-quality education for public service.

The McCormack Institute, for its part, has always taken great pride in, while receiving multiple benefits from, its identification with the Public Affairs graduate program. McCormack fellows and staff teach widely in the program, and MSPA students contribute greatly to the research projects and the overall energy of the Institute. I was privileged to be the first Director of both the McCormack Institute and of the Public Affairs program (I am now in my second go-round in both jobs), and my association with the MSPA and its students has brought enormous satisfaction over the years.

The two-year Public Affairs graduate program culminates with a Case Study — our equivalent of the traditional Masters thesis, but with a focus on a pertinent public policy issue facing New England. We regularly host an often rollicking, day-long event, open to faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, where the final products are presented. Just as regularly, we have told ourselves how good many of these studies are and how much they deserve a wider audience, while doing little to accomplish that end. With this issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy*, we seek to rectify that shortcoming by publishing three of the best Case Studies of last year's graduating class. We have been remiss in not initiating this practice sooner. ❁