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The UMass/Boston Friday Report #8

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

January 24, 1992

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How The University Saves Dollars -- UMass/Boston saved the Commonwealth almost \$820,000 during the last fiscal year by making purchases through the Massachusetts Higher Education Consortium (MHEC). According to **Richard Simmons**, our director of procurement, by belonging to the consortium UMass/Boston saved about 30% on its purchases. The campus spent \$1.9 million on goods and services during FY 1991. However, buying them as a single institution would have cost the University approximately \$2.7 million. Says Simmons, "We consolidate our buying power to get maximum discounts on items used regularly. And we only had to bid once on them." The consortium was established 14 years ago to facilitate group purchase agreements for the benefit of member schools, including the five University campuses at Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, Lowell and Worcester. Members of MHEC also include nine state colleges, 15 community colleges as well as private institutions throughout the state.

According to **Jake E. Bishop**, a contracts coordinator based at UMass/Amherst who proposed the founding of MHEC, the consortium stands out as an example of what can be accomplished to save money in difficult times by working together. And **Joseph Bloomstein**, the materials manager at UMass/Boston, says that the University and other MHEC members "save on administrative expenses as well as on the items purchased. The schools get together to forge a combined buying power. We have refined the system so that we have geographic sources. For hardware items, for instance, we merely have to go to a store nearby in Dorchester. There we can order nails, paint, you name it -- and at the right price."

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Campus Notes -- Political science professor **Jack Spence** played a role in a sequence of events that paved the way for the recently-signed peace treaty for El Salvador. Spence, whose involvement in that nation's politics dates back several years, and colleague **Martin Diskin**, a Brandeis University professor of anthropology, were summoned one December weekend to New York City, where United Nations-sponsored peace talks had hit a stumbling block on the issue of land distribution in territory held by rebel forces. According to a recent article in *The Boston Globe*, Spence and Diskin -- both experts in agrarian reform -- spent Saturday evening reviewing possible solutions with representatives of the Salvadoran rebels. A resolution of the issue was reached the next morning in a New York coffee shop, and details of the proposal later faxed to the rebel group from Spence's home in Cambridge. Spence said several of his ideas were incorporated into the final version of the peace treaty that was signed in Mexico City. • Anthropology professor **Michael Gibbons**' expertise in analyzing skeletal remains of humans and animals has made him a valuable resource for both archaeological organizations and law enforcement authorities. He is currently at work on a police investigation, although he will not provide details, citing confidentiality. Gibbons is also

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The Friday Report Cont'd

a member of an international team of scientists that since 1986 has been searching caves in the British Virgin Islands for fossils dating back 5000 years. The fossils are providing information about the ecological history of the region. • The McCormack Institute is making plans for a day-long April 8th conference at the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston to be co-sponsored by the University of Southern Maine's Muskie Institute. The conference will delve into the fiscal crisis in the Northeast, with special attention to the economic, budgetary and political aspects. Leading economists, policy makers and academics from throughout the Northeast are expected to participate. • Biology professor **Garrison Wilkes** will be on sabbatical next fall in Mexico and Guatemala, where he will assist the local governments in their attempts to ensure that corn crops there will remain viable for future generations. Professor Wilkes will help gather corn seeds to be placed in storage facilities that will protect them from insect and fungus attacks. Professor Wilkes also is chairman of a National Academy of Sciences committee that has prepared a 200-page report, to be released in June, citing the genetic vulnerability of certain crops around the world. The report targets Kenya, India and Guatemala as three nations whose crops rely too heavily on a single genetic complex, and thus could potentially experience extensive crop damage from a single rampaging insect or fungus.

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Weld To Speak at Campus -- Governor William Weld will be the chief speaker on March 6th at UMass/Boston's fifth annual seminar on the regional economy and the environment. The day-long seminar will take place from 8:30 to 2:00 p.m. in the University Club. It is being presented by the McCormack Institute, the New England chapter of the American Planning Association and the non-profit 1,000 Friends of Massachusetts. Institute senior fellow **Ian Menzies** will serve as moderator. Several members of Governor Weld's cabinet also are scheduled to speak at the seminar. They include economic affairs secretary **Steven Tocco**, transportation secretary **Richard Taylor**, environmental affairs secretary **Susan Tierney**, and **Mary Padula**, secretary of communities and development. Mayors, councilors, selectmen, community planners and business executives from communities around the state are expected to attend. Admission is \$10.

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Discrimination Is Topic of Pentagon Discussion --

Chancellor **Sherry H. Penney** was among a group of presidents and provosts from seven universities nationwide who met recently with a U.S. Defense Department official to urge a change in the military's policy that bans the recruitment of gays and lesbians for military service. In a one-hour meeting the university officials informed Dr. **Christopher Jehn**, the Defense Department's assistant secretary of force management and personnel, that more campuses are likely to terminate their ROTC partnerships if the military does not alter its policy of discrimination based on sexual orientation. Penney reports that Jehn "listened intensely [and] he seemed to have some sympathy with our position, but also we have a clear indication that change is not imminent." She calls the meeting "productive," adding "we were pleased by the interest of the Defense Department in our concerns and we look forward to continuing contact with them about this very complex issue."