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NEASC Accreditation Commends Teaching, Graduate Development

UMass Boston's accreditation has been continued by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), which commended the campus for creating new graduate programs while maintaining a focus on undergraduate education during a time of financial shortfall.

The December 4 letter of accreditation, signed by Joel C. Martin, Chair of NEASC's Commission on Higher Education, commended the campus for maintaining "a strong culture of support for teaching, investing resources in workshops and lectures which enable faculty to improve their classroom skills," and for giving "visibility and support to student support services and other aspects of the mission of its Office of Student Affairs."

NEASC also commended the campus for excellence and broad participation in its self-study and the planning of its accreditation visit. Nearly 200 faculty, staff, and students participated in the process.

In April of 1995, a ten-person team chaired by James Stukel, President of the University of Illinois system, visited the campus to assess the campus's performance in relation to NEASC's ten major standards. Accreditation was continued, according to Martin, "based upon the Commission's finding that its standards were being substantially met."

"We should feel a tremendous amount of pride in what the evaluators and the Commission had to say about us," commented Graduate Studies Dean Martin Quitt, Chair of the Assessment Steering Committee. "We are a first-rate institution, but sometimes we need to hear it from the outside."

In keeping with Commission policy, the campus has been asked to submit a fifth-year interim report in Spring 2000, on its progress implementing campus-wide general education and assessment mechanisms, and its facilities management plan, especially the construction of the new Campus Center.

"This is a strong vote of confidence," said Chancellor Jean MacCormack. "NEASC recognized that we maintained our focus on undergraduate education while implementing our strategic planning goals for developing graduate programs. Their vote of confidence lets us move on the goals of our strategic plan for the year 2000, the chief of which is to attain a leadership position as an urban university."

Provost Louis Esposito commented, "The ten-year reaccreditation is testifying to the commitment and efforts of faculty and staff, and a recognition of our achievement, the quality of our programs, and our students."

STEP Promotes Commonwealth Envirotech Industry

The global environmental trade market is expected by Environmental Business International, a California market research firm, to increase from $200 billion to $500 billion within five to ten years. According to William Braha, Director of the College of Management's Environmental Business and Technology Center (EBTC), roughly 300 Massachusetts companies compete actively in this market, and thirty more have been newly established.

The Strategic Envirotech Partnership (STEP), a year-old initiative of the University of Massachusetts system that has already involved the City of Boston's Executive Offices of Environmental Affairs and Economic Affairs, offers services to envirotech companies to promote their products and services through EBTC at UMass Boston, and at centers on other UMass campuses. "With STEP's assistance, new environmental and energy technology companies can become recognized world-class companies," stated Braha.

UMass Boston's EBTC assists the Massachusetts environmental industry in environmental business management, including technology development, commercialization, and financing. At UMass Amherst, the National Environmental Technology Institute (NETI), provides research and development for redesigning companies processes to minimize wastes. The Center for Environmentally Appropriate Materials at UMass Lowell has concentrated on research and development of plastic recycling through the establishment of the Chelsea Center for Material Reuse. At UMass Dartmouth, the Center for Marine Science and Technology is developing measures for monitoring fish populations and closed-system agriculture.

One of the envirotech companies being assisted by STEP through the EBTC is Caldwell Environmental Inc., a private corporation established in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1993. The company produces equipment for treatment of waste products with naturally occurring bacteria.

Under the direction of Professor Joseph Cooney and graduate assistant Mark Dooldittle of the Graduate Program in Environmental Sciences, STEP is providing demonstration procedures to validate Caldwell's grease trap services. "There is a critical need for testing, evaluation, and aid-in-development for the support of new technologies and new businesses like Caldwell's," said Professor Cooney.

"The University System is a repository of brain power and resources that can be directed at a particu­ lar situation," said William Braha, Envirotech and Envi­ ronmental technology specialist at EBTC. "STEP works to evaluate and enhance the prospective viability of Massachusetts businesses."
Internet-based, computer-assisted educational programs will be the first products of an expanding partnership between the McCormack Institute’s Center for Democracy and Development and Russia’s Gorbachev Foundation.

The project, to be conducted in partnership with the University of Novgorod, is a result of Professor Edmund Beard’s ten-day trip to the former Soviet Union in October. Beard, a Senior Fellow at the McCormack Institute and Associate Professor of Political Science, chaired the plenary sessions of a Moscow conference on parliamentary television funded by the Eurasia Foundation of Washington, D.C. Professor Beard also lectured on the evolution and direction of the American political party system to fifty researchers and their guests, including former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, at the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow. Beard’s presentations followed a visit from four Gorbachev Foundation officials to UMass Boston in October, hosted by the McCormack Institute.

The Gorbachev Foundation is a public service and research organization founded in 1992 to advance former Soviet President Gorbachev’s efforts to promote a peaceful transition to democratic institutions and a market economy throughout Russia. Internationally funded, it has grown into a public policy “think tank” with a professional staff of over 150.

**Conference Examines Local Minority Business**

Massachusetts Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, keynote speaker at a conference entitled “Economic Development and the Inner Cities: The Role of Minority Business Entrepreneurs,” warned that recent Supreme Court decisions jeopardize programs which set aside shares of public contracts for minority and women-owned businesses.

Attorney General Harshbarger predicted that because of two high-court cases, City of Richmond vs. Croton in 1989 and Adarand Construction vs. Pena this year, cities and towns may have to justify set-aside programs by supplying compelling evidence that discrimination has occurred and that particular set-aside programs will remedy it.

Conference participants discussed other factors affecting minority business entrepreneurs (MBEs), including public perceptions of doing business in the inner city, the availability of well-educated workers, the need for critical information on the markets, and the impact of technology on small businesses.

At two roundtable discussions, panelists and audience members discussed recent progress and strategies for improving conditions for MBEs in the state. Mai Ling Tong, Executive Director of the New England Minority Purchasing Council, pointed out that in a survey of private sector companies, two-thirds favored maintaining and increasing minority purchasing programs, despite the current challenges to affirmative action programs.

Kenneth Guscott, General Partner of Long Bay Management Company, encouraged political action and economic development for minority businesses to obtain a greater share of an estimated $5 billion in business revenues within a five-mile radius of Dorchester's Grove Hall during the next two years.

"Today, there is a tremendous potential for global business," said Gail Snowden, President of First Commercial Bank. "I think that MBEs must look outward, not just at their own communities, in order to thrive." Snowden cautioned that MBEs must not be left out of the technological changes affecting the business world.

"The focus must be on producing jobs," said James Jennings, Director of the Trotter Institute. "I hope this conference elevates the public discourse about the future of the economy and the state, and can convince city and state leaders that a vibrant MBE sector will help create a healthy city."