When I arrived at UMass, I saw that it had a problem. Too many students didn’t engage with their campus community. Too many students didn’t get involved in a club or other non-academic pursuit. So I decided that I was going to jump in. But even with the activities fairs, flyers, and New Students Orientation, I thought that meant working with the Student Government Association (SGA) and running for office (a story I will tell in my next post).
Boy was I wrong. From the Student Permaculture Garden and CHC Student Advisory Board, to Undergraduate Economics Club, Outing Club, and Skydiving Club, there are so many ways to get involved and grow at UMass. Coming in as a political science major, I was biased towards the public sphere, like the SGA, but what I didn’t know is that “campus politics” isn’t confined to student government.
When you think of “politics,” you probably think of Republicans and Democrats arguing about nothing in Washington D.C. Well politics is more than that. Politics is the decision-making process of our leaders, both students and administrators. Politics is the process that decides guest policies, diversity plans, and how much money the Outing Club will get for tents. Politics includes media coverage from WMUA Radio, UVC-TV, and the Daily Collegian too. Student-run campaigns are part of politics too: “What the FACT?” is a group that draws attention to dilapidated facilities for dance and performance majors.
Campus politics and involvement have been at the core of my UMass experience. Part of that clearly comes from my political science and economics majors (I've been tempted to use buzzwords like ‘public good’ and ‘institutions’ throughout this post). But more than that, being involved in campus politics means having your voice heard. Your voice could be a simple budget request for a new RSO, or it could be a news story that changes a University-wide policy. Either way, you have to get involved to be heard.

(Photos courtesy of Katelyn Dube/Daily Collegian, Christina Yacono/Daily Collegian, and Commonwealth Honors College)

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