Welcome!
It is with great anticipation that I welcome our new and returning students to the 2017–2018 academic year.

We are pleased that your academic journey has brought you to the Honors College, where your intellectual curiosity
will be piqued as you delve deeper into research, collaborate with faculty and fellow students from multiple disciplines, and access tools designed to advance your ingenuity. Remember that your advisors are here to help you navigate the numerous academic resources available and to help you identify the focus of your final thesis project. I encourage you to engage in the many events and activities we have planned throughout the year, including Pizza and Prof, guest lectures, and the honors thesis seminars. I especially look forward to the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with many first-year students when I deliver this fall’s 201H “Ideas that Change the World” lecture.

You will have the opportunity to meet, live with, and learn from students and faculty from many backgrounds. You’ve journeyed from over 380 cities across Massachusetts, 38 states and more than 20 countries. These impressive numbers do not represent the breadth and depth of experiences you bring that will affect each of our lives. From being the first in your family to attend college, to continuing a long legacy of scholarship; or if English is not your native language—all these experiences, and more, will broaden your academic exploration, challenge your conclusions, and enrich your journey here at the honors college.

It is in appreciation of the richness of our community that I want to join Chancellor Subbaswamy in reaffirming UMass Amherst’s commitment to ensuring a safe and welcoming living-learning environment for every member of our campus community. In addition, I echo his call for every member of our community to reject hatred in all its forms and to stand united in defense of tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. You will bring to all discussions the skills of evidence, critical thinking. In doing so, we remove barriers to knowledge sharing, innovation, and solutions.

Regardless of where you are from, one of our most cherished rituals is the “breaking of bread” together. It’s a ritual that has bridged divides, built nations, and changed lives and it is in this spirit that I will be hosting several Dean’s Table throughout the year. A cross-section of Honors College students will be randomly selected to attend a small catered dinner, where we will engage in discussion aimed at enhancing the CHC experience. I encourage you to find your own ways of engaging with your fellow Honors College scholars from different walks of life.

I look forward to seeing how your voice; your contribution; our collaboration will strengthen us, grow our community, and change our world.

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, PhD
Dean, Commonwealth Honors College

View Dean Gerzina's bio

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