SPECIALIZED STUDENT PROGRAMS

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Through international studies coursework and development of cultural awareness and appreciation, the program supported 11 students living and learning in other countries, prepared 15 additional students for upcoming study abroad experiences, and provided a cross-cultural reentry seminar for nine students returning from overseas.

RESIDENTIAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (RAPs)
Over half of all first-year honors students participated in 11 honors residential learning communities covering a range of themes, including engineering, creativity, and community service. Seventy-eight percent reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their honors living/learning experience.

CITIZEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Thirty-five students participated in this leadership development program and engaged in meaningful service with 17 local community organizations. They integrated theory with practice, using their service experiences to identify, research, and advocate for changes in public policy.

Citizen Scholars Organize for Education
Citizen Scholars Emily Bloch ’11 and Melissa Urban ’11 worked together to increase access to affordable, quality public education in Massachusetts; they organized a statewide effort during which students and supporters from UMass Amherst and other schools converged at the State House in Boston to meet with their elected officials and urge them to support funding for public higher education. “Lobby Day was a good opportunity to increase student power by getting students to advocate on their own behalf,” noted Bloch.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS LEADS TO FELLOWSHIP
“There’s a huge disconnect between what you want and how the world really works. UMass helped me appreciate how large that gap is; it also helped me find ways to bridge it,” said Melanie Mukey ’12, who was selected for the Institute for International Public Policy Fellowship Program, one of the nation’s premier fellowships in global affairs. As an International Scholar with a self-designed major in global relations and advocacy, she is well-prepared for the fellowship’s six-year sequence of summer institutes, language training, study abroad, internships, and graduate study designed to aid outstanding minority students in gaining practical skills necessary for successful careers in international and government service.

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First-Year Living Helps Future Learning
“The Residential Academic Program experience helped me to perform at a high level on my graduate school projects. Through the RAP classes at Commonwealth Honors College, I was well prepared to lead classmates in groups during graduate school. It also helped me to work effectively with clients and coworkers during my graduate school internships.” Maria (Franco) Alden ’06, MSW (Boston University) photographed with Michael Alden ’04, MS (University of Virginia), MBA (University of North Carolina)

BACHELOR’S DEGREE WITH INDIVIDUAL CONCENTRATION (BDIC)
BDIC celebrated 40 years of aiding students in developing unique interdisciplinary concentrations that have launched many into notable and innovative careers. With self-designed majors such as “Law and Management in the Entertainment Industry” and “Sustainable Structures in Community Development,” BDIC students totaled 225.

Ideas for New Growth Take Root
“If you graduate from college not understanding how interconnected the world is, you might be at a disadvantage,” advises Peter Merzbacher ’11. With a self-designed major in globalization studies, he positioned a local urban community to take advantage of its assets, spearheading efforts to convert unused lots not only into community gardens, but communal spaces. Merzbacher’s proposal for New Growth, an initiative that combines community development and urban sustainability with urban farming and early childhood education, won the National Collegiate Honors Council’s first-ever Portz Interdisciplinary Research Fellowship. Now his ideas are literally taking root as a small business based in Springfield, Mass.
Students entering in Fall 2009

- Number: 478
- Average high school GPA: 4.16
- Average high school rank: Top 4.5%
- Average combined SAT critical reading and math scores: 1345
- Self-identified as ALANA*: 16.8%
- From out of state: 15%
- Honors students in UMass Amherst’s entering class: 11.6%
- Admitted to the Honors College after fall 2009: 168

* African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander & Native American

Commonwealth Honors College enriched the academic experience on campus, providing:

- 51 enriched HONORS courses for 759 enrollments
- 95 HONORS Seminar Series courses for 1,386 enrollments
- 10 HONORS capstone courses for 158 enrollments
- 33 independent academic opportunities (colloquia and independent studies) for 44 enrollments

The College collaborated with other departments to offer:

- 92 honors-level courses for 2,110 enrollments
- 434 independent academic opportunities (honors colloquia and independent studies) for 764 enrollments
- 17 honors-level capstone courses for 177 enrollments
- 371 independent honors-level capstone projects and theses
- 27 Commonwealth Honors College faculty taught interdisciplinary HONORS courses
- 169 university faculty taught honors-level courses in other departments

Honors Seminar Series Redesigned

The College redesigned its signature HONORS Seminar Series into two components. In Part I: "Ideas That Changed the World" students examine books and other works that have profoundly shaped our world, while faculty members combine their personal interests and cutting-edge research in Part II to do what journalists do best—to critically inquire into other disciplines, and to do so in concert with some of our highest achieving students.

Nick McBride, professor of journalism, offered the Special Topics seminar Teaching the Gospel.

"Why daffodils? They are perennials; they bloom every year and multiply their beauty. They symbolize strength, resilience, and endurance—all characteristics of the College’s growth and development." ~ Dean Priscilla Clarkson

INSTRUCTION

DEGREES AWARDED

Of the 4,852 degrees awarded to UMass Amherst’s 2009-2010 graduating class, 13.7% were presented to members of Commonwealth Honors College.

Commonwealth Honors College celebrated its 10th anniversary with several events throughout the year, including an all-honors reunion that brought hundreds to campus to reconnect, explore the campus’s new facilities, and attend the inaugural Daffodil Lectures on Sustainability and the Environment. The reunion dinner unveiled a retrospective video and featured academic deans and the chancellor as “celebrity servers” who offered guests a range of delectable appetizers prepared by nationally-recognized UMass Amherst chefs.

STUDENTS

10th ANNIVERSARY

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Expended $18,492 to organize the 16th annual Massachusetts Statewide Conference on Undergraduate Research at which 670 students from 20 public higher education campuses in Massachusetts presented their research through oral and poster presentations.

Awarded 118 students $91,480 in research support, helping them gain experience in their academic fields and covering the cost of materials and activities related to Capstone Experience research projects.

Archived 675 honors manuscripts.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Of the Twelve 21st Century Leaders Awards presented at undergraduate commencement, eleven were awarded to Commonwealth Honors College students, recognizing them for demonstrating exemplary standards of achievement, initiative, and social awareness.

49.5% of honors students were awarded financial aid.

74 students were awarded $188,500 in scholarships and awards from the endowment and other sources.

Images below: From left to right: Daffodil Lecturers Andrew Revkin, Senior Fellow for Environmental Understanding, Pace University; Bron Taylor, Professor of Religion and Nature, University of Rhode Island; Raymond Bradley, Distinguished Professor, UMass Amherst; course Moderator Julie Brigham-Grette, Professor of Geosciences, UMass Amherst

ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD

Dean Priscilla Clarkson with Sumner Kaplan and Saul Klamann at the Scholarship Awards Reception.

* Desiata: Commonwealth Honors College regrets the loss of close friends, classmates, and long-time supporter Bron Taylor. Sumner Z. Kaplan ’41 and Dr. Saul B. Klamann ’41.

“Celebrity servers” at the Honors Reunion Dinner