

## Loyal Annual Gifts Support Excellence



Growing up in a blue-collar neighborhood of Gardner, MA, Mark Deveau '81 listened when his mother would say, "college is for rich people." In his world, adults designed their careers by looking at the newspaper want-ads to see which factories were hiring. One day his physician neighbor told him that if she had it to do all over again, she would be a veterinarian. This comment planted a seed in the bright young boy's mind.

As a student at Gardner High School, Deveau did well academically and was friends with several classmates who were college-bound. One day, they asked him to accompany them to the library so they could apply to college. Remembering the words of his neighbor, Deveau found that UMass Amherst had a veterinary and animal science program and applied. It was the only college application he submitted. "It didn't even occur to me that I would apply to more

than one place," he says with a laugh. Once accepted, he was able to enroll with the aid of a federal Pell Grant. That aid, along with the support of faculty and administrators on campus, has inspired his loyal annual fund support for 25 years.

Deveau found a supportive community in several areas at UMass Amherst, particularly in his major and in the honors program. "The honors colloquia and honors research papers I wrote were some of the high points of my academic experience at UMass Amherst. They added an independent and in-depth aspect to learning," recalls Deveau. Faculty members in veterinary and animal science, especially Professor Martin Sevoian recognized his ability and encouraged him to push himself academically. Sevoian, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, encouraged Deveau to apply to the school of veterinary medicine there and Deveau earned a V.M.D. in 1986.

When asked what the impact that his education at UMass Amherst has had on his life, Deveau credits the intellectual world of UMass Amherst and the Amherst area with introducing him to a community of ideas and intellect. Though his hometown was only a 45-minute drive from the campus, "it was an entirely different world from Amherst." He also points to the faculty who were deeply committed to education for all. "My professors were excellent, and could have taught at the most elite institutions in the country. They chose to share their stardom with us at a public university." Deveau believes that the growth of the university's honors program into Commonwealth Honors College brings distinction to the entire university and emphasizes the importance of learning and academic achievement.

Deveau is deeply grateful for the support and nurturing he received as a student, and wants his gifts to help continue that great tradition. Lately, he sees the economic dynamics of higher education changing, and is growing increasingly concerned that for students from working-class backgrounds, the path he followed is less likely today. Through his annual gifts to Commonwealth Honors College, Deveau chooses to support "students with ability and interest in academic excellence. There needs to be a place for them to feel welcomed," he asserts. "By paying it forward in this way, I can give someone like me a hand up."