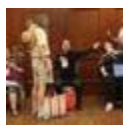
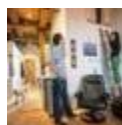


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# UMass Boston marks 50th birthday

## After rocky start, campus is thriving

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JUNE 17, 2014



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AP PHOTO

**This University of Massachusetts Boston campus.**

The University of Massachusetts Boston has faced numerous hurdles in its relatively brief history: launching in a temporary downtown home; relocating to the site of a cow pasture turned garbage dump; and merging with the now-closed Boston State College.

But perhaps the school's greatest challenge came 50 years ago this week, when some legislators and leaders of rival private colleges tried to stop the urban public university from being established.

On Monday, legislators, campus administrators, alumni, students, and others gathered at the State House to celebrate the semicentennial of UMass Boston's birth, to remember how it almost did not happen, and to point the way toward the future. The gathering kicked off a series of 50th anniversary events over the next 15 months.

The Dorchester university received a shoutout before Monday night's Red Sox game at Fenway Park, which the school billed as UMass Boston and Boston State College "alumni night." The university will host a birthday block party at its campus Wednesday, and the Zakim Bridge will be lighted in blue to honor the anniversary.

"From the only choice for some, we have become the first choice for generations of students in Boston and far beyond," Chancellor J. Keith Motley said in the House chamber. "No matter how large we grow, no matter how many research dollars we attract, no matter how many new buildings pop up on our campus, our mission today is exactly the same as it was 50 years ago: access, excellence, opportunity."

In 1964, public higher education supporters were alarmed to learn that the flagship campus in Amherst, the only location in the university system at the time, had turned away some 8,000 applicants, 2,000 of whom came from Greater Boston, due to a lack of space.

"Something must be done now to give aid to the thousands of youngsters who can't afford tuitions in the state's private institutions and for that reason are being denied education," House majority whip Robert Quinn told colleagues on the night of June 15, 1964, according to news coverage, as they debated the bill he cosponsored to create a UMass campus in Boston.

Boston University and Northeastern University worried the school could cut into their enrollment; the bill was opposed by the House Ways and Means Committee, including some members who felt lawmakers should wait for a statewide education report, due at year's end, before considering the idea; other legislators wanted a new public campus to be run by Boston State instead of UMass.

The bill passed just before midnight and was signed less than 72 hours later by Governor Endicott Peabody.

At Monday's ceremony, Elaina M. Quinn, the daughter of Robert Quinn, who died in January, said he and two other late legislators who pushed for the UMass Boston measure, Maurice A. Donahue and George V. Kenneally Jr., would have been proud.

"My father's goal, in his own words, was to ensure that Boston's youth would 'trip over opportunities' to get a great education," she said. "Fifty years after its founding, the University of Massachusetts Boston has successfully made history and that of countless others come true."

Attorney and former state legislator James Smith, a member of UMass Boston's first class, highlighted the constant changes he and his classmates witnessed.

"Through it all, the university survived and developed a unique character," he said. "The football teams were missing, as were the grass quadrangle and the fraternity houses. Our school spirit was more serious. We were creatures of our environment, and our environment was Boston."

The school has grown dramatically and now has more than 16,000 students, the third-highest enrollment in the five-campus UMass system, just slightly behind Lowell.

The university plans to open a science complex — the first new academic building on the waterfront campus on Columbia Point in nearly 40 years — in the fall, followed by a new general academic building next year. Other construction projects in the 10-year pipeline include an additional academic building and the first dormitories on campus.

At the morning ceremony, university president Robert Caret temporarily declared UMass Boston his favorite in the system. "I don't like to play favorites among my five campuses, but today, given the occasion . . . this is my favorite campus," he joked.

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