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Enrollment at UMass system surges 30 percent over past decade

By **Matt Rocheleau**

| GLOBE CORRESPONDENT | SEPTEMBER 03, 2014



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JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

UMass system president Robert L. Caret appeared at his 2011 inauguration.

Enrollment at the University of Massachusetts system has surged 30 percent since 2004 to a record 73,614 students, according to projections announced by university leaders Wednesday.

President Robert L. Caret attributed the growth to the affordability of UMass compared with other colleges, and improvements in the system's quality.

"Part of it is the return on investment and the fiscal realities of today," Caret said by phone. "How much do you spend and how much do you get back on what you spend. UMass is a heck of a buy.

"And it's the understanding that we are high quality; we're not

just affordable,” he added.

The UMass Lowell campus has seen the largest proportional growth in enrollment since 2004, rising by about 60 percent, to 17,664 students. UMass Boston grew by about 44 percent over that span, to 16,816 students; UMass Worcester expanded by 33 percent, to 1,161 students; UMass Amherst’s enrollment rose 17 percent, to 28,885 students; and UMass Dartmouth increased its student population to 9,088, a 9.5 percent jump.

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Caret said the higher enrollment reflected the system’s priorities.

“Our goal is to provide high-quality, affordable access to the residents of Massachusetts,” he said. “Our growth is evidence of the demand and our ability to respond to that demand.”

He said the system has spent roughly \$3 billion over the past decade on construction.

“We’ve had to respond by building new academic facilities, new residence halls, and other facilities to serve students,” he said. “And, we’ve done a pretty good job keeping pace.”

About 1 in 7 public high school graduates in the state enrolls at UMass, according to state education data.

Fall enrollment in the five-campus system is projected to be up by 2.3 percent compared with a year ago, officials said.

Officials said the number of applications, SAT scores, and grade point averages have also risen at each of the campuses over the past year.

For example, at UMass Amherst applications increased 3 percent to 37,200, average SAT scores of incoming freshmen rose 10 points to 1218, and their average high school GPA rose from 3.73 to 3.78. Incoming students on average ranked in the top fifth of their high school class. The flagship campus said the group is its most academically accomplished first-year class ever.

SAT scores and GPAs of incoming students at the other four campuses have not been finalized, officials said.

Reach Matt Rocheleau at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com.



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