

De-Mystifying the Financial Aid Process

By Kathleen Teehan, associate chancellor for Enrollment Services

To help members of the UMass Boston community improve their understanding of financial aid and offer support to students during the application process, the Enrollment Services Division provides the following information:

The financial aid application cycle is already underway for academic year 2000-1. Prospective and continuing UMass Boston students are invited to apply in February to determine their eligibility for funding for next academic year. To be considered for the first round of awards, students must apply by March 1. Students who apply after that date may be eligible for some federal and state funds, but their eligibility for campus-based funds will be limited, as these are exhausted early.

To apply, students must first complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is available on paper at the Office of Financial Aid Services and on the web at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Some students who have previously received aid will be sent a renewal FAFSA that will just need updating. Others who have previously filed on line will receive a PIN from the Department of Education to access the renewal form on the web and update their information electronically.

Eligibility for aid for 2000-1 is based on 1999 federal income tax information. Applicants who have not completed federal tax returns should still apply on time, using income and tax estimates. One important new question on the FAFSA relates to convictions for drug offenses. Applicants must complete this item; if it is left blank, the FAFSA will be rejected.

About three weeks after filing, applicants will receive a pink Student Aid Report (SAR) in the mail, and UMass Boston will receive the same information electronically. Applicants should check to be certain that the information on the SAR is correct, paying particular attention to any comments in Part I. If referred to Financial Aid Services, they should follow up immediately.

Some applicants are chosen for verification, which means that they must verify or submit further information about their application and status. Verification can be trig-

gered randomly, by questions left blank on the form, or by inconsistencies in information provided. Applicants who are flagged for verification cannot receive aid until they complete the verification process. Generally this requires submission of all applicable tax forms, W-2 forms, bank statements, and other investment records, as well as documentation of some non-taxable income. Financial Aid Services must verify any flagged applications and any in which the staff notes inconsistencies.

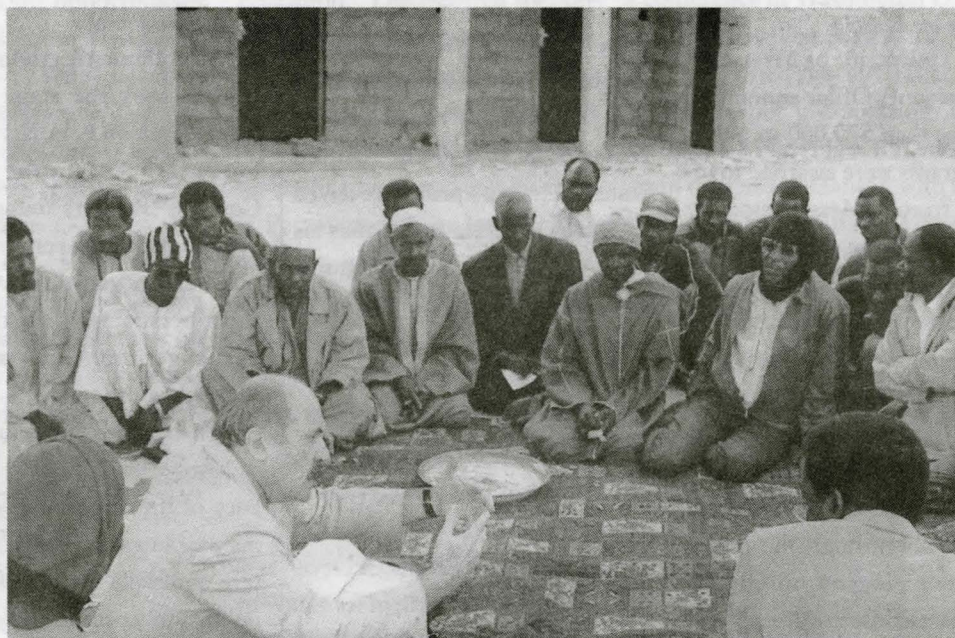
During the first week in April, Financial Aid Services will begin issuing award letters to applicants whose files are complete, including any verification documentation requested. Undergraduate awards are based on the assumption of full-time enrollment and are adjusted according to actual enrollment after the add/drop period. It is necessary to assume full-time enrollment since registrations occur later in the cycle.

To complete the awarding process and avoid delays, students must follow all instructions in the award letter. If an applicant is awarded a Stafford loan, Financial Aid Services will submit a loan request to the Guarantor for processing. The Guarantor will send a promissory note to the student to be completed and returned. When the promissory note is complete and the loan approved, the Guarantor sends certification to UMass Boston, and funds to be credited to the student's account.

Students who have received an award letter will have their aid posted to their account in the Bursar's office. Stafford loans are not posted until the Guarantor's certification is on file. Students should complete any loan processes at least eight weeks before the semester begins to be certain that funds will be available before school starts. Remember that after add/drop the aid can be adjusted downward if a student enrolls part-time.

Financial aid can sometimes seem to be a very complex and challenging process. But in most cases, if applicants complete forms fully, provide accurate information, and read and follow instructions carefully, all goes smoothly. Financial Aid Services encourages students to contact them directly for advice or guidance.

McCormack Institute Forms New Partnership in Senegal



McCormack Institute Director Ed Beard speaking with a group of Senegalese citizens during the trip to the city of St Louis in Senegal, West Africa. (Photo by Margery O'Donnell)

By Kim Burke

The McCormack Institute has launched a partnership with the Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis in Senegal thanks to a two-year, \$100,000 grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This marks the first time USAID has awarded a grant to UMass Boston. This highly competitive grant will allow the University to strengthen Gaston Berger's capacity to offer instruction and conduct research in political science, the needs of local government, and business law, as well as promote economic development in the surrounding communities.

Three representatives of UMass Boston recently went on a ten-day assessment trip to Gaston Berger. They were Professor Edmund Beard, director of the McCormack Institute and the principal investigator for the

project; Professor Jemadari Kamara, chair of the Africana Studies Department; and Margery O'Donnell, administrator for the Center for Democracy and Development of the McCormack Institute. While there they met with Babacar Kante, director of the Unité de Formation et de Recherche de Sciences Juridiques et Politiques, who is Beard's counterpart at Gaston Berger.

This partnership will present Gaston Berger with an American educational model to compare with the French model that they are presently using. To accomplish the goals of the grant, there will be faculty exchanges, workshops and site visits, networking and outreach programs, and fund-raising with the goal of eventually creating an African-based public policy research center. Though the project was proposed by the McCormack Institute,

it does not exclude participation by the rest of the University.

That was made quite clear during the assessment trip by the video conferencing technology that was transmitted from UMass Boston by John Jessoe of the Distance Learning Center. The technology will soon link UMass Boston with Gaston Berger. This new capability will allow students and faculty to interact with counterparts in Africa as never before.

O'Donnell acknowledges that the McCormack Institute has a "deep commitment to Africa" and has other initiatives in Mali and Cameroon. These other connections in Africa bring their own reward. O'Donnell asserts that "each time we set foot in Africa we generate and develop new initiatives that are subsequently funded by outside agencies."

Two New Computer Labs in McCormack Hall: Students Networked for Success

By Anne-Marie Kent

Serving students in distinct categories—those enhancing information technology career skills and those beginning undergraduate careers—two new computer labs have been created on the third floor of McCormack Hall.

Boasting seventeen Pentium III Dell 9.6-gigabyte PCs, each running Windows NT 4 Servicepack 4, with a Dell PowerEdge 2300 server, the Division of Continuing Education's new lab (M-3-129) supports classes including "Network Essentials," "Creating Webpages with Macromedia Dreamweaver," "Developing Web Pages with Frontpage 2000," and "Webpage Design." The workstations are all connected to the World Wide Web and the UMass Boston network.

"Our objective was to quickly bring to the public a list of training topics responsive to current workplace needs," says Continuing Education's director of professional training programs, Jack Hughes. He adds, "By seeking the advice of faculty such as Oscar Gutierrez and practitioners such as Kristen Sutton from Polaroid, we have been able to determine the cutting edge."

Down the hallway, another lab is slated to open in June. This "smart classroom" (M-3-617) is the result of smart thinking by Vice Provost Patricia Davidson, who realized that facilities made possible by a Board of Higher Education grant for board-mandated entry testing could also serve twenty sections of UMass Boston's new quantitative reasoning

general education course each year.

Professor Mark Pawlak, who teaches a pilot quantitative reasoning course (INTR-D 114), explains that computers enable students to visualize and manipulate complex data in ways that are impossible with simple chalkboard teaching.

Vice Provost Davidson credits a long list of individuals for their assistance, including Lee Nason, James Morrison, Charlie Boland, Joan Becker, Mark Pawlak, Linda Kime, Cynthia Jahn, Estelle Disch, Joey Horsley, John Applebee, Julie McCusker Sanabri, Steve Kiser, and Ray Melcher. "There are still many steps to be taken before the classroom becomes a reality," Davidson says. "The efforts of everyone involved are greatly appreciated."