

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**Report**

**of the**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
POST AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT**

**entitled**

**Findings and Recommendations in Response to the Acquisition of  
Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts Amherst**

(under the provisions of Section 63 of Chapter 3  
of the General Laws, as most recently amended by  
Chapter 557 of the Acts of 1986)

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June 28, 2018

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

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REVENUE  
ELECTION LAWS  
OPIOID ADDICTION, PREVENTION, TREATMENT  
AND RECOVERY OPTIONS

June 26, 2018

Mr. William F. Welch, Clerk of the Senate  
State House, Room 335  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Clerk Welch,

Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 3, Section 63, as amended by Chapter 557 of the Acts of 1986, the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight files with the Massachusetts Senate the enclosed report: *Findings and Recommendations in Response to the Acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts Amherst*.

This report issues the Committee's recommendations, based on related findings, with the following goals:

1. Notifying stakeholders, namely the Mount Ida College Administration and Board of Trustees, the University of Massachusetts Administration and Board of Trustees, and all institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, of the position of the Committee after the conclusion of an approximately six-hour public hearing and supplemental information gathering.
2. Informing the public at-large on these findings and recommendations.
3. Communicating recommendations on immediate-term actions on the part of the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Mount Ida College so those recommendations may be implemented.
4. Encouraging long-term action in the next Legislative Session, regarding legislation-specific recommendations.

If the recommendations presented in the report are adopted, the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight finds that negative impacts on affected students, parents and faculty may be mitigated and future negative impacts related to prospective higher education institution mergers and acquisitions may be avoided.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives, Chair

Senator James Welch, Vice-Chair

Senator Nick Collins

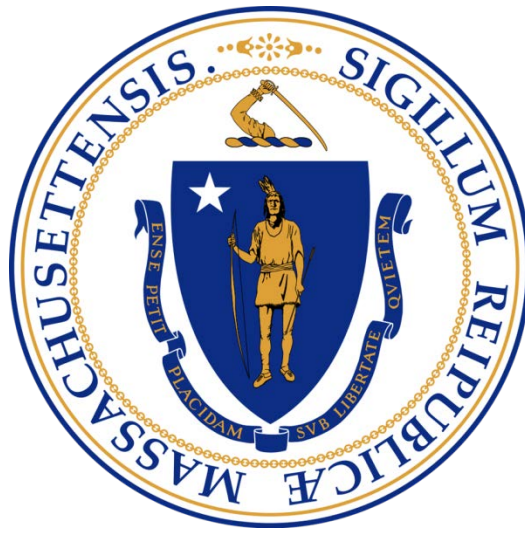
Senator Ryan Fattman

Senator Anne Gobi

Senator Michael Moore

Senator Dean Tran

**Report of the Massachusetts Senate**  
**Committee on Post Audit and Oversight**



Findings and Recommendations in Response to the  
Acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of  
Massachusetts Amherst

*June 26, 2018*

## **Members of the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight**

Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives, Chair

Senator James Welch, Vice-Chair

Senator Nick Collins

Senator Ryan Fattman

Senator Anne Gobi

Senator Michael Moore

Senator Dean Tran

### **Staff to the Committee**

Emily Lazzaro, Committee Coordinator

## Introduction

On April 11, 2018 the Massachusetts State Senate voted unanimously in support of an order filed by Senator Michael Rodrigues with the following language:

*Ordered, That, the planned closure of Mount Ida College in Newton and the question of the pending acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts be referred to the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight. The Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight is hereby authorized and requested to hold a public oversight hearing on the merits of the pending acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts as it relates to the fiscal impact of assuming debt and related impacts on the well-being of students, access to and quality of public higher education opportunities, existing student loans and scholarships, and impacts on other public institutions of higher education.*

The hearing took place on May 16, 2018 in Gardner Auditorium at the State House. It began at 12:15 p.m. and concluded at approximately 6:30 p.m. The hearing can be viewed on the Massachusetts Legislature's website at: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/2967>

The following individuals and groups testified at the hearing: Mount Ida students, Mount Ida faculty member Michele Cunneen, Mount Ida Board of Trustees Chair Carmin Reiss, UMass system President Marty Meehan, UMass Amherst Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy, Lasell College President Michael Alexander, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Commissioner Carlos Santiago, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success Patricia Marshall, Former Department of Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland, Newton-Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce President Greg Reibman, UMass Boston Honors College Dean Rajini Srikanth and

UMass Boston College of Liberal Arts Dean David Terkla, as well as UMass Boston Alumnus Arthur Mabbett.

**Findings (1):**

Where the Senate order requested that the Committee explore the merits of the acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts as it relates to the fiscal impact of assuming debt, testimony presented confirmed there are gaps in oversight in the areas of 1) mergers and acquisitions for institutions of higher education and 2) notification to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education by institutions of higher education when they are in financial peril.

The May 16 Senate Post Audit and Oversight hearing confirmed that when the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees met on April 6, 2018 and voted to approve a UMass Amherst acquisition of Mount Ida College, board members were not certain of the specific amount of debt the UMass system would assume and then assign to UMass Amherst for repayment. Meeting minutes for this agenda item are unavailable because this agenda item was placed under the executive session of the meeting. However, President Meehan testified at the hearing that the Board met in executive session to vote to approve a deal to purchase Mount Ida College. The Board of Trustees meeting agenda states that this issue was taken up in executive session, “since an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of a public body, as permitted by General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21(6).” This vote was taken on the same day that students and faculty learned that Mount Ida College would close.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has oversight over Massachusetts state and community colleges under M.G.L. Chapter 15A. The UMass system is governed under M.G.L. Chapter 75 and as such, the UMass Board of Trustees has complete and autonomous

authority over all operations and finances of UMass. As such, there is currently no notification process for UMass to inform the Board of Higher Education when such transactions are pending. Moreover, there is currently no role for the Department of Higher Education to be involved in an anticipated merger or acquisition by UMass and this lack of coordination proved harmful to the Mount Ida students, parents and faculty. The acquisition also has impacts on the entire UMass system which are yet to be determined, and as such, merited coordination with the Department of Higher Education prior to the vote of the UMass Board of Trustees.

Further, notification to the Department of Higher Education is critical when public and private educational institutions know they are in financial peril. Mount Ida knew it was in financial distress in 2014, and intentionally chose not to disclose that information to students and faculty until April 6, 2018. Mount Ida Board of Trustees Chair Carmin Reiss confirmed in testimony, “Joining the Board in 2014, I came to understand quickly that the College was facing significant academic, organizational, financial and physical resource challenges...The financial situation was tenuous enough that at Board meetings, the Strategic Plan was often discussed as the school’s ‘turnaround plan’.”

**Recommendation (1):**

The Department of Higher Education should have equivalent oversight over all public and private institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth when such institutions intend to enter into mergers or acquisitions. This is the only way closure plans can be developed and implemented in a responsible manner which is fair to students. And, institutions should affirmatively notify the Board of Higher Education when they are in financial peril that jeopardizes their ability to fulfill their obligations to current and prospective students. Chair Reiss stated that through a non-disclosure agreement, “On March 23, 2018, following collapse of

the merger negotiations with Lasell, Mount Ida began negotiations in earnest with UMass Amherst under an obligation of confidentiality (including any communication to the Board of Higher Education or the Attorney General).” She also asserted in her testimony, “[T]he public disclosure by a college that it is facing financial difficulties is a self-fulfilling prophecy of its demise....The College saw no reason to push itself toward demise through more pointed public discussion of the financial difficulties it had a plan to resolve.”

The Committee finds that non-disclosure to the Department of Higher Education regarding a school’s dire financial circumstances and pending acquisition is highly problematic. As such, Senator Nick Collins’ Amendment 323 to the Senate FY 2019 Budget, which passed unanimously, should be maintained in the Legislature’s budget conference committee and included in the final version of the FY 2019 Budget. This amendment requires that institutions of higher education report to the Department of Higher Education upon learning they may need to close or merge with another institution.

The amendment states,

*“SECTION 5A. Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 31 the following section:-*

*Section 31A. (a) An institution of higher education with the power to grant degrees and located in the commonwealth that begins discussions or deliberations, or enters into a written agreement to: (i) close; (ii) merge with another institution of higher education; (iii) acquire the facilities or land of another institution of higher education; or (iv) to open a branch campus shall provide the board of higher education with reasonable notice not less than 120 days before the intended closure, merger, acquisition or opening.*

*An institution of higher education with the power to grant degrees and located in the commonwealth shall, upon learning that it may not have the financial resources to sustain the quality of its education programs, support institutional improvements, or graduate its entering class, notify the board of higher education not less than 14 days after the institution becomes aware of those circumstances.*

*The board of higher education shall establish standards and guidelines on notice required under this subsection which shall include, but shall not be limited to, requirements on notice to current students, employees and applicants of the institution of higher education. The board may*



*establish sanctions or fines, not to exceed \$1,000 per day, for institutions that fail to comply with the board's notification requirements.*

*(b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, a proposal by a public institution of higher education to: (i) merge with another institution of higher education; (ii) acquire the facilities or land of an institution of higher education; or (iii) open a branch campus shall be subject to the notice requirements under subsection (a) and be reviewed by the board of higher education. During its review of the merger, acquisition or opening, the board may request additional information from the public institution of higher education.*

*The board's review of such proposal shall include a determination as to whether the proposal is consistent with the institution of higher education's 5 year master plan, as required by subsection (l) of section 22 and subsection (l) of section 1A of chapter 75.*

*(c) Notice under this section shall not be a public record and shall be exempt from disclosure under clause Twenty sixth of section 7 of chapter 4 and section 10 of chapter 66."*

## **Findings (2):**

The Senate order also requested the Committee conduct oversight on the impacts of this transaction on the well-being of students, access to and quality of public higher education opportunities, existing student loans and scholarships, and impacts on other public institutions of higher education.

UMass President Marty Meehan stated during the hearing that the newly acquired Mount Ida campus will be available to all campuses in the UMass system. President Meehan stated, "Not only that this acquisition will not interfere with UMass Boston's progress, or opportunities for students, but it will enhance both. I look forward to significant collaboration between our campuses in Newton and the other campuses. I believe the activity of Chancellor Subbaswamy and his team have planned will benefit the entire system and all UMass students at all of our campuses." However, the current organization of the UMass system fosters a culture a competition, versus collaboration. This transaction highlighted how the UMass system does not currently operate as a system.

**Recommendation (2):**

Moving forward, the future utilization and governance of the Mount Ida property and assets is an important opportunity for UMass to demonstrate that the UMass system can operate as a system. The Mount Ida campus acquisition should be available and governed as a UMass system-wide asset, with equal access to students, faculty, researchers, and staff from all UMass campuses. The UMass President's Office should operate the acquisition, not UMass Amherst. President Meehan has communicated that all campuses are welcome to use the facility, and that all activities on the Mount Ida campus will be determined by consensus through the UMass Council, comprised of the UMass chancellors. However, under the current financing structure, whereby, UMass Amherst students will be charged for this acquisition through their student fees, the notion of bonafide, system-wide utilization seems uncertain. UMass Amherst needs to formally state the details of its intent in writing for UMass system-wide usage and access of the Mount Ida campus, despite UMass Amherst having paid for the acquisition. Will there be usage fees or supplemental tuition fees for students outside of UMass Amherst? President Meehan testified, "All the campuses have an opportunity to either put money up if they wanted to or to participate in some way. Most of the campuses, they don't want to put money up for it ... When the Board of Trustees voted for this they said they wanted it to benefit every single campus. It's going to benefit every single campus. The Board of Trustees mandated it, to the extent that any of the campuses have ideas, and some of them are thinking of ideas ..." Shared governance of this asset by all UMass campuses, and UMass President's Office-based operations of the Mount Ida campus versus UMass Amherst-based operation of the campus is recommended to insure this acquisition achieves this UMass Board of Trustees mandate.

**Findings (3):**

The Mount Ida Veterinary Technology program is currently slated to be taught-out only. UMass Amherst has communicated to the Committee that they are conducting a business analysis to determine whether it makes financial sense to continue the program outright. With a teach-out, UMass is not providing options for the 100 accepted incoming freshman. And, if the program ends within approximately two years, according to testimony presented, the number of graduating vet techs will be cut in half and absent from the workforce, with no replacement plans.

**Recommendation (3):**

Mount Ida's Veterinary Technician program should not only be taught-out, but maintained permanently. If UMass arrives at this decision quickly, they can provide a path forward to those newly admitted Vet Tech students.

The Mount Ida Veterinary Technology program is a leader in the nation and stands as an asset to the Commonwealth's educational offerings and economy, with state-of-the-art facilities and high-quality faculty. According to testimony delivered by Mount Ida Veterinary Technology faculty member Michele Cunneen, the Mount Ida program is unique because, "Mount Ida is the largest and only fully on campus learning Vet Tech program in MA, with its own state of the art vet technology teaching building. Mount Ida accepted 100 students a year with [a] waiting list [and] graduates 50 a year. All other schools together do not add up to the 50 graduates a year that Mount Ida produces." According to the Massachusetts Veterinary Technician Association, "there is a critical shortage of qualified Veterinary Technicians in Massachusetts and throughout New England. Without Mount Ida's program, an already taxed workforce will become even more so."

It should also be noted that there are associate degree veterinary technician programs at Massasoit, Holyoke, and North Shore Community Colleges, as well as a newly developing

associate degree program at Mount Wachusett Community College. If there is no longer a bachelor's degree program at Mount Ida, students in the associate degree programs will not have advancement opportunities to continue their education and advance professionally.

With facilities and faculty in place, in conjunction with strong program demand, it is clear that continuation of the program, without any gap in instruction, is a viable and responsible next step.

**Findings (4):**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires institutions of higher education to submit their audited financial statements annually to the Attorney General's Office by May 15, nearly eleven months after the close of the institution's fiscal year. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 12, section 8F,

*The trustee or trustees or the governing board of every public charity shall annually, at a time to be determined by the director, file with the division a written report for its last preceding fiscal year. Such report shall be filed on forms prescribed by the director and shall contain such financial and other information as the director may require.*

**Recommendation (4):**

Massachusetts institutions of higher education should be required to submit their annual audited financial statements to the Attorney General five months after the close of the institution's fiscal year. The recommended earlier deadline would mirror the filing deadline required by the U.S. Department of Higher Education. Educational institution fiscal years typically end June 30, resulting in the majority of audited financial statements being submitted by November 30. For example, if the Attorney General's Office had received Mount Ida's

audited financial statement by November 30, 2017, they could have been made aware of the school's problematic finances sooner. If these filings were required to be submitted earlier, the public would also have an expanded opportunity to be made aware of these schools' financial standing.

**Finding (5):**

Even with an earlier required submission date of audited financial statements, there is now no mechanism in place to flag those institutions of higher education in financial jeopardy, despite these statements being made available to the public on the Attorney General's Public Charities Annual Filing website. The Attorney General's Office approved UMass' acquisition of Mount Ida College on May 15—the same day the audited financial statement was due. Mount Ida College has not submitted its 2017 audited financial statement to the Attorney General's Office to date.

As well, students and faculty experienced a major lack of communication from Mount Ida at every phase of its decline. On the afternoon of April 6, the day that the UMass Board of Trustees voted to acquire Mount Ida College, President Brown sent an email to students alerting them that “Mount Ida College and Lasell College have ended discussion on the previously announced exploration of merger.” It makes no mention of a UMass Amherst acquisition, despite the fact that the UMass Board of Trustees voted to approve the acquisition on April 6. President Brown continued in the email, “[W]e shall continue to examine our best options going forward to ensure the future success of our students.” Mount Ida Junior John Driscoll attested to how this email was the first and only notice given of Mount Ida College being in a state of flux.

Therefore, the Committee recommends two additional safeguards to improve the public's access to information on the financial status of these schools.

**Recommendation (5):**

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) should have an affirmative duty to notify the Board of Higher Education when an accreditation assessment reveals an institution is in financial jeopardy. The parameters for what triggers a categorization of financial jeopardy should be determined by the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Higher Education should determine if and when current and prospective students should be notified of a school's precarious financial standing. This notification would provide the Department of Higher Education with valuable time to engage with schools on potentially needed closure plans.

**Recommendation (6):**

A new communication standard across colleges and universities should be voluntarily and consistently adopted, where institutions of higher education place a link to their audited financial statements directly on their college websites, in a prominent and easily accessible manner. Then, students, parents and faculty may easily access this important information. This should be the new standard in higher education and for institutions to do anything less would itself invite questions as to the financial standing of a college or university. This is the least bureaucratic, most sensible approach toward not only good business practices, but a reasonable responsibility owed to the public given the vast benefits these institutions gain by holding a tax-exempt status.

**Findings (7):**

Quincy College recently discontinued its nursing program and the acting president, Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch requested that the college's board set aside \$4.5 million to reimburse students who paid for classes but will be unable to transfer credits to other colleges.

**Recommendation (7):**

UMass has communicated to the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight that no funding resources remain after paying 75 million dollars for the acquisition of Mount Ida College. After all of Mount Ida's obligations were paid, remaining funds were applied towards attorney fees. Regardless, it is the recommendation of the Committee that a mitigation fund, created pursuant to legislative authorization, be established and administered through the Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division of the Attorney General's Office. Ideally, the Attorney General's Office would have required the creation and seeding of a mitigation fund as a negotiated term during their expedited review of whether Mount Ida College was getting fair value for its assets with the UMass transaction. Since there are no remaining proceeds from the acquisition transaction, any ongoing Attorney General investigations of Mount Ida's Administration and Board, resulting in financial settlements could be a path forward for seeding such a fund. Funds should be used as determined by the Attorney General's Office, to pay restitution to Mount Ida students, parents and faculty who were financially harmed by the fiscal mismanagement and decision-making on the part of Mount Ida's Board of Director and Administration who breached their fiduciary responsibilities.

**Findings (8):**

In her testimony, Carmin Reiss, Chair of Mount Ida's Board of Trustees stated, "There is no doubt that the UMass acquisition of the Mount Ida campus is the best course available to

provide a transition for Mount Ida's students, faculty and staff, as well as the course that best supports Mount Ida's non-profit education mission ...." President Meehan testified, stating, "The fact of the matter is, that if UMass were not engaged in this transaction, Mount Ida would still be closing. In fact they would be filing financial bankruptcy papers in federal court today...." The Committee finds, it was Lasell College that could have saved Mount Ida, but Mount Ida's Board of Trustees incomprehensibly rejected that opportunity.

It is notable that UMass was aware of Mount Ida's interest in options to resolve their financial problems, as far back as 2014, where Chair Reiss confirmed, "There was a brief and very preliminary conversation with UMass that came to nothing."

In 2016, Mount Ida engaged with Lasell College for a second time regarding a possible merger. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was reached and subject to a non-disclosure agreement. Both schools participated in a February 2018 announcement that a merger was being negotiated. However, Reiss stated, "While the discussion[s] between Mount Ida and Lasell were underway, Mount Ida Trustees learned that UMass Amherst might have a continued interest in discussion[s] with Mount Ida." After Mount Ida signed the MOU with Lasell College and before the Mount Ida/Lasell College public announcement of merger negotiations, it was Mount Ida's President Brown who presented the board with information regarding UMass being interested again in Mount Ida. The Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight questions why the College's President, Barry Brown would introduce an option that would result in the liquidation of the school? Reiss testified, "[I]n fact in our discussions internally about the contact with UMass at that time, we referred to those discussions as plan B."

Chair of Mount Ida College Board of Trustees Carmin Reiss and Lasell President Michael Alexander presented conflicting testimony regarding the failed merger. Chair Reiss asserted that Lasell College did not have the financial wherewithal to handle the merger with



Mount Ida. President Alexander disagreed with that statement. She also stated the merger with Lasell would have forced a liquidation of Mount Ida's assets and was not a merger, but an acquisition. President Alexander disagreed with that as well. Reiss testified that on March 21, 2018, Lasell presented Mount Ida with "a deal that was missing the central commitments of the MOU, and required a decision within 24 hours." Reiss continued that, "Publicly available news reports, quoting Lasell sources, assert that if Mount Ida had accepted the final terms offered to it by Lasell, Mount Ida could have continued operations, its students could have stayed on campus, and the majority of Mount Ida employees would have been retained. This is not the case. Although the initially executed MOU between Mount Ida and Lasell may have accomplished that result, Lasell's last and final offer withdrew those commitments and sought to saddle Mount Ida with more debt." President Alexander stated that Lasell College did not withdraw from the memorandum of understanding and did not require Mount Ida to take on additional debt. He stated the Lasell deal would have maintained the programs at Mount Ida, kept faculty in their positions, and there would have been some administrative changes.

Where Chair Reiss said the Board wanted to make a decision in the best interest of students, the Board's actions directly conflict with this purported goal. Mount Ida would have been able to preserve programs and degrees for prospective and current students, as well as jobs for faculty if they had completed the Lasell merger. Reiss confirmed that, "Financial projections prepared for the colleges by a well-known and respected accounting firm showed significant savings generated by combining the schools, near term losses that could be funded by Lasell, and operations generating a surplus in the not too distant future." These two schools had already coordinated on campus policing and were in close proximity to one another. Mount Ida's Board was aware that Lasell's programs would in many cases be able to expand opportunities for Mount Ida students. Instead, they decided to close the school, leave the students and faculty to

fund for themselves given the short notice and lack of transparency, and advanced the sale of Mount Ida's property and assets to UMass Amherst. It is apparent that the Mount Ida College Administration and Board of Trustees had the opportunity to avert closure by proceeding with a merger-style transaction with Lasell and chose not to for reasons that still remain unknown and without adequate explanation.

Reiss stated in testimony, "Our Board did not believe that Lasell would be able to fund Mount Ida's losses, did not believe that the new deal presented was a realistic alternative to liquidation, and rejected it as not in the best interests of Mount Ida students." Reiss stated that, "Acceptance of the Lasell ultimatum would have put Mount Ida at risk of foreclosure within the coming year, resulting in a distressed liquidation sale and closure of the College with absolutely no opportunity to put in place a transition plan for students ...". The Committee finds this testimony perplexing because acquisition of Mount Ida by UMass Amherst, where President Meehan has persistently referred to the deal with Mount Ida as a real estate transaction, led to that exact result.

**Recommendation (8):**

The Committee requests that the Attorney General investigate why Mount Ida College walked away from its Memorandum of Understanding with Lasell College. The agreement was broken during the March 2018 meeting of the Mount Ida Board of Trustees and Mount Ida's motivation for doing so remains unknown. We believe Mount Ida's rejection of Lasell's offer to take over and operate Mount Ida College is one of the most important examples of the Board and President Brown breaching their fiduciary duties. The Attorney General should refer to other investigatory agencies, such as the Inspector General as necessary.

**Findings (9):**

Mount Ida faculty was not provided specific guidelines for how they might transition to teach in the UMass system and there was no plan in place to consider how a transition of faculty could make for a smoother transition for students.

**Recommendation (9):**

UMass should make every effort to ensure the transition of Mount Ida faculty is parallel to Mount Ida students. Mount Ida faculty is also experiencing financial and professional uncertainty on account of this transaction. UMass should make every effort to hire qualified Mount Ida faculty to comparable positions, allowing for a smoother transition for Mount Ida students by making it more possible for programs and coursework to continue. And, faculty should be given more consideration during the development of future closure plans.

**Findings (10):**

Testimony presented confirmed that Mount Ida students have experienced significant financial and emotional strains, as well as potential academic and professional challenges.

**Recommendation (10):**

All credits students earned at Mount Ida College should be recognized and credited to all students transferring into the UMass system.

**Conclusion:**

Forty percent of Mount Ida College students were first in their families to attend college. Many students were especially vulnerable to a closure because their programs were unique and

they saved money by commuting to school and living at home. Students had part-time jobs to afford college and advance their professional development. Faculty signed new contracts and were left with limited options on account of annual hiring schedules. Parents saw their investment in their child's education jeopardized and continue to endure witnessing their children stressed and uncertain as their college of choice—Mount Ida, no longer exists. Mount Ida's students and faculty were subject to significant hardships on account of Mount Ida's closure and closure process. And, all UMass students deserve to know what this acquisition means for them.

This Committee recommends:

- 1) Amendment 323 to the Senate FY 2019 Budget, should be maintained in the final version of the FY 2019 Budget because it would require that all institutions of higher education report to the Department of Higher Education upon learning they may close, merge, or are in financial trouble.
- 2) The Mount Ida property should be operated by the UMass President's Office, not UMass Amherst, through shared governance in order to be a truly system-wide asset.
- 3) Mount Ida's Veterinary Technician program should be permanently maintained beyond the planned teach-out.
- 4) Schools audited financial statements should be submitted to the Attorney General's Office earlier.
- 5) The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) should have an affirmative duty to notify the Board of Higher Education when an accreditation assessment reveals an institution is in financial jeopardy.

- 6) A new communication standard across colleges and universities should be voluntarily and consistently adopted, where institutions of higher education place a link to their audited financial statements directly on their college websites.
- 7) Any ongoing Attorney General investigations of Mount Ida's Administration and Board resulting in financial settlements should seed a mitigation fund, created pursuant to legislative authorization, used as determined by the Attorney General's Office, to pay restitution to Mount Ida students, parents and faculty who were financially harmed.
- 8) The Committee requests that the Attorney General investigate why Mount Ida College walked away from its Memorandum of Understanding with Lasell College. The Attorney General should refer to other investigatory agencies, such as the Inspector General as necessary.
- 9) UMass should make every effort to ensure the transition of Mount Ida faculty is parallel to Mount Ida students, and faculty should be given more consideration during the development of future closure plans.
- 10) All credits students earned at Mount Ida College should be recognized and credited to all students transferring into the UMass system.

Committee member, Senator Anne Gobi's statement at the Committee's hearing stands true at the conclusion of this Committee's findings and recommendations, where, "In all of this discussion it seems very apparent ... that the current students and the students that were going to be going to Mount Ida ... were an afterthought in all of this." It is the expectation of this Committee that the adoption of these recommendations will change the course so that students' best interests will lead future decision-making pertaining to the UMass Amherst acquisition of Mount Ida College from this point forward.

The Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight welcomes responses to these findings and recommendations from the Office of UMass President Marty Meehan, UMass Amherst Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy, the Department of Higher Education, or any individuals or entities referenced directly in this report.