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Senate Committee Releases Report on UMass Amherst Acquisition of Mount Ida College

BOSTON –**Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** and the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight released a report of findings and related recommendations on the acquisition of Mount Ida College by the University of Massachusetts Amherst. On May 16, 2018, the Committee held an oversight hearing in response to the Senate’s request and public outcry for answers to the sudden shuttering of the college and immediate acquisition of the Newton campus by UMass Amherst.

The Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight recommends:

- 1) Amendment 323 to the Senate FY 2019 Budget 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.

The full report will be available on the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight website: www.malegislature.gov/Committees/Details/S48.

“Listening to the testimony of the students, faculty and college and university officials, it was quite clear to me that the students were an afterthought and not enough was done to protect them,” Senator Gobi said. “I expect further scrutiny and answers to assure for the students as well as the taxpayers.”

“Our goal in issuing these recommendations is to see that a situation like Mount Ida's abrupt closure does not happen again in the future,” said **Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives (D-Newburyport)**. “Mount Ida students deserved better and a number of these recommendations aim to mitigate their harm. It is also important for the public and for UMass students to understand as soon as possible the specifics on how this UMass Amherst acquisition will be advanced as a UMass system-wide asset,” Senator O'Connor Ives added.

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