

The subject of this week's **Student Spotlight on Academic Affairs** is UMass Boston's Honors College. Although the college was limited to remotely assisting students due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Honors College has hit the ground running with a transition to in-person learning through multiple ongoing initiatives, a supportive faculty, and an enthusiastic student body. At the helm of Honor's College's drive is Susan Gauss, the interim Dean of the Honors College, and an Associate Professor of Latin American and Iberian Studies. I had an opportunity to discuss with Dean Gauss about the College's dedicated efforts to incorporating students within a multi-layered support system at the Honors College.

Since its inception as a college within the last decade, the Honors College has quickly become a space where UMass Boston students can enhance their scholastic experience. Although Susan Gauss became the dean in September 2021, she quickly assimilated into the role due to the office's already strong efficacy. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the College has continued to strengthen connections with their students. The steady influx of students into the College point to the overall growing interest on the campus.

Like other academic units on campus, the Honors College is dedicated to being a student-centered focus for the undergraduate body. Yet, the Honors College would enjoy the unique attribute in being the crossroads for ambitious students from all the academic disciplines. Initially, incoming students to the College are paired with peer mentors alongside an academic advisor. All Honors students would engage in various seminars that consist of a small class size. As the faculty and the advisors become better attuned to their students' needs, the active feedback between the faculty and the advisors can lend the best tools for students to succeed. Dean Gauss expressed that the College also works to include the support of current Honors College students themselves as student ambassadors. With such heavy popularity, the role of a student ambassador has become a coveted position by the students to illustrate the universal desire for their fellow peers to succeed together. Alongside the plethora of noted academic support, the student ambassadors can provide a more enriching sense of community for new students entering the university.

Furthermore, the Honors College receives great contributions from the alumni community as many graduates are excited to join workshops for various career paths that current Honors students may find interesting. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has proved some hindrance in coordinating the workshops, the staff of the Honors College is diligently working to ensure that the alumni connections continue to remain strong. She is encouraged by the continuous interest by the alumni community to support the Honors College's efforts. Importantly, Dean Gauss emphasized that "Anytime we run alumni events, they are open not just to Honors College students, they are open to the entire university community." While some institutions may spotlight the Honors College to be an exclusive experience, UMass Boston's College is actively working to carry a more community perspective. The Honors College not only strives to ensure that all interested students have access to the Honors College, but also that the students are able to take full advantage of such opportunities.