

The Massachusetts Daily Collegian
February 7, 2010

Interim Vice Chancellor Jean Kim looking to claim position permanently
By Sara Cody

Dr. Jean Kim, the interim vice chancellor for student affairs and campus life at the University of Massachusetts, held an open session on Thursday, Feb. 4 to discuss her future plans for the position with a group of students.

The forum was part of a series of open sessions in which UMass students had the opportunity to meet and converse with the candidates for the vice chancellor position.

Kim took the opportunity to relate her ideas and positions on certain issues on campus, and discussed what changes she would make to the current status quo.

“Our vision for student affairs ... [is to develop] a comprehensive living and learning environment on campus,” said Kim. “[This] would contribute to the successful education and transformation of our students so that they can really transform their potential and skill sets to match their highest aspirations.”

Kim is no stranger to the UMass campus. She received a bachelor of arts and a masters degree in sociology as well as a doctor of education degree in counseling psychology from the University. She has over 30 years of previous experience in leading student affairs from Stanford University, the University of Colorado at Boulder and the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, among other accredited institutions.

Kim returned to UMass last July when she began a one-year interim term in the vice chancellor position.

One of the observations she made upon her return was that many of the buildings were the same. She cited the student union, built in 1958, as an example of a structure that was “too old and not sufficient to meet the [growing] student body.”

In addition to academic buildings, Kim would like to see more work done in residential halls. UMass should look into supplying more residential halls for students, she said. Additionally, she would hope to provide a more “progressive” element to residential halls. This would include more suite style and apartment options on campus, so students would have the opportunity to “progress” from dormitory to apartment.

Kim also said one of the biggest changes she would like to see is more attention focused on sophomores.

“[Sophomore year is] a difficult year [and] a different kind of transition,” she said. “There is probably more of a need as educators to connect to students in their sophomore year than we do now.”

Kim said that the transition program would be similar to that currently implemented for first-year students. She said that sophomore year is one in which students tackle questions about the choices they have made so far and their identity as a student.

"If students can successfully get two years under their belt," she said, "then chances are they're going to be able to make it and be able to realize and maximize the academic opportunities we have."

During the open session, Kim fielded questions from students about different issues on campus.

One student asked about the recent reduction of open hours at University Health Services, and what options students have if they get sick in the middle of the night.

Kim is currently working on a proposal with the director of UHS that would establish a shuttle on campus. This shuttle would provide transportation for sick students, either to UHS or to the hospital, 24 hours a day.

"We would offer the service for \$25 a semester [as an] insurance that you could buy for sick transportation," said Kim. "With the cost of a taxi, it's still significantly cheaper than any ambulance run."

When asked about the most important approach to her job, Kim referred to a "student-centered approach" in her role as vice chancellor. She spoke of hosting dinners with groups of students at least once every month to hear their impressions of campus and to bring up any possible issues.

"I see my role as being one of the primary advocates for students," said Kim. "Part of my job is to be available, to be accessible, to listen and to ask so that I am in touch with ... the needs of the students."