

January, 2008

Dear parents and families of Commonwealth College students:  
The spring semester is nearly upon us. I hope that you have reconnected with your sons and daughters over the January break and that they enjoyed their fall semester and are ready to return to campus. We are looking forward to seeing them again! In the meantime, we have some news, invitations, and advice. As always, if you have any comments or concerns, please let us know at [dean@comcol.umass.edu](mailto:dean@comcol.umass.edu).

Sincerely,  
Priscilla M. Clarkson  
Distinguished Professor  
Dean

## News

### Commonwealth College student receives prestigious Marshall Scholarship to study in Britain

Commonwealth College senior and Journalism major Katie Huston is one of 40 students nationwide to receive the Marshall Scholarship, created in 1953 by the British Parliament in honor of General George C. Marshall. Huston, who is also minoring in Political Science and completing the Five College certificate program in International Relations, plans to pursue master's degrees in global political economy and human rights at the University of Sussex in England. For more on this story, click here:

<http://www.umass.edu/loop/talkingpoints/articles/69681.php>



### Commonwealth College alumni survey indicates high levels of satisfaction and high graduate school attendance rates:

Commonwealth College invited 3,025 honors alumni to participate in a survey. An impressive 40% (1,128) responded.

- 97% indicated satisfaction with their UMass Amherst experience.
- 95% would recommend Commonwealth College to an eligible student.
- 84% of honors alumni who graduated five or more years ago have pursued graduate or professional degrees.
- 77% of those who graduated one, two, three, or four years ago have pursued or are pursuing graduate degrees.
- Experiences our recent Commonwealth College alumni (2003-2007) cited as most valuable:
  1. intellectually rigorous classes;
  2. interactions with individual faculty members;
  3. independent study or research experience;
  4. capstone thesis or project

#### Alumni Recommendations

Our alumni also offered many suggestions for improvement through the survey, including requests for more honors classes, more social activities, more career guidance, more interaction with alumni, greater public awareness of Commonwealth College, and more dedicated space. You can help us expand in these areas in three ways:

1. Make sure those in your social and professional circles know about Commonwealth College at UMass Amherst.

2. Let your state representative and senator know how important their support for UMass and Commonwealth College is to you. Commonwealth College is a tremendous success story for the state, and serves nearly twice as many students as originally envisioned. The College has submitted a request for a significant budget increase, which, if approved, will result in many more honors courses and research opportunities. For more information about how to identify and contact your senator and representative, click here. <http://www.comcol.umass.edu/alumni/advocacy.html>

3. Make a gift to Commonwealth College; we make every gift count to improve our students' experiences. Give here! <https://www.umass.edu/development/give/?a=60>

- Join us for the 14th annual **Undergraduate Conference**, May 2nd. Each year, Commonwealth College co-sponsors, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Public System of Higher Education, a conference involving undergraduate students from all branches of the University and public colleges across the state. Over 400 students present their work including thesis research, creative projects and public service activities, highlighting the outstanding undergraduate research that takes place each year – from cutting edge laboratory studies in protein folding that may someday find a cure for Alzheimer's, to poetry, music and the visual arts, to ethnographic studies at clinics in Africa, factories in Argentina, and of student culture at UMass. Most presenters are juniors or seniors. Families, friends and the general public are welcome and encouraged to attend. Use the Guest Registration on the conference website: [www.comcol.umass.edu/conference](http://www.comcol.umass.edu/conference)  
*Students really appreciate parents' support!*
- Save the date for **Family Weekend**, April 11-13, 2008. It will include a reception for families of Commonwealth College students on Saturday afternoon. The campus will send additional information in February.
- Parents of graduating seniors: save the date for our **Celebration of Excellence**, the Commonwealth College celebration of graduating students on Saturday, May 24th from 9:00 until 10:30 am. Parents of seniors, watch your mail for a "save the date" card. Click here for more information on the Commonwealth College Celebration of Excellence <http://www.comcol.umass.edu/studentlife/celebrationofexcellence.html> and the 12:30-2:30 p.m. UMass Amherst Undergraduate Commencement <http://www.umass.edu/commencement/2008/>

## Advice

### Encourage your students to use our advising services:

We recommend that students check in with a Commonwealth College advisor at least once each year. They can make appointments by calling the front desk (413-545-2483) or emailing [advisor@comcol.umass.edu](mailto:advisor@comcol.umass.edu).

- For scheduling or time-sensitive issues, students should make brief appointments during the "Add/Drop" period (January 28-February 11).
- For substantive discussions of their academic plans, students should schedule longer appointments between Add/Drop and Preregistration (February 12-April 4). Students who had a rough first semester should make an appointment so we can help them get back on track. Juniors should make appointments to discuss capstone plans for their senior year, and sophomores who will be studying abroad during their junior year should also begin discussions about their capstone plans.