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University President Jack M. Wilson to step down in 2011

By: **Matt Rocheleau** | March 02, 2010 |

University of Massachusetts President Jack M. Wilson announced yesterday he will step down after eight years as head of the five-campus system when his current term ends in June 2011.

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve as a steward of this University," said President Wilson in a University press release on Monday. "It has been a joy to work on behalf of the students, faculty and staff of the University through the good times and through the challenges. But now it is time for me to prepare to hand the baton to the next President."

Wilson's contract required that he declare his future plans by the end of this coming June, so that the University would have adequate time to arrange for his successor, if necessary, before his term ends June 30, 2011.

Because Wilson said Monday he will not return after June 2011, the University subsequently announced that a search committee, which will include students, faculty and staff, will be formed and a consultant hired to take part in a national search for a replacement.

A 64-year-old physicist and career educator, Wilson has been University president since September 2003. During his tenure, the release said, he has emphasized access and affordability for students, has focused on research and innovation, and has supported a capital program aimed at providing new facilities and renovations on all five campuses.

He said he is particularly proud of the University's increased enrollment and financial aid availability. This academic year the University has met 93 percent of students' demonstrated financial need – a new record for UMass and "a number far higher than any of the other public universities in the region," he said.

However, Wilson has also faced criticism, including recent revelations that his overall compensation level increased by 15 percent last year – the same year in which the University faced major budget cuts and enacted both a student fee increase and a salary freeze for UMass faculty and employees.

"Leaving at this time is a bit easier knowing that there is a uniquely qualified leadership team of chancellors guiding the five campuses. I have complete confidence in their ability to continue the progress that we have seen on the campuses, and I know that the Board of Trustees shares my confidence in their superb leadership and in the prospects for the future," Wilson said.

"I assure you that I gave this very serious consideration but have concluded that this is the time for a change. I am very proud of what we have accomplished together," Wilson added.

He will continue to serve as president until his current term expires. Over the course of the next year, Wilson will consider future opportunities both at and beyond the University, according to the release.

Gov. Deval Patrick and Board of Trustees Chairman Robert J. Manning applauded Wilson's achievements during his time as president, according to yesterday's release.

"By any measure – enrollment, endowment, test scores or capital improvements – Jack Wilson's tenure has moved the University of Massachusetts forward," said Patrick. "He has been a terrific partner in our shared commitment to making the public higher education system in Massachusetts a national model for excellence while keeping it affordable and accessible for our students,"

Wilson joined the University in 2001 to become the founding CEO of UMassOnline, the University's distance-education program.

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He said he is looking forward to working with students and working on the technology, innovation and economic development issues that have interested him throughout his career.

"At my core, I am an educator, and I look forward to being able to focus on teaching and to advancing research," said Wilson in the release. "I feel that it will soon be time to open a new chapter in my career."

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mrochele@dailycollegian.com.

2 Responses to "University President Jack M. Wilson to step down in 2011"

Bob says:
March 2, 2010 at 5:29 am
If Jack M. Wilson really wanted to help UMass he would leave now and save the University one-half billion dollars (his current annual salary). I mean really, what has he done? What will he accomplish in 12 months as a lame duck ?

-Bob

orange_cone says:
March 3, 2010 at 8:35 am
Something finally goes right for UMass and maybe there will now be a real leader.

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