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## **UMass Awarded Sloan Foundation Grant to Launch Life Science Masters Degree Programs**

*Professional Science Masters Degrees Will Offer Academic Concentrations in the Sciences, Internships and Practical Business, Communication Skills*

**BOSTON**—University of Massachusetts **President Jack M. Wilson** today announced UMass has been awarded a \$124,200 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to develop or adapt existing programs to create up to 10 life sciences Professional Science Masters (PSM) degree programs. The programs would span all five of the University's campuses and combine academic concentrations, industry experience and practical skills in business and communications.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a national leader in promoting higher education in science, awarded the UMass system a \$124,200 grant to advance the effort. The private funds will be matched by \$150,000 from the University and significant in-kind work.

The initiative is being developed by a system-wide steering committee led by UMass Lowell Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

**President Wilson** thanked the Sloan Foundation for its support, noting: "We appreciate the vote of confidence in UMass signified by the Sloan Foundation's grant. Developing these degree programs underscores the University's commitment to educating students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and to economic and work-force development in Massachusetts."

The wide range of new and adapted PSM degree programs will likely include Applied Biotechnology; Biomedical Engineering and Biotechnology; Biosafety; Medical Lab Science; Environmental Services, Systems and Technology; Marine Sciences; Project Management for Life Sciences, and Health Informatics. This fall, Animal Biotechnology and Biomedical Science, and Engineering and Integrative Life Sciences will be considered as additional offerings.

Massachusetts Biotechnology Council President **Robert K. Coughlin** said that, "This initiative is evidence of the strong commitment to the life sciences industry that UMass has demonstrated over the last several years. Our 'Growing Talent' study and 2015 Strategic Report both called for this type of collaborative effort in order for Massachusetts to maintain its leadership position and to properly prepare our future workforce for the life sciences industry. We will continue to work closely with UMass."

The development of PSM degrees was one of the recommendations included in "Growing Talent," a study of work-force needs in the life sciences supported by the Massachusetts Life

Sciences Center and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and conducted by the UMass Donahue Institute. Recognizing the strength of the life sciences industry as one of the strongest sectors in the Massachusetts economy, the study urges the creation of PSM degrees as a way to meet the critical work force need for experienced scientists.

“A Professional Science Masters degree program at UMass will help train the next generation of leaders for our state’s thriving life sciences super cluster,” said **Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister**, president of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center.

Under plans being developed by a system-wide steering committee, the UMass PSM degree programs would include traditional face-to-face courses taught by faculty with expertise in the life sciences and business and communications courses taught by UMass faculty and offered primarily through the internationally recognized UMassOnline, with internships providing a strong connection to the life sciences industry. As the initiative advances, UMass intends to develop PSM degrees in other areas critical to Massachusetts’ innovation economy.

“Professional Science Masters programs provide scientists with the training needed not only to enter the work force in specific sectors of industry such as biotechnology or bio-manufacturing, but also the potential to advance subsequently to leadership positions in corporations,” said **UMass Lowell Provost Ahmed Abdelal**, who is leading the system-wide steering committee.

The UMass PSM Degree Programs in the Life Sciences will be tailored to meet the needs of four types of prospective students: full-time employed or recently unemployed professionals; current undergraduates in science, technology, math or engineering (STEM) majors; students enrolled in traditional science Ph.D. programs who prefer to pursue advanced, applied professional training; and those who hold non-science degrees but seek further science and technical education directly applicable to a career change. Future employment opportunities for graduates include the life science industry as well as government agencies or non-government organizations.

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