

M A S S A C H U S E T T S
HIGHTECHNOLOGYCOUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Massachusetts General Court

From: Christopher R. Anderson, President

Date: March 28, 2005

Re: Support Senate Bill #25, Senate Higher Ed. Task Force Report

Two significant items impacting the state's technology community are being unveiled by the Legislature today. While most of the attention will likely go to the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technology's expected endorsement of the Senate's stem cell legislation, another plan released by the Senate Higher Education Task Force will shape the state's future academic, research & development and technological competitiveness. **Both of these proposals merit your support.**

Higher Education

Working with MassInsight and others, the Massachusetts High Technology Council began calling for a statewide technology-based, economic strategy for Massachusetts in the summer of 2002. A crucial component of that strategy is to develop a public higher education system that can compete with the nation's best public systems. Earlier this year, the CEO members of the High Tech Council endorsed a public policy objective to "strengthen the University of Massachusetts system as a world-class public higher education institution."

The Senate Higher Education Task Force report is a very important step toward that goal. In particular, the High Tech Council is pleased the report recommends:

- Developing a five-year strategic plan to boost UMASS's R&D capacity and to work with state government and industry partners to focus on strategic opportunities that will lead to job growth. This parallels the objective of the Science & Technology Road Map and Strategic Opportunities study, which is a collaborative effort of MassInsight, the Council and others;
- Implementing reform measures, long supported by the Council, that will grant UMASS more control over its fiscal destiny;
- Making a significant capital investment commitment to UMASS and the state and community colleges;

- Creating an endowment matching fund to help attract the best science and technology professors; and
- Authorizing additional investment in science and technology facilities and infrastructure to help UMASS compete for federal R&D opportunities.

Stem Cell Research

Senate President Travaglini's stem cell legislation (Senate Bill #25) is a necessary and important measure to encourage the ethical and effective research of diseases and conditions that could be addressed through embryonic stem cell research. The Council supports scientific freedom, which has helped Massachusetts become a world technology leader in life sciences, defense technology, photonics and other areas. The Council opposes any attempt to limit that scientific freedom or even criminalize the critical work of researchers who have devoted their careers to serving mankind.

However, looking further down the road, the state must avoid directing taxpayer resources inappropriately on speculative economic initiatives, no matter how tempting the allure. While stem cell research has great promise in the fight against disabling and degenerative diseases, the realization of significant job growth in this area may prove elusive. While appropriate for academic and hospital research, investing large amounts of taxpayer funding in stem cell research alone is not a good bet for Massachusetts at this time. Our strength is in the diversity of the state's technology and academic research community. The state's science and technology strategy should be broad and flexible enough to capitalize on that diversity and encourage the continued development of new fields of technology and research, not just favor what appears to be the hot issue of the day.

For more on the Council's position on the stem cell issue, I have attached for your review my opinion editorial which appeared in the January 24, 2005 issue of Mass High Tech.