OF ALL YOU GRADUATES A PRAISER AND ALSO, TODAY, A FUNDRAISER!

From ‘61 to ‘63
I taught at Harvard, and at MIT
Thenceforward until ‘67,
From whence I rose to as close to heaven –

In terms of “Groves of Academe” –
As I hope to come: this is my dream
Of a global school, committed to be
A Beacon of Diversity,
Beaming broadly UMB’s
Promise across the Seven Seas
That unbridled tribal enmities
Can yet be resolved into harmonies,
That we, in time, can yet in deed ‘n
Word reclaim the name of Eden!

In this context, I, your Poet Laureate,
Come before you today to glory at
You! I pray you’ll take “under advisement”
That you are our best advertisement
For why your gifts to us mean so much
To our mission. You are the touchstone of our success, you who represent,
Each and every one of you, how much it’s meant
To spend the time you have spent with each
Other, and through these connections reach
Towards ever higher levels of
Aspiration. What I love,
Perhaps most of all, is how saying your names
Out loud, over and over again, reclaims
The possibility, rich and vast,
Of finding in their unsurpassed
Variety a hope to discern
That the most important thing we can learn
Is that Nguyen, Smith, Esparza, Donahue,
Njogu, Abedido, Ababobenkru
(Such are the names I see in my classes!)

Show, dramatically, how UMass is
A place that goes beyond melting pot
To a whole new kind of Camelot
Where we get to keep each “stripe” and “spot”
In a way that gives us one last best shot
At resolving all conflict and all confusion,
By sounding the trumpet call of INCLUSION!
And that is the trumpet note you have sounded
Since the very first day we were founded,
Where Arlington Street met Columbus Avenue, each alumna-alumnus-
to-be sailing forth on uncharted seas
Past Azores’ shores, past the Hebrides,
Compass set for naught less than a world at peace,
One in which nobody gets left out!

And hey, this is why I give a shout
To say that giving to UMB
Is an investment peculiarly
Suitied to our campus’s setting
At ocean’s edge. For we have been getting
To come to McCormack and Wheatley Hall
Students from so many Ports of Call
That I assert we can safely say
We have attracted to Dorchester Bay,
As I’ve said, more varied a roster of NAMES
Than any other school can make claims
To! So now I hope you’ll do
What you can in the way of contributing to
Your Alma Mater. Please recognize
That a gift of any size
Will be much appreciated;
And know that the reason we’re top-rated
Already, and are rising higher,
Is because you lit the fire
That ever more brightly burns! What we’re seekin’
Is your help in further igniting our Beacon!

Duncan Nelson
Associate Professor of English
University Poet Laureate