

**Testimony on the U.S. Postal Service's Station and Branch Optimization and Consolidation Initiative**

**Richard Doherty, President**

**Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts**

**September 23, 2009**

My name is Richard Doherty and I serve as the President of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts. AICUM represents 60 private, not for profit institutions of higher education in Massachusetts, educating more than 250,000 students annually and employing nearly 100,000 faculty and staff.

I very much appreciate the invitation of the Commission to offer our perspective on the effect closures of US Postal Service branches would have on Babson College, Boston College, Boston University, Harvard University, MIT, and Tufts University, six of our member colleges and universities which currently host branch facilities on their campuses. As the facts and circumstances on each of these campuses are unique, I will allow each school, if they so choose, to communicate their special concerns to you under separate cover. However, there are some general themes that I believe should be taken into account by the Commission and the US Postal Service during its deliberations.

First, these potential closures impact large communities, with significant and unique postal needs. To give you a perspective of the size and vibrancy of these academic communities, I have attached a simple chart documenting the number of full and part-time employees at each college or university, the number of students, and the sum of those numbers to arrive at a total community population.

In Harvard's case, that population exceeds 40,000; which means that the university community, according to the 2007 census, is larger than the populations of 318 of Massachusetts' 351 cities and towns! For Boston University, their student and employee ranks are just under 40,000—making it larger than the 36<sup>th</sup> largest city or town in the state! Babson College, Boston College, MIT and Tufts also have large campus communities, collectively serving nearly 60,000 students and employees. These are not just quaint college postal annexes. They are bustling branches, regularly shipping and receiving large numbers of packages for our faculty and students, many of whom are international or from out of state. In an era when time is a precious commodity in our work life and in our home life, the convenience of an on-campus postal facility is an invaluable service to our academic community.

I am greatly concerned that the closure of these facilities will not only inconvenience the postal service consumers on our campuses, but also those consumers at the next closest post office to the college. That facility, which in many cases is not within walking distance of campus, will inevitably experience longer lines and declines in service simply because the remaining facility and staff cannot accommodate the influx of postal service demands from these large campus communities.

I do not pretend to know a lot about postal service operations; however I am surprised at the disproportionate number of campus branches which are on the Massachusetts list. Higher education is a defining and driving sector for the Massachusetts economy. I would posture that a tremendous amount of critically important work passes through these campus post offices on a daily basis. Just this week I have had business conversations about the importance of increased student participation in the 2010 U.S.Census and in the Massachusetts and national elective process. A convenient and safe on-campus post office will absolutely facilitate participation in the responsibilities associated with an active citizenry. These campus communities are growing in size and importance and I would suggest that serving this sector should be a priority of the Postal Service.

Finally, I would like to close with a personal note from the father of a college freshman. This past month, my wife and I have sent more packages through the mail than any time in the past year—including Christmas. We have mailed out shoeracks and pillows, textbooks inadvertently sent to our home address and favorite framed pictures, and I expect to be mailing ice skates and Halloween candy sometime next month. Until our kids went off to college, we and they never needed to go to a post office to get certain things done. But now we realize the post office serves a critical function in our staying connected as a family. You can't send a favorite pillow by e-mail and you can't text candy corn. For an 18 year old freshman at a large urban university, hundreds or thousands of miles away from home, the on-campus postal office is a wonderfully safe service we should try very hard to preserve.

Thank you for your time.