

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

Hampshire College's course in survival

Some fear for the future of unique school. President, others say it's on the right path.

By Brooke Hauser and Hilary Burns

GLOBE STAFF

AMHERST — Abigail Crocker, a first-year student at Hampshire College, is starting to think about backup plans just in case her school shutters before she graduates.

"I feel very confident that I could transfer, but I really like this school," Crocker said. "I would be really sad if it didn't hold out until my senior year."

With around 750 students,

Hampshire missed its enrollment goal by nearly half this fall, enrolling only 168 new students instead of 300. The shortfall compounds serious financial problems for the iconoclastic liberal arts college. It is already facing scrutiny from creditors and remains in danger of losing its accreditation — the school has received a notation that institutional resources are not where they need to be, a warning that has been repeatedly affirmed by the New England Commission of Higher Education.

Meanwhile, Hampshire's auditor continues to express concern about the school's ability to survive.

"What's happening is this dearly beloved institution is sputtering and dying," said Larry Ladd, a former budget officer at Harvard University, now with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. "It hopes to live, and it may live," he added, but "I'm prepared to be in mourning."

A spokesperson with Hampshire said the school has steadily engaged with its accreditors over the past 6.5 years and its most recent progress report submitted in November was

accepted.

On a recent day in January, many students were aware of the existential threat looming over their campus, which the school describes as a cultural village that's also home to the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and the Yiddish Book Center. With approximately 800 acres of rolling farmland — more than one acre per student — it's prime real estate in the Pioneer Valley.

Students have noticed fewer people on campus and fewer resources, from limited meal options to scarce housekeeping.

"My bathroom doesn't have any

HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE, Page A10

Housing plan hits obstacle in Wellesley

Opposition to proposal for state land is latest example of local resistance

By Andrew Brinker

GLOBE STAFF

On the vast parking lot across Oakland Street from his school's leafy Wellesley campus, MassBay Community College's president, David Podell, believed he had found something rare: a place where everyone could agree to build some desperately needed housing.

It is, after all, just a parking lot.

And by designating the five-acre site as state-owned "surplus" land and offering it to developers to build up to 180 apartments there, MassBay would pull in a decent profit to help fund new campus facilities.

"The idea is that we can meet the needs of MassBay students and help address the state's urgent need for housing," said Podell.

But this is Wellesley, one of the state's wealthiest suburbs, where large single-family homes are abundant and new development is rare. And, perhaps predictably, Podell said, "some people do not see this as the benefit to the community that

APARTMENTS, Page A7



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Karen Gardner sat on the bed of her grandson, Dezmin, as she talked with him and her granddaughter, Kitty.

In bids to help save grandkids, they look to Mass. for assistance

Group lobbies for benefits equal to those received by foster parents

By Jason Laughlin

GLOBE STAFF

After 17 years and 218,000 miles, Karen Gardner's Jeep Grand Cherokee died for good a few weeks before Christmas.

Without it, she cannot take her grandson, who is autistic, to the doctor, chauffeur her granddaughter to play rehearsals, or shop for groceries.

At 67, she is their sole caretaker, a role that has enriched her life as it has devastated her finances.

"I am trapped," said Gardner, who lives in transit-scarce Western Massachusetts and now hitches rides with friends or borrows an adult granddaughter's car to run errands.

Gardner is among nearly 10,000 people

in Massachusetts raising grandchildren on their own. Roughly 20,000 more are heads of households for families that include their grandchildren, according to a 2022 state report. Becoming parents all over again was no one's plan, and most took on the role amid tragedy, often their adult children's drug addiction, mental illness, or untimely death.

In Massachusetts, these grandparents are pushing for more state support.

"I don't want anyone to praise me," said Judy Walter, 76, who is raising her 11-year-old granddaughter Sofia in Northfield. "But I do want money."

Gardner and Walter are among a handful of grandparents who have lobbied for state legislation to cover tuition and fees at state

public colleges for any child with a grandparent as legal guardian, a benefit now available to children in foster care. The future of the bill is murky, and the need for it has been partially addressed by a free tuition program for low-income students, but it brings awareness of what these grandparents really want: parity with the benefits Massachusetts foster families receive.

These grandparents are poorer, have more food insecurity, and are more likely to be disabled than the general population, state and federal reports show. Meanwhile, the children in these families are more likely to experience mental and behavioral health challenges, including depression, anxiety,

GRANDPARENTS, Page A7

18%
of voters said they approved of how Democrats in Congress were handling their jobs, compared with

73%
who disapproved.

PRIMARY, Page A6

Officials suspended the search on the Cape for a man after his wife died falling through the ice. B1.

Celtics star Jaylen Brown questioned why Beverly Hills police shut down a panel discussion he organized. C1.

Governor Maura Healey criticized President Trump and his supporters as she launched her campaign for reelection with a town hall at a YMCA in Boston. B1.

Israel was set to start a regulatory process that could help Jewish settlers obtain swaths of Palestinian-held land in the occupied West Bank. A3.

Some state officials have threatened funds for high schools whose students have organized anti-ICE demonstrations. A2.

The menace in the melting snowbanks

Debris, pollution, and, particularly, salt contaminate area waterways

By Aayushi Datta

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As snowbanks begin to melt across Greater Boston, they leave behind more than wet sidewalks, slushy streets.

When plowed into contiguous mounds along streets, the snow collects a mixture of substances: road salt, car exhaust, and even pet waste. As temperatures rise, as they are expected to do into this week, these pollutants flow directly into storm drains, ultimately reaching rivers and harbors.

Of all the winter pollutants, road salt, which lowers the freezing point of water, is the most concerning because it is particularly harmful to freshwater organisms that haven't evolved to tolerate salt water, experts say.

"The reason this is an environmental issue for aquatic ecosystems is that salt, specifically, is toxic," said Andrew Hrycyna,

MELTING, Page A10



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

So nobly advanced

Presidents' Day: Warmer. High 37-42, low 26-31.

Tuesday: Much the same. High 37-42, low 31-36.

Sunrise: 6:39. Sunset: 5:18.

Weather and comics, D4-5.

Obituaries, C9.

VOL. 309, NO. 47

*

Suggested retail price \$4.00

07119

0 947 725 4

0 947 725 4