

## WUMD – A Bright Light Could Be Extinguished

FCC File: BALED20170104AAT

MAR 02 2017

Joseph E. Ingoldsby

FCC Mail Room

UMASS Dartmouth's WUMD has been a beacon of light presenting innovative and informative local programming for the South Coast and beyond for forty-five years. This light is about to be extinguished with the secretive and non-deliberative sale of 89.3 FM to Rhode Island Public Radio, an affiliate of National Public Radio. We are told the fire sale price is 1.5 million dollars, which is 0.6% of the UMASS Dartmouth's 2017 annual budget. The intentions of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth were only publicly announced after the contract had been signed and accepted. The full Board of Trustees, the Radio Station, the students and the community were kept in the dark about the potential sale. Comments were funneled to the Vice Chancellor for Communications, who is active proponent of the sale. The actual announcement was made during winter break, when the students and faculty were not on campus. There was no mention on how to comment to the FCC, nor any mention of the deadlines.

The sale will bring a standardization of programming and a repetition of viewpoints already available at WGBH and WCAI FM. Lost will be our morning current affairs and progressive news broadcasting, and original student and alumni programming. The voices for change will be censored.

Gone will be the international music and foreign language programs of the world, from Celtic to Balkan to Brazilian to Reggae and uniquely American genres of folk, jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll, garage bands, electronica, and local talent, underrepresented in mainstream and commercial programming. The Portuguese language programming developed through the University to serve the Portuguese and Brazilian cultures of New Bedford will be gone. The music will be silenced.

Original programming for children and for the blind, science programs, environmental reporting from the front lines, interviews with national experts in food, health and agriculture, science reporting and the media will be lost to NPR standardized programming. This is a great loss for the South Coast and for the intellectual growth of the UMASS Dartmouth community, who has been well served by WUMD over the years.

Massachusetts taxpayers paid for UMass Dartmouth's WUMD that was to broadcast inclusive public interest and local programming representing the diversity of the university's students and faculty as well as the surrounding communities. WUMD-89.3 will be sold to an out of state-corporation with little interest in community programming. The tower is to be moved from Dartmouth Massachusetts to Tiverton, RI and the radio equipment will go with the sale. Let us keep local independent radio local.

WUMD South Coast listeners ask that the University of Massachusetts President Marty Meehan, the UMass Dartmouth Trustees and Administration, our MA Legislators, and the FCC reconsider the sale of our local college radio station, FCC File # BALED20170104AAT. Please don't let this bright light be extinguished.

Sincerely,



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WUMD, 89.3 FM: Has the Train Left the Station?

Joseph E. Ingoldsby

**FCC File: BALED 20170104AAT**

Received & Inspected

MAR 12 2017

FCC Mail Room

At a February 13, 2017 Faculty Senate Meeting and a Student Forum that followed, UMass Vice Chancellor of Communications, John Hoey did his best to rationalize the sale of the University of Massachusetts independent radio station, WUMD- 89.3FM to Rhode Island Public Radio for the price of \$1,500,000 pending FCC approval to a questioning audience. According to John Hoey, it was Rhode Island Public Radio that approached UMass Dartmouth to expand its broadcast signal and consolidate its ownership of the airwaves. An internal decision was made to pursue the sale in closed- door committee negotiations without station, student, board of trustees, or public input. The UMass Dartmouth administration waited until the sale was finalized before the community was notified of the sale during the winter semester break, when students or faculty were not on campus. The sale would eliminate WUMD as a vehicle for university talent, cutting edge research, and student involvement. WUMD would become an online broadcast only, with a greatly diminished format.

According to John Hoey, the benefits of the transfer outnumber the loss of the university radio station. The money would be invested and used as collateral for raising matching funds from private donations to provide need based financial aid for ten to twenty students per year with the interest gained on the investment of the principal with private matching donations. \$250,000 would be placed in an emergency aid fund, which will be seed money for matching donations. The hope is that the initial sale price of 1.5 million dollars could be doubled with matching fund donations. \$250,000 of which would be used for community micro programs and an additional \$25,000 used to modernize the WUMD studio for the Internet programming. All of the radio equipment would go with the sale to Rhode Island Public Radio. The 200' tall WUMD radio tower would be replaced with an 800' tower in Tiverton, R.I. to increase the broadcast range to Taunton and Cape Cod. Rhode Island Public Radio has agreed to provide \$617,000 worth of promotional time over a ten-year period to increase the enrollment at UMass Dartmouth. Four R.I. internships would be available per academic year at Rhode Island Public Radio in Providence.

The drawbacks to the sale would be the loss of WUMD as a megaphone for the talent and cutting edge research conducted at UMass Dartmouth, the loss of South Coast programming, and original

programming. Rhode Island Public Radio would broadcast National Public Radio syndicated programs. There is doubt that any of the local progressive news, community affairs, international music, and Portuguese programming serving the South Coast ethnic cultures would be carried by the Rhode Island station. WUMD would become less diverse and not reflective of the international makeup of the student or faculty body diversity. WUMD would no longer exist.

Questions were posed to John Hoey and Dr. Milstone, Dean of Students, at a sparsely attended student forum, conducted at 5:00-6:00, when most students were in classes until 6. One visitor, who called out as I passed by the Charlton Business building with a yellow and blue Save WUMD sign under my arm was a former SMU DJ, Todd Rego. He asked Dr. Milstone and John Hoey, "If the sale contract made an allowance for a split of private and public airspace sharing?" He spoke of the nationally known KCRW, Santa Monica College Radio, which allowed for a "50%/50% split of programming between NPR and college programming." Here they are able to showcase the talent at Santa Monica and bring in Public Radio International, PRI, programming to supplement the standardized NPR programming. UMass Dartmouth officials had not included such an arrangement in the sale. A question was raised if the sale was negotiated prematurely? Dr. Milstone and John Hoey stressed it was not and was the result of a survey and student unwillingness to fund the station from campus fees. However, local businesses were never asked to sponsor WUMD to fund the station for on air mention. John Hoey was "bemused that the public were asked to contact him on how to Save WUMD," when he was the principle negotiator of the sale, which he sees as a public benefit. The public comment period was unclear, as was the FCC format for making comment. Petitions to Save WUMD left at public places were filled with sheets of signatures in a matter of days.

One graduate student, Rene'e Russo, wondered "why WUMD was not used as a vehicle for university departments to cement their studies in reality?" She asked "Why the Charlton School of Business was not developing a marketing strategy to publicize and fund WUMD through sponsorships and on air publicity?" She asked, "Why the English Department did not use WUMD to expand their Journalism classes to the airwaves?" "Or the Music Department to air their concerts?" Each department could showcase their work using WUMD as a vehicle, which would help to sell UMass Dartmouth as a world-class institution. Some questioned whether UMass Dartmouth was "selling off it's assets" for a



short term gain and a long term loss. Once gone, unless the University can persuade RI Public Radio to share the airwaves after the fact, the train will have left the station. WUMD will be silenced.



UMass Dartmouth Faculty Senate Meeting WUMD Sale Discussion  
Photographs by Joseph E. Ingoldsby



Dr. Milstone and John Hoey at UMass Dartmouth Student WUMD Forum

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**SAVE  
WUMD – 89.3 FM  
FROM CLOSURE  
CONTACT**

**jhoey@umassd.edu**

**Keep independent college radio local**

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**John Hoey  
Vice Chancellor of Communications  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth**

**WUMD FM listeners ask that UMass Dartmouth retain the station as local college radio to provide another viewpoint to commercial news, public affairs, and music representing the diversity of the campus community. WUMD also is a showcase of faculty cutting edge research and is a megaphone for UMass Dartmouth.**

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WUMD – 89.3 FM  
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John Hoey  
Vice Chancellor of Communications  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

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