

PRESS RELEASE

December 6, 2000
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Scott Cassel, MA Executive Office of Environmental
Affairs (617) 626-1048
John Hoey, University of Massachusetts (617) 287-7006

**MAKING PRODUCTS REUSABLE, RECYCLABLE AND TOXIN-FREE
FOCUS OF NEW UMASS/EOEA INSTITUTE**

Secretary of Environmental Affairs Robert Durand today announced the creation of the Product Stewardship Institute at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, which will research and promote efforts to manufacture products that are easier to recycle and toxin-free.

The Institute is the first major initiative to grow out of an agreement signed in January by Secretary Durand and University of Massachusetts President William M. Bulger to combine the research and education resources of the University with the policy-making expertise of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

" We need to change from a disposable society to one that values sustainable products that last longer, are made with fewer toxins and less materials, and are reusable and recyclable," Secretary Durand said. " This movement toward product stewardship will change the entire nature of how our waste will be managed."

" This partnership with the state's environmental agency allows researchers throughout the University system to apply their knowledge to resolve waste management problems confronting not only Massachusetts, but other states across the country," added President Bulger.

Secretary Durand made his comments as nearly 100 government officials from 20 states met in Boston at an EOEA-sponsored forum to discuss strategies for negotiating voluntary agreements with manufacturers to reduce the environmental impacts from consumer products.

Prior to the forum, state, local, and federal environmental officials began work on draft action plans for each of five priority products - electronics, products containing mercury,

paint, carpet, and pesticides - which were chosen for either their toxicity or high volume found in the waste stream. The forum is an opportunity to review those plans and to discuss each state's interest in negotiating with product manufacturers and environmental groups.

"The economic prosperity of the last 10 years has dramatically increased the amount and toxicity of waste, as well as the associated costs of recycling and disposal," said EOEA Director of Waste Policy and Planning Scott Cassel, who will direct the Institute. "With government budgets unable to meet this growing financial burden, state and local officials are now asking product manufacturers to be part of the waste management solution."

"With the establishment of this Institute, Massachusetts expands its leadership position in the growing effort to manage and manufacture products in an environmentally sound manner," said Dr. Kenneth Geiser of UMass Lowell, who will be the University manager for the Institute. Dr. Geiser is an internationally recognized expert in pollution reduction and has worked with dozens of companies throughout New England.

"If we do this right, Massachusetts products of the future will fit the cycles of both nature and business," Dr. Geiser added. "The alternative is that our solid waste stream will simply overwhelm our landfills and incinerators. We have the opportunity to set a shining example for the rest of the country."

Dr. Geiser said several New England companies, including some in Massachusetts, are already working with the University and the EOEA to manufacture products in a way that promotes recycling and reduces toxins.

--END--