

## Mass. Brain Drain?

*By Amy Wong*

Although it is a state that has long been recognized for its renowned universities, Massachusetts will have to work harder to compete with other, less expensive, and more venerable colleges.

Recent studies show that Massachusetts' net migration has decreased by nearly half. This means that the number of students coming in has decreased while the number of students going out has increased. In short, more students — both in-state and out-of-state — are opting to further their education in states other than Massachusetts.

As of 2004, Massachusetts was the sixth largest importer of students, behind only Pennsylvania; Florida; North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; and Indiana. This is desirable news, except when you realize that Massachusetts topped the list less than a decade ago, drawing in more than double its current rate.

Even the draw of top Ivy League schools such as Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Tufts University — still going strong — cannot fully mitigate the disastrous effects befalling second- and third-tier schools.

In 2004, enrollment at Massachusetts-based public colleges and universities dropped by 2,299, making it the fourth lowest public sector in the nation. Even attendance at the state's private sector has dropped 27 percent in 2006, suffering the greatest drop in the country.

Some speculate that the cause of this downward trend boils down to funding. In addition to competitive curricula, public schools are also significantly cheaper than private schools. In fact, with an average annual tuition of \$12,127, public schools cost an average of \$16,899 less than private schools. Public education, which is growing in reputation, costs less than half the price of private education.

Todd Hoffman, a Wellesley higher-education marketing consultant, realizes the drawback of more expensive, private colleges. He recently told the *Boston Business Journal*, "Because we have so many smaller, private colleges in Massachusetts, those colleges are just going to wash away."

Also, Massachusetts has decreased financial aid by 22 percent while the top-five net importers of students have increased financial aid within the last five years.

Furthermore, there are demographics to consider.

Most children grow up in the Sunbelt and are reluctant to move to colder regions thousands of miles from home. In order to keep students in state, some states offer their students scholarships. This added monetary incentive, coupled with the idea of "home," keeps students from attending Massachusetts-based schools.

Stephen Tocco, chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, told the *Boston Business Journal*, "Those tuitions and fees have crept too high, and they're beginning to affect [student's] decisions."