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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Men's Basketball

## **UMass Dartmouth Earns Top Billing In Men's Basketball Preseason Poll**

**NORTH DARTMOUTH, Mass.** – The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has been projected as the favorite to win the 2009-10 Little East men's basketball regular-season crown after each of the conference's eight coaches voted in the annual preseason poll. The Corsairs sit atop the coaches' survey for the first time since the start of the 2002-03 season after receiving six first-place votes and 62 total points.

Rhode Island College earned the remaining two first-place votes and 51 total points to edge Western Connecticut State University (49) for the No. 2 seed. Plymouth State University received 40 points to complete the top-half of the preseason standings.

Under the direction of Head Coach **Brian Baptiste**, UMass Dartmouth matched the program record for single-season victories (27) since the inception of the Little East with an overall mark of 27-4. The Corsairs captured the program's 11th Little East Men's Basketball Tournament Championship after upsetting the top-seeded Anchormen in the finals, 62-53, to raise the championship trophy for the first time since 2001. Baptiste led his charges to the NCAA Division III sectional semifinals after defeating Baruch (82-72) and WPI (81-68). With all four of their top scorers returning, UMass Dartmouth is ranked inside the top-10 in each of the two most prominent preseason publications—*Division III Sporting News* (6th) and D3Hoops.com (8th). UMass Dartmouth will face a challenging schedule with four teams—Bridgewater State (11th), Brandeis University (22nd), Rhode Island College (RV), and Salem State College (RV)—currently ranked or receiving votes in the D3Hoops.com Preseason Top 25 Poll. The Corsairs will tip-off the season at 7 p.m. on Nov. 17, when UMass Dartmouth hosts Johnson and Wales University.

Rhode Island College advanced to the NCAA Division III Tournament for the third consecutive campaign in 2009 after posting an overall record of 23-6. The Anchormen established a new record for victories inside the conference circuit with a 13-1 mark, putting an additional win between the 2007 squad. Rhode Island College earned the top seed and right to host the annual conference tournament championship for the second time in the past three years. Head Coach **Bob Walsh** returns seven student-athletes from last winter, including All-Little East first-team selection **Antone Gray (Providence, R.I.)**. Gray piloted the fast-pace Anchormen attack, handing out a 116 assists and scoring 10.8 points per game. Rhode Island College will open the 2010 season on Nov. 15 at 1 p.m., when they travel to Springfield College.

In 2009, Western Connecticut (14-12) reached the Little East Men's Basketball Tournament semifinal round for the first time since 2005. The sixth-seeded Colonials recorded the lone upset in the quarterfinal round, when they edged the third-seeded Panthers, 58-56. Head Coach **Bob Campbell** will welcome back eight players from last season, including four starters. Sophomore guard **Daquan Brooks (Bristol, Conn.)** is the top-returning offensive threat for Western Connecticut. Brooks, the 2009 Little East Rookie of the Year, averaged 13.7 points per game during his rookie campaign. The Colonials begin the 2010 schedule on Nov. 15, when Western Connecticut travels to Cobleskill State for a 2 p.m. tip-off.

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Eastern Connecticut State University • Keene State College • University of Massachusetts Boston  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth • Plymouth State University • Rhode Island College  
University of Southern Maine • Western Connecticut State University

The top-six teams in the final regular season standings will advance to the 2010 Little East Men's Basketball Tournament Championship with the two highest seeded squads earning a first round bye into the semifinals. The No. 1 seed will host both semifinal round contests on Feb. 27 with the two winners meeting in the championship round the following afternoon. The Little East champion will earn the automatic qualifier into the NCAA Division III Tournament.

Completing the order in projected order of finish in the final regular season standings are Eastern Connecticut State University (35), Keene State College (26), University of Massachusetts Boston (15), and the University of Southern Maine (10).

Initially formed in 1986 as a six-team men's and women's basketball conference, the Little East Conference will begin its 24th sponsored season in 2009-2010. Western Connecticut State University joined the conference in 1993-1994, while Keene State College raised its current membership to eight teams in 1997-1998.

<b>2009-10 Little East Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll</b>			
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>First Place</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
1	U. of Massachusetts Dartmouth	6	62
2	Rhode Island College	2	51
3	Western Connecticut		49
4	Plymouth State U.		40
5	<b>EASTERN CONNECITUCT</b>		35
6	Keene State College		26
7	U. of Massachusetts Boston		15
8	U. of Southern Maine		10