

## The University of Massachusetts History

The University of Massachusetts Amherst was established in 1863 under the original Morrill Land Grant Act. The campus is the oldest and largest in the state university system.

Four faculty members and four wooden buildings awaited the first entering class of 56 students at the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1867. The first degrees were awarded in 1871. The first graduate degrees were authorized in 1892. “Mass Aggie” became Massachusetts State College in 1931, and the University of Massachusetts in 1947.

Two legislative breakthroughs were responsible in part for the University’s progress over the past three decades: the 1956 “Freedom Bill,” giving the University authority to appoint faculty members at any salary within the rank’s established range, and the 1962 “Fiscal Autonomy Bill,” transferring from the Legislature to the Trustees full control—within budget and salary scale limits—over professional personnel actions and many purchasing procedures.

Since World War II, the University experienced rapid growth in its physical facilities, enrollment, and quality of programs. The physical growth, crested in the decade of the ‘70s, the beginning of a fairly stable enrollment plateau that continued until budget cuts and tuition increases triggered enrollment declines in the early ‘90s. During the latter half of the decade,

enrollments have experienced a slight increase and appear to have stabilized at approximately 25,000.

The University’s second campus was opened in Boston in 1965 and expanded to the Harbor Campus in 1974. A third campus, the University of Massachusetts Medical Center at Worcester, was founded in 1962 and enrolled its first class in 1970. The same year, the President’s Office was moved from Amherst to separate offices in Boston, and the office of Chancellor was established as the primary administrative position at each campus.

In 1989, the Board of Trustees commissioned a blue-ribbon panel to examine “...the future role of the University of Massachusetts in the Commonwealth, its governance and financing.” The Commission on the Future of the University (better known as the “Saxon” Commission, after its chair, MIT Corporation Chairman and President Emeritus of the University of California David S. Saxon) called for the consolidation of all five public university campuses (the three UMass campuses, the University of Lowell, and Southeastern Massachusetts University, later renamed University of Massachusetts Dartmouth) into a single university sector with an autonomous governing board. In 1991, Governor William F. Weld signed legislation implementing much of the Saxon Commission’s report

and creating a new five-campus University of Massachusetts with a single president and Board of Trustees.

## The University Today

The University is governed by a Board of Trustees with members who are appointed by the Governor. The students of each of the five campuses elect a student trustee, and two of these five serve as voting members of the Board on a rotating basis. Governance responsibility in some areas (e.g., tuition rates, academic program review and approval) is shared with the statewide Board of Higher Education. Board policy is administered by the president and the five campus chancellors.