

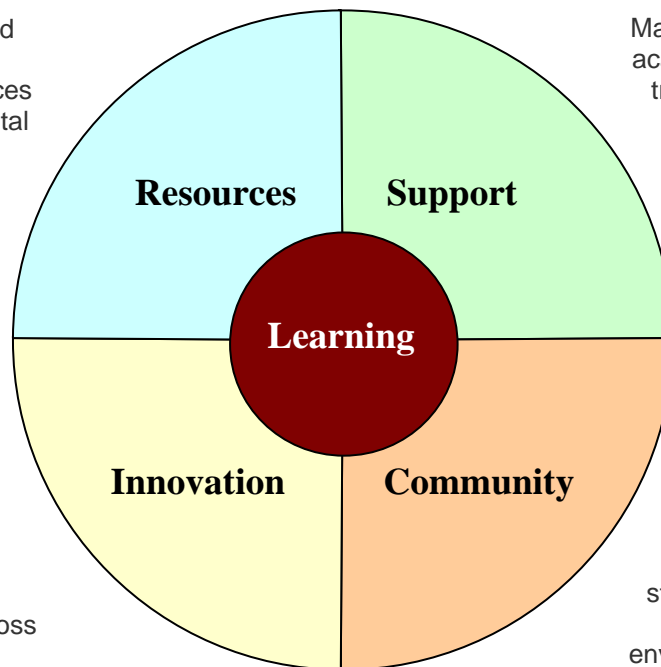
# The Learning Commons

## The Opportunity

Faculty and administrators have been meeting over the last year to discuss the creation of a dynamic teaching and learning environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Representing the W.E.B. Dubois Library, Academic Computing, the Center for Teaching, the Provost's Office, the Information Technology Program, and several departments across all the schools and colleges, this group is exploring how to bring together the best principles of teaching and learning into a single cohesive effort, one that would serve the needs of UMass' diverse student body and academic disciplines. The result of several months of spirited and collaborative debate is the Learning Commons, a proposal to renovate the main floor of the library as the center of a new learning environment.

The Learning Commons is envisioned as a vibrant open studio environment with seamless, coordinated resources and services—a place where students will be able to access the library's extensive print and electronic collections; utilize state-of-the-art technology for research and coursework; meet with faculty and fellow students in comfortable, inviting breakout rooms; and receive support from experts in research, technology, writing, and the disciplines. The Commons will encourage engagement with information in its various forms, reinforce the value of collaborative inquiry, and create new opportunities for community interaction.

Enrich knowledge, skills, and inquiry-based learning by improving access to resources (e.g., library collections, digital databases) and technology.



Maximize the efficient delivery of academic support services (e.g., training, tutoring) by increasing visibility and student use.

Support development, evaluation, and diffusion of innovative pedagogy and instructional technology across all disciplines.

Promote student-student and student-faculty interaction in an inviting social and cultural environment (e.g., café, theater).

## The Funding

Funding for the envelope that will contain the Learning Commons is in place, and construction is expected to begin in Summer 2004. We are currently seeking partners in the development of systems and applications of technologies to help make the Learning Commons a model 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment for public research universities.