

Dear Prospective ENVIRO TAP Students,

Congratulations on being accepted to the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and furthermore, congratulations on your invitation to join the ENVIRO TAP Program! My name is Aarati Halbe. I am presently a freshman majoring in Environmental Sciences at the University.

I recently completed my first semester in the ENVIRO TAP program at UMass. I am an international student and was extremely nervous when I started at the University. In my time here, I have found the program to be immensely beneficial, and I encourage you to consider joining the program for your first year here.

My biggest concern when joining the University was the size of the student body and classes. The TAP program makes it so that the University gains the feel of a smaller college. You are guaranteed small class sizes, especially in those directly related to the environmental field. Some classes, such as College Writing, comprise of students from other Residential Academic Programs (RAP) also. As such, the classes are intellectually stimulating, and you will get to know both your classmates and professors personally.

Small classes are especially important as they make for a more involved learning experience. The professor is able to immediately address any problems you may have due to the small number of students. You are surrounded by people you know. This makes it easier to ask questions and to start discussions. TAP classes are typically held in your residential area, and thus it is not difficult to get from class to class.

As a freshman, you are generally given last priority when selecting your courses. As a TAP student, you are able to evade this luck of the draw. Your faculty advisors will do everything they can to ensure that you get into the class of your choice. In addition, you are reserved a spot in certain core courses.

All ENVIRO TAP students live on the same floor. Since all members of the program take the same core courses, it is never difficult to get help or to catch up on a missed class. Living with TAP students enables you to meet people with similar interests. Often students from other TAPs or RAPs also live on the same floor, and it is not at all difficult to meet new people who do not share your major.

An important part of the residential aspect of TAP is that all TAP students live in the Southwest residential area. Southwest is the largest of all the residential areas on campus, and is most requested by students.

TAP students also get to live in “Z-rooms” which are among the largest on campus and are extremely well set up so as to maximize the use of space. They also allow you and your roommate to set up the room such that there is a greater level of privacy than in a typical rectangular room. This is important, especially when living away from home for the first time.

One of the greatest advantages of being a part of this program is the TAP seminar. This course is a one-credit requirement for all TAP students. Every week, professors from the different concentrations in the Environmental Science major come in to speak to you about their work, and the choices and experiences that brought them to what they do now. Students are often unaware of how much the field has to offer, and this course gives them an idea of what opportunities are open to them for the future.

On the whole, ENVIRO TAP is an excellent program. It will ensure that you are headed in the right direction in the Environmental field, and you will benefit immensely – both academically and socially. I sincerely hope that you will actively consider becoming a member of the program and I look forward to meeting you at the ENVIRO TAP Spring Reception. I hope to see you at UMass in the fall! Congratulations again on your acceptance!

Sincerely,

Aarati Halbe
ENVIRO TAP Student Ambassador
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