Student Resource Booklet

Small Communities Big Opportunities

Residential Academic Programs

Discover! Explore! Succeed!

Fall 2015

UMass Amherst

rap.umass.edu
Greetings!

Welcome to one of the best living and learning opportunities on campus! RAP provides a framework for you to develop valuable relationships with instructors and peers as you transition to the new world of college life – being independent and responsible for your own academic, social and personal success.

In this RAP course, you will join in stimulating discussions, collaborative learning activities and projects that will encourage you to become an active member of the UMass community. In addition, you will participate in a variety of academic and social events that will inspire you to become life-wide as well as life-long learners.

Throughout the semester, your RAP instructor will encourage you to attain the following goals:

- Be an active participant in class.
- Become a strong self-advocate.
- Develop a sense of community with your RAP peers.
- Collaborate on projects and activities.
- Reflect upon and make meaning from what you are learning in different courses and relate that information to your life experiences and goals.
- Become connected and engaged with both resources and opportunities that the university and the surrounding community have to offer.
- Understand and appreciate the value of the General Education (Gen Ed) program.

This Student Resource Booklet is intended to provide you with some basic information and suggestions to assist with your transition to college.

Throughout the booklet you’ll see QR (quick response) codes which use the camera on your smartphone to get ‘quick’ access to a website. Both Google Play and the App Store have free QR readers for you to download.

Finally, be sure to use the Academic Planner for Student Success that you received at fall NSO – it’s filled with a wealth of information and resources.

Have a wonderful semester,

Kathy Weilerstein,
Director of Academic Programs for First-Year Students

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Course Syllabi – Your Key to Success

In college, a course syllabus is a contract between the professor and the student. There is a wealth of information that will be included in each syllabus:

1. Course title, day, time and location of the class
2. The names and contact information of the professor and teaching assistants
3. Office hours and locations to meet with the professor and teaching assistants
4. Course objectives
5. Required materials: textbooks, course packets & technology
6. What you have to do: papers, exams, projects
7. Dates assignments are due
8. The numerical value of each assignment
9. How your final grade will be calculated
10. A statement about disability services and academic honesty

If any of the above information is missing from a syllabus, ask the professor.

At the beginning of the semester you can use your syllabi to ensure that you have a manageable workload.

Step 1: Gather all of your syllabi and look carefully at what will be expected.
- What does the instructor hope you will achieve? (#4 listed above)
- How much money will you have to spend? (#5 listed above)
- What is the balance of papers, exams, projects, etc.? (#6, 8 & 9 listed above)

Step 2: Plot your semester information in your Academic Planner (on paper or online).
- Record instructor contact information. (#2 listed above)
- Enter EVERY major exam or assignment on the due dates for the ENTIRE semester for each course. (#7 listed above). Get a visual sense of the flow of your semester.
- Confirm that you are confident in your ability to earn strong grades.

Step 3: If you are concerned about any of your courses or your overall course load, speak with an advisor!

Your advisor or advising center is listed under the “Primary Advisor” tab on the Student Center section of SPIRE.

A complete list of the advising centers can be found online at: umass.edu/gateway/academics/advising

Be sure to make any changes on SPIRE before the end of the ADD/DROP period on September 21, 2015.
SYLLABI continued

Something as simple as a quick **look over your syllabi each week** can raise your chances of earning a strong grade in the class!

Although professors may not talk about what they have written on their syllabus – they expect that you are reading it and they hold you accountable for being aware of all the information including exam dates, paper and project due dates, etc. **Throughout the semester refer back to your syllabi for:**

- **Weekly homework assignments:** Even if your professor does not explicitly state in class what is due the next time you meet students must take the initiative to keep up with homework.

- **Extra help:** If you find yourself getting behind in work or you are confused about any of the information presented in class go to office hours or email your professor to make an appointment.

- **Questions about the course:** If you have a question about ANY course expectations, reread the syllabus first. You may find an answer to your question. Professors do not like being asked questions that are addressed in the syllabus.

- **Assignment requirements and descriptions:** Professors often include descriptions, guidelines and expectations for course assignments. Read through this information before beginning any assignments and while working on them as specifics may not be mentioned during classes.

- **Grade calculation:** It is a good idea to keep track of your grades and calculate your overall average throughout the semester. See # 8 on the previous page.

**Working for success:** Look ahead! At the end of your academic week look ahead and see what is on the agenda for the following week. Pay attention to paper and exam deadlines. It is never too early to begin outlining a paper or studying for an exam.

*Time management and planning are two of the most important skills for success in college.*
SUCCESS THROUGH ACTION

Developing relationships with professors / instructors / TAs and advisors will increase your success in college.

- Meeting with an instructor will help your motivation and engagement in the course and often lead to a higher grade.
- When instructors know who you are, they are able to write reference letters (which you will want soon).

Here are a few possibilities of WHAT you could discuss with your instructors / TAs:

- You were interested in a lecture topic or idea and want to know more.
- There is an upcoming assignment you do not quite understand.
- You want to review your errors on an exam and get pointers in order to earn a higher grade on your next exam.
- You would like some guidance regarding future courses, or major or career goals.

Each instructor / TA will have contact information on his/her syllabus. Attend the office hours listed or email to schedule an appointment or ask a question.

What about meeting/interacting with my advisor?
The advising staff from your major or college can help ensure that you are on track to make adequate progress regarding your academic requirements.

Remember! It is up to you to seek out these connections!

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

When sending email to instructors, advisors and ALL adults on campus be sure to:

- Use your UMass email address. Don’t run the risk of a message sent from your personal email account going to a spam folder.
- ALWAYS put your name and course name in the subject line.
- Begin all emails with a salutation – ‘Dear Professor Walker’. Messages that begin with ‘hey’ do not make a posssitive impression.
- Make the body of your email short, concise and grammatically correct.
- Avoid using ‘text speak’ that might be more appropriate when text messaging (BTW – by the way).
- Include your full name and your SPIRE ID NUMBER as a part of your closing. ‘Sincerely’, ‘Best’, ‘Regards’, even ‘Thanks’, all work well.
- DO NOT “reply all” unless specifically requested to do so.
- Be patient. Don’t expect a professor to respond instantaneously. Many professors list expected email response time in their syllabus.

Don’t forget to proofread your email before sending it!
Autocorrect can be dangerous!
TIME, PLACE & PACE

Be PROACTIVE: Create a work space and schedule that are best suited to your personality and learning style.

Create a space and gather supplies and resources:
- Be sure you locate an area where you can focus and concentrate. There are many to choose from! Consider a space in the library or a study room in your residence hall or in an academic building.
- Gather all the supplies and resources you will need and either leave them in your study location or make them portable to save you time.

Create a schedule:
- **Study time**: Determine the time you will need to study and get your work done. You may require more time than you realize at first. **The general formula is three hours study time for each hour spent in class.**
- **Play time**: It is important to balance the school work and pressures that life may bring with activities that are just for fun.
- **Daily life**: Don’t forget to allocate time for meals, doing laundry, and errands.

Taking care of your mind and body:
- **Maintain a healthy diet**: Eating breakfast, healthy snacks, reducing caffeine and sugar - all help you feel balanced and focused.
- **Get regular physical exercise**: Stay healthy and fit! The benefit to exercise is that it can help you release tension in your body and clear your mind.
- **Identify a systematic, drug-free method of relaxing**: Meditation, yoga and a variety of relaxation classes are available on campus and around town.
- **Talk about your feelings**: It is incredibly helpful to talk about both positive and negative feelings. Find a friend, advisor, member of the clergy, faculty member, counselor or psychotherapist you can be open with.

Share your ideas with others:

Study location ideas

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Relaxation/fun activity ideas

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (Gen Ed)

It’s more than just a checklist!

The goal of the Gen Ed program is to prepare you for learning now and in the future, in the world of work, in pursuit of personal fulfillment and in responsible civic engagement. Fulfilling this requirement will help you stretch your mind and broaden your experiences.

Specifically, the method of instruction together with the curriculum in the Gen Ed courses will guide you in ways that will help you:

- Maximize your college experiences and future career.
- Embrace a lifetime of learning.
- Engage in community activities to become an informed citizen.
- Understand our diverse and rapidly changing world.

In addition to content in your Gen Ed courses, you will be introduced to, taught and required to master one or more of these skills:

- Inquiry and analysis
- Problem solving
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative reasoning
- Information and technology literacy
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Ethical deliberation

How will this RAP course help you with Gen Ed?

In your RAP course you will actively discuss the university’s Gen Ed goals so that you understand the purpose and value of the Gen Ed skills. Then, in future Gen Ed courses you will be able to identify the Gen Ed skills infused into the course content. This can help you appreciate the value of all courses – even those that may seem to have no connection to your area of interest.

More information can be found on the Gen Ed website umass.edu/geden/
FIND MEANING AND LEARN MORE IN EVERY CLASS

One of the goals of the Integrative Experience requirement (a Gen Ed course you will take through your major department in your junior or senior year) is to help you identify value in every course you take.

You can achieve this by taking charge of your learning.

- The more you think about, talk about and make connections – between what you are learning in different courses, or with prior experience – the deeper your engagement, understanding and ultimate “take away” from your courses will be.

The questions below will guide you in realizing this deeper level of meaning in what you are learning which will increase the value of your education.

As you begin a course (or unit in a course), ask yourself:

1. What do I already know about the topic (from previous classes, personal experience, books you have read, etc.)?

2. What am I hoping to learn about the topic?

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY!!

During a course (or unit in a course), ask yourself:

1. How does something in this course/unit relate to something I previously learned or I am learning in another course?

2. How does something in this course connect to my interests and/or goals?
STUDYING IN GROUPS GIVES YOU AN ADVANTAGE!

Research shows that students who study with their peers develop a deeper understanding of material and earn higher grades.

REASONS TO CONSIDER A STUDY GROUP

- Study groups can energize and motivate you to focus on your academic task.
- You improve your ability to work as a member of a team.
- A study group can help you improve your note-taking skills by reviewing your peers’ notes and sharing yours.
- Oral discussion and explaining concepts to others increase your level of understanding and the likelihood of remembering information and concepts you are learning.

TIPS FOR FORMING A STUDY GROUP

- Commit to regular meetings that fit everyone’s schedule.
- Clarify specific group goals and expectations at the beginning.
- Create a structure!
  - Make agendas for your meetings.
  - Assign tasks, and stick to a detailed timeline.
  - Take care of business during meeting times – you can socialize outside of the study group.
- Follow through. If you say you’ll do something, do it!

What course/s would you like to have a study group for? Who will be in the study group?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

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ACADEMIC & PERSONAL RESOURCES

In addition to emailing or going to instructors’ office hours, you can find support in other areas of campus.

Check out what the Du Bois Library has to offer!

- Learning Resource Center (LRC) on the 10th floor
  - Drop in hours: Sunday – Thursday 1:00PM – 10:00PM.
  - Free 1:1 tutoring in almost every Gen Ed course.
  - Supplemental Instruction for many Gen Ed courses.
  - The ExSEL program offers weekly study groups in several math and science courses for Fall 2015.
  - www.umass.edu/lrc/

- The Writing Center – in the Learning Commons lower level
  - Drop in hours: Sunday – Friday
  - Confirm times online at umass.edu/writingcenter
  - Assistance at any stage of the writing process – brainstorming through final edits.

- Assistive Technologies Center – lower level
  - Open to students with ADA defined disabilities
  - Contact the IT help desk at (413) 545 – 9400

Other resources across campus include:

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<tr>
<th>Center for Counseling &amp; Psychological Health (CCPH)</th>
<th>Information Technology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>127 Hills North, M – F 8AM – 5PM</td>
<td>A109 Lederle Graduate Research tower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(413) 545 – 2337 OR</td>
<td>Open M – F 8:30AM – 4:45PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(413) 577 – 5000 (after hours and weekend on call)</td>
<td>(413) 545 – 9400 OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact online: it.umass.edu/</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Services</th>
<th>Financial Aid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>161 Whitmore, (413) 545 – 0892</td>
<td>243 Whitmore, (413) 545 – 0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.umass.edu/disability">www.umass.edu/disability</a></td>
<td>umass.edu/umfa</td>
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There are even MORE resources listed in your Academic Planner for Student Success.
EXPAND YOUR ACADEMIC HORIZONS

There are some fantastic ways to enhance your college experience.
It’s not too early to start planning!

As member of a RAP, you are also part of an exciting initiative at UMass Amherst called Global Pathways Student (GPS).
GPS incorporates all the RAP goals stated in this resource booklet and adds the element of taking your college experience to the next level. Specifically, GPS is designed to get you excited about a variety of opportunities that will enhance your college experience and enable you to develop the skills, tools and knowledge to take charge of your college education and be an active and engaged member of the global community upon graduation.

Global Pathways Student Panels, sponsored by RAP and UMass CALLS (Community Action through Learning, Leadership and Service) provide a chance for you to hear stories from upper class students about their personal experiences with various programs and opportunities. We hope this will help you realize that there are many wonderful options for you to choose from – and many are easier to participate in than you might have imagined. We are confident that participation in one or more of these opportunities will significantly enhance your overall satisfaction with your college years.

Fall Semester 2015 Global Pathways Student Panel

Dates: CHOOSE ONE
All panels will be from 7:00-8:30PM.
Location details will be announced when finalized.

Wednesday, November 4
Monday, November 16
Thursday, November 5
Tuesday, November 17

GPS PANEL INFORMATION

Five College Interchange:
You can enroll in courses at Amherst, Hampshire, Smith and Mount Holyoke Colleges. You may participate if you are:

- A second semester freshman - or beyond – AND
- In good academic standing AND
- Registered for at least one 3-credit UMass course

For more info:

- Go online at umass.edu/fivecollegeinterchange
- Visit the Five College Interchange Office in 613 Goodell or call 413-545-5352.
GPS PANEL INFORMATION (continued)

Domestic Exchange:
UMass Amherst students can choose to spend:
- One semester OR A full academic year at a participating state school through the National Student Exchange (NSE) program.
Check it out!
- Attend an information session held on Thursdays and Fridays at 2:30 PM in the Domestic Exchange Office located in 613 Goodell or
- Call 413-545-5351 if you have questions.
- Go on line for more information at umass.edu/domesticexchange/

Study Abroad: International Programs Office
- Students in all majors can study abroad
- Over 400 program options
- More than 50 countries
- Explore the many options- semester, year, or even summer
So many choices! Before you begin:
- Meet with a Study Abroad Peer Advisor at The Education Abroad Advising Center, 455 Hills South, M-F 10AM-4PM OR
- Go online at umass.edu/ipo/ for more information

Internships:
Gain valuable work experience on or off campus:
- Learn new skills
- Work alongside professionals in the field
- Explore your career goals
- Part-time and full-time options
How do I get started?
- Attend an information session in Career Services (508 Goodell). The schedule is online at umass.edu/careers/career-services-calendar

UMass CALLS:
UMass CALLS is a primary resource for students interested in getting involved in their communities.
- Get connected to volunteer and service opportunities that fit your interests.
- Stay abreast of upcoming events through the blog and events calendar
- Subscribe to a weekly newsletter which features volunteer and service opportunities http://blogs.umass.edu/volunteerlead/programs-and-projects/

Office of Undergraduate Research and Studies (OURS):
OURS is a resource for all undergraduates in all majors and at all stages of experience. OURS helps students find research and scholarly opportunities on and off campus throughout the years. Students are also supported in preparing for and navigating the application process. Check it out online at umass.edu/ours
ACADEMIC PLAN: WHAT’S YOURS?

An Academic Plan is a method for you to map out short, intermediate and long-term goals with activities that are designed to guide you toward achievement of your overall academic goal – to become a college graduate fully prepared to enter the world as a contributing global citizen.

An Academic Plan should contain GOALS:

- What do you want to experience in college (coursework and beyond)? ________________

- Why and how will those experiences be important to you? ______________

- What do you want to accomplish by the end of this semester? ______________

An Academic Plan should include EVALUATION and REVISION. As each semester ends, consider:

- Did you meet your semester goals? Why or why not? ______________

- What changes can you make in your plan? __________________________

When you develop an academic plan, consider:

- Course requirements: university, college and major
  - Monitor your grades to ensure you are maintaining the required GPA.

- Activities outside the classroom
  - Explore the programs and opportunities on pages 12 and 13.
  - Undertake research with a faculty member.
  - Get involved in student government.

Many people on campus can assist you with the development and revision of your academic plan. You can discuss your ideas with your classmates, upper class students, faculty, teaching assistants, staff from various offices, and especially your Academic Advisor.
GOING BEYOND ACADEMICS

UMass Amherst Student Organizations
How Do You Get Involved?

At UMass Amherst you have access to an online tool that can provide you with information about extra-curricular options, and if used consistently, can provide you with a co-curricular transcript upon graduation!

Campus Pulse is:
- Your daily calendar where you can find out about a multitude of interesting campus events and activities.
- An online method to join a Registered Student Organization (RSO) where you will meet a community of other students who share your interests.
- A place to get involved with the Student Government Association (SGA) – serve on a committee, learn how to run for office, find out what happened at SGA meetings.

Log in to Campus Pulse using your UMass Net ID, and check in regularly to find out what's happening. Track your involvement at umass.edu/campuspulse

Look at Campus Pulse - it has lots to offer! List at least two activities/events you discovered and will check out.

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
For more information or assistance, stop by the Center for Student Development (CSD) in Room 416 in the Student Union.

Check out the Activities Expo at the start of each semester!

Go.UMass is a device – responsive website. The portal combines students’ personalized academic information (e.g. class schedule, Moodle course components) with other useful campus information, such as dining menus, campus maps, news, events, and athletic scores. Students can also connect to the UMass Amherst Libraries WorldCat Catalog and search the University directory within the portal.

Go.UMass is available anytime, anywhere, from computers, smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices at: go.umass.edu/home/
SPRING SEMESTER PLANNING

When do I choose courses for the next semester?
The period in which you enroll for courses for next semester typically starts in mid-late November. The exact time is posted on Spire as your Enrollment Appointment.

What is my Enrollment Appointment, and how do I find it?
Your Enrollment Appointment is the time at which you may begin to register for courses in Spire. It does not refer to a time you meet with someone.

1. Check on Spire to see your personalized start date and time for registration for the next semester.
2. You cannot register before your Enrollment Appointment.
3. Plan to register as close to the time given as possible. It is important to be ready with courses in your shopping cart because they fill up quickly!

How can I prepare for my Enrollment Appointment?
- Check for and resolve any HOLDS you may have.
- Surf around on Spire for courses that interest you.
- Consult your Academic Plan.
- Depending on your major, you may need to meet with an advisor.
- Check out myedu.com. It is a very helpful, free, online schedule builder assistant.
- Seek out your Peer Mentor if you need help with Spire.

How can I prepare for my advisor appointment?
Do your ‘homework’ and go to your advising appointment with a list of potential courses and questions.

Make sure to keep track of your major and/or minor requirements. Bring any questions regarding these requirements to your advising appointment. A checklist of required courses can be found on each department page.

Did you enjoy having a small section of a Gen Ed course?
Check out the RAP website for information about spring courses open to any first – year student! rap.umass.edu