

Five College Students FAQ

Important Computer Account Information for Five College Students Taking UMass Courses

What is the NetID and how do I get one?

Your NetID serves as the user name for your Office of Information Technologies (OIT) Account and gives you access to most online services at UMass Amherst. Once you register for a UMass course through the Five College registration process, OIT automatically issues you a NetID. No other account application process is required. OIT sends your login credentials, i.e., your NetID and temporary password, to your home college email account, if you provided one on the registration form. Otherwise, OIT mails your login credentials via USPS to your local mailing address. Besides your NetID and temporary password, the mailing also includes your 8-digit SPIRE ID, which you may need when speaking to the UMass Registrar's Office or for logging into OWL (see below). Once you activate your account, you can access UMass online resources.

What online resources do I need to access at UMass?

SPARK is the Learning Management System at UMass Amherst. It is used by many instructors for assigning and submitting class work, discussions, quizzes and surveys. You log in using your NetID. You cannot use SPARK to access course materials until your registration process is complete, the NetID has been issued, and your course enrollment has been passed to SPARK. For more information on SPARK, see <http://oit.umass.edu/spark/students/index.html>.

MOODLE is the new learning management system that will replace SPARK by January 2013. MOODLE is used to deliver course content and host online learning activities. Starting Fall 2011, there will be a limited number of courses participating in a pilot program of MOODLE.

OWL is an online learning environment used for quizzes and homework. Some courses that use OWL are connected to SPARK. For those courses, after you log in to SPARK, you see a button that leads you directly into OWL without an additional login page. For courses that use OWL but do not use SPARK, you must use a separate OWL login that likely will not be your NetID. Either the instructor or the OWL administrator creates the OWL logins from the class roster. You probably will log in with Login = 8-digit SPIRE ID and Password = last name. If that doesn't work, check with your instructor or follow the instructions on the OWL login page to report a problem or request a login. For more information on OWL, see <http://owl.oit.umass.edu>.

SPIRE is the UMass online student information system. Five College students enrolled at UMass use SPIRE to view their UMass class schedule, to change personal information, to view grades, and to set emergency contacts and campus alerts. As a Five College student, you cannot use SPIRE to add or drop courses or to request transcripts. Contact your home Registrar's Office if you need to add or drop a course.

Other UMass online resources available to you include UDrive, email, and blogs. For more information, see the OIT help pages at <http://www.oit.umass.edu/index.html>.

I registered for my UMass class three days ago; why can't I get into SPARK?

The Five College registration procedure is a partially manual process.. It takes time to coordinate and finalize the registration transactions between the UMass Registrar and your home school's Registrar's Office. Once your registration is complete, the time to issue your NetID and pass your enrollment to SPARK will take another few days. Therefore, it is very important to register as early as possible so that you can participate in class and access your assignments right away.