Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Description

In 1998, UMass Amherst presented itself to the public primarily in its print publications. At that time the campus had just appointed a web design team to maintain and develop the official campus website. Since then there has been an increased reliance on technology and the UMass website now serves as the primary mode of presentation for the campus, augmented by numerous print and various other electronic publications. This has enabled the campus to be more transparent and to improve the quantity and quality of information available to its varied audiences, particularly to its current and prospective students. Official statistics about the institution, undergraduate and graduate catalogs, policies and procedures, detailed description of academic offerings, and news stories about students, faculty and staff are now accessible through the campus website www.umass.edu.

As a public institution, state law mandates that much of the information about the campus be publicly available. The campus complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and other federal and local legislation concerning the privacy of student and personnel data. Information about the institution, its faculty, staff and finances is accessible through various institutional websites including the home page, http://www.umass.edu/umhome/about/. The Office of Institutional Research website, http://www.umass.edu/oir contains extensive information about the campus with links to a Public Disclosure site, http://www.umass.edu/disclosure that links to information about the institution, major publications, FERPA regulations and financial statements. Other websites, such as the Budget Office’s (http://www.umass.edu/af/budget/Budget_Office_Data_Statistics.htm), the Chancellor’s website www.umass.edu/chancellor, and the Admissions’ Office website, http://www.umass.edu/admissions/fast_facts/ also provide detailed information about the campus.

Reasonable ad hoc requests for information that do not violate FERPA or other privacy laws are reviewed and responded to by the appropriate office. The University Registrar's Office has established a process to review requests for public information that could potentially infringe on privacy. The committee includes representatives from the Registrar’s Office, Dean of Students, Government and Community Relations, and Office of Institutional Research. Whenever the committee is uncertain, requests for information are referred to University Counsel for advice.

The undergraduate and graduate catalogs are published annually. The Guide to Undergraduate Programs is available both as a print and a web-based publication. Beginning in 2008-09, the Graduate Bulletin became exclusively web-based. Information concerning the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, which offers the Associate’s degree, is currently available only on its website (http://www.umass.edu/stockbridge/index/) while a revised print publication is under development. The Division of Continuing and Professional Education lists courses and programs

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it offers, along with information about them, on its website (http://www.umassulearn.net^^). Whether electronic or paper, these catalogs furnish accurate information on academic programs and support services. Some of this information appears in the Undergraduate Viewbook^, a print publication that is sent to prospective students but also available on the Admissions Office website (http://www.umass.edu/admissions/^^).

University regulations for undergraduate students appear in the annually revised Academic Regulations (^) and in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs^; those relating to graduate students can be found in the Graduate School Handbook (^) and the Guidelines for Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations (^). Information on these topics may also be found in the publications and websites produced by individual academic departments and programs. Information on student fees, charges and refund policies appears in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs and the Graduate Bulletin. Financial Aid Services publications, such as the Guide to Financial Aid (http://www.umass.edu/umfa/^^), and on the Bursar’s website, http://www.umass.edu/bursar/index.html^^. All undergraduate students are responsible for complying with the rules, regulations, policies and procedures detailed in the Code of Student Conduct (^). The Code appears in multiple print and electronic publications including the Daily Planner and is updated and distributed to all undergraduates at the beginning of the academic year. It is also available on the Dean of Students Office website (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/^^). Policies and procedures pertaining to graduate students appear in the Graduate Student Handbook (^).

A list of current full-time faculty is published annually in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs^^ and the Graduate Bulletin^. The information provided includes department or program affiliations, degrees held, and the institutions awarding them. Tenure system faculty members are identified separately from non-tenure system faculty, and members of the graduate faculty (those authorized to supervise graduate-level work) are noted in the Graduate Bulletin^. These publications also list faculty affiliated with Five Colleges as well as those from other campuses of the UMass system. These materials also list key administrative officers. Members of the University Board of Trustees are posted on the University system website, http://www.massachusetts.edu/bot/members.html,^^ and the members of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education are listed on its website, http://www.mass.edu/aboutus/boardmembers.asp,^^

The campus offers five degree-granting programs that may be completed partially or exclusively at off-campus locations (Master of Business Administration; M.S. in Plant and Soil Sciences; M.Ed. and C.A.G.S. in Education; and M.P.H. in Public Health). These programs that serve non-traditional students can be completed in the evening, weekends or during the summer. They are administered by Continuing and Professional Education (CPE). Many of the courses are taught by full-time Amherst campus faculty. CPE also has a dedicated advising office and twenty-four hour online technical support is available for students and faculty. Academic advising is also offered by individual programs, and faculty members often hold office hours at these locations. A list of these programs (http://www.umassulearn.net/Programs^^) and associated student support services (http://www.umassulearn.net/Student-Services^^) can be found on the CPE website (https://www.umassulearn.net/^^) and program-specific websites.

Campus policy requires undergraduate and graduate catalogs to list only approved courses that have either been offered during the previous two years or will be offered in the upcoming academic year. Catalogs are used in conjunction with a schedule of courses published each

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semester which is available on the Registrar’s website (http://www.umass.edu/Registrar/). The availability of programs, courses, and services listed in the catalogs is updated annually and archived for future reference.

UMass Amherst publishes, both in print and electronic form, updated campus information such as the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, physical resources and the range of both curricular and co-curricular opportunities available to students. Information about the campus is prominently displayed on the campus website (http://www.umass.edu/oapa/publications/accreditation/programs.pdf) with links to other sites for more detailed information. A schedule of events and other information on programs and activities also appears regularly in the weekly electronic publication In the Loop, on the Arts and Events section of the campus website (www.umass.edu/umhome/events), the Daily Collegian student newspaper, and in a range of specialty publications, such as those listing intramural sports activities. The Office of Institutional Research maintains an extensive website (http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oir/index.php) with comprehensive information on enrollment, retention and graduation rates, faculty and staff, financial and other institutional measures. Admissions publications, including the Viewbook, are distributed to more than 75,000 potential students, parents and others interested in learning about UMass Amherst, and the webpage version (http://www.umass.edu/admissions/) annually receives more than 25 million hits.

A statement of learning goals for each academic program is included in the descriptions appearing in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs and the Graduate Bulletin. Program websites and publications also provide supplemental information on academic goals and expected outcomes. A full description of the campus’s program of learning outcomes and their assessment is included in Standard Four and the E-series tables accompanying this Report. The Office of Institutional Research produces a series of analyses on the retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students, both first-year, and transfers (www.umass.edu/oapa/topics/students.php). This information is also reported in the Common Data Set, an annual publication that includes information about admissions, transfer students, enrollment and financial aid. A doctoral student tracking system has been developed in recent years, and program-level information on doctoral student retention and graduation rates is also available (http://www.umass.edu/oapa/publications/department_profiles/index.php). The campus maintains a public disclosure website (www.umass.edu/disclosure/) with links to information on institutional pass rates on the Massachusetts Educator teacher certification test and performance on the National Council Licensure Examination for nursing graduates.

The campus also publishes information about financing a college education on its website (www.umass.edu/umfa/basics/costs/) and in print. The Guide to Financial Aid is intended to help current and prospective students and families understand the options for funding their education, including the cost of attendance, financial aid eligibility, and the types of grant aid and loans for which they may be eligible. It also lists other financial aid resources available. The Guide addresses debt management and includes examples of loan repayment plans so that students can estimate their loan repayment schedule after graduation. A companion publication, Financial Aid Facts & Figures supplies additional information on how to apply for aid.

The Office of News and Media Relations promotes the achievements of UMass Amherst, explains its policies, and enhances recognition of its accomplishments as a national research institution and the state’s flagship public university. The staff follows a thorough process to

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identify and double-check information released about campus achievements. The achievements of faculty, staff, students and alumni are documented through individual interviews, peer-reviewed publications, grant applications and awards, database and Web research, and news releases issued by awarding groups. The office also tracks and records rankings issued by general interest publications such as *U.S. News & World Report* and *SmartMoney* as well as trade publications ranging from *Combined Cycle Journal* (a power plant publication) to *Restaurants and Institutions* magazine.

UMass Amherst prints accurate information about its accreditation status in both its undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The status of various professional program accreditations—such as Nursing, Management and Engineering—appears in relevant sections of catalogs and in other print and electronic publications (www.umass.edu/oapa/publications/accreditation/programs.pdf[^]). Drafts of this NEASC Self-Study has been available on the campus website (www.umass.edu/neasc[^]) where individuals are invited to review the report and provide feedback. The final version of the Self-Study submitted to NEASC will remain available on that website for the duration of the accreditation period. Prior to the accreditation team visit in November 2009, notice of the reaccreditation process will be published in area newspapers and publications distributed to alumni, to families of current students and to other supporters who have contributed to campus development efforts. In each instance, readers will be invited to submit comments about UMass Amherst to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

**Appraisal and Projection**

In fall 2008 the new administration centralized communications and marketing efforts and established a new University Relations executive area. Its goal is to improve the coordination of the communication strategy for the campus, and more effectively link it to key university priorities in the areas of student recruitment, fundraising, alumni, government and community relations, and internal communications. To date, there has been a redesign of the UMass homepage which was launched in March 2009, the creation of a free design service for the entire campus, the implementation of a state-of-the-art media distribution system (http://www.vocus.com[^]), and the creation of “Look, Tone and Feel Guidelines” to help create broad consensus and consistency in the campus message.

The new University Relations unit will drive much of its work around market-research data and has already initiated new research efforts including focus groups, surveys and web surveys designed to understand current market conditions. This information will provide useful assessment information that should enhance campus performance in priority areas such as admissions and fundraising.

The campus public disclosure website (http://www.umass.edu/disclosure[^]), that contains links to relevant information, was developed in response to the Higher Education Act of 1998. Some provisions in the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) may present challenges to the campus by requiring increased disclosure of accountability and consumer information for current and prospective students. At this time, some of these reporting requirements remain vague and, like many other campuses, UMass Amherst is awaiting guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. Most of this information currently exists, but it will require coordination among offices, such as Institutional Research, Registrar and Financial Aid, to assemble and display this

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information. Eventually, consumer information will also be incorporated in the Integrated Post Secondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) data collection and made available on the U.S. Department of Education College Navigator website^.

UMass Amherst will participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) which will assist in complying with Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) because the VSA will provide web links to a good deal of the consumer information.

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