Standard 6: Students

Admissions, Financial Aid and Records

Description

UMass Amherst maintains an orderly and ethical admissions program directed toward meeting the enrollment goals of the university. Application procedures, the application process, required tests, admissions standards and the decision making process, as well as Massachusetts Department of Higher Education requirements, are available for freshman applicants at http://www.umass.edu/ug_programguide/admissions/freshman.html, and for transfer applicants at http://www.umass.edu/ug_programguide/admissions/transfer.html, and is published in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs. The admissions office fully subscribes to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Statement of Principles and Good Practices.

First-year applications have increased by 76% since the fall of 2003, rising from 16,427 to 29,968 for fall 2009. During the same period the acceptance rate has fallen by 18 percentage points. Representation of ALANA (African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Native American) students rose between 2003 and 2009 from 17% of the class to 22%. The ALANA proportion of Massachusetts high school seniors planning to attend a four-year college is 18.5%.

The entering freshman class has typically been between 4,000 and 4,200 in recent years, with roughly 77% being Massachusetts residents. The university also enrolls a sizable transfer class each fall of approximately 1,100 students. More than 85% of entering transfer students are from Massachusetts. About one-third enter through a Joint Admissions program with the state’s community colleges which guarantees acceptance upon completion of an associate’s degree with a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA.

The admissions staff recruits students from Massachusetts, New England, the northeast and targeted areas throughout the country. This past year the staff conducted a number of off-campus recruitment activities:

- Approximately 550 visits to high schools.
- 40 College Fairs sponsored by national and regional professional organizations.
- More than 400 college nights and “mini-fairs” sponsored by high schools.
- 36 panel presentations to students and parents.
- 7 receptions for students and family sponsored by the university.
- 9 guidance counselor receptions.

On campus recruiting activities include:

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• Campus tours led by current undergraduate students. The number of visitors participating in campus tours has increased 46%, to 31,268, since 2003.
• Group information sessions are available twice a day, 6 days a week.
• Fall Open House is a campus wide event held in October for all prospective students and their families. Attendance has increased to approximately 4,500 in fall 2003.
• A series of ten Open House programs for admitted students in the spring. Two Early Action sessions have been added, and overall attendance has increased to more than 7,200 admitted students and family members.

In 2006, the Admissions Office instituted an Early Action (EA) program designed for applicants with strong academic records who wish to apply early and receive an early admissions decision. Deposits are not required until the standard reply date, May 1. Early Action applications have more than doubled, from 3,030 for fall 2006 to 8,000 for the fall 2009 entering class. EA applications made up 16% of the 2006 entering class, rising to 22% in 2009.

Beginning in fall 2007, UMass Amherst participated in the Common Application, a member organization that provides online as well as paper applications that members agree to accept and treat as they would their own applications. In the three years UMass Amherst has participated, the portion of the applicant pool using the Common Application has grown from 54% to 82%.

Student financial aid information is clearly presented through the Financial Aid website. Need based aid is used to promote access to higher education; merit based funding enhances the academic quality of the student body.

Detailed financial aid information is available in printed materials as well as the website. Financial aid information is presented to families at admission open house events. The only application required for financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The financial aid office follows all federal, State and institutional policies and regulations related to the managing of financial aid. The office is audited on an annual basis by an independent auditor as required by federal regulations and every third year is audited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Students can access their financial aid information at any time through the online registration and records system, SPIRE.

UMass Amherst has established a schedule for student records retention and final disposition that assures consistency and security of students’ permanent record (see attached). The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs release of all student records. The security staff in the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) manage the access approval process for University employees who require student records to execute their job duties. All staff who have access to student records are FERPA-certified by OIT. All third party requests for access to student records are reviewed by the Directory Committee, which has representation from the Dean of Students (as the University FERPA Compliance Officer), the University Registrar, the Office of Institutional Research and the Office of Public Affairs.

Appraisal

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The university has consistently met its enrollment targets for first year students and transfers. The numbers of freshman applications has increased dramatically, selectivity has increased, student profile has increased, and ALANA representation has increased. The number of visitors to campus and the number of programs attended and hosted by the admissions office have also increased. Because the campus retains tuition from out-of-state students, and those revenues play an increasingly important part in supporting the campus general operations budget, success with this population represents a critical enrollment goal. The number of out-of-state applications has increased by 86% since 2003, and out-of-state applicants now represent 40% of the total pool, compared to 34% in 2003.

The increases in applications, selectivity and academic profile present the university with several challenges:

- The campus has begun to compete more directly with the large private institutions in the state.
- This heightened competition is reflected in yield (the percentage of applicants who accept our offer of admission). Students with higher profiles have more choices, and are consequently more difficult to yield. Overall, yield has declined steadily since 2003 from 30% to approximately 21% for fall 2009.
- The current economic recession, while likely to increase interest in UMass Amherst among Massachusetts residents, may further complicate efforts to attract non-residents.
- For the first time since 2003, out-of-state applications have decreased. Again, this may in part reflect larger economic trends, but it also underscores the challenge of competing head-to-head for the limited number of higher-profile applicants. This challenge is likely to continue given demographic projections of a 15% to 20% decline in high school graduates in Massachusetts and in our primary out-of-state market areas in the northeast.

Significant changes are underway for transfer programs within the state. Students entering Massachusetts community colleges in fall 2009 will no longer qualify for the Joint Admissions program but will instead participate in the new MassTransfer program. Under MassTransfer, students complete coursework ensuring a smooth transition to a bachelor’s degree program; however, the GPA required for guaranteed admission varies based on the program.

The campus has historically emphasized maintaining adequate need-based aid even as student costs have increased. Prior to 2009, a substantial portion of revenues from any student fee increase was devoted to increased need-based aid. This policy continues, but this year included expanded availability of such aid to a broader group of students. Need-based grant aid is now awarded to students with family incomes of less than $90,000; students receive grant aid equal to tuition plus fees minus the students’ expected family contribution.

**Projection**

To maintain enrollment and meet growth scenarios for the future a number of steps are being pursued:

- Closer alignment and integration of enrollment related activities across the campus.

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• Expanded marketing and financial aid research.
• Increased focus on distinctive features of the academic experience for prospective undergraduates.
• Exploration of new strategies to increase out-of-state enrollment:
  o Area representatives who live and recruit in selected geographic areas.
  o Staff dedicated to international student recruitment.
  o Revised and expanded collateral recruiting publications.
  o An expanded and well trained alumni volunteer organization.

In the past the UMass Amherst has done little to integrate financial aid with overall enrollment planning. During 2009 the campus has worked closely with external consultants to assess the effectiveness of financial aid dollars and explore ways of managing aid to improve yield, achieve greater impact, and improve admissions competitiveness.

**Retention and Graduation**

The campus tracks the progress of its undergraduate students on an ongoing basis. Since the last self-study, there have been significant improvements in both the one-year retention and six-year graduation rates of entering first-year students. The one-year rate increased from 80.6% for the fall 1998 cohort to 86.5% for the 2007 cohort. There have been similar gains in the six-year graduation rates which increased from 61.9% for students entering in fall 1998 to 69.1% for the fall 2002 cohort. These gains have been accompanied by gradual improvement in the SAT and more notably, the high school grade point average. The latter is a better predictor of one-year retention. Although the campus has made progress in this area, both academic profile and retention and graduation rates are somewhat below the average of other major public universities.

The campus also monitors the retention and graduation rates of special populations of students including students who enter the institution as transfers and students in selected majors. For example, the campus has participated in an NSF funded project to increase the participation rate of undergraduate students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The progress of students who entered in STEM majors is tracked and updated annually. The campus participates in the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), and retention and graduation data are submitted to CSRDE for full-time first-year students, including STEM majors, and community college transfer students. The campus uses these data to compare the retention and graduation rates of UMass Amherst students to the rates for similar populations at other research universities.

Figure 6.1
The campus’s strategy to promote student retention and graduation are described in the following components of this Standard, and in the discussion of academic advising in Standard Five.

**Student Services**

The responsibility for most student support services at UMass Amherst falls to the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Campus Life. Its charge is to enhance the life of students outside of the classroom, enriching their intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural, ethical and social development in a safe and secure environment (see *Student Affairs Mission Statement*).

Student Affairs serves a population of approximately 19,000 undergraduate students. Of these, 80.1% are in-state students, 2% are part of the New England Regional Student Program, 16.5% are out-of-state students, .9% are international, and .5% are students participating in an exchange. During the 2008 academic year, 11,410 undergraduates lived on campus, 170 in fraternities, 210 in sororities, and 8750 off campus. The ethnic makeup of the undergraduate population includes 80.8% White, non-Hispanic students, and 19.2% ALANA (African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Native American) students.
The primary focus of Student Affairs in the past ten years has been to improve the experience of students and therefore improve retention and graduation rates. The goal has been to provide all of the choices of a large university while delivering services on a more intimate scale. To this end, Student Affairs has worked to:

- Eliminate silos and improve cooperation with other campus units (especially Academic Affairs) to ensure that student are engaged in a broad, holistic way (intellectually, emotionally, and physically)
- Further integrate academic and co-curricular experiences
- Make cross-cultural interaction a core campus value
- Break down bureaucratic barriers to student success and their integration into campus life
- Make communications with student and their families seamless
- Develop a comprehensive approach ensure the health and safety of the campus

Student Affairs staff are selected on the basis of formal training and relevant work experience. In 2006, Student Affairs introduced a formal orientation program for all new employees to provide an introduction to the University and focus on diversity in the workplace and creating a respectful environment. Student Affairs employs graduate students, primarily from the Higher Education Administration graduate program, and provides training in student development, multiculturalism, and meeting the needs of underrepresented students.

Many Student Affairs initiatives were sparked or supported by the work of the Commission on Campus Diversity, formed in 2004. The Commission was composed of national experts, campus participants, and community members, and conducted a comprehensive review of UMass Amherst’s approach, support, and investment in campus diversity. The resulting documents: UMass Amherst: A Commitment to Inclusiveness and Diversity (2006) and On Improving Campus Diversity: Action Plan (2005) made a number of recommendations specifically for Student Affairs.

- Student Affairs and Academic Affairs should work together to enhance, build, and reorient their programs and personnel to support student academic success.
- Following the model of comparable institutions, the university should move quickly to fully develop first year only residence halls as part of a “First Year Experience,” in order to provide an effective, academically sound, and socially and culturally enriched first year experience to increase the likelihood of graduation.
- The Office of Student Affairs should organize its programs and activities to ensure that UMass Amherst has one diverse student body and that all students will have full access to the campus’s resources and support. This effort should emphasize intercultural dialogue, and redefining and restructuring the ALANA Support Programs to support connection of students of color with the general campus community, as well as within ALANA student communities.

Over the past five years the campus has focused closely on programs and services to promote student success in the first year. Much of this effort has centered on academic advising (see Feedback

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Standard Five), but also extends to the full range of student services. First-year programs focus on three areas of student development: helping the student develop a complete academic plan, guiding the student in becoming an educated and responsible citizen, and guiding the student in becoming an involved member of the campus community.

**Residential Programs**

UMass Amherst has a long history of residentially-based academic programs. It was an innovator in the 1960s and 1970s through the Inquiry Program and its Residential Colleges in the Orchard Hill and Southwest residential areas, and in recent years has adapted to a very successful program of living-learning communities involving nearly half of first-year students. These programs — the [Residential Academic Programs (RAPs)](http://www.umass.edu/rap/rap_index.htm) and [Commonwealth College Learning Communities](http://www.umass.edu/rap/rap_index.htm) — assign groups of students with similar academic interests to a common residence hall, provide advising and academic support, and enroll those students in one or more small classes related to their academic programs, usually offered in the residential setting. The first RAPs were organized around particular majors, but the model has now been successfully adapted to undeclared students seeking to identify a major, and to honors students in Commonwealth College who can enroll in their required honors coursework through their RAP. The residentially-based learning communities are managed by Undergraduate Advising and Learning Communities (UALC), reporting to the Deputy Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education. The list of current RAP offerings can be found at [http://www.umass.edu/rap/rap_index.htm](http://www.umass.edu/rap/rap_index.htm).

UALC also offers OASIS, a one-credit first-year seminar designed to address the needs of students acclimating to college life and who have not yet selected a major. Taught by advisors in Undergraduate Advising and staff from Residence Life, first-year students are introduced to the academic programs, services, resources, and opportunities available at the university, and to assist them in identifying those that match their interests and abilities.

In 2008, the campus completed the transition to dedicated first-year residence halls. With the advent of first-year residence halls, Student Affairs and Campus Life developed a program of peer-supported communities where students develop an understanding of what is required of a successful student, how to recognize problems early, where to go for help, and how to engage and interact productively with students from many different locations, backgrounds, and experiences. The program encourages students to be involved in campus events and activities and prepares them to take ownership for their academic and personal development.

The Residence Life programs focus on leadership, involvement, academic success, diversity, and transitions. The programming in each hall is developed around a particular interdisciplinary theme. For instance, the “Enterprise & Action” cluster is oriented toward students interested in social action and public service along with those interested in business and economics. “Science, Innovation & Leadership” is oriented toward students interested in science and research. This thematic approach is intended to allow students to live with peers with similar academic and career interests.

In each first-year residence hall, the Residence Life staff of professionals, graduate students, and undergraduates develops and leads activities to create a network of support and guidance. These
include First Year Experience Specialists, Residential Learning Graduate Assistants, Residence Directors, Assistant Residence Directors, Resident Assistants, and Peer Mentors. These activities include:

- Peer mentoring
- Residential Academic Success Centers (staffed by peer mentors, offering academic resources, study groups, workshops)
- Faculty/instructor chats and RAP socials
- Off-campus trips
- Initiatives based on hall themes (e.g. student journal, performances, political discussions)
- Informational bulletin boards
- Community building activities (First Week activities, Trivia Challenge, study breaks, fitness and recreation, social events)
- Majors Fair, Career Services presentation, registration workshops

Appraisal

A strong residential program is important to student success generally, but particularly at an institution like UMass Amherst that houses a very high proportion of its students on campus. The residential academic programs have been important in promoting student success and countering the impersonality of a large institution. Formal evaluation of the RAPs demonstrates that participants show more positive outcomes (first semester GPA, retention, first-year experience) than non-learning community students. The programs have been extremely popular, and have steadily expanded to the current involvement of about 45% of first-year students.

The first-year residence hall program has only been fully implemented since fall 2008, and comprehensive evaluation data are not yet available. Some preliminary assessments have noted positive experiences that matched the goals of a first year program: the support of peers going through similar transitions, ease of getting to know classmates who lived with them, a strong feeling of community in the halls, and appreciation of Peer Mentors as resources. Additional assessment will be required to understand the impact of first-year residence halls and Residence Life programming on student satisfaction and retention.

Projection

The expansion of residential programs for first-year students has created many opportunities for students, but it has also revealed a need for more effective collaboration among the various service providers. With a broad array of formal residential learning communities, dorm “themes,” and multiple staffing approaches, students are presented with a sometimes bewildering set of choices, and responsibilities and hand-offs among staff are not always clear. In addition, the availability and nature of programming varies widely from residence hall to residence hall and from student to student within the same residence hall. The next step in the development of first-year programs is therefore to assess the interplay of programs and services and seek to bring more clarity and consistency to these offerings.

Academic Support Services
The campus does not admit students on a provisional basis, nor does it offer remedial programs. It does, however, offer a number of formal programs to promote student academic success. The Learning Resource Center (LRC), previously known as Learning Support Services, is located in the W. E. B. Du Bois Library and offers tutoring and Supplemental Instruction (SI) to all undergraduate students. This peer-support program offers tutoring on a walk-in basis for 250-300 of the required courses that students often consider difficult. SI sessions are also available in a number of courses that have been shown to be barriers to academic success. SI leaders are students who have successfully completed a course, attend each session of a particular course section and then hold twice weekly 75-minute review sessions for that section. Leaders meet with the course instructor to review course content and are supervised by the LRC.

Academic support programs are also offered by several of the schools and colleges and some academic departments. These efforts include first-year seminars focused on student success (of which OASIS, described above, is one), which involve roughly one-third of first-year students.

An important recent effort to promote student academic success was the development of the Learning Commons, which provides group and individual study facilities, reference and library services, technical support, and advising links 24 hours a day, five days a week on the main floor of the Library in the core of campus. The Learning Commons is fully described in Standard 7.

**Appraisal**

The remarkable success of the Learning Commons is detailed in Standard 7. The development of the Learning Resource Center has been equally impressive, with the number of students taking advantage of LRC programs continuing to grow over the past 5 years. During the 2003-04 academic year 4,789 students visited the LRC for either tutoring or SI; during the most recently completed academic year, 2007-08, 12,112 student visits were recorded.

In addition to counting the number of student visits to LRC, attempts are made to evaluate the services offered through a variety of means: request tallies, class surveys, and one in-depth case study. Request tallies are made at the front desk throughout the semester; the selection of courses supported in subsequent semesters has been adapted to accommodate students’ repeated requests. Communication with faculty has also contributed to the increasing number of courses supported, particularly through SI. Students in classes that include SI complete a survey at the end of each semester, and these surveys have been useful in developing improved training opportunities for the LRC student staff.

**Projection**

LRC will continue to adapt its programs to respond to increasing student interest and promote the campus’s retention goals. For example, student feedback indicated interest in SI support for upper level courses, known to be barriers to student persistence in their majors, particularly in the sciences. A trial of SI in organic chemistry resulted in a significant increase in attendance at SI sessions. The course instructor reported that students performed better on examinations and seemed to have improved understanding of course materials. Similar results were achieved in a
physical chemistry course. These explorations will continue with the objective of bringing effective academic support to courses with the greatest impact on continued student success.

**Orientation, Communication and Interaction**

New Students Orientation (NSO) is an essential element in integrating students into the university and providing information on the resources and services available to them, academic and co-curricular opportunities, and academic expectations. The two-day program, offered in ten sessions over the summer and one in January, includes placement exams for writing and foreign languages, information about academic requirements, work with an academic advisor to register for courses, housing selection, and information on extracurricular opportunities and the full range of campus support services and resources. There are separate sessions for freshmen, transfer students, those entering the Stockbridge School.

One recent development, encouraged in the 2005 Diversity Commission report action plan, is increased emphasis on the connection between the student, the family, and the university. Although NSO had long had a parent program, it was expanded to a full parent and family orientation run concurrently with the student session.

Beginning with their entry to the campus, UMass Amherst maintains consistent communication with students to help them become integrated into the student body. This is a cooperative effort involving Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and other campus units, such as the Office of Information Technologies. Through this program the campus introduces students to the academic and personal support available and their co-curricular options. To ensure consistency and reduce confusion, email contact with students is coordinated consolidated messages are sent on a regular schedule.

As soon as students enroll they receive a Welcome Guide. This detailed handbook brings together information from different units into one clear guide to take students from acceptance to matriculation, including information on preparing for New Students Orientation, technology needs, health insurance and immunizations, housing, financial matters, registration, and move-in. Parents receive a version tailored to their needs and interests. In the period leading to the start of the semester parents also receive a parent newsletter and students receive NSO and Housing Guides.

Student Affairs provides all undergraduate students (on and off campus) with a daily planner. The planner serves several purposes: besides giving students an organizational tool, it puts crucial information in their hands on a daily basis, including contact information for campus offices, the academic calendar with key deadlines and dates, academic regulations, graduation requirements, registration processes, the Code of Student Conduct, university policies and guidelines, laws affecting university students, Housing and Residence Life policies, and safety information.

Recognizing the important role that parents play in their students’ college experience, the Office of Parent Services (OPS) was formed in 2004. OPS offers parents, particularly those who are

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experiencing the first year transition, a “first call” location for any questions and concerns, and often serves as a sounding board. Parent Services also maintains a website with key information and links for parents and send monthly e-mails with updates and reminders to more than 18,000 subscribers.

Appraisal

NSO asks participants to complete written evaluations after each session. NSO freshman and Stockbridge programs tend to be rated highly, with somewhat lower satisfaction reported among transfer students. Across all groups, satisfaction with the process of registering for courses was rated lowest Parent evaluations have also been positive. A larger question is how NSO fits into the effort to build a broader, more coherent, and more effective first-year experience. In that context, NSO must be viewed as the “on ramp” to a larger and ongoing program of orientation and acclimatization.

In addition to improved publications and parent services, the technological advances of the past 5-10 years have significantly eased students’ access to information as well as their ability to manage their lives at UMass Amherst. The advent of SPIRE (part of the campus’s PeopleSoft student system) has allowed the university to ease many interactions and processes. From the initial contact with UMass Amherst, students are able to participate in most university processes online. They may apply for admission online; once accepted, they may activate their Office of Information Technologies (OIT) account, which gives them a UMass Amherst email account and access to SPIRE. Much of the enrollment process takes place online. Students may register for New Students Orientation, take their math placement exam, and register for a Residential Academic Program online soon after admission. They are able to complete important steps regarding health insurance, immunizations, and drug and alcohol education. Students register for courses and select or change their housing assignments online, and in 2008-2009 the Bursar’s Office initiated online, paperless billing of tuition and fees.

Projection

NSO is in a period of transition, as it has moved organizationally from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs, under the umbrella of Undergraduate Advising and Learning Communities. This move should strengthen the relationship with advising and academic programs such as RAPs, and also support the transition to a coordinated first-year experience with the student’s academic plan at its core.

Communication with students will remain a high priority. The ongoing implementation of improvements to first-year advising (See Standard Five) create the framework for more coherent and timely interactions with students. Technological support will improve as the campus implements the next release of its PeopleSoft student system during 2009-10, which includes new transactional and advising tools.

Student Development

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UMass Amherst views student development opportunities as a way to take students from the structured environment of the first year to a more self-directed experience for the remaining three years, and to help students become engaged citizens of both the campus and the world.

The Center for Student Development (CSD) supports students’ co-curricular development. In 2006 Student Affairs refocused the mission and structure of what was then called Student Activities to emphasize student and leadership development, cultural education, and interaction, to deepen students’ engagement in campus life, and build a stronger sense of community. Many of these changes were consistent with recommendations of the Campus Commission on Diversity.

To support this refocusing, the Student Activities Center, support programs, cultural centers, the Office of ALANA Affairs (now called the Office of Programs and Services for ALANA Students), and other areas that provide services for student development were folded into CSD. This alignment of effort enables stronger support for ALANA students, and helps overcome the tendency toward balkanization that often results in a disconnection of students of color from the general campus community, as well as within the ALANA student communities.

CSD supports more than 200 registered student organizations dedicated to academics, arts, cultures, government, media, politics, religion, community service, recreation, and sports. CSD also supports the Student Government Association and the University Programming Council (UPC). The staff advises students and campus organizations, supporting and challenging students to succeed. They train and mentor students as they create campus-wide programming, fostering the development of high work standards, skilled decision-making, creativity, organization, and planning, collaboration, and leadership skills. They encourage better interaction among student groups, especially those dedicated to ethnic and cultural programming and support. CSD provides extensive opportunities for students to build leadership skills and have a voice in the governance of campus organizations.

Career Services at UMass Amherst helps undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni (on a limited basis) develop career plans and pursue employment and graduate/professional school. Advisors and peer mentors work with students to explore career options, identify and apply to internships and co-ops, apply to graduate and professional schools, build job-seeking skills (networking, resume writing, interviewing), search for jobs, and develop life-long career development skills. Career Services’ offerings include one-on-one counseling, workshops, career fairs, networking sessions, employee information sessions, alumni panels, and an online job posting system (eRecruiting). They serve approximately 5,000 students each year.

Appraisal

The evolution of CSD reflects several concerns on the part of the Student Affairs leadership: many students were not engaged in campus life, which affected satisfaction and retention; the professional staff had insufficient background in student development theory; and the organization needed stronger assessment tools and methods.

Feedback

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To improve engagement, CSD has moved away from a model of staff-initiated events to more student-initiated events, and has formalized training and recognition opportunities. The First Week program has been particularly successful in engaging students and helping new students learn about and become connected to student organizations. The number of student-initiated events has increased, and new populations of students — such as returning veterans — have been engaged.

Staff development and assessment remain concerns. Building an understanding of student development theory among CSD staff has been a priority since the unit was created in 2006. Early efforts to support an assessment initiative stalled, but plans are underway to re-energize the effort.

CSD professional staff have been able to cultivate more trusting, less antagonistic relationships with student leaders, especially in the relationship between the Student Government Association (SGA) and CSD. This has been achieved through better communication: senior staff members, including the Associate Vice-Chancellor, attend SGA meetings and meet with SGA officers on a regular basis, which had not been the case in the past. CSD created a dedicated advisor for SGA, which allows better linkages between the organizations and better support for SGA. In addition, SGA has been able to have a greater voice in the leadership of agencies within CSD. The stronger relationship has allowed CSD to draw on the support of student leaders in supporting campus events and addressing controversial issues on campus, such as encouraging responsible behavior around sporting events.

The Career Services advising staff consists of three professional career advisors, two graduate assistants, peer mentors, a field experience director, and support staff. Approximately ten years ago the office used grant funding to adopt a new, decentralized advising model, with staff assigned to the various schools and colleges. Subsequent budget reductions have required a return to a diminished centralized operation. Two colleges—the Isenberg School of Management and the College of Engineering — support their own career advising staff.

Within its limited scope, Career Services has focused on its strengths. A new Peer Advising program has been useful in taking some of the preliminary advising responsibilities off of the professional staff. The graduate assistant program has also provided important support. Programs emphasize group activities that can reach large numbers of students versus more labor-intensive one-on-one advising. Career fairs involve approximately 4000 students a year, although in the past year, the numbers of participating employers has decreased due to the recession. In addition to career fairs, Career Services has developed a successful “networking night” with employers and students. It is popular with students, but its high cost may make it unsustainable.

Collaboration has increased with academic departments, creating a variety of programs that bring Career Services staff into the classroom to educate students on career development. The Field Experience program has become very popular as students have become increasingly aware of the value of internships and co-ops. This past year 1,244 students participated, growing from 736 in 2005, 962 in 2006, 1,100 in 2007, and 1,176 in 2008. Field Experience has also recently initiated a Post-Graduate Internship program allowing alumni participation for up to five years after graduation.

**Feedback**

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Projection

CSD plans to further increase students’ engagement on campus with an expansion of student space in the Student Union. They will create a “UMass Underground” in the basement of the Union with more programming and better connections to the amenities that are already there.

CSD anticipates changes to meet the needs of the increasingly multiethnic student body, including bi-racial students, to meet students in terms of how they define themselves. This will include a strong emphasis on global and multiethnic programming.

Other changes underway include:

- A Leadership Education and Development Center to provide customized leadership training programs for different student organizations and levels of students.
- Development of co-curricular transcripts to allow students to present their co-curricular achievements and leadership training alongside their academic achievements.
- Further investment in professional development to help staff become more fluent in current student development theory and to look more strategically at student development.
- Resumption of efforts to improve assessment through benchmarking and more effective customer service feedback.

Career Services will focus on promoting participation in existing programs. Part of this effort will be to better connect with students during their sophomore year. Career Services will also explore better connections to students and employers (and between students and employers) using emerging technologies (such as ConnectEdu, Twitter, other social networking, etc.).

Student Behavior, Academic Honesty, and Grievances and Appeals

UMass Amherst has established clear standards for student behavior on campus and for academic honesty, which are outlined in the Code of Student Conduct\(^\text{^\text{1}}\), the Academic Honesty Policy\(^\text{^\text{1}}\), and the Alcohol and Drug Policy\(^\text{^\text{1}}\). These appear on the Dean of Students website and are published in the Daily Planner for Academic Success. The academic honesty policy is also published in the Guide to Undergraduate Programs\(^\text{^\text{1}}\) online and in print. Violations of the Code are handled through the Dean of Students judicial system. Violations of academic honesty are addressed through the Academic Honesty Office, a component of the Ombuds Office\(^\text{^\text{2}}\).

Students with an academic grievance against the university or a faculty member, who need assistance with a dispute, or wish to appeal a charge of academic dishonesty receive assistance from the Ombuds Office.

Appraisal

The priority is to ensure that judicial cases are handled fairly, openly, and honestly. The most common complaint of students is that a sanction is too harsh, but there are few formal appeals
and decisions are rarely overturned. The principal weakness of the judicial system in the view of the Dean of Students is that it is sanction-driven and often seen as punitive. Students may therefore be reluctant to report problematic behavior. Training of the 30 professional staff who hear cases is also a challenge.

Very few formal student academic grievances are filed—approximately one per year. The emphasis of the Ombuds Office is to help students resolve complaints informally, and to assist them in the process when informal resolution fails. If a student does choose to file a formal grievance, the ombuds convenes a grievance panel consisting of faculty and students, with the burden of proof falling to the student.

It is also rare for a faculty member to file a formal charge of academic dishonesty against a student, occurring approximately twice a year. In such cases the Ombuds will convene the Academic Honesty Board, both parties will present their positions and answer questions, the board will deliberate, and charges will be upheld or dismissed. The Ombuds does not advocate, but seeks to ensure that students understand their rights. To encourage participation in the process (versus ad hoc actions on the part of faculty members), the Ombuds Office recently secured a change to the academic honesty policy establishing two options for resolving a charge of academic dishonesty: informal resolution, in which a student agrees that he/she committed an act of dishonesty and agrees to a confidential sanction with no appeal process; and a formal charge which, if upheld, results in a notation on the student’s discipline record until graduation.

Making faculty and students aware of grievance policies and Ombuds services is a major challenge. The Office provides reminders to housing staff, student groups, and other support staff, and places ads in student media and information tables during NSO, but lack of awareness remains a chronic problem. Similar challenges exist in promoting appropriate use of academic honesty procedures. In particular, faculty do not consistently inform students of their rights or give them the opportunity to appeal.

**Projection**

The Dean of Students Office is shifting its approach from a legalistic model of sanctions and punishment to a model that prioritizes mediation and attention to student development. A certified mediator has been hired, and future hiring will emphasize mediation skills and perspectives.

The Ombuds office will continue its focus on mediating conflicts, and will increase efforts to publicize their services and students’ rights to the campus community.

**Athletics**

UMass Amherst fields 21 intercollegiate sports teams: men’s baseball, basketball, cross-country, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, skiing, soccer, swimming & diving, and track & field, and women’s basketball, cross country, field hockey, lacrosse, rowing, skiing, soccer, softball, swimming & diving, tennis, and track & field. All are part of the Atlantic 10 Conference, with
the exceptions of men’s ice hockey (Hockey East Association), men’s lacrosse (Eastern College Athletic Conference), and men’s and women’s skiing (independent). The intercollegiate athletics program is seen as an integral part of the university’s educational program and mission.

Appraisal

UMass Athletics adheres to the standards of the NCAA and the Atlantic 10 Conference to assure that athletic programs are conducted in a manner consistent with sound educational policy, standards of integrity, and the institution’s purposes. In 2005-2006 the university undertook a self-evaluation in the form of the Division I Athletics Certification Self-Study. At the completion of this process, UMass Athletics received certification without conditions (NCAA Certification Letter^).

The institution maintains full responsibility for athletics programs through the campus administration (which retains considerable autonomy for intercollegiate athletics), the system President (who has responsibility for certain budgetary decisions), and the Trustee Committee on Academic and Student Affairs and Athletics (which is involved in major policy decisions and in approval of student fees). All funds raised for and expended on behalf of the Athletic Department are under the control of the university and the athletics budget is subject to the university’s normal budgetary process. All funds received and expended for athletics are handled in compliance with NCAA requirements.

Student-athletes are admitted to the university following the same procedures used in admission for all students. An athletic counselor manages all athletes’ applications to ensure compliance with university and NCAA rules. Student-athletes are held to the same standards and policies, and evaluated by the same campus agencies, as all students, with no exceptions. These processes are detailed in the 2005-2006 Division I Athletics Certification Self-Study^.

Projection

Athletics programs will continue strict compliance with NCAA and campus standards.

Health, Wellness and Safety

Description

UMass Amherst takes a comprehensive approach to promoting health and safety, with a significant emphasis on prevention and preparedness. Programs range from the level of the individual student to the entire campus, and include broad recreation opportunities, health education, and wellness; formal prevention, treatment, and risk assessment capabilities; comprehensive residence hall and campus security programs; and emergency preparedness and response.

Recreation

Feedback

Become involved in the accreditation process. Please lend your voice to this important work.
Visit: http://www.umass.edu/neasc/feedback.html
The Recreation Department, part of the Athletic Department, provides many opportunities for students to remain physically active in order to maintain health and reduce stress. Intramural Sports organizes twenty-four different sports or tournaments for students. In 2007-2008, nearly ten thousand students participated in intramural sports. Ten Sport Clubs engage in intercollegiate competition with other sport clubs, junior varsity, and varsity teams.

Students have access to two gymnasiums on campus with basketball, badminton, and volleyball courts, two fitness centers with cardio and weight lifting equipment, two indoor pools, squash and handball courts, and tennis courts. An extensive drop-in exercise program is in its third year, offering cardio, weights and yoga. Last year students made 170,570 visits to these facilities. Four wellness centers are also located in the residence halls, offering fitness equipment and group exercise classes.

Appraisal

Recreation’s weakness has been in its facilities. Although there are many different facilities, they tend to compare poorly with those at similar universities in terms of quality and quantity. Many lack air conditioning and appropriately designed space, and many students choose private fitness clubs at an added cost, rather than use the free facilities on campus.

Projection

Facilities improved dramatically with the opening of the new Recreation Center in fall 2009. Recreational needs, including those of the sports clubs, were considered in its development. The new center adds a three-court gym lined for basketball, volleyball, and badminton; a suspended track; 24,000 square feet of cardio equipment and weights; multipurpose activity rooms with proper exercise flooring; and locker rooms, administrative offices, a lounge, a resource room for sports clubs, and an armory for the fencing club. The center will meet much of the campus’s recreation needs, although it will lack an aquatics center and additional courts for squash and racquetball.

Recreation also seeks to improve the “drop-in” workout and group exercise programs, and in cooperation with University Health Services is planning a Wellness Area to provide self-assessment tools thorough which students can examine their behaviors around alcohol, diet, and nutrition.

University Health Services

University Health Services (UHS) is a comprehensive health care system that offers students a complete menu of services including physical health care, preventative care, mental health care, health education, and outreach. The UHS staff includes board-certified physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physician assistants, certified medical assistants, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Additionally, UHS provides specialists in acupuncture, mind/body medicine, neurology, obstetrics/gynecology, orthopedics, and sports medicine. UHS resources include a full-service pharmacy, on-site laboratory, radiology and physical therapy, eye
care and optical services, allergy, travel medicine, and eating disorders clinics, alcohol and drug abuse programs, and contraception and sexual health services. Full-time students are required to carry primary health care insurance and to pay the Student Health Fee, which provides access to all UHS benefits. UHS is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Appraisal

UHS has identified three areas of emerging importance on college campuses nationwide: suicide prevention, timely access to mental health urgent care, and drug and alcohol abuse:

Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Project. Recognizing that suicide has become a growing issue on college campuses, Mental Health Services has improved the ability of staff members to recognize the warning signs of students at risk. Through a three-year, $225,000 grant MHS implemented a “gatekeeper” model, bringing suicide prevention skills training to individuals regularly interacting with students, including 90% of resident assistants and 164 staff members in key areas.

MHS Clinical Triage System. Universities nationwide have seen increased usage of mental health care services, and an increase in the complexity and severity of students’ situations. To improve service Mental Health Services adopted a triage system to improve intake and give priority to patients with the most acute needs. Previously, an initial assessment appointment could require several weeks’ wait with attendant emotional distress, potential for the patients to become dangerous to themselves or others, a poor image of service, and missed treatment opportunities. Triage is standard in medical health care, but not widely used among university-based mental health providers. New clients now receive a same-day brief assessment, and crisis situations receive immediate attention. Since implementation, 95% of clients surveyed describe themselves as satisfied with their experiences, and the number of urgent walk-ins to MHS has decreased significantly. UMass Amherst’s model has been adopted at many schools, including Northwestern, Purdue, Harvard, and NYU.

Center for Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Prevention (CADAP). For decades, UMass Amherst struggled with a national reputation as a “party school.” In 2004, the university created the Center for Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Prevention (CADAP) to promote responsible decision-making regarding alcohol and other drugs. Since CADAP’s evidence-based environmental management approach began the campus has seen significant reductions in heavy drinking.

Projection

UHS will continue to expand prevention and assessment activities. One challenge is to sustain the grant-funded initiatives following expiration of their start-up funding. In addition, UHS’s multidisciplinary Patient Access Team spent the 2008-2009 academic year gathering data across UHS to determine any roadblocks to patient care, and looking at other universities to determine benchmarks. It will make recommendations based on its findings.

UMass Amherst Police Department

Feedback

Become involved in the accreditation process. Please lend your voice to this important work.
Visit: http://www.umass.edu/neasc/feedback.html
The UMass Amherst Police Department (UMPD) includes 63 full-time sworn police officers and 30 student cadets, as well as support staff. Officers receive training and possess powers, authority, and responsibilities identical to municipal police officers in Massachusetts. UMPD services include patrol, investigation, specialized and emergency response, and crime prevention and educational programs.

The UMPD prepares the annual Clery Report in cooperation with campus and local law enforcement agencies. UMPD also posts a Crime Log on its website.

Residence Hall Security utilizes a student staff of 220, and police cadets provide additional security. The residence hall doors are locked 24 hours a day, and students must use an ID card to enter the building. All exterior doors are connected to a silent alarm system. There are 618 security cameras on campus, as well as 115 HELP phones. Student Security provides a walking escort program and this, along with a campus shuttle bus, provides safe transportation after dark. The UMPD operates numerous specialized units: mounted, K9, bike, motorcycle, and Rape Aggression Defense (RAD).

Appraisal

The UMPD is now one of the largest police agencies in western Massachusetts. At one time it was common for UMPD officers to leave the department for positions in local or state police agencies; this trend has been reversed and now municipal officers frequently transfer to UMPD, citing its commitment to the profession and service to the community.

The university is constructing a new 25,000 square foot state-of-the-art police station, replacing the current 8,000 square foot facility. When occupied in December 2010, this will be one of the most advanced police stations in the state.

UMPD has made significant progress toward attaining Massachusetts Police Accreditation status, which emphasizes professional public safety services. The department also continues to strengthen collaborative efforts with student groups through community outreach and day-to-day interactions.

Projection

The UMPD’s major ongoing shift in focus is to expand preparation for and response to active threats. The department will increase training to prepare students for potential threats, and will work with the Emergency Operations Center to prepare the campus for a potential campus-wide incident. UMPD will also expand use of the department website to provide streamlined services to the community.

Emergency Management and Business Continuity

The university formalized its Emergency Management and Business Continuity efforts in 2008 with the appointment of an EM/BC Manager within the Department of Environmental Health.
and Safety. The **Campus Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)** provides the framework for campus administrators to manage emergencies and disasters. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC), with two backup sites, serves as the central location from which all emergency management operations are coordinated. The campus conducts regular drills and exercises including table-top exercises and unannounced full-scale drills for each UMPD shift. The “Campus Alerts” emergency notification system allows text messaging about situations that pose an imminent threat to campus safety. This system is tested each semester. UMPD provides [*active threat response guidelines*](http://www.umass.edu/umpd) on its website.

UMass Amherst’s Business Continuity program focuses on two areas: business/academic resumption planning and disaster recovery planning. The campus is in the early stages of a transition from decentralized ad hoc planning to a formal, centralized program.

**Appraisal**

The UMPD’s published policy on how to respond in the event of an active threat on campus was cited as a best practice among colleges and universities in Massachusetts in a 2008 report on campus violence prevention for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. A recent review by Marsh USA recommended that other campuses model their emergency management program after UMass Amherst’s.

In 2006, a campus-wide security review was performed by Arup & Partners, Inc. The Arup report recommended establishment of a Security Implementation Committee to oversee integration of all life safety, security, crime prevention, and property protection responsibilities of the campus. This group was established in 2008, and will monitor security capabilities and needs on an ongoing basis.

**Projection**

The campus EM/BC program has developed a three-year strategic plan to ensure the campus’s resiliency in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters. New software has been acquired to assist in creating and maintaining emergency action plans, department emergency operations plans, and department business resumption and disaster recovery plans. The campus is in the process of installing an outdoor warning system as part of the “Campus Alerts” emergency notification system. The system will support alert tones and voice recordings for a variety of potential emergencies and also has the capability for live voice PA.

**Recognizing and Helping Members of the Community in Distress**

After the shooting at Virginia Tech, many campuses examined their risk assessment systems to determine if they were sufficient to prevent a similar occurrence. UMass Amherst had a number of protocols in place, but after a comprehensive review formalized and strengthened its capacity with respect to both students and staff members.

Student Affairs had long had an on-call system, to ensure that when incidents occurred, the key administrators who had a role in the response would be fully informed. After Virginia Tech, the
Dean of Students and director of Mental Health Services determined that they should formalize the communication process by creating an Assessment Care Team (ACT) in 2007. ACT’s charge is to focus on students (undergraduate and graduate, on and off campus) who may pose a threat to themselves or others, taking action to help the individual and protect campus safety. The team meets weekly and on an emergency basis to share information about particular students and incidents, discuss concerning behavior, and develop actions plans. Since its inception, ACT has managed a caseload of approximately 75 students each semester.

ACT members consult with faculty, advisors, and staff in identifying problem behaviors and educating them on how to respond. They have also produced a variety of educational materials and guides for faculty and staff. These include print publications that are also available on the Student Affairs website: How to Recognize and Handle Students in Distress, Intervention, Policies & Safety, Clinical Assessment & Referral Services, and Education & Prevention.

Through the Workplace Violence Management Team, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program undertakes work similar to that of the Assessment Care Team on behalf of the staff and faculty. The Team was established to address in a systematic way the potential incidence and prevention of violence in the workplace. The Team is divided into three workgroups: Prevention and Education, Risk Assessment, and Crisis Management. The Prevention and Education workgroup focuses on policies and procedures, training, and awareness of available resources. The Risk Assessment workgroup consults in situations of potential workplace violence to assess the level of risk and appropriate response. The Crisis Management workgroup coordinates crisis intervention when an incident of workplace violence occurs. The risk assessment and crisis management teams include representatives from Labor Relations, Workplace Learning & Development, the UMass Amherst Police Department, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, Mental Health Services, and the Ombuds Office.

Appraisal

One measure of effectiveness is whether there has been an incident of violence by a student on campus that could have been prevented by better monitoring or communication. There has not. Further, all of the individuals that ACT has monitored have either been able to continue at the university, have ceased to be a concern, have entered some sort of response program (treatment center), or have left the university.

ACT was cited as a benchmark for best practices among colleges and universities in Massachusetts by Applied Risk Management in their June 2008 report to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education [Exhibit: Campus Violence Prevention and Response: Best Practices for Massachusetts Higher Education].

Similarly, the campus has not seen avoidable incidents since the Workplace Violence Management Team was organized. One challenge has been building support for appropriate interventions at different levels of the organization.

Projection
Moving forward, ACT will continue to monitor its effectiveness and assess outcomes for each individual case. A priority is to avoid formulaic responses and maintain focus on the individual situation of each student. The Workplace Violence Management Team also plans to assess its success as it gains experience over time.

**Campus Safety and Accident Prevention**

The Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) works through multiple venues throughout the University in promoting safety and providing a formalized accident prevention program. The main components of this comprehensive approach to safety and prevention are described below. A full description of all program components is provided in *Appendix X*.

- The Accident Prevention program encompasses basic activities of safety management that include: hazard recognition and hazard analysis; inspections and audits of facilities and operations; regulatory compliance; incident investigation and data collection; and general safety related training.

- The Fire Prevention program ensures that campus buildings and fire protection equipment are maintained in compliance with all appropriate state fire codes and safety policies of the University. The Fire Prevention staff inspects buildings, tests and recharges fire extinguishers, investigates fires and fire alarms, checks fire alarm systems, tests laboratory safety showers, and ensures that all fire hydrants, fire pumps, stand pipes, and sprinkler systems are in good working order.

- Environmental and Hazardous Materials Management Services include comprehensive pollution control services; emergency response to chemical leaks and spills, equipment decontamination, and characterization of unknown chemical wastes; hazardous waste management; toxic use reduction programs; and comprehensive environmental impact assessment and pollution control services.

- Academic Safety and Environmental Health Services include the Biological Safety Program, which focuses on protecting students, employees, and the campus environment from biological hazards and the challenges that are unique to biomedical and biotechnology research; lab safety and industrial hygiene; environmental health; and radiation safety services.

**Appraisal**

**Projection**