

## **Standard One: Mission and Purposes**

### **Institutional History**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst, the flagship campus of a five-campus public university system, was founded in 1863 as a consequence of the Morrill Land Grant Act. As a land-grant university, UMass Amherst's mission is to provide teaching, research and public service to benefit people in Massachusetts, the nation and the world. This mission, as interpreted to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, remains as vital today as it was when the institution opened its doors as the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1867.

In 2007, UMass Amherst celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a university. In 1947, with an increased enrollment of returning World War II veterans and the need to provide many of them with education in engineering and business, the Massachusetts State College, as it had been called since 1931, expanded its curriculum to offer more courses in both professional programs and in liberal arts and sciences. It received permission from state authorities to change its name to the University of Massachusetts to more accurately reflect what the institution had become. In 1962, the University was granted fiscal autonomy by the state legislature and major infusions of state support in the following decade allowed the campus to grow from 7,676 students in 1962 to more than 24,000 full-time equivalent students in fall 2008.

Degrees are now awarded in six associate, 88 baccalaureate, 73 master's and 52 doctoral programs. UMass Amherst is the only public institution in Massachusetts with a designation from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a research university with "very high research activity," known as RU/VH. The Carnegie Foundation also has awarded the campus its Community Engagement classification. UMass Amherst's aspiration to achieve excellence in teaching, research and public service is consistent with its history, and this history informs every planning exercise the campus undertakes.

### **The University System**

In 1965, the University's second campus opened in downtown Boston, then expanded to the Harbor Campus in 1974. A third campus, the UMass Medical Center in Worcester, was founded in 1962 and enrolled its first medical students in 1970. That same year, the President's Office moved from the Amherst campus to offices in Boston, and a Chancellor's Office was established as the principal administrative position on each of the three campuses.

In 1989, the Board of Trustees created a Commission on the Future of the University and appointed David S. Saxon, President Emeritus of the University of California, as its Chair. The Commission's report called for the consolidation of all five public university campuses in Massachusetts – the three UMass campuses plus the University of Lowell and Southeastern Massachusetts University – into a single university sector with an autonomous board. In 1991, Governor William Weld signed legislation creating the new five-campus University of Massachusetts as it exists today with a single President and Board of Trustees.

### **University Mission**

The most recent Mission Statement for the University system, approved by its Board of Trustees in 2005 and found in *Trustee Document T05-024*, is as follows:

“To provide an affordable and accessible education of high quality and to conduct programs of research and public service that advance knowledge and improve the lives of the people of the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.”

At the same time, the Board of Trustees reaffirmed 10 strategic priorities related to that mission:

- Maintain and improve affordability and access
- Enhance the student learning experience
- Strengthen the University’s research and development enterprise
- Continue a focus on diversity and positive climate
- Renew the faculty
- Increase the endowment
- Develop first-rate infrastructure
- Develop a leadership role in public service
- Improve the delivery of administrative and IT services
- Position the University effectively in the higher education marketplace

### **Campus Mission**

In March 2008, the Board of Trustees reaffirmed a more focused mission for the Amherst campus, describing it as the system’s “flagship campus” and acknowledging that “a strong and nationally recognized flagship is essential to the success of the system as a whole.” The Trustees committed “to moving UMass Amherst into the top tier of public universities in the country.” Further, the Board instructed the Chancellor of the Amherst campus, in cooperation with the President, to prepare the outline of a campus strategic plan that would implement that goal ([Board of Trustees Votes, March 19, 2008](#)).

In remarks to a community group in February 2009, Chancellor Robert Holub succinctly stated the assumptions upon which he would build his outline for a strategic plan: “We will continue to give our highest priority to our core mission: the teaching of our undergraduate students; the training of graduate students for academic and professional careers; research and scholarly activity; and service and outreach to the citizenry in both western Massachusetts and the Commonwealth” ([A Strategic Vision for UMass Amherst](#)).

Chancellor Holub’s outline for a strategic plan, [A Framework for Excellence: The Flagship Report](#), was published in spring 2009 for campus review. Its details are discussed fully in Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation, but it is worth noting here that the document opens with a reaffirmation of both the institution’s land-grant mission and its designation by the Trustees as the University’s flagship campus:

“The University of Massachusetts Amherst, the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts, has a distinctive mission in the Commonwealth ... It is the only public research institution that offers a combination of high quality undergraduate education, outstanding graduate education, and internationally recognized research ... As the state’s land-grant campus, it has the responsibility to carry on programs around the state for the benefit of the citizenry and to maintain dynamic connections to communities across the state.”

### **Appraisal and Projection**

The mission of UMass Amherst, as articulated by the Trustees and reiterated by the campus administration, is clear and has remained consistent with its founding principles of 1863. The mission is available on the University’s website, <http://www.umass.edu/provost/mission.html>, and is accepted by its stakeholders. It has been reviewed and reaffirmed in the most recent transition of the campus’s leadership. The mission has been tested by time and has proven flexible enough to adapt to the changing circumstances of economic needs, demographic trends and resource availability.

The current economic crisis poses additional challenges: While remaining affordable and accessible to the citizens it serves, UMass Amherst must acquire the needed resources to strengthen its teaching and research activities; it must continue to provide a broad range of high-quality public service to the state. Despite economic realities, the institution is forging ahead with important improvement plans to fulfill its mission.

### **Institutional Effectiveness**

The University's Board of Trustees periodically reviews and affirms the institution's mission statement. As recently as 2005, the Board adopted a mission statement for the University of Massachusetts system, which identified strategic priorities that provide specific applications of the mission to the state's current needs and opportunities. In 2008, the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved a more specific mission statement for the Amherst campus, affirming it as the system's "flagship campus" and stating that it should move "into the top tier of public universities" in America. These priorities and goals inform and guide the campus as it develops plans for addressing the challenges of the coming decade.