

Innovation and Impact: 2018-23 Campus Strategic Plan

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Innovation and Impact: Rising to the Challenge

Introduction

Over many decades the University of Massachusetts Amherst has developed into a top-ranked public research university, the only one in our state and one of only a handful in the northeast. Five years ago, we collectively took stock of our situation and prospects as we developed our first comprehensive strategic plan. In the ensuing five years the campus has made immense strides. Now we renew our commitment to strategic planning and assess how events of the past five years have shaped our thinking as we look ahead.

The role of the public research university has become more important as the nation and the world confront escalating challenges related to technological change, human interactions, and the vitality of the natural environment. We recognize that we are entering a period of historic challenge for our society, and we are determined to rise to that challenge. Some long-term trends in higher education seem likely to continue: higher expectations on the part of students and society; greater competition for talented students; growing resistance to increasing tuition; tighter competition for sponsored research; declining share of state investments; and mounting pressure on operating budgets.

And looking ahead, we can see a sharper shift. In the wake of the Great Recession, birth rates in the U.S. dropped markedly and have yet to recover. Beginning in just three years the number of high school students will begin a long decline, and shortly after that the impact will reach colleges and universities. It is a national trend, but it will be felt most directly here in the northeast. Institutions of all kinds will need to act strategically and decisively to account for this shift.

For the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the challenge is two-fold. First, we want to maintain the remarkable momentum of the past few years and continue to attract and graduate students from Massachusetts and beyond who seek an affordable, world-class education. Second, we must shape a sustainable financial strategy that can underwrite that high quality educational experience and the impact and innovation that flow from our research, scholarship, and creative activity. These two imperatives are inextricably intertwined.

We enter this period with a strong belief in our community and redoubling our commitment to the values that have sustained us for more than 150 years. When this time of transition is over, we intend for the University of Massachusetts Amherst to be a national model for the very best of American higher education in a new era. Leading public research universities demonstrate excellence in a broad range of fields, including the fine arts, the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the professional schools. The stature of an institution's faculty and the nature of their accomplishments, across the disciplines, are a major contributor to its national and international reputation and impact.

In arriving at the Strategic Plan for the next five years, a large group of campus stakeholders has worked tirelessly, taking careful stock of progress to date, external threats and opportunities, and internal strengths and weaknesses. What is presented in the next section is a statement of our mission, vision, values, and campus-level goals. This is followed by an outline of our financial planning. The last section provides additional context and commentary for planning.

University of Massachusetts Amherst Strategic Plan

Mission

The mission of the University of Massachusetts Amherst is to create positive impact on the Commonwealth and the broader society we serve through education and advancing knowledge. As the flagship public university in Massachusetts, we cherish and add to the Commonwealth's long tradition of intellectual and educational leadership.

Our institution is rooted in the idea that any qualified individual, regardless of wealth or social status, should have access to high quality higher education. We draw from and support diverse experiences and perspectives as an essential strength of this learning community and accept for ourselves and instill in our students an ongoing commitment to create a better, more just world.

Vision

Our vision is to dramatically improve every aspect of the University of Massachusetts Amherst so as to ascend into the ranks of the top 20 public universities in America, as measured by nationally and internationally recognized criteria. We intend to deliver, for the people of Massachusetts and beyond, a public university that shares the same qualities of excellence, impact, and outcomes as the best public universities in the nation and the world.

Values

- **Excellence.** In whatever we choose to do, we strive for excellence.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness.** We are committed to the success and well-being of every individual in our community regardless of group identity.
- **Openness.** As a university, we are committed to free and open intellectual inquiry and expression.
- **Integrity and Stewardship.** As a community we set high standards for personal responsibility and institutional integrity, and hold ourselves accountable in managing institutional resources and for advancing sustainability of our planet.
- **Innovation.** We stimulate, recognize and reward innovation and creativity.
- **Impact.** We aim to create far-reaching impact on society by welcoming students and faculty from around the world and assisting them to contribute to the welfare of people both locally and globally.

Goals

The plan for the next five years will propel the campus on the pathway to the Top 20 among public research universities by fulfilling the following strategic goals:

- I. Establish UMass Amherst as a destination of choice where academically accomplished, socially responsible seekers of a world-class education succeed in a research-rich, inclusive learning community.
- II. Establish UMass Amherst as a partner of choice in advancing and applying knowledge and innovation for the betterment of society.
- III. Establish UMass Amherst as a community of choice for students, staff, and faculty that exemplifies the power of diverse perspectives and mutual respect.

In support of these goals we follow two overarching principles: 1) Mobilize all our resources to achieve a sustainable financial strategy; and 2) Instill a culture of evidence at all levels that applies the best possible information and analysis to decisions.

Goal I.

Establish UMass Amherst as a destination of choice where academically accomplished, socially responsible seekers of a world-class education succeed in a research-rich, inclusive learning community

Attract and Retain Outstanding Students of All Backgrounds

Action Steps

1. Craft a dynamic enrollment and financial aid strategy that is shaped by the populations we desire to serve taking account of state, national, and international demographic shifts, impact of rising student costs, and other trends.
2. Offer a wide range of high-demand degree programs and career pathways to attract high-achieving students and prepare them to contribute to the Massachusetts innovation economy.
3. Articulate the value and the quality of a UMass Amherst education through a well-defined and compelling communications strategy.
4. Identify and address obstacles to retention and timely graduation, and provide appropriate access to courses, curricula, and advising, within a supportive climate that promotes student well-being.

Support Student Success

Action Steps

1. Increase the coherence of the undergraduate educational experience through careful curricular scaffolding and integration of classroom and co-curricular high-impact practices such as internships, study abroad, research opportunities, community service, etc.
2. Create well-designed pathways that mesh major requirements, General Education, and out-of-classroom experiences.
3. Apply both indirect and direct assessment and the latest analytics tools to identify and remove barriers to success and improve educational outcomes for all students.
4. Incorporate students' goals, expectations, and holistic understanding beyond academic performance (e.g., wellness, sense of belonging) into pathways and advising; taking advantage of innovations in curriculum and pedagogy in the discipline.

Expand Career Development Opportunities

Action Steps

1. Embed career and professional development opportunities throughout each student's life at the university: map curricular, co-curricular, internship, employment, volunteer, and other forms of experience onto career and professional advising. In so doing, become an exemplar in supporting specialized career guidance of students who elect to major in the liberal or fine arts.
2. Engage students actively in the career advising process, making explicit the connections between formal academic programs, school/college efforts, and organized career and professional development opportunities.
3. Expand and integrate collaborations with alumni, graduate schools, and employers, such as the Alumni Career Network, to increase post-graduate opportunities for students.
4. Provide more experiential opportunities locally, regionally, and globally, including facilitating our students' access to the vibrant economy of the Greater Boston area.

Goal II.

Establish UMass Amherst as a partner of choice in advancing and applying knowledge and innovation to the betterment of society.

Expand Research and Scholarly Impact

Action Steps

1. Identify and support research areas of highest potential impact and quality, and invest strategically in tenure-stream faculty, commensurate with our status as a leading comprehensive research university.
2. Leverage external resources at the state, national, and global levels by investing in research areas that align UMass Amherst strengths with current and emerging external needs in ways that contribute to enhancing the human experience.
3. Grow relationships with government, industry, communities, and others by expanding industry master agreements, facilitating center-scale proposals, and supporting community-engaged research.
4. Identify opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and graduate training that span the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering.
5. Provide the necessary physical, administrative, and compliance support to conduct high impact research commensurate with leading research universities.
6. Enhance research collaborations with companies in the region and in technology clusters such as the Greater Boston area.
7. Continue to strengthen our entrepreneurial ecosystem via education, practical assistance, and by attracting private investment.

Strengthen Graduate Education

Action Steps

1. Attract and retain high-achieving graduate students by creating an overall environment that compares favorably to other leading public research universities in educational opportunities, mentoring, compensation, and student experience and outcomes.
2. Expand curricular and co-curricular programming to enhance the professional knowledge and skills necessary for graduate students to thrive in academia, industry, public policy, and the non-profit sector.
3. Ensure a safe and supportive climate for graduate students regardless of nationality, ability, race, ethnicity, cultural and socioeconomic background, and gender identity.
4. Increase graduate on-line and continuing professional education opportunities for non-traditional students and working professionals, expanding into the Greater Boston market as appropriate opportunities arise.

Expand Outreach and Engagement

Action Steps

1. Identify and support additional off-campus collaborative opportunities locally, regionally, and globally to broaden the impact of research, teaching, and service.
2. Provide appropriate training and organizational support for faculty, staff, and students seeking to engage communities.
3. Expand service to alumni and others via executive and continuing education opportunities in urban markets.
4. Implement a regular and systematic approach to identify and evaluate outreach and engagement activities.
5. Develop a communication strategy for outreach and engagement to demonstrate impact and attract new off-campus collaborators and resources.

Goal III.

Establish UMass Amherst as a community of choice for students, staff, and faculty that exemplifies the power of diverse perspectives and mutual respect.

Build a More Diverse and Inclusive Community

Action Steps

1. Continue and enhance recruitment strategies that increase the diversity of the graduate and undergraduate student body, the faculty, and staff in all aspects, e.g., geographic, racial, cultural, socioeconomic, disability status, and gender identity.
2. Demonstrate that UMass Amherst is a welcoming destination for people of all backgrounds and develop a robust communication strategy.
3. Assess and address barriers to the retention and success of students, faculty, and staff.
4. Incorporate into our curriculum the study of arts, literature, and society that represents the full range of human experience.

Improve Campus Climate

Action Steps

1. Provide tools and training opportunities for all faculty and staff to become adept at working in a diverse and inclusive environment, whether inside or outside the classroom, with colleagues, and with the general public.
2. Improve and utilize curricular, co- and extra-curricular opportunities to enhance student development and success in a diverse, inclusive environment.
3. Ensure that the allocation and utilization of resources and services provided reflect institutional commitment to the support and success of all members of the community and address concerns of discrimination and unfair treatment.
4. Establish UMass Amherst as a workplace of choice through progressive and accountable human resource and grievance policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Organize for Success

Action Steps

1. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of resources, services, and administrative processes in fostering a climate of inclusion.
2. Provide incentives and seed funding to catalyze diversity and equity initiatives.
3. Make diversity outcomes part of the regular responsibility and accountability of administrators.
4. Ensure the inclusion of underserved communities in the university's outreach and engagement efforts.

Resource Planning

Prudent financial management in the past has placed the campus on solid footing despite the year-to-year uncertainties of state funding. Through both the campus and university system efficiency and effectiveness initiatives, we have been able to make internal allocations to improve quality in spite of minimal increases in state appropriation. The campus is committed to continuing to invest in quality enhancement. However, such improvements are likely to be insufficient for us to maintain our positive momentum. In order to move into the ranks of the top 20 public research universities, significant additional investments will need to be made in faculty and staff, facilities, and student support. Those investments will require both additional public and private investments and the development of new revenue sources by the university.

Action Steps

1. Leverage information technologies and analytics to make evidence-based allocation of human, fiscal, and space resources.
2. Set and achieve aggressive growth targets for online and hybrid courses and programs that are fully consistent with UMass Amherst quality standards.
3. Expand offerings in continuing and professional education, professional and accelerated Master's degrees, and executive education/training programs in new markets, including inside Route 128.
4. Expand efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness ("E&E") across campus, including expanded use of business analytics and broadening our partnerships with the UMass System, industry, and others.
5. Become an exemplar for energy efficiency, conservation, and resiliency.
6. Launch another comprehensive fundraising campaign, building on the success of the UMass Rising Campaign to expand support for scholarships, endowed faculty, academic programs, and facilities.
7. Mount an advocacy campaign in support of a Top 20 operating funds investment by the state to bring per student spending to the 75th percentile of peer institutions.
8. Through internal allocation, state capital appropriation, philanthropy, and public/private partnerships sustain the physical campus through reducing deferred maintenance and aligning physical assets with strategic programmatic priorities.
9. Increase incentives to encourage quality enhancement, revenue growth, and increasing efficiency.

Context and Commentary

Undergraduate Education

The nature and quality of the undergraduate experience remain central to institutional success. The simple fact is that an increasing majority of our operating budget comes from student tuition. Student and societal expectations continue to rise, student interests continue to shift, and there is increasing competition for high quality students. Further, employers have sharpened their focus on preparation and job-readiness.

Improvements in student outcomes and selectivity have been a major factor in our dramatic rise through the U.S. News rankings. Consolidating our success and preparing for coming demographic challenges will require aggressive steps in all our academic units to increase our attractiveness, especially among applicants with stronger academic profiles who have fueled our recent rise through the rankings. Continued success will also rest upon our capacity to retain students through timely graduation from outstanding academic programs. Demonstrating superior quality and distinctive value must be at the core of campus and unit planning: *given the rich choice among institutions, why should a well qualified student choose to come to UMass Amherst?*

The Top 20 strategy advances these efforts in two ways:

1. Makes available a world-class education to the sons and daughters of Massachusetts. They have a right to expect and receive the kind of affordable, distinctive education that the finest public research institutions in the nation offer. They should have no reason to leave the state, particularly given the advantage of in-state tuition.
2. Demonstrates world-class quality to students in other states and nations so as to attract the kind of diversity and resources essential to our educational success. Success performing on a national and international stage (i.e., higher prestige by way of higher ranking) will fuel success here at home.

A world-class educational experience is defined in terms of student success: providing students the educational and personal development opportunities they seek and the preparation they will need in a timely, effective, and coherent way. It involves offering the right program mix, making the right courses available as needed, integrating experiential learning and high impact practices (such as internships, undergraduate research and study abroad), and guiding students through their choices in a way that maintains their momentum and minimizes the time needed to reach their goals. A well-rounded education, bringing together perspectives from the arts, humanities, the social and natural sciences, remains as important as ever. A unified student success strategy has guided planning at all levels for the past five years, and remains central to the destination of choice strategic goal. It is “unified” in two senses: 1) it approaches the undergraduate experience comprehensively, knitting together formal curriculum, experiential education, co-curricular activities, health and wellness, and career and personal development; and 2) it emphasizes shared responsibility for student success across organizational units and levels. Through this approach we have made great progress. Going forward this strategy must permeate planning in schools and colleges, departments, and student support units.

The Destination of Choice goal and its associated objectives point to many strategies to make the UMass Amherst educational experience more effective. In addition, school/college and departmental plans will focus on specific actions that emerge from examination of the available evidence. To support that process, we will assess the extent to which evidence is appropriately reflected in plans, identify gaps in the data, and further refine the use, communication, and understanding of evidence within and across units. By integrating use of evidence through ongoing educational effectiveness plans and expanding

access to information and analytics from different sources through a distributed data platform, we can deepen the use of evidence toward program improvement.

We will continue the discussion begun three years ago of the qualities we wish to impart to students during their UMass Amherst experience: community, agency, responsibility, and proficiency. Learning objectives associated with each have been developed, and their discussion and incorporation into curricular and co-curricular plans will help bring focus to what a distinctive educational experience means to our current and future students.

Research and Scholarly Impact

The campus's research mission and role remain central. One of the characteristics of top-ranked universities in the U.S.—which makes them among the best in the world—is the comprehensive intellectual capital they represent. Their faculty are made up of outstanding poets and musicians as well as policy experts and scientists. Through their disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and creative work they bring new insights into the human experience and inspire the personal development of their students. Our Top 20 plan is dependent on enhancing the full range of intellectual capital at the university.

The state's innovation economy has expanded, and supports one of the nation's most robust economies. We have demonstrated our capacity for leadership in several key fields of importance to the state and the nation, and will expand these areas based on the intersection of campus strengths and evolving workforce and other important societal needs. Campus resources are often best used as leverage, so external collaborations can play an important role in making the case for campus investment. Opportunities for alignment with external priorities are dynamic, and must be evaluated regularly through the annual planning and budget process.

Faculty hiring remains the most important research investment, and our capacity to invest in faculty is a function of our success in achieving our sustainable long-term financial strategy. Increasingly, costs involve not only faculty salaries but also escalating costs of start-up and facilities as well as adequate staff support. Hiring and allocation decisions at all levels must be guided by metrics of research success and opportunity, considered in parallel with metrics of teaching effectiveness and student success. Evidence used to assess impact must always reflect the wide range of research, scholarship, and creative activities that together define excellence in different fields. This process must ensure that decisions are deliberate, transparent, and evidence-based.

Expanding research impact requires continued success in enhancing research support, including implementing an improved system for grant administration with a strong focus on client needs and training, and adjusting capacity for data management support as needed. Given limits on capital funding, our priorities for research facilities must focus on allocating facilities to identified research, scholarship, and creative priorities, and placing a sharper focus on effective use of existing space. We have experienced rapid expansion in research compliance and accountability expectations, including human subjects review and clinical trials. Additional capacity has been added, but effectiveness will be evaluated as demands continue to grow.

Graduate Education

Graduate education is a defining feature of our mission as the Commonwealth's flagship university. We strive to be the destination of choice for graduate students as well as undergraduates and continuing professional education students. To achieve this goal, we seek to provide the highest quality education and impact for our diverse body of graduate students through competitive, nationally-recognized, and dynamic academic programs. Destination of choice also means expanded attention to the overall graduate student experience, including mentoring and other student success initiatives, support for student well-being, and improved campus climate. Attracting and retaining high-quality graduate students often involves the amount, type and duration of student support over the entire period of enrollment, and being transparent in financial offers made at the time of admission. Getting the most from what we have means being more strategic in the use of both departmental and university resources: careful calibration of program size, elimination of practices such as splitting tuition waivers, and considering timely progress and student success when allocating or reallocating scholarships, waivers, fellowships, and assistantships. It will also be important for program reviews to incorporate data and criteria for assessing graduate students' training, time-to-degree, and professional outcomes. In addition, maintaining adequate faculty strengths in cognate fields is necessary for sustaining high quality doctoral programs.

Outreach and Engagement

Outreach and engagement form one of the pillars of our tripartite mission as a land-grant university. Through outreach and engagement, we conduct engaged scholarship, research, and creative activity; develop and use curricular and co-curricular activities that include service learning and civic engagement; offer study abroad and professional development opportunities; and provide and participate in public performances, lectures and other programs on and off-campus. This work enriches lives of citizens while addressing societal needs facing Massachusetts communities, the nation, and the world. At the same time, outreach and engagement advance campus priorities, such as offering a distinctive student experience, promoting inclusion and diversity, improving efficiency and reducing operational costs, and building synergies and partnerships.

By their nature, outreach and engagement activities often occur outside the view of the campus community. Students and faculty working in communities locally and worldwide may be unaware of opportunities or collaborations emanating from their own campus. By tracking, evaluating and documenting these efforts we can support more effective collaboration on and off campus. In doing so it will be important to respect how outreach and engagement activities are defined in different disciplines, so that appropriate metrics for assessing impact can inform discussions about resources, tenure, promotion, merit, support, rewards, and incentives.

Campus Climate and Community

By working together in a culture of mutual respect and cooperation we have made steady progress even in challenging times. All of our goals related to diversity — in recruiting and retaining students, faculty, and staff, in reflecting the diversity of our community, and in respecting diverse perspectives — rest on success in building and maintaining an inclusive campus culture. The Campus Climate Survey serves both as a source of insight for making improvements and as a baseline for measuring progress over time.

New administrative structures and a more accountable framework will make us more effective in incorporating priorities related to diversity and community into planning. Centrally coordinated and supported programs will focus where they will be most effective, and operating units should have flexibility to utilize their insight and innovation in achieving diversity goals. Unit plans should incorporate appropriate performance metrics and regular reporting mechanisms at all levels.

Resource Strategy

Even with resource constraints, we continue to invest in new ideas and adapt to changing circumstances. Our systematic program of budget management and strategic reallocation makes targeted reductions when necessary and moves resources from existing activities to emerging areas of need. In the past five years this process moved \$25 million into critical areas such as high-priority faculty hiring, student success programs, research partnerships, IT and facilities, and business systems improvements. In the period ahead, this process will become even more sharply focused on our strategic priorities.

One priority that undergirds all others is developing and maintaining a sustainable financial strategy. Two broad financial trends at work over the past decade or more continue: rising costs — especially driven by facilities, state-negotiated salary increases, and student financial aid — and decline in the proportion of the campus budget funded through the state appropriation.

Given those trends, our financial strategy remains increasingly reliant on student revenue. But potential further enrollment increases seem limited. The current historically high levels of enrollment are saturating classrooms, teaching labs, and student housing. Many families are less able — or willing — to pay higher tuition rates. The urgency of realizing success with the destination of choice strategy is coming into sharp focus. A shrinking pool of college-going students will put unprecedented pressure on student revenues for many years.

Our ambitious goals cannot be achieved through revenues alone. Expansions in efficiency, effectiveness, capacity, and impact are also essential. Strengthening business analytics by focusing on service volume, quality, timeliness, responsiveness and other factors will support ongoing cost control. To support that effort we will implement a new Tableau-based platform for information, evaluation, and accountability. Expanding partnerships through joint purchasing arrangements and relationships with industry partners can also fuel our success. Large-scale research partnerships, such as the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center, demonstrate how these activities can be scaled up. Both serve as models for greater resource impact.

The challenge of maintaining and renewing an aging infrastructure remains a central dilemma. We committed ourselves to reversing the staggering deferred maintenance backlog and have brought the total down by 40%. The campus has closed in on the limits of its ability to fund capital improvements, and without large-scale capital investment by the state, our progress is at severe risk.

To achieve greater value for facilities dollars, we will increasingly focus on adaptive reuse of existing facilities. We will also implement new approaches to strategic space management, including allocation of physical assets to planning priorities; a sharper focus on shared assets and scheduling; and expanded use of data and analytics to inform new policies and incentives for effective space use.

All of the above notwithstanding, we will need to find additional investments in quality enhancement for our university. Achieving the Top 20 vision will require that we do all we can do on our own in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, and in finding new markets and new revenue streams. That won't be enough. We will make a compelling case for investment to our alumni, friends, and corporate partners through a new comprehensive fundraising campaign. Finally, we will mount an advocacy campaign to convince the state to increase its investment—both operating funds and capital—in support of our/the state's Top 20 vision for UMass Amherst.

Over the decades, through working together toward common goals, the University of Massachusetts Amherst has made remarkable progress as the Commonwealth's flagship, public research university. Looking ahead, by pursuing together the goals and strategies outlined in this plan, we are confident we can deliver, for the people of Massachusetts and beyond, a public university that provides the innovation and impact on par with the best public universities in the nation and the world.