

# Flexible Learning Implementation Committee

## Quarterly Report

February 28, 2022

### Membership

- Jim Kurose, Associate Chancellor, Partnerships and Innovation and Distinguished University Professor, College of Information and Computer Sciences (co-chair)
- John Wells, Senior Vice Provost for Lifelong Learning and Professor, Operations and Information Management (co-chair)
- Jenny Adams, Associate Professor, English
- Carolyn Bassett, Associate Provost for Student Success
- Jacqueline Castledine, Chair, UWW
- Kristin Famighette, Project Manager
- Michelle Goncalves, Deputy Chief of Staff, Chancellor's Office (Administrative Liaison)
- Deb Gould, Vice Provost for Administration & Finance
- Claire Hamilton, Associate Provost and Director, Center for Teaching and Learning
- Sarah Hutton, Interim Dean, UMass Libraries
- Ken Kleinman, Professor, Biostatistics and Epidemiology
- Adam Lechowicz, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science
- Mzamo Mangaliso, Associate Professor, Isenberg School of Management
- Anne Massey, Dean and Thomas O'Brien Endowed Chair Operations & Information Management, Isenberg School of Management
- Chris Misra, Vice Chancellor for Information Technology
- Key Nuttall, Chief Marketing Officer, University Relations
- Heather Sharpes-Smith, Executive Director, Online Education Technology, Instructional Design, Engagement and Support (IDEAS)
- Mary Deane Sorcinelli, Senior Fellow, Center for Teaching and Learning
- Xiaoyun Song, PhD Student, College of Education
- Patrick Sullivan, Registrar
- Susan Weldon, Senior Director for Employee Engagement, Human Resources
- Tilman Wolf, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering

## Overview and Context

In Spring 2021, Chancellor Subbaswamy convened the Task Force on Flexible Learning to develop a strategic plan for the future of [Flexible Learning for our campus](#). This plan includes: guiding principles and goals; an analysis of our campus' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats with respect to Flexible Learning; recommended action/implementation steps and possible timelines; and success indicators. The Task Force was expansive, with more than 50 members from the campus community, including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty from all academic colleges, staff, and representatives from Faculty Senate and Massachusetts Society of Professors. Its work was guided by a series of subgroups on 1.) Instruction, Pedagogy, and Technology, 2.) Student Experience and Equity, 3.) Workload and Support, 4.) Finances, and 5.) Academic Calendar, Registration, and Facilities. Following three months of intensive discussion, including meetings with various student and governance groups and two open Town Hall discussions, the Task Force released its [Final Report](#), containing more than 60 recommendations.

In Fall 2021, the Chancellor convened a Flexible Learning Implementation Committee, [charging the committee](#) to build on the vision and momentum of the Spring 2021 Task Force on Flexible Learning, and to begin moving the campus from strategic planning to implementation, consistent with the vision and recommendations of the Flexible Learning Task Force. As the Implementation Committee begins to move Flexible Learning from strategy to implementation, it is critical to note that:

- The Implementation Committee primarily makes recommendations, backed by analysis and discussion, to appropriate decision makers in administration, campus units, and governance bodies.
- Communication and engagement with the campus community is critically important. Indeed, the Chancellor also charged the Implementation Committee “To report to [him], and the larger campus community, quarterly on progress.” This document is the first quarterly report of the Flexible Learning Implementation Committee.

The Flexible Learning Implementation Committee has divided its work across six subgroups: Pedagogy, Technology, Communications, Finance, Co-Curricular & Student Services, and Records & Registration. While each subgroup has a particular focus, all subgroups address issues of equity, access, and inclusion, and invite perspectives of faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

							Co-chairs
Pedagogy							Claire Hamilton Heather Sharpes-Smith
Technology							Chris Misra Tilman Wolf
Communications							Key Nuttall John Wells
Finance							Deb Gould Anne Massey
Co-curricular & Student Services							Carolyn Bassett Sarah Hutton
Records & Registration							Patrick Sullivan John Wells
Integrated Perspectives	DEI	Faculty	Staff	Students	Admin		

## Activities Underway

The subgroups have prioritized the more than 60 recommendations in the Taskforce report. Among the nearer-term, high priority activities currently underway are the following:

- **FlexLearning Fellows program.** The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Instructional Design Engagement and Support (IDEAS) group announced a FlexLearning Fellows (FLF) program in June 2021. The FLF program helps faculty and their departments identify types of Flexible Learning that work best for their field, their degree programs, and their students. It also provides a faculty-centered learning community in which faculty can further develop the knowledge and skills needed for flexible pedagogy. FLF Fellows will, in turn, serve as leaders and models in their department and in the University. The inaugural FlexLearning Fellows [were announced this past November](#).
- **A definition of Flexible Learning.** Led by the Pedagogy and Communication subgroups, the Implementation Committee has developed a concise definition of Flexible Learning at UMass and is working with faculty (through the FLF Program) and the Communications subgroup to refine this definition.
- **Learning Management System (LMS) recommendation.** The Flexible Learning Strategic Plan and subsequent additional student input and surveys recommend an LMS needs assessment and an LMS systems analysis. The Technology subgroup is undertaking these tasks and exploring the rationale and recommendation for a single LMS for the campus. The subgroup will engage with appropriate governance groups including the Faculty Senate Information and Communication Technology Council (ICTC), in its work.
- **Conferencing, capture, and storage.** The Technology subgroup is also working with IT to develop and evaluate a common information technology suite for classroom conferencing, capture, and storage.
- **An identity for Flexible Learning.** The Communications subgroup is working with University Relations staff to create an identity for Flexible Learning at UMass Amherst. Focus group surveys and initial design have been completed, with an initial April rollout anticipated.
- **A Flex Learning web presence.** The Communication subgroup is working with University Relations staff to create a Flexible Learning web present. An initial design concept has been completed, with an planned initial rollout in April.
- **Estimating revenue/expense of expanding on-line offerings.** The Finance subgroup is developing models to estimate the costs and revenues of expanding online offerings in select University and/or UWW courses that could allow for additional enrollment while also maintaining quality in all dimensions. A key task here is to identify programs and courses that are in high demand, that are ready for Flexible Learning, and that can be incentivized to grow.
- **Access to UWW courses by on-campus students.** The Finance subgroup is developing models to estimate the impact of eliminating the extra UWW charges for all or some full-time on-campus students in a way that is both financially feasible for the university and beneficial to students.
- **Student services.** The Co-curricular and Student Services subgroup is working with Student Affairs and Campus Life (SACL) and other offices to determine the degree to which student services are currently offered in a “flex” manner, and to identify where there are gaps. Accessibility and disability services are of particular interest here.
- **Course coding.** The Records and Registration subgroup is working with the Registrar's office and University Relations to produce a coding framework that will allow the Registrar to schedule courses across sessions and effectively convey the mode of instruction that students can expect.
- **April 12 UMass Flex Summit & Showcase.** We have planned an event for April 12 that will bring together faculty, students, and staff to discuss Flexible Learning, and to showcase FlexLearning Fellows and early adopters experience. Keynote speakers, two panels on Flexible Learning (one with an institutional perspective and one with a pedagogy/faculty perspective) are planned. There will also be opportunities for participants to interact informally with our FlexLearning Fellows.

## Looking forward

The committee will continue to push forward on many of these activities over the next three quarters, with new activities being undertaken, consistent with the Flexible Learning Strategic Plan. More detailed information about Implementation Committee activities can be found on the current [Flexible Learning website](#). The Implementation Committee will continue to engage with the campus via reports (such as this first quarterly report); open Town Hall meetings; and briefings offered to various campus organizations, governance bodies, and other groups.