

Flexible Learning Implementation Committee

Quarterly Report

Activities through May 5, 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

This is the second quarterly report of the AY 21/22 Flexible Learning Implementation Committee (FLIC), covering the period 2/28/22 – 5/8/22. The FLIC has been [charged](#) 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. Earlier quarterly reports and other background material on Flexible Learning can be found in the “About” section of on the new UMassFlex website, <http://www.umass.edu/flex> (created during this second quarter).

Q2 Major Activities

Among the many Q2 activities, perhaps two bear special mention. First, the FLIC developed a concise, UMass Amherst-specific definition for Flexible Learning (see Figure 1). Its simplicity is in marked contrast to that of many other campuses, offering a “big tent” approach that recognizes the many dimensions of Flexible Learning in both academics and co-curricular activities and student services. The definition, and a related positioning statement, was developed jointly by the FLIC Communications and Pedagogy subgroups, and discussed and endorsed by the entire committee.

A second major Flexible Learning activity was the April 12, 2022 UMassFlex Summit, which provided an opportunity for the entire campus community to learn more about Flexible Learning and the UMassFlex initiative. The event itself was “flexible” (of course!) with 123 in-person participants and 169 online participants. Keynote talks and panel discussions involving faculty, staff, and students highlighted the day. More information about the day-long event can be found at the [UMassFlex website](#) (including video highlights) and in this [UMass News article](#).

Many other important FLIC activities took place during Q2. We list highlights below, organized by the FLIC subgroup coordinating the activity:

- **Pedagogy.** The 20 inaugural [Flex Learning Fellows](#) (FLF) completed their fellowship, which included bi-weekly meetings led by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CLT) and the Instructional Design, Engagement, & Support (IDEAS) group. A [solicitation](#) for next year’s FLF class was developed and posted.
- **Technology.** The Technology subgroup initiated a “listening tour” to better understand technology needs in support of Flexible Learning. A particular focus of the tour was on Learning Management System (LMS) needs, in anticipation of possibly moving to a single recommended LMS in the Fall



Flexible Learning at UMass. *UMass Flex is an extension of the world-class academics of UMass Amherst that provides flexible access to our rich campus experience. Why? Because students in this rapidly changing world demand both excellence in their university educational experience and true flexibility in the ways they access those opportunities.*





of 2022. Twenty-three meetings were held in Q2, with participants from across the campus community (31% students, 27% staff, 23% admin, 18% faculty). Specific platform capabilities were identified. Some common themes heard in these meetings were the need for a small set of tools (i.e., avoiding a proliferation of different tools) and for support and training in these tools and in converting over to any new tools. The technology subgroup also invited presentations from external vendors on classroom technology platforms for classroom capture, streaming, and live interaction (with an emphasis on integration with higher level systems such as SPIRE and the LMS).

- **Communications.** This group had a particularly busy quarter! In addition to coordinating the launch of the new website, supporting the UMassFlex Summit, and helping (with the Pedagogy group) to develop the Flexible Learning definition and positioning statement (all discussed above), the Communication group also coordinated the development of the UMassFlex brand identity.
- **Finance.** Currently, university-session (e.g., residential) students who enroll in UWW courses pay additional tuition to UWW for UWW-offered courses. The Finance subgroup completed an historical study of the number of students who choose this option and the financial flows of their tuition revenues to UWW, colleges, and central administration.
- **Co-curricular and Student Services.** This group continued its survey of existing flex-related offerings in co-curricular and student activities, with an aim of understanding where there are existing offerings/capabilities and where there are gaps.
- **Records and Registration.** This group initiated its planning for introducing explicit UMassFlex designations into SPIRE for courses, starting with Fall 2023 classes. Initial discussion here focused on specific requirements needed for a course to have a “UMassFlex” designation.