Focus area 2: Excellence in Undergraduate Education
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

From the existing plan, Goal 1: “The University is recognized for its excellent undergraduate and graduate programs that integrate innovative teaching/learning strategies and prepare students for advancement in the twenty-first century environment.”

Focus area 2, Excellence in Undergraduate Education, derives from this planning goal. The other three focus areas driven by Goal 1 are 1. Recognition of the University for Program Excellence, 3. Excellence of Graduate Programs, and 4. Integrating Innovative Teaching/Learning Strategies and Preparing Students for Advancement in the Twenty-first Century Environment.

Area 2, Excellence of Undergraduate Programs: Committee Members

William Hogan, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Team Chair
Renate Crawford, Associate Dean, College of Engineering
Susan Costa, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Ellen Christian, Director, Academic Advising, and Professor of Nursing
Carol Spencer, Director, College Now
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Laura Franz, College of Visual & Performing Arts (Design)
Catherine Houser, College of Arts & Sciences (Chairperson, English)
Toby Dills, College of Arts & Sciences (Chemistry & Biochemistry)
Robert Jones, College of Arts & Sciences (Economics)
Kristen Sethares, College of Nursing (Adult & Child Nursing)
Wendell Brown, SMAST (Chairperson, Estuarine & Ocean Sciences)
Maria Blanton, Mathematics
Matt Sylvain, Assistant Librarian
Stephanie Luz, Student Senator/Resident Advisor

STRENGTHS
(1) A strong and productive faculty to deliver undergraduate (UG) programs
(2) Renewal of the faculty following two early retirement incentive programs.
(3) Support facilities that contribute significantly to UG education.
(4) A comprehensive selection of Colleges and Majors, each with a strong curriculum leading to baccalaureate degrees.
(5) Growing enrollment in many/most programs reflective of expanding student interest in the particular programs and the University in general
(6) Admissions Office success in recruiting freshmen directly from high schools, and meeting or exceeding enrollment targets
(7) New programs being created or in development that reflect changing student needs and interests
STRENGTHS, continued

(8) Significant progress toward establishing on-going procedures for assessing learning outcomes in majors.

(9) The Faculty Instructional Laptop Program (FILP) and the Classroom Technology Initiatives that have equipped classrooms with state-of-the-art instructional technology and equipped faculty with laptops to support use of technology in UG instruction. (While approximately two-thirds of the faculty have received instructional laptops, absence of funding in the current fiscal year threatens this program that has revolutionized teaching at UMD. See Threats section.)

(10) Relatively small class sizes which facilitate opportunities for students to interact with faculty both in and outside class, including participation in research projects in some disciplines.

(11) In some departments, strong systems of academic advising with sustained personal attention to students through their undergraduate careers.

(12) Some undergraduate programs have been cited for excellence by external review or accreditation boards.

(13) Chancellor’s outreach activities to area elected officials and business leaders to promote awareness of UG programs.

(14) Alumni commitment to UG programs and UMD in general.

(15) UMass Dartmouth’s role as a provider of university-level educational opportunities in southeastern Massachusetts

(16) Scenic coastal location; location near urban centers but with rural surroundings and access to ocean; size and configuration of the campus, its buildings, and student body.

(17) Balance of undergraduate teaching responsibilities with success in research.

WEAKNESSES

(1) A General Education program that many faculty, students, and administrators find unsatisfactory

(2) No program to assess learning outcomes of the General Education Requirements

(3) Heavy reliance on part time faculty in many programs

(4) Retention of UG students, especially freshmen, is not a targeted responsibility of anyone on campus.

(5) Graduation rate of 51% within 6 years of initial enrollment

(6) Lagging progress on diversity of student body, with respect to color, ethnicity, age, and other characteristics.

(7) Limited opportunities for non-traditional learning, for example on-line or blended courses.

(8) There is no systematic program to review, update, and fund teaching laboratory facilities, equipment, and supplies.

(9) While there is significant progress in many departments with respect to assessing learning outcomes, we cannot at present claim to have instituted a campus-wide culture of assessment with the consequent on-going revision of curricula.

(10) The freshman retention rate is lower than many on our campus would like.

(11) Relatively limited resources and attention to the integration of commuting students into campus life.
WEAKNESSES, continued

(12) Limited interdisciplinary programs or course offerings that allow programmatic interaction among colleges and departments.
(13) Limited opportunities for students and faculty to interact outside classes.
(14) Lack of adequate access to technology to fulfill General Education mandates.
(15) Lack of adequate office space and technology support for HTLs and PTLs many of whom teach courses that satisfy General Education requirements.
(16) Some classrooms still not equipped with appropriate technological and learning environments.
(17) Shift to more emphasis on graduate enrollment and programs, and more emphasis on research productivity has de-emphasized commitment to UG instruction.
(18) The new COIN direct registration system has reduced the opportunities for student-faculty contact, especially with respect to advising.
(19) Limited sections of required courses in some programs in some semesters.
(20) Cost of attending UMass Dartmouth exceeds cost of UMass Amherst including room and board.
(21) Campus amenities for students such as the gym, pool, opportunities for recreation in evenings and on weekends are not as desirable as those of some other campuses.
(22) Reduced offerings of “trailer” courses in off-semester add a year to the time to degree completion of students who drop or fail required courses, and frequent cancellation of summer courses due to insufficient enrollment.
(23) A campus climate that does not provide adequate opportunities for participation in extra-curricular activities; the “suitcase” campus.
(24) Advisee email contact information is not available to faculty in COIN.
(25) Teacher preparation programs and activities are dispersed, lack coordination, and sometimes conflict.
(26) The overall advising process does not eliminate potential for advising error that can lead to students’ enrollment in courses that are inappropriate for their needs or for which they do not meet the pre-requisites.
(27) Absence of professional development program for faculty in content (as opposed to pedagogy such as CTE).
(28) No systematic transportation system for students to arrive at sites off the main campus.
(29) Student life programs, including initial contacts and orientations, do not sufficiently emphasize the importance of academics vs. socialization.
(30) Problems with coordination, curriculum planning, staffing, and scheduling of first year courses in MTH.

OPPORTUNITIES

(1) Recruitment of new full time tenure track faculty allows UMD to provide areas of specialization that will appeal to students; reallocation of faculty resources to better meet student needs and interests.
(2) External funding to support UG teaching programs through named donor opportunities.
(3) Development of non-traditional methods of instruction, especially on-line learning
OPPORTUNITIES, continued
(4) Development of new technological support for traditional teaching and learning methods, e.g. a server-based language lab permitting remote access; Podcasting as an alternative to conventional lecturing.
(5) Scholarship of teaching and learning will allow faculty to contribute scholarly work to their disciplines at the same time as benefiting the effectiveness of teaching.
(6) Increasing opportunities to work with K-12 schools, community colleges, and other institutions to better coordinate curriculum and better prepare students for enrollment at UMass Dartmouth.
(7) A systematic program to require students to purchase computers, probably portable/laptop models, would allow an integration of IT in all disciplines that choose to use it.
(8) Prospects for improved UG programs via greater awareness of needs by administrative decision-makers.
(9) Programs to integrate UMD curricula with community college curricula to improve the UG experience for transfer students.
(10) Develop a comprehensive First and Second Year Student Experience to support student success and increase retention.
(11) Add a support center for Humanities and Social Sciences as a component of the Academic Resource Center (formerly known as the Co-Operative Learning Center).
(12) Increase diversity of the faculty via recruiting
(13) Expand co-op opportunities for UG students and increase internships in service learning
(14) Increase undergraduate involvement in research.
(15) The growing residential student population will increase opportunities for student involvement in extracurricular learning and activities.
(16) The renovation of the Claire T. Carney Library will create a learning-centered environment.
(17) Greater research productivity of the faculty will increase the campus’s prestige and may attract the kinds of students who currently choose to attend universities with more research activity. This will also attract higher quality faculty candidates.

THREATS
(1) Funding shortfalls, for full time faculty, part time faculty, and staff.
(2) Funding threat to the continuation of the Faculty Instructional Laptop Program and Classroom Technology Initiatives
(3) Classroom availability: campus is now at or near capacity
(4) Inadequate funding mechanisms to support teaching laboratory activities and needs.
(5) Federal demands for external public accountability will add to the pressure already exerted by NEASC to demonstrate that UMD is delivering the high quality undergraduate education that we claim.
THREATS, continued

(6) Rapid technological and structural change in U.S. society requires that UMD continuously adapt the undergraduate curricula to changing demands from students who are driven by graduate admissions committees, employers, and others.

(7) Quality of undergraduate education is at risk from unbridled expansion of online courses.

(8) Lack of support for assessment endeavors.

(9) Retention of new and junior faculty at risk due to inadequate support for research and the absence of connection to campus life.

(10) Allowing students to participate in commencement ceremonies while lacking credits required for degree certification.

(11) Rapid expansion of existing programs and creation of new programs puts a strain on support services.

(12) Inability to establish differentiated faculty foci for “teaching” and “graduate” groups with different expectations and requirements for tenure and promotion.

(13) Lack of experience and infrastructure for doctoral programs may impact the quality of undergraduate education.

(14) Involvement of Trustees in managing operations rather than setting policy, particularly with respect to the approval of new degree programs.