SWOT Team #4: Integrating Innovative Teaching-Learning Strategies and Preparing Students for Advancement in the 21st Century Environment

I. Strengths
- UMass Dartmouth’s commitment to student learning
- UMass Dartmouth’s commitment to faculty development
- UMass and UMassOnline support for and of expansion of teaching and learning technologies, including continuing analysis and piloting of emerging teaching and learning technologies.
- Committed, creative, and energetic faculty and staff/professionals
- Growing numbers of faculty engaged with using technology to facilitate teaching that reaches a student body that is increasingly technology oriented.
- Faculty training and support for using technology in the classroom and for developing pedagogy
- Innovative academic programs that cross disciplines
- Intercampus research and teaching collaborations, enabled by distance technologies

II. Weaknesses
- Campus lacks cross-college and inter-college discussions on teaching and learning assessment practices
- Campus lacks assessment of and plan for students’ changing needs for information literacy and media literacy
- Campus lacks integrated/strategic planning for prioritizing of faculty development that enables faculty to balance both research and teaching
- Campus continues to rely on traditional course scheduling, which does not meet working student needs
- Some students lack access to appropriate software and hardware
- Student focus on college as career training detracts from development as citizens engaged in learning, appreciation of the arts and development of lifelong skills
- Disincentives to faculty to offer courses via distance learning

III. Opportunities
- Planned growth of full-online and blended (50% or more online) courses
- Planned development of assessment initiatives through faculty discourse and broad implementation of ePortfolios
- Develop program for student computer and software purchases
- Increased collaboration and sharing of ideas, content, and learning objects among faculty community enabled by new technologies
- Development of online, blended and hybrid learning courses to increase student access, as well as alternative course scheduling
- Create faculty development center that encompasses teaching, research, and service development needs of faculty throughout a faculty member’s life-cycle
- Innovative programs to meet Commonwealth needs for continuing students seeking higher degrees and professional certifications
- Improved development of first year programs to increase student retention
IV: Threats

- General faculty belief that teaching improvement is about better teaching methods rather than critical engagement in serious and ongoing reflection and assessment
- Campus lack of assessment conversation and training may lead to departments unable to gauge effectively learning outcomes and affect accreditation processes
- Increased inter-campus struggles for resources due to funding cuts
- Faculty time constraints growing due to increased undergraduate and graduate teaching load, increased demands for research and required technology skills
- State funding/increased costs: cuts in the former and additions in the latter will force students to spend even more time working outside of school
- Competition: Online programs growing exponentially nationwide, particularly at the graduate level, threatening our enrollment; increased competition with private institutions, scholarships, transfer credits, programs, etc.
- Danger of relying on technology to save faculty time and not increase student learning; technology training must be focused on the student learning experience
- Campus faces student and faculty retention issues if institutionalized support services and resources not established and maintained