

## INTRODUCTION

### The NEASC Self-Study Process

The purpose of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's self-study process is to reflect on the changing profile of the University over the past ten years and assess the impact of these changes relative to the institution's Mission and Vision. Given the institution's continuing evolution, broad representation of the University's community in the preparation of the self-study was critical. In addition to outlining the institution's self-evaluation process, this section describes the context provided by UMass Dartmouth's NEASC re-accreditation history since the 2000 site visit.

UMass Dartmouth's NEASC reaccreditation process began in September 2008 with three levels of organizational structure. The first, the NEASC Self-Study Core Team, consisted of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, the Assistant Chancellor for Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Executive Office Director of the Provost's Office. This group managed the reaccreditation effort, reviewing the 2000 Self-Study and evaluation documents and developed a plan and timeline for the 2010 self-study process, emphasizing that it would be both transparent and inclusive. In late-October 2008, the Core Team appointed the co-chairs and members of the eleven committees that would manage the sub-report for each Standard. In this process, they considered nominations from the UMass Dartmouth Faculty Senate, staff, administrators, and the Student Senate. The Co-Chairs of the working committees for most Standards consisted of an administrator and faculty member, with committees of about 10 to 12 people who were representative of all segments of the UMass Dartmouth community. Standard 4 was co-chaired by two administrators. During this initial phase, the Assistant Chancellor for Institutional Research and Assessment prepared a plan for data gathering, completing required forms, disseminating data, and providing assistance to each committee.

The second level consisted of a NEASC Steering Committee chaired by the Provost. Composed of the Co-Chairs of each of the working committees as well as a few additional individuals *ex officio* to the Steering Committee, this group maintained oversight of the self-study process, identified needs for data, and reported on their committee's progress at the monthly meetings that occurred from December 2008 to June 2009. In addition, the Steering Committee provided broad input for editing and feedback on the drafts of the self-study. The third level consisted of the eleven subcommittees of faculty, staff, and students, organized by standard. These committees collected and assessed evidence, drafted projections, and produced draft documents. The first draft reports for each standard were completed in June/July 2009.

A Blackboard website provided a helpful communication tool for the Core Team and the Subcommittees during their organizational, information-gathering, and drafting phases. The site was identified as the NEASC Self-Study Workroom and included links to sub-pages for NEASC General Information, the Self-Study Overview and Process, and the documents for each Subcommittee's work. It also allowed the Subcommittees to review each others' drafts. Each Subcommittee page had links to Resources/Data and Information folders, where a wide variety of information sources, specific NEASC tools such as the relevant Data First form, and a Discussion Area were provided. The Discussion Area allowed the Co-chairs to post minutes and

other messages and for the Co-chairs and members to engage in communication threads. Most committees took advantage of the site's communications functions, and all used its access to reports and information sources. The documentation in the website was the starting point for the Team Workroom.

A writer was appointed to create integrated narratives that were reviewed with the Core Team as well as Co-Chairs and committees. In October 2009, a draft Self-Study Report was posted on a secure intranet site available to all members of the UMass Dartmouth community. An online forum was created via blog and email to provide an extended opportunity for commentary and feedback. At the same time, the Provost held community forums on November 23 and December 1, 2009, where he provided a summary presentation of the report and an opportunity for all members of the campus community to discuss the report. These comments, along with comments from Chancellor MacCormack, were incorporated into the next draft, and in late December 2009 copies were forwarded to Barbara Brittingham and Louise Zak, NEASC, and President John Miller, Chair of UMass Dartmouth's NEASC evaluation team, for preliminary review.

On February 5, 2010, another draft of the Self-Study, which incorporated comments from the preliminary reviews, was posted on a secure intranet site for comments from members of the UMass Dartmouth community. These comments, along with those of the Steering Committee, were then incorporated into the final draft of the Self-Study report, with final reviews by the Chancellor and Provost. A final report was then prepared for submission.

## **NEASC Self-study Timeline**

### **Fall 08**

- **Early September:** NEASC Core Team meets to plan re-accreditation process; establish timeline; call for nominations to NEASC working committees.
- **October:** NEASC Core Team finalized committee membership and appointment of Co-Chairs; Provost, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, Assistant Chancellor, and President of the Faculty Senate attend NEASC Self-Study workshop.
- **November:** Committee Co-chairs attend campus Workshop with Dr. Louise Zak, Associate Director of the NEASC Commission.

### **Fall 08-Spring 09**

- **November-May:** NEASC working committees collected and assessed data; then they drafted preliminary reports; Steering Committee met monthly to assess data requirements and report on working committee's progress.

### **Summer 09**

- Initial drafts are completed and the writer begins to edit reports and produces Draft Self-Study report.

### **Fall 09**

- **September:** Self-Study draft reviewed by Team and Steering Committee.
- **October:** Draft Self-Study posted on a secure intranet website for community review and comment.
- **November 23/December 1<sup>st</sup>:** Open Forums for community comment.

- **December 22<sup>nd</sup>**: Revised Self-Study report sent to NEASC and Team Leader of NEASC Evaluation Committee.

### Spring 10

- **January**: NEASC Core Team reviews and establishes plan for completion of the Self-Study Report.
- **February 5<sup>th</sup>**: Draft Self-Study posted on a secure intranet website for community review and comment.
- **Early February**: Complete final versions of data forms, appendices, etc.
- **February 25<sup>th</sup>**: Final version of Self-Study submitted to Visit Team and NEASC.
- **April 11-14<sup>th</sup>**: NEASC Accreditation Team campus visit.

### NEASC Core Team

Anthony Garro	Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Magali Carrera	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Alex Fowler	Associate Provost for Graduate Studies
Richard Panofsky	Assistant Chancellor, Institutional Research and Assessment
Karen Dixon	Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (Writer)
Lori Nickerson	Executive Office Director, Provost

### NEASC Steering Committee

Anthony Garro	Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic/Student Affairs	Steering Committee Chair
Ismael Ramirez-Soto	Dean, School of Education, Public Policy, and Civic Engagement	Co-Chair, Standard One
Kristen Sethares	Faculty College of Nursing	Co-Chair, Standard One
Richard Panofsky	Assistant Chancellor Chancellor's Office	Co-Chair, Standard Two
Nancy Dluhy	Faculty College of Nursing	Co-Chair, Standard Two
Michael Baum	Faculty College of Arts and Sciences, and President, Faculty Senate	Co-Chair, Standard Three
Robert Peck	Dean College of Engineering	Co-Chair, Standard Three
Adrian Tío	Dean College Visual and Performing Arts	Co-Chair, Standard Three
Magali Carrera	Associate Provost Undergraduate Studies	Co-Chair, Standard Four
Alex Fowler	Associate Provost Graduate Studies	Co-Chair, Standard Four
Jim Fain	Dean College of Nursing	Co-Chair, Standard Five
Robert Jones	Faculty, College of Arts and Sciences	Co-Chair, Standard Five

David Milstone	Associate Vice Chancellor Student Affairs	Co-Chair, Standard Six
Kenneth Langley	Faculty College of Engineering	Co-Chair, Standard Six
Robert Green	Dean Library	Co-Chair, Standard Seven
Angappa Gunasekaran	Faculty Charlton College of Business	Co-Chair, Standard Seven
Donna Massano	CIO/Associate Vice Chancellor Computing and Information Technology	Co-Chair, Standard Eight and Standard Seven for Information Resources
David Ferguson	Director Physical Plant	Co-Chair, Standard Eight
Deborah McLaughlin	Vice Chancellor Administration and Finance	Co-Chair, Standard Nine
Tribhuvan Puri	Faculty Charlton College of Business	Co-Chair, Standard Nine
John Hoey	Assistant Chancellor Public Affairs	Co-Chair, Standard Ten
Steve White	Faculty Charlton College of Business	Co-Chair, Standard Ten
William Hogan	Dean College of Arts and Sciences	Co-Chair, Standard Eleven
Patricia White	Faculty College of Arts and Sciences/ Chair Senate Ethics Committee	Co-Chair, Standard Eleven
John Farrington	Interim-Dean School of Marine Science and Technology	Ex-Officio
Susan Engelkemeyer	Dean Charlton College of Business	Ex-Officio
Tammy Silva	Director Institutional Research	Ex-Officio
Frank Smith	Communications Specialist	Copy Editor

### **NEASC Standard Committee Membership**

### **Recent NEASC Accreditation Overview**

UMass Dartmouth's accreditation history since the University's last comprehensive site visit in Spring 2000 is somewhat complex. During the intervening ten-year period, the institution has worked progressively to address a number of CIHE findings.

1. The findings from the 2000 comprehensive evaluation site visit required a "Focused Evaluation Visit" in Spring 2003 addressing four issues:

- Undertaking systematic planning and evaluation that includes the assessment of student learning outcomes;

- Further integrating the graduate programs and research centers with the rest of the institution;
- Developing and implementing a facilities master plan;
- Achieving financial stability and eliminating the budget deficit.

The [CIHE's letter](#) of findings from the focused visit found the University to have satisfied the concerns in the areas of systematic planning, graduate programs and centers, and some aspects of financial stability. However, issues to be addressed in the 2005 interim report remained.

2. In 2005, the institution was asked to submit the regular fifth-year interim report with a focus on continuing areas of concern:

- Developing and implementing assessment strategies throughout the institution;
- Continuing the discussion regarding a coordinated and centralized student course evaluation system;
- Completing and implementing a facilities master plan;
- Linking strategic planning and resource allocation activities to continue progress toward financial stability and budget deficit reduction.

The [CIHE response](#) to the fifth-year report again cited continued progress, but CIHE requested a special progress report in Spring 2007. Remaining from the list of original concerns were two aspects of academic program assessment:

- Implementing assessment of student learning strategies throughout the institution and using the results for improvement;
- Developing a coordinated and centralized student course evaluation system.

3. The [CIHE response](#) to the 2007 Progress Report acknowledged that the institution had addressed assessment in the academic programs but cited the continuing need to improve assessment of general education outcomes and to adopt a campus-wide format for student evaluation of courses. In anticipation of the spring 2010 visit, the Self-Study has given emphasis to these concerns. Faculty and administration have agreed to a process and form for common student course evaluation. The General Education program now has approved learning outcomes and an active program for assessing students' learning in general education. The institution has also formulated a broad statement of educational goals, the Integrated Student Learning Outcomes statement, for UMass Dartmouth undergraduate students, which will help ground ongoing assessment of both academic and co-curricular programs in a common recognition of our aspirations for our students.

## **Conclusion**

UMass Dartmouth has engaged in ongoing efforts between 2000 and 2010 to strengthen its processes and policies related to institutional effectiveness. This commitment and a thorough and broadly participatory self-study process demonstrate the University's continuing progress toward systematic assessment and improvement.