

# ENROLLMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FRESHMEN & TRANSFER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020-2024



**UMass** | Dartmouth

## Introduction

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2020 among the top 218 national universities, among the top 16 best colleges in Massachusetts, and the only National University south of Boston, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth provides an intimate learning environment for highly qualified students who pursue academic programs through 57 majors and 47 professional and doctoral programs, including the UMass School of Law, the Commonwealth's only public law school.

Over the past decade UMass Dartmouth has faced some challenges in growing its enrollment as seen in the figure below. The University's Enrollment Strategic Plan provides the framework for strategic and tactical actions for recruiting new students and retaining enrolled students. This executive summary provides an overview of the plan.

## The Decade of Decreasing Enrollment

The University has experienced an 11.2% decline in enrollment over the past decade. There are two primary causes for the lack of expansion experienced by the University: negative demographic trends and a failure on the part of the University to effectively market the quality educational experiences offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The demographic trends of Massachusetts and greater New England have created a very dynamic environment for traditional enrollment, both freshmen and transfer. The University draws the majority (88.4% in Fall 2019) of its first-time freshmen and transfer enrollments from the state of Massachusetts. The current environment has placed significant pressure on all higher education institutions, forcing steep discounting and significant new investments in recruitment and marketing. In the face of this turbulence, the University has been late to market with key initiatives that would have helped attract freshmen and transfers to campus.

## UMass Dartmouth is Fundamentally Different than Other Public Universities

Forty-nine percent of UMass Dartmouth's entering freshmen have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$5,576 or less and a significant residential population (only Amherst has a higher percentage of residential students). This means that UMass Dartmouth students are challenged by a relatively low ability to pay and a higher cost of attendance than other UMass campuses:

Institution	Tuition & Fees	Room & Board	*** On-Campus	Total
UMass Dartmouth	\$14,358	\$14,647	52%	\$29,005
UMass Boston	\$14,167	\$15,270	10%	\$29,437
UMass Amherst	\$16,784	\$14,006	62%	\$30,790
UMass Lowell	\$15,648	\$13,060	32%	\$28,708

\*\* Source: collegeboard.org

## The Plan to Grow Enrollment

Since 2016, new freshmen enrolling at the University has been flat with a 7% increase from 2017-2018, followed by a 7% decrease from 2018-2019. During that time, significant change in the recruitment team and programs have taken place, primarily focused on implementing best practices and increasing the level of engagement with both prospective students and the people who effect their decision making.

As a result, in the 2019-2020 enrollment cycle the University has executed the following:

- Purchased 198,440 names of prospective students ranking UMass Dartmouth in the top 12% of all public institutions nationally. Complementing this increased investment, the enrollment management team has continued a pre-awarding strategy to these prospects in order to better compete with other institutions.
- Increased visits with high school guidance counselors and their students from 333 in 2017-2018 to 419 in 2019-2020, an increase of 26%. Additionally, there was a 4.8% increase in student visits to UMass Dartmouth from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020.
- Invested more than \$1.1 million (discretionary spending) to execute the University's first significant integrated marketing campaign, which includes multi-channel digital and social media campaign, special events, outdoor and radio advertising, and direct mail. This represents an investment, which almost quadruples what was spent in 2018-2019.

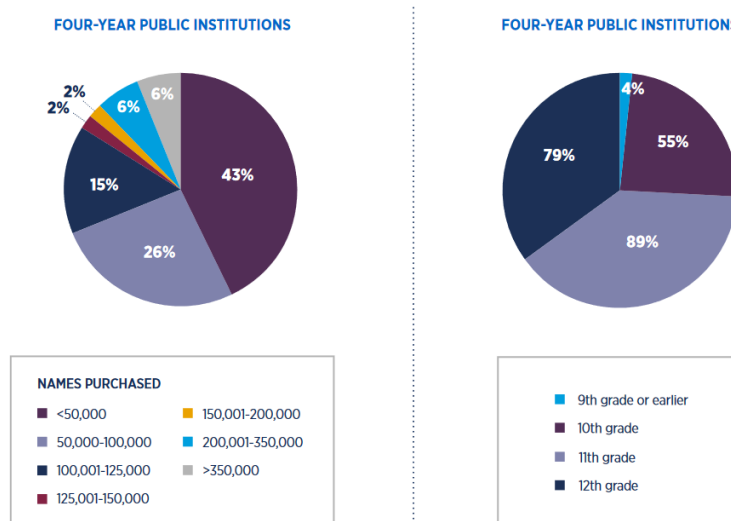
## An Emphasis on Data-Driven Decision Making to Devise and Execute Strategies

### Key Recruitment Strategy Trends

Reference: *2018 Marketing and Student Recruitment Report of Effective Practices, RNL, 2018*

In their 2018 report, Ruffalo Noel Levitz identified several key areas that four-year public institutions should incorporate as part of an effective recruitment and enrollment strategy. The following describes several of the key areas in use by UMass Dartmouth.

- Student Search Practices -UMass Dartmouth's use of Student Search to generate inquiries and applicants places it among the top 12 percent of four-year public institutions.



- Preferred First and Subsequent Contact Method- UMass Dartmouth's use of email, self-mailers and postcards is similar to other four-year public institutions. Texting and Digital Advertising have also been introduced and will continue to be expanded.
- First Contact Source- Purchased names, travel to high schools and college fairs and the application as first contact are the most identified first contact sources for four-year public institutions, including UMass Dartmouth.

- Top Most Effective Outreach Strategies and Tactics- Of the top five most effective outreach practices, UMass Dartmouth is utilizing publications, videos embedded on website and a mobile responsive website. Digital advertising and texting have been introduced and are being expanded.
- Advertising Strategies- Among the advertising strategies identified as effective, UMass Dartmouth has initiated a strategy that incorporates re-targeted ads, pay-per-click, online display ads, and billboards.
- Outreach to High School Counselors- The report identifies 10 outreach strategies to high school counselors, and UMass Dartmouth utilizes all of these strategies to varying degrees.
- Admissions Events- UMass Dartmouth utilizes all of the top five admissions event activities with certain modifications.

### Strategic Enrollment Plan Goals

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The University's Undergraduate Strategic Enrollment Plan has been developed to outline the University's response to the market headwinds and plans to leverage market opportunities.

In order to increase new student undergraduate enrollment, the University must,

1. Build enrollments during a period of declining high school graduates and adult learners.
2. Increase market share within Massachusetts and expand geographic reach.
3. Improve the University's brand identity.
4. Remain competitive in terms of pricing.
5. Provide relevant academic offerings.
6. Allow students to complete multiple degrees through continuous enrollment options and competitive pricing (i.e. 3+1, 4+1, etc.)
7. Continuously review and revise content used in marketing across all platforms.
8. Utilize a CRM that provides the opportunity to adeptly communicate with prospective students and parents across multiple channels.
9. Increase faculty engagement in recruitment activities.
10. Improve relationships with professionals and organizations (high school counselors and community college advisors) who can feed students to UMass Dartmouth.