

STANDARD TEN—PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

DESCRIPTION

As a public institution, UMass Dartmouth has a special responsibility to be transparent in the conduct of its activities, to ensure accuracy and currency of content, and to balance transparency with the right of privacy, specifically for those provisions governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and more generally for all students and employees as private citizens under state and federal law.

The University presents on its website information about its Mission and purposes, student enrollment and demographics, academic programs, tuition and fees, and other information of interest to prospective students and the general public; see the web page [About UMass Dartmouth](#). The comprehensive [website](#) also provides students and prospective students with both general and detailed information about admissions, academic offerings, student life support and opportunities. For example, the [UMass Dartmouth Academics](#) page shows the overall organization of the academic units and allows the user to locate more information about areas of specific interest. The institution's current accreditation status is accurately and explicitly worded on both the About UMass Dartmouth webpage and in the University's catalogs.

To address inquiries for further information or other interests, the footer appearing on all web pages directs the viewer to a [Contact the University](#) notice that provides links to the online directory, index, building map and building search tool, a general inquiry page (offering a pull-down menu of common addresses), admissions sites, the COIN student database, and e-mail/IT services. Led by the Office of Public Information, each functional area is charged to respond to inquiries. [Financial statements](#) and [audit information](#) are also posted and available on request.

The [General Catalog](#) presents the Mission and Vision and campus information, as well as more detailed sections that present current programs, program requirements, and descriptions of all credit courses. The catalog also outlines policies and procedures for undergraduate admissions and application for financial aid. In addition, the catalog lists the names of all full-time faculty, staff, and administrators. The Graduate Catalog follows a similar structure, providing campus information, graduate program requirements and courses, policies and procedures for graduate admissions and financial aid, and a listing of faculty. Each catalog sets forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. These catalogs are produced under the supervision of the Provost and serve as the official documents describing educational program offerings of the University. Beginning in 2009-2010, UMass Dartmouth implemented the use of fully online electronic catalogs. This system collects updates directly from originating offices through a web-based process managed by the Office of the University Registrar and overseen by the Office of the Provost. [Catalog editions](#) from 2001-02 forward were web-archived, and all versions are archived in print.

In addition to University catalogs, there are several important tools for public disclosure, which are consistent with the appropriate catalog information and use embedded links to the catalogs. For example, the [Student Handbook](#) contains information on student rights and responsibilities, University policies, code of conduct policy, student judiciary policies and procedures, standards

of student behavior, as well as information on University services, resources, and programs. Admissions materials include viewbooks, search pieces, and posters.

Communication beyond the University campus takes many forms. *UMass Dartmouth Magazine*, a 32-page, full-color document, highlights the activities of students, faculty, staff, and alumni and publishes one issue that includes the annual report of the UMass Dartmouth Foundation in supplemental form. The *Campanile* (Campanil-E) is an electronic publication that provides updates to alumni and community partners on the activities of students, alumni, faculty, and staff. WUMD-FM (89.3), a 10,000-watt University owned and licensed FM radio station, broadcasts in southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and Rhode Island. The electronic marquee at the front entrance of the campus informs faculty, staff, students, visitors, and passersby of events taking place on the campus. Located within the major media markets of Boston and Providence and the regional media markets of New Bedford, Fall River, and Taunton, the University attracts regular coverage by independent media.

The official UMass Dartmouth Web Page, located at www.umassd.edu, is a primary source of information about University programs, activities, and practices. Web 2.0 Tools are increasingly used to communicate with students, prospective students, and alumni in the spaces they operate: I-TunesU, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, an online alumni community, and a variety of blogs. Daily email notices inform the University community of upcoming events and other communications of general interest. Separate communications can be addressed to staff, faculty, and students. Emergency communications are also conveyed by UMDalert e-mail messages. Beyond e-mail, the University has contracted with a third party to create the *MyAlert* instant messaging system for use in the case of emergencies. Further, the campus has installed a public address warning system that can reach the entire campus and surrounding neighborhoods.

Consistent with the Strategic Plan goal to be recognized for “excellent undergraduate and graduate programs that integrate innovative teaching/learning strategies and prepare students for advancement in the twenty-first century environment,” UMass Dartmouth focuses its integrated communications effort on key stakeholders, whose decisions shape the character of the institution. These stakeholders include current and prospective students, and their parents and families; faculty and staff; alumni; community partners; governing bodies such as the UMass Board of Trustees (BOT), the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the Massachusetts Legislature and Governor, the United States Congress, local boards and commissions; and citizens of the Commonwealth. To reach these constituencies, UMass Dartmouth utilizes an evolving combination of electronic and print communication media. The institution’s communications policies are modeled on “best practices” to ensure compliance with standards for public accountability.

The University of Massachusetts System Office compiles information about UMass Dartmouth campus operations, including trend data, annual indicators, minutes of BOT meetings, brochures, student profiles, budget information, research and development statistics, and other information appropriate to the mission, and makes it available through a number of links on the [system website](#). [Campus information](#) sources give additional detail, covering the many aspects of student characteristics, campus, [academic and support services](#), [co-curricular](#) and [outreach](#) opportunities, and the institution’s [learning](#) and physical resources.

Although a printed course schedule booklet is no longer published, students have ready access through COIN (Corsairs Online Information), the student information management system, to the list of courses offered each semester, in the winter intersession and summer term, and the instructors teaching them. Schedules are posted both for the current and the up-coming term.

UMass Dartmouth participates in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) (VSA) to provide the broadest access to documented statements about the success of students in achieving the institution's educational goals as well as information about the total cost of a UMass Dartmouth education, availability of financial aid, the typical length of study, and expected student debt. The VSA "[college portrait](#)" posting appeared in September 2009. Rates of retention, graduation, and student success on licensure examinations are published and included in the UMass-wide key indicators (Performance Management System) report. VSA will serve as another means of public accountability (stressing undergraduate educational programming), along with the catalog and related web- and print-information sources.

APPRAISAL

The website includes sufficient information to allow students and prospective students to make informed decisions about attending UMass Dartmouth. The website meets requirements for providing contact information; financial reports and audit information; and information about admissions, student costs, time to degree, and program procedures, and requirements. These systems, along with the institution's participation in VSA, provide public accountability. The website was revamped in 2005 to make it more user friendly for current members of the UMass Dartmouth community and external audiences.

The Admissions section of the site assures that prospective students have access to information they need to make a knowledge-based decision about attending the University. New features include "Nano Lectures," a series of short lectures by faculty and staff to give prospective students some sense of the teaching styles they will experience on campus. Plans are underway to further upgrade the website by applying stricter standards on content and design, and by applying well-established best practices to the site architecture. Future efforts also include addition of video podcasts of student spotlights, which will allow visitors to "meet" current students. A social media policy under development will outline the University's expectations regarding open access through blogging and other web tools to the student body.

Particular emphasis is placed on efforts to communicate with students, prospective students, and alumni through Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, an online alumni community, and a variety of blogs. Examples of the use of these media to maintain communications with students or graduates include the use of system-wide alumni networking tools by Alumni Affairs, and Facebook by the Office of International Programs.

The Undergraduate General Catalog serves well as the official document describing academic and educational program offerings of the University (emphasizing undergraduate academic programs), and its recent publication online addresses previous problems with frequency of issue. A delay of three years in producing an official comprehensive catalog forced departments and students to rely on web- and paper-based information sources from departments and colleges

which sometimes lacked consistency. The conversion of the Graduate catalog to an online version was completed early in 2010.

Both catalogs contain official Mission and Vision Statements, accreditation statements, and lists of current faculty, administrators, and academic programs; they describe admissions processes and requirements, academic regulations, and the range of student and academic service functions; and they give complete degree and certificate program requirements and descriptions of current courses. Each academic program is required to state its student learning outcomes in its catalog section.

Catalogs beginning with the 2001-2002 editions are available on the web, and the Registrar responds readily to requests for information from earlier catalogs. Each semester's course schedule indicates the courses that are currently offered and faculty who are currently active; and annotations appear in the catalog concerning suspended or closed programs or services. A process during catalog editing identifies courses not offered within the previous three years and requires additional justification for them to remain as "active" in the catalog.

The Division of [Professional and Continuing Education](#) has its own comprehensive website providing a wide range of information, including costs, policies, and course and program offerings. In effect, the site serves as a catalog for that division providing current and specific programs and offerings.

The online [Student Handbook](#) is produced by the Coordinator of Judicial Affairs in the Student Affairs Division. It encompasses student policies and procedures, including judicial due process, the code of conduct, and a listing of student expectations. Three broadcast e-mail functions, UMDannounce, UMDnotify, and UMDalert, continue to be an important source of information for students, faculty, and staff. Daily notices are delivered every morning to the campus community, presenting information about events, policy changes, and other items of interest. The Chancellor, the Director of Public Affairs, and the Director of Public Safety have authority to send a message to the entire campus community, while other individuals and offices submit proposed communications for approval by an IT officer who follows posting guidelines. Nearly 3,000 individuals have active MyAlert accounts to receive instant messages in the case of emergencies. Also, the University has designed a simple text-based home page to be used during emergencies so the site can handle unusually large amounts of traffic. The public address warning system is tested biannually.

Admissions materials—[viewbooks](#), search pieces, posters, other [recruitment materials](#), and web-based communications organized for prospective students—are regularly reviewed and updated to inform prospective students of current academic programs, campus life, and other issues they need to know in order to make an informed decision about their college plans. The addition of VSA will strengthen public disclosure by presenting in one location essential information about student demographics and, most importantly, learning outcomes and educational experiences. Program quality and scope are also documented. Future iterations of these publications as well as the catalog and Student Handbook will give prominence to the recently adopted Integrated Student Learning Outcomes statement of general educational outcomes.

Many tools are used to communicate information about UMass Dartmouth to the greater public. UMass Dartmouth Magazine is distributed to approximately 35,000 alumni, staff, faculty, and community partners and is also available on the web. On a monthly basis, The Campanil-E, named for the University's bell tower, is distributed to more than 5,000 alumni and community partners, as well as to faculty, students, and staff via email. Programming on WUMD-FM radio includes music (primarily jazz, reggae, and alternative) as well as public affairs features. Plans are underway to expand local public affairs programming to bring university-based knowledge to the greater community. As one of the region's largest employers, a major public policy center, the alma mater of thousands of area alumni, and college aspiration of thousands of young people, the University attracts regular coverage by the media.

The Office of Public Affairs develops and updates the strategic communication plan; works to communicate with all constituencies in an effective, honest, and cost-effective manner; assures that communications goals align with the University's strategic plan; communicates and implements design standards across the campus; develops new strategies to reach key audiences; and reviews existing communications strategies to gauge their effectiveness.

UMass Dartmouth strives to support its statements about the quality of academic programs and student success through "readily available valid documentation." This fall, the Chancellor asked campus leaders to share their pride in the institution with students, alumni, faculty, and staff, in essence to personify the aphorism, "World Class. Within Reach." Among the activities that support this effort, new admissions publications were distributed across campus, and collaborative groups of faculty and administration have been formed to address a range of initiatives. These efforts seek to engage the University community in connecting the heritage of the past and the vitality of the present to the evolving vision for future students.

PROJECTIONS

Catalog: A process for regular updating of the General/Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs will be developed. The Office of the Registrar and the Associate Provosts for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies will lead this initiative in collaboration with the Associate/Assistant Deans Council.

Schedule and Activities:

- In AY 2009-10, a policy for review and revision of the catalog will be established. Within each college, an associate or assistant dean will coordinate departmental revisions.
- In AY 2010-11, a policy will be established for maintaining course currency and eliminating from the catalog courses that have not been recently offered.

Public Accountability: The process for implementation of VSA participation will be defined. The Assistant Chancellor for Public Affairs and the Assistant Chancellor for Institutional Research and Assessment will lead this initiative.

Schedule and Activities:

- Beginning in AY 2009-10 and continuing over an established three-year schedule, the process of VSA development and implementation will add an important dimension to public disclosure for UMass Dartmouth.

Website: The accuracy and currency of content posted to the website will be improved. The Associate Vice Chancellor for CITS, the Assistant Chancellor for Public Affairs, and the Associate Provosts for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies will lead this effort in coordination with the Associate/Assistant Deans.

Schedule and Activities:

- In AY 2009-10, a comprehensive guide to content standards will be developed and distributed.
- Beginning in the summer of 2010, the new content standards will be implemented in a phased plan as content is migrated from the current system to Terminal Four (T4). Web teams will assist departments and programs with site architecture and content issues.

New Communications Media: On a continuing basis, the use of new communications media will be developed. The Office of Public Affairs, together with CITS, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs will lead this effort.

Schedule and Activities:

- In AY 2009-10, a working group will develop a social media policy that outlines the University’s expectations for open access to blogging and other tools by the student body.

Mission and Vision: The University’s Mission to provide high-quality, personalized education, and expanded access to research opportunities will be strengthened through periodic review. As part of this review process, each College will review and revise its mission. These activities will provide affirmation of ways in which the University’s new slogan, “World Class. Within Reach.” is realized in each of the Colleges. These “proof points” – fact-based statements justifying the use of the slogan – will be developed by the Office of Public Affairs and published on various pages throughout the website and in relevant publications.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Over the past decade, UMass Dartmouth has implemented an improved communication strategy that supports the Mission of the University by ensuring that its publications and reports contain reliable and accurate information. The communication strategy also emphasizes consistency in the campus message and establishes processes for continuous improvement using current technologies to meet the information needs of the institution and its constituent communities.