DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
Transformational Blueprint

This blueprint serves as a guide for the Division of Student Affairs’ ongoing work to serve the UMass Boston community. It is updated from time to time to reflect our growing and dynamic institution.

Cause
We believe that the public urban research university experience transforms lives.

Mission
The Division of Student Affairs at UMass Boston creates and sustains a campus environment that supports and nurtures the academic, personal, and social development of our diverse community of students so that they can achieve their potential as active and engaged citizens of the world.

Vision
UMass Boston’s Division of Student Affairs aspires to create a new paradigm in student care, connection, and success that is unique to the public urban global research university and a model for higher education.

Goals to Achieve the Vision

LEAD THE TRANSFORMATION TO A 24/7 CAMPUS
Our leadership includes a responsibility for changes in culture, processes, structures, and priorities to reflect our evolving 24/7 academic community of students who live on or near campus. This evolution in part is due to students living closer to campus as evidenced by 31 percent of freshman students, reporting via National Survey for Student Engagement, living within walking distance of campus and the 1,050 students who will be living on campus in our new residential community. Moving beyond a self-image as a “commuter school” is critical, as such language is deficit-based and can limit non-residential student services and learning.

ENHANCE STUDENT PERSISTENCE THROUGH SEAMLESS AND TIMELY WELFARE RESPONSES & REFERRALS
Moving the needle on student persistence is a critical indicator of success. Students are more likely to persist when a well-coordinated network of staff, faculty, and students actively cultivates foundational student needs, such as safety, health, mental well-being, and feelings of belonging along with connections to academic support. Persistence indicators include the six-year graduation rate (currently 48 percent) and the freshman one-year retention rate (currently 75 percent).

ENSURE EVERY STUDENT HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE MEANINGFULLY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
Research tells us that out of classroom engagement leads to more significant learning, personal development, and success. Therefore, we must actively recognize, identify, and remove barriers to such involvement so that every student has an equal opportunity to thrive at UMass Boston and beyond. A student’s situation (e.g., financial capacity, family responsibilities and/or expectations), our practices (e.g., traditional delivery models, inadequate communication about opportunities), or the student’s disposition (e.g., a feeling of difficulty in getting connected, generally does not understand the value of involvement) may cause barriers.

PROMOTE STUDENT LEARNING VIA OUT-OF-CLASS ENGAGEMENT & STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Student learning happens throughout and across a student’s experience. We are uniquely positioned to deliver and collaborate with campus partners on learning opportunities that complement in-classroom learning in the areas of intellectual depth and experiential learning, inquiry and analysis, self-awareness, interpersonal competence, social responsibility, and practical competence. We must assess and report student learning (e.g., movement in relevant National Survey for Student Engagement indicators, a co-curricular record, or participation data).

ENHANCE AND OPTIMIZE SPACE, TECHNOLOGY, FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND BUSINESS PROCESSES
Enhancements and optimizations could include new efforts in soliciting donations, securing grants, strategically repurposing dollars within one’s own department, modeling the way we operate within allocated resources, and information sharing about effective and efficient administrative and business practices. Consideration should also be made for leveraging of technology best practices, including the repurposing of assets and the use of digital media.

RECRUIT, RETAIN, & DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL STAFF TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL & OUR VISION
Staff are a critical ingredient in taking transformational ideas and putting them into practice. Additionally, staff are key to the delivery of a student-centered experience. This Blueprint should be actively communicated during the recruitment process as it reflects a unique opportunity within higher education to transform student affairs practice and a campus. Staff retention should be promoted through more intentional on-boarding, responsive supervision, and regular assessment. Professional development opportunities should be made available via on and off campus avenues (e.g., workshops at the Practitioners Team and Division Wide meetings).

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