



# FOR THE TIMES

## A New Strategic Plan for UMass Boston, 2022–2032

### Our Mission

The University of Massachusetts Boston is an academic community dedicated to pursuing locally rooted and globally engaged research, teaching, and learning at the highest level of scholarly excellence. Firmly rooted in the city of Boston, we are committed to truth-seeking and service in the quest for social justice.

Our expansive scholarly and creative contributions are directed at advancing knowledge in partnership with the communities we serve, especially the historically marginalized. We honor and uplift the cultural wealth and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff to sustain a vibrant and just campus community.

# CHANCELLOR'S LETTER

Dear Beacons,

These are no ordinary times. We are deep into the fourth industrial revolution, an age witnessing momentous but uneven advances. Via quantum computing, scientists apply the laws of quantum mechanics to solve problems that were once too complex for computers. Gene-editing technologies are useful in creating drugs that treat and prevent the spread of disease. Artificial intelligence sets the foundation for machine learning, which is now revolutionizing healthcare, transportation, and financial services, among other industries. Stunning advances are flowing from robotics, augmented reality, and computer-assisted everything. We can now witness gorgeous vistas detailing the very birth of the cosmos billions of years ago. All these developments sprout from education, the foundation for the lifelong love of learning.

We are also in an age of extraordinary challenges to our economy and society. In the face of deepening inequality, planetary risks to all living systems flowing from unchecked climate change, historic demographic transformations, an unresolved racial reckoning, and global health crises, we put forth a bold, optimistic strategic plan for the future of Boston's only public research university. Over months of engaged, consultative work, UMass Boston came together to imagine and engineer the blueprint for the public urban research university of the future. Here we present the fruits of the work of 10 committees— involving hundreds of faculty members, staff, and students representing a diverse range of scholarly expertise, humanistic sensibilities, and community engagement.

Faithful to our history, mindful of the unique role we are called to play in our iconic city, and cognizant of the immensity of the work ahead, this strategic plan boldly outlines the priorities, processes, and vehicles we are building to meet our students where they will need to be to flourish as engaged citizens, accomplished professionals, civic leaders, and members of the global family working for the common good.

These extraordinary times necessitate the urban research university to prepare students and communities for the paradigms that will define our future: the paradigm of diversity and the paradigm of complexity. Let's imagine and build our next chapter, with a nostalgia, not for the past, but as Loris Malaguzzi advised us, a nostalgia for a more humane, sustainable, equitable world we will build for and with our students.

UMass Boston, for the times, no matter the times.



Chancellor Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco

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## INTRODUCTION

The University of Massachusetts Boston story began at our founding in the 1960s, a time of manifest civic and political upheaval. UMass Boston's distinct ethos was forged as visionary scientists, humanists, and activist-scholars came together to fuse the pursuit of knowledge to an ardent social conscience to engage the defining issues of the times.

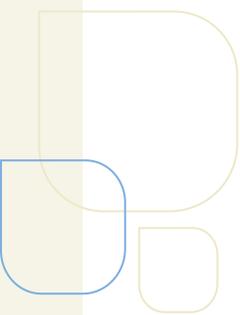
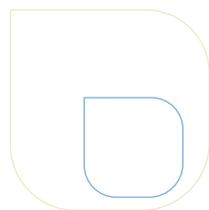
The focus in higher education, first in Boston and then around the commonwealth, turned sharply to affordability and access—for all students seeking excellence in a college education.

A longing for new, more inclusive, non-elitist models in higher education was palpable. Scholars and like-minded community allies gathered, ready to engage with the timely and timeless challenges of the day. UMass Boston was born in a time of struggle and possibility when social progress was in the air.

In this context, two vital strands of UMass Boston's emerging mission and educational ethos began to take shape: first, ours is an institution that attracted scholars dedicated to the pursuit of truth, beauty, and justice who questioned exclusion and the many faces of inequality; and second, ours is an institution that has always admired the power of diversity to expand scholarly ways of knowing, endeavored to redefine the boundaries of academic knowledge, and thus expanded the purposes of a higher education.

UMass Boston's founding engaged students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds, whose life experiences were compelling yet overlooked and underrepresented, coming together with a clear sense of purpose: basic and translational research, teaching, learning, and engaged service with Boston and its underserved communities. Service, the public good, equity, diversity, and inclusion have been the hallmarks of a UMass Boston education since our founding.

Today we commit ourselves to a vision of higher education, basic research, and community engagement as indispensable tools for forging a more democratic, inclusive, sustainable, and just Boston, commonwealth, and beyond. In an ever more interconnected, miniaturized, and fragile world, UMass Boston is more important than ever, as a university of and for the times, no matter the times.



## Our Window of Opportunity

UMass Boston's previous strategic plan, *Fulfilling the Promise*, was enacted during the past decade. It broke new ground in strengthening the university's foundation. That strategic planning period was marked by significant progress in expanding the built environment of our Columbia Point campus, increasing student enrollment, expanding graduate programs, opening the campus's first residence hall, and bolstering UMass Boston's research and teaching for deeper impact.

Our foundation is strong, but this moment calls for a new transformational phase that positions UMass Boston as a higher education model for producing future leaders, skilled workers, engaged citizens, vibrant partner communities, inclusive social and economic mobility, and relevant scholarship for the city of Boston and beyond. Accordingly, we present *For the Times*, a bold strategic plan that charts UMass Boston's path forward over the next ten years.

*For the Times* affirms our standing as a leading public research university—one that posits diversity as a centerpiece for leading discovery and advancing knowledge and tackles unprecedented global challenges with impactful research directed at solutions that serve the public good.

On the strength of this plan, UMass Boston is poised to build on our legacy—of basic research, service, teaching and learning, community engagement, and the imperative of socially just inclusion. In times of division, we build bridges; in times of malaise, we build wellness; in times of hopelessness, we build optimism; in times of racial strife, we build antiracism. We are for the times, no matter the times.

## Our Vision

We are a public research university with a teaching soul. UMass Boston brings diverse people and ideas together to seek knowledge and improve lives, here in Boston, across the nation, and around the world. We are dedicated to promoting the practice of democratic citizenship; preparing a diverse, talented workforce; informing equitable public policy; and strengthening the social and economic resilience of our city.

Our rigorous academic environment supports the intellectual growth and success of students from diverse socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Our student body, drawn from and embodying the world's immense cultural wealth, will be the primary source of Boston's future talent. Our students' future is Boston's future. Equity and an ethic of care are core values that drive institutional policies, practices, and culture. And we thrive as a community of people who learn from each other and from life experiences different from our own.

UMass Boston's community-engaged scholarship, service, and strategic collaborations promote the interests of our partner communities. Our academic programs reflect alignment between racial and environmental justice and the principles of sustainable humanity that guide university planning and operations.



## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

*For the Times* identifies five strategic priorities that provide the framework to structure our work. In the coming decade, we will build in these areas:

### **Strategic Priority 1: Holistic Student Success**

Student success is at the center of everything we do at UMass Boston. Supporting the development of engaged, curious, critical-thinking students remains our most important lever for creating positive societal change. UMass Boston embraces a holistic approach to undergraduate and graduate student access and success, offering multiple pathways to and through the university, backed by robust advising, support, and career success services for students and alumni. We value the cultural wealth of our students with a view to fostering community and advancing equitable student outcomes. We are proud to be the most diverse university campus in New England, enabling success for students of all backgrounds, including those who are first generation, people of color, low income, of immigrant origin, and many other identities. And we are equally proud that UMass Boston students represent our demographic future and stay in Greater Boston and the commonwealth as future local leaders, citizens, and professionals. Student recruitment and enrollment management is a critical enabler of our student success work, creating educational access for students, supporting the delivery of our mission, and providing stability of university finances.

To bolster student success, and accelerate the track record of improvements in retention and graduation rates, we will

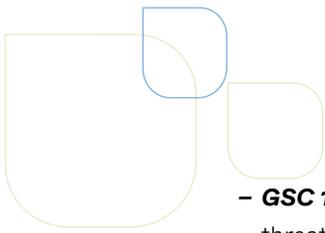
- **Ensure equitable academic outcomes** by improving coordination and integration of all student support services aimed at promoting general well-being with a focus on mental, physical, and emotional health; proactively supporting increasingly successful course and degree progression and completion; and accelerating the use of data to inform student success initiatives.
- **Deepen targeted recruitment and retention strategies** including alignment of academic and financial supports to scaffold student progression, strengthening of transfer pathways, enhancing strategies for recruiting out-of-state and international students, and expanding capacity to recruit and retain graduate students.

- **Enhance career planning capacity** by expanding student access to experiential learning, career development, alumni networking opportunities, and career services for alumni; and facilitating partnerships with local, regional, national, and international employers and community organizations to support the educational, programmatic, and career goals of UMass Boston students and alumni.
- **Recognize cultural wealth and deepen engagement** by expanding current and developing new culturally affirming educational initiatives; and shaping a 24/7 campus that fosters community and encourages full participation in learning opportunities, athletics/recreation, multicultural affairs, residential life, and other student activities.
- **Provide multiple pathways to/through UMass Boston** by extending partnerships with community colleges and Boston Public Schools and supporting student transitions; expanding participation in and enhancing quality of programs for new students; and enriching the graduate student community.
- **Enhance and grow academic programs** by evaluating existing programs and new program proposals with an eye to identifying emerging areas for strategic growth and investment, particularly in programs that students, industry and business, and our engaged communities value and that are flexible in time, pace, and modality.
- **Expand educational pathways for non-degree and non-credit students** by creating a dedicated team focused on the recruitment and registration of non-degree and non-credit students as we expand the full range of new learning and training opportunities needed to further drive social mobility while advancing economic development, equity, and diversity and inclusion.

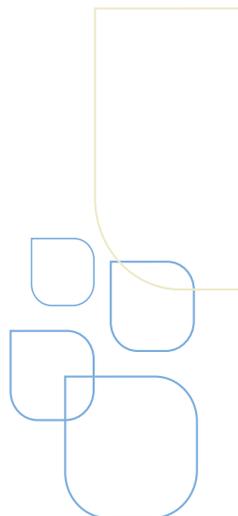
## Strategic Priority 2: Impactful Research and Scholarship

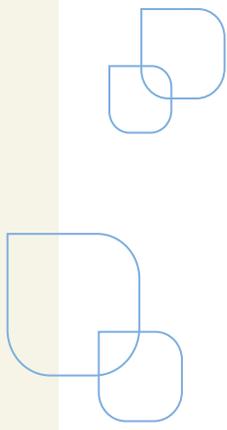
Public research universities are the front line of advancing knowledge and generating transformative scholarship directed at the many complex challenges facing our society, such as climate change, growing inequality, and new health challenges. In this regard, UMass Boston is exceptionally well positioned—principally because of its engaged faculty and talented students—to undertake impactful research that is relevant to improving human lives and shaping a resilient future for all. Our research excellence will continue to be anchored by a fulsome trust in *integrated scholarship* that draws from multiple disciplines and harnesses innovative ideas to shape evidence-based solutions benefiting the greater good. With a view to strengthening our overall research environment, UMass Boston will make targeted investments in its research infrastructure and in its capacity to attract research funding.

- **Invest in Grand Scholarly Challenges.** UMass Boston will array research, scholarship, and academic programming around four Grand Scholarly Challenges (GSCs)—issues of great consequence and relevance to individuals, families, and communities. These thoughtfully chosen GSCs embody the values and ideals that underpin the university's research and scholarly strengths.



- **GSC 1 Climate Equity and Urban Coastal Areas:** Climate change is the existential threat of our times. In our harbor city, it is a clear, urgent environmental challenge that touches upon health and wellness, our economic future, and the very livelihood affecting every individual, family, and community in Boston and beyond. UMass Boston will research, design, and implement leading-edge, equitable, and restorative adaptations to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. And we will infuse an ethic of environmental care into our culture and curriculum through teaching, research, and service initiatives that promote knowledge and action on climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development moving forward.
- **GSC 2 Bridging Divides in Health Equity – Cells to Societies:** Societal changes are bringing into focus existing and emerging acute and chronic health challenges fueled by intersecting inequities. Addressing health inequities requires bridging disciplinary divides in understanding the root causes of disease, increasing access to healthcare, improving mental and physical health outcomes, and addressing healthcare policy. UMass Boston will contribute to wellness and equity by promoting systems that facilitate access to care and train a diverse, skilled biomedical workforce. We will leverage our strengths in basic, translational, clinical, social, psychological, and biomedical research and in public health scholarship to empower innovative, transdisciplinary projects.
- **GSC 3 Education for the Future:** Reinventing education that fosters inclusive excellence requires strategic, creative inquiry that enables educational structures to support alignment with the histories, experiences, values, and aspirations of students who are not the same as those for whom historical educational systems were designed. UMass Boston will lead in conducting research that facilitates new K–16 educational paradigms, leveraging partnerships to explore collaborative solutions to education for the future, and providing opportunities that align with workforce and community development.
- **GSC 4 Advancing a Just Society – Local and Global Dimensions:** Our local community, indeed our economy and society, must address systemic inequities and anti-democratic trends such as the rise of authoritarianism in the United States and beyond, and assaults on truth. These trends, exacerbated by growing inequality and social media, contribute to polarization and the erosion of democratic norms, which limit our ability to address persistent inequities. UMass Boston will promote scholarship focused on developing strategies to safeguard democracy, foster dialogue and civility, and direct collective action toward just and secure futures for all.



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- **Accelerate interdisciplinary scholarship.** Federal agencies and other research sponsors are catalyzing more collaborative, cross-institutional work auguring a time when broad interdisciplinary research endeavors will yield the most compelling discoveries in the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Many of the complex challenges of the day—including the GSCs profiled above—will not and cannot be effectively tackled by any one discipline. They require convergence—the merging of ideas, approaches, and technologies from widely diverse fields of knowledge—to prompt innovation. UMass Boston is dedicated to becoming a leader in interdisciplinary research.
  - **Strengthen our research enterprise.** UMass Boston will increase the capacity of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to better prepare UMass Boston faculty and researchers to successfully compete for research funding and lead large-scale, multi-institutional research projects. We will simultaneously upgrade core research facilities to support research and innovation; forge cross-sector partnerships that bolster research in high-impact areas of scholarship; encourage undergraduate and graduate student participation in research; and promote eminent and emerging UMass Boston scholars for national and international recognition.

### Strategic Priority 3: For the City

In the 21st century, great cities will come to rely on their public research universities to build the synergies for attracting, educating, and retaining citizens working with a sense of purpose for the common good. Boston is a rapidly changing city undergoing a historic demographic change that will offer extraordinary opportunities to model for the rest of the world excellence in the age of super-diversity. As Boston's only public research university, UMass Boston will redouble its efforts to be the university of and for the city. We embrace the responsibility to lead in cultivating a diverse workforce and an engaged citizenry through innovative and expansive academic programs. UMass Boston is singularly positioned to develop talented graduates and generate cutting-edge knowledge that addresses Boston's most important challenges in the areas of health equity, coastal resilience, climate justice, entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and economic opportunity for all. We are the face of the future of Boston, and we remain dedicated to students who come from and remain in Boston as engaged alumni and community leaders—our students are an indispensable force for good for the future of the city. UMass Boston will deepen its engagement with the city of Boston and surrounding communities in ways that benefit the commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

- **Prepare diverse students to be the future** of Boston's economic growth and vitality by increasing access to higher education, providing world-class academic education and career preparation, and promoting timely student progression and completion. (see *Strategic Priority #1*)
  - **Create cross-disciplinary knowledge and scholarship** that contribute to urban resilience, engender civic engagement, and inform equitable public policy in Boston. (see *Strategic Priority #2*)
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- **Support and strengthen local institutions and sectors**, and advocate for best practices in governance, community development, and citizen participation. This includes deep engagement with local employers, close collaboration with industry and community organizations, and strengthening of connections to—and support for—UMass Boston alumni. It also includes playing a leadership role in improving Greater Boston's public education ecosystem, addressing urban health inequity, improving local coastal resilience, and more.

## Strategic Priority 4: Enriching Our Human Core

UMass Boston's exceptional faculty and staff, our human core, are our greatest asset. Enriching our human core requires that we invest in continuous professional development, mentorship, and health and well-being with a view to supporting faculty/staff success and fostering excellence throughout the university. As UMass Boston continues to diversify, it is imperative that faculty/staff at all levels are culturally adept and aware. We remain committed to improving the quality of work life for all university employees and to being an employer of choice. At UMass Boston, we honor all our workers.

- **Strengthen employee support and recognition.** We will work to expand access to and awareness of professional growth and support programs for faculty/staff and ensure that tailored resources are available to meet the unique needs of diverse employee groups—for example, faculty/staff of color, women, international faculty, and graduate student instructors. We will promote excellence, improve recognition programs, invest in programs and resources that support the health and well-being of all UMass Boston employees, and celebrate the successes of the individuals and teams who are dedicated to advancing our unique mission.
- **Deepen diversity.** The UMass Boston community embodies the entire range of the human condition—all continents, dozens and dozens of languages, all world religions, all identities, and more are represented on our campus. With a view to deepening our signature diversity, UMass Boston will implement practices and policies that facilitate diversity hiring. And we will provide all UMass Boston employees—leaders, faculty, researchers, and staff—with increased opportunities for professional development in restorative justice, diversity and inclusion, and equity. Going forward, we will shape a comprehensive plan for developing a diverse pipeline of early-career scholars from the ranks of our undergraduate, graduate, post-doctoral students.
- **Improve service delivery.** We will undertake an inventory and analysis of university services with a view to eliminating duplication, optimizing service delivery practices, and improving responsiveness. We will prioritize streamlining and modernizing complex business processes, leveraging technology where possible, and collaborating with others to improve cost-effective service delivery. Activity-based budgeting will be deployed, and academic units will be structured to better align instructional resources with enrollment growth and support for student success.

## Strategic Priority 5: Reimagining Campus Space

Academic leadership calls for building a physical infrastructure that is commensurate with the world-class teaching and research excellence at UMass Boston. UMass Boston boasts an extraordinary locational endowment, situated on the waterfront in the heart of Boston. Reimagining all aspects of our built environment will strengthen the foundation of our campus, and our new master plan will help us harness our location and facilities in pursuit of our mission. This includes the completion of a new quad that will transform the center of campus from a brick courtyard into a beautiful, five-and-a-half-acre green space and hub for student life.

- **Continue ongoing major campus projects.** We will prioritize the completion of Campus Master Plan initiatives and alignment of that plan with *For the Times* to ensure state of the art teaching, learning, research, and co-curricular spaces on campus. And we will continue to renovate, upgrade, and tailor physical spaces to support teaching, learning, wellness, health promotion, research, and community engagement by sequencing major capital projects over the next 10 years.
- **Empower sustainability.** Our strategic campus master plan envisions sustainable site development, energy-efficient building design and materials, renewable energy sources and technologies, use of recyclable and locally available materials, and clean transportation alternatives.
- **Leverage partnerships to shape new community assets.** UMass Boston will contribute to the development of Dorchester Bay City and cultivate partner relationships that benefit the community and university. This will entail deepening partnerships with employers and community organizations to increase experiential learning opportunities for students and broaden stakeholder access to the UMass Boston campus.



## OUR COMMITMENTS

As we implement *For the Times*, four cross-cutting commitments will anchor UMass Boston's work: advancing our teaching, research, and service mission; fostering an antiracist and health-promoting institutional culture; collaborating with community partners; and modeling operational excellence.

### **Commitment 1: Teaching, Research, and Service Mission**

UMass Boston's mission calls on all members of our campus community to pursue positive engagement and social progress. By harnessing our teaching, research, and service expertise, UMass Boston will reach the next level of excellence as a higher education leader in producing relevant, interdisciplinary, and transformative research addressing the vexing problems facing our society. We are convinced that the power of knowledge flows from helping us develop informed convictions that drive principled actions to benefit the world. We here and now redouble our endeavors to showcase our distinction: our pledge to be an antiracist, health-promoting public research university; our dedication to seek truth and advance knowledge in the service of Boston, the commonwealth, and the greater good; and our devotion to innovative, student-centered learning and success. Above all, we pledge to our students our devotion to work with and for them so they may flourish as citizens, professionals, and advocates for social justice in the service of creating a more humane, sustainable, and resilient planet.

### **Commitment 2: Antiracist and Health-Promoting Culture**

Since our founding, UMass Boston has been a leader in promoting diversity and ensuring educational access and opportunity to diverse students. Disrupting systemic racism is a pillar of UMass Boston's approach to educating. As a federally designated Minority Serving Institution and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution, UMass Boston has, for decades, insisted on equality of access and opportunity in higher education. We are intentional in cultivating antiracist values—in our curriculum, across our research enterprise, in the transdisciplinary scholarship we produce, and in the community-university partnerships we build. We are equally intentional in modeling a positive culture of health and wellness that dislodges and transcends longstanding inequities in the delivery of healthcare. UMass Boston's strengths in multidisciplinary biomedical/public health research and practice, and our deep partnerships with public/private healthcare networks in Boston and the commonwealth position us to bolster health equity—for our campus community, in the region, and beyond.

### **Commitment 3: Community Collaboration**

At UMass Boston, we believe in the importance of community-university engagement with like-minded partners in Boston and beyond. The path in higher education moving forward will be increasingly collaborative, linking institutions across sectors and creating more equitable and effective models for educational delivery. Reciprocal partnerships between universities, civil society organizations, industry and businesses, and government democratize education by generating more opportunities through expanded networks, unexpected connections, and continuing education. This enables the rising number of students from all parts of the income distribution to receive an education that meets the needs of the 21st century workplace. UMass Boston's longstanding community engagement continues to enrich teaching, research, and scholarship, and prepare educated, engaged citizens for lives of consequence and civic responsibility.

### **Commitment 4: Operational Excellence**

With a view to institutional improvement and financial strength, UMass Boston demands operational excellence in its planning, programmatic delivery, and systems for resource generation, utilization, and allocation. Operational excellence builds community. Being part of teams that create goals, execute on plans, and improve processes challenges students, faculty, and staff to think imaginatively. It can revitalize campus community life. And it can create alignment that infuses university operations with the same creative, innovative, and agile mindset that drives academics at UMass Boston. To do this, we will refine our financial architecture to manage resources more effectively and develop new revenue streams in support of our mission. Recognizing that investment comes in many forms, we will reallocate existing dollars, reimagine the ways we work, prioritize renewable resources, improve multi-year planning, and strengthen campus service delivery.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

Effective implementation, assessment, and monitoring of *For the Times* will require disciplined and detailed planning and execution on:

- Identifying and clarifying near-term priorities from among the broader strategic plan and then putting in place clear action plans, timelines, and ownership structures to ensure implementation and continuous improvement.
- Integrating strategic priorities and cross-cutting commitments into existing governance, management, and implementation structures.
- Developing meaningful metrics/benchmarks for success, transparent dashboards, and systems to monitor implementation of the plan.
- Engaging community stakeholders in tracking annual progress and adjusting the plan, as needed, as implementation unfolds.

## CLOSING

UMass Boston is the university of and for the times. Our locational endowment necessitates our fulsome engagement with the City of Boston. Key challenges lie before us as we confront unchecked climate change, healthcare disparities, the reckoning of racial inequalities, assaults on truth and civility, and a rapidly evolving world of work. At the same time, the future of higher education is shifting to great urban centers and must embrace the cultural wealth and diversity that is the demographic future of Boston and the commonwealth. In these times, UMass Boston, as the public research university in the great city of Boston, and as the most diverse public university in New England, is poised to be indispensable, more relevant, and more valuable than ever before. Indeed, paraphrasing Voltaire, if UMass Boston did not exist, we would need to invent it.

This 10-year strategic plan provides a blueprint that is bold, ambitious, and practical in driving our university forward, elevating our work and our impact, while also contributing to workforce and community development as only a public university can. UMass Boston is the face of Boston, and our students and alumni are the future of Boston. UMass Boston graduates, deeply rooted in the city, remain in Boston and our scholarly endeavors impact local and place-based challenges while also informing regional, national, and global communities. *For the Times* is our commitment to fulfill the promise of public higher education as we advance the mission of UMass Boston now and over the next ten years. It is incredibly exciting to launch this ambitious new strategic plan for the next ten years at UMass Boston.



## Our commitments

Teaching, Research,  
and Service Mission

Antiracist and Health  
Promoting

Community  
Collaboration

Operational  
Excellence

## Strategic priorities

- Holistic Student Success
- Impactful Research and Scholarship
- For the City
- Enriching Our Human Core
- Reimagining Campus Space

### Appendix: Our Strategic Planning Process

This draft plan synthesizes the recommendations of ten strategic planning committees, and coordination with several other standing and critically important committees including the Restorative Justice Commission, the Activities-Based Budgeting Steering Committee, and the Campus Master Planning Workgroup. More than 200 campus stakeholders participated directly on these committees, and the committee recommendations included feedback from countless other members of our community. All committees employed similar methods including data collection, SWOT analysis, best practices research, and community feedback.