



Focus on the University of Massachusetts in Amherst

Massachusetts' flagship public university in Amherst is consistently ranked by U.S. News and World Report among the top 30 public universities in the nation. Despite the relatively large size of its student body, its 24,000 undergraduates enjoy an average class size of fewer than 30 students and ample opportunities to engage in faculty-mentored research while also having access to 110 majors in 10 colleges, more than 200 student clubs and organizations, and the excitement of a Division 1 athletic program. On top of all that, their dining has been ranked best in the U.S. for the past five years.

A significant investment in fulltime faculty who are valued for their teaching as well as their research enabled UMass to keep classes small enough for many undergrads to attend in person throughout the pandemic and to engage in research both in person and remotely with professors who are among the world's most cited researchers.

A building boom over the past decade has given the campus a fresh feel with numerous new and renovated facilities for academics, housing and dining as well as a new student union and tree-lined walkway. All first year students live in university housing, where they may opt for living-learning communities with classmates in the first year seminar whose theme they selected. Residence halls for upperclassmen with common interests are available too.

UMass is notable for both the diversity of its student body and the inclusiveness of its community. Thirty percent of the students are from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, and 21% are the first in their families to attend college. In an effort to ensure that all feel welcome, the university has implemented a "Hate Has No Home" campaign and an initiative called "You Matter" to promote student health and wellbeing. Students enjoy a strong sense of community, and the school has been recognized as one of the nation's top 30 LGBTQ-friendly universities.

The Pioneer Valley where UMass is located offers much to explore, and the "Interchange" (formerly referred to as a "consortium") enables students at UMass,

Amherst, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, and Hampshire, to take classes and participate in extracurricular activities at each other's schools.

Nine percent of UMass students participate in Greek life, so it's there for those who want it but does not play a dominant role on campus. The openness of the community is exemplified by the fact that the world-renowned marching band is open to anyone who wants to join with no audition required.

Admission to UMass is by major, with some considerably more selective than others. The College of Nursing and the Isenberg School of Management, especially the Finance and Marketing majors, are the most difficult to get into. Nursing has only 50 seats each year, so admits only 10 to 12% of the applicants. The admit rate for business programs tends to be in the 30 to 40% range, and for some other more popular programs like Computer Science, Engineering, Information Sciences and Psychology, it is usually around 40%, whereas for most other programs it is closer to 50 to 60%. Calculus is desirable for Computer Science and Engineering programs, and physics is helpful too, but applicants are evaluated in the context of what is available to them in their high school and what else they have taken in view of their options.

Students are invited to put a second choice major on their applications, but admissions prioritizes those who identify the majors as their first choice because in the past they have seen students leave the university when there was no space for them to transfer into the program they really wanted. Applicants whose second choice major is related to the first are more likely to be admitted because data has shown that those who wanted Business, for instance, usually ended up content with Economics.

Each year the admissions office invites into the Commonwealth Honors College ten to fifteen percent of the admitted students, but others may apply later, and in fact, a majority of those in the Honors College enter in their second semester. The Honors College has smaller classes, its own advisors and residence hall, state-of-the-art facilities and some special scholarships, but even students who are not in it can take advantage of some of its offerings. As Director of Admissions Mike Drish explains, it is "for academically curious students seeking a particularly impactful experience" regardless of their major.

Approximately 50% of UMass's class is filled each year with Early Action applicants, so the Regular Decision round is a bit more competitive. Consequently, those applying to the more popular programs are strongly advised to meet the November 1st Early Action deadline.

Although the school has no official policy regarding the proportion of in-state versus out-of-state students, the applications they receive as well as the students they admit each year are consistently approximately 75% from Massachusetts and 25% from elsewhere. The admissions criteria are the same for all applicants.

Beginning in 2020, UMass became test-optional for both admission and scholarships, and the plan is to remain so at least through the 2023 application cycle. This past year approximately 37% did not submit scores, with the majority of admitted students coming from that group. Admissions decisions are made holistically, so no one factor would keep a student out. Every application is read in its entirety, with consideration given to achievements in all spheres - academic, extracurricular and work. The essays, letters of recommendation, and supplemental materials for specific programs are used to determine character and identify engaged students of all backgrounds. Applicants are welcome to submit an additional letter of recommendation, but demonstrated interest plays no role in the admissions process.