

**UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons Planning Committee
Final Report
February 2008**

Submitted by Magali Carrera, Donna Massano, and Sharon Weiner

Background.

The UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons (LC) Planning Committee was formed in Fall 2007. Since a Learning Commons is, by definition, a *partnership* between campus entities, there were three co-chairs: Magali Carrera (Professor of Art History), Donna Massano (CITS), and Sharon Weiner (Library). They enlisted a committee representing multiple campus constituencies. Although the LC Committee requested that a representative from the Faculty Senate Library Committee participate, no one offered. After the committee membership was announced, the Library's Information Services Department requested that two additional librarians from their department serve on the committee. Those representatives were elected by their department. Members of the Committee were: Chris Allen, Jessica Arruda, D. Confar, Allison Cywin, Peggy Dias, Jim Fain, Catherine Gardner, Damon Gatenby, Diane Gomes, Kate Randall Haley, Jamie Jacquart, Megan Lemieux, Charlie McNeil, Dan McSweeney, William Nelles, Tim O'Neil, Grant O'Reilly, Amy Parelman, Jennifer Russell, Tracy Russo, Susanne Scott, Matt Sylvain, and Linda Zieper.

This was the charge of the Committee:

"The UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons (LC) Planning Committee will develop plans for the services, technology, resources, and space for the LC on the first and second floors of the Claire T. Carney Library. The LC will be an interdisciplinary collaborative learning space that will provide seamless access to resources, technology, and people to support teaching, learning, and research. The LC will advance the University mission to be "actively engaged in personalized teaching and innovative research" and will help to fulfill the University's vision of "providing a personalized academic environment where the scholarly research and creative activities of faculty and graduate students are interwoven with the undergraduate experience." It will also advance the vision of providing "enhanced technological capabilities for the delivery of our educational and outreach programs." As an integrated environment that fosters engagement, collaboration, and discovery, the LC will meet the changing and emerging needs of teaching, learning, and scholarship at UMass Dartmouth."

The Committee considered the following questions:

- **What are the learning styles and preferences of today's high school and college students and faculty?**

The committee engaged in discussions about students' expectations of the availability of mobile and collaborative technology. They naturally acquire information through multiple modalities.

- **What type of environment will foster learning at UMass Dartmouth, given changing learning styles and preferences?**

Generally, committee discussion agreed that the space needed to be inviting, comfortable, and flexible. It should offer seamless, integrated services and resources.

- **What staffing, technology, and space are necessary to create this environment?**
The committee agreed that there needed to be wireless technology and flexible space. Staff should be able to triage needs and issues.
- **What LC programs would foster this environment?**
This question was not resolved.
- **Should the scope of the LC include faculty and staff learning, as well as student learning?**
The committee agreed that, ideally, it should include student, faculty, and staff learning. Some members felt that supporting *student* learning was the priority, however, if resources were not available to include all campus learners.
- **Which campus units might be involved, and how might they work together?**
It was agreed that the LC would particularly benefit from collaborations between the Library, CITS, the Writing Center, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and Student Services.
- **Is it necessary for these campus units to be physically located in the same space to be effective together?**
This question was not resolved.
- **What kinds of hardware, software, and seating configurations are needed?**
The seating should be flexible to allow group as well as quiet, individual work with wireless access and sufficient power sources.
- **What staffing is needed in terms of qualification, and abilities?**
This question was unresolved.
- **What are the issues in accomplishing the ideal LC environment for UMass Dartmouth?**
The primary issues are: adequacy of resource; and support from the UMass Dartmouth community.
- **How can these issues be resolved?**
These issues can be resolved by communication with all campus constituencies; and the involvement of students, faculty, and staff in the planning and implementation of the LC.
- **How should we measure the LC's success?**
The success of the LC will be determined by including assessment in the planning.

Background readings included the Educause report, "Linking the Information Commons to Learning;" the 2007 Horizon Report; and "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media education for the 21st century." Committee members were expected to

work with their respective constituencies to learn, discuss, and plan. The Committee members from the Library developed a survey for the Library staff.

Strategy.

We established a schedule of meetings (11/1, 11/15, 11/29, 12/13, 1/3). Meetings were held from 3:30-5:30 in several campus locations. We established a Google Group and a discussion list to facilitate discussion and to share information. S. Weiner reported on her implementation of a Learning Commons at Vanderbilt University's Peabody Library as a case study. The following are the site visits to nearby LC's that were scheduled along with Committee members who attended:

- Bridgewater State College
A. Cywin, P. Dias, M. Sylvain, C. McNeil, D. Gomes, D. Massano
- Dartmouth College Media Center
A. Cywin
- Northeastern University Library, Media Center (Planned visit on 2/12/2008)
A. Cywin, D. Confar, C. McNeil
- Providence College
C. Allen, A. Parelman, C. Garron, S. Scott, J. Arruda, C. McNeil
- Rhode Island School of Design
C. Fortier-Barnes, C. McNeil
- Roger Williams University
K. Randall Haley, C. McNeil, L. Winiarz, L. Zieper,

Some staff had seen other LC's outside of the site visits (L. Zieper, RISD; S. Weiner, University of Southern California, Indiana University Bloomington, UMass Amherst).

Questions that were to be considered at the site visits were:

- How many hours was the LC open?
- What services were offered?
- How was the LC marketed?
- What was the physical arrangement?
- How did services flow; how were students referred to services?
- What technology and software was available?
- Was there consideration for environmental-friendliness?
- What were the aesthetics like (plants, lighting, color, comfort)
- What were the accessibility accommodations?
- What were the security considerations?
- What did you learn when talking with your counterparts?
- What was the organizational structure?
- How were diverse learning styles and virtual learning included?
- How is the LC assessed?

Appendix I is a table listing tools, services, and space needs for the Learning Commons. The following are additional features that the members of the Learning Commons Planning Committee and Carney Library staff who attended site visits **liked** and thought **should be considered** for the UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons:

Environment. Articles about and descriptions of Learning Commons often highlight their "look" and "feel." Committee members noted such impressions during their visits:

- Welcoming
- Use of color to differentiate sections of LC; rich colors; quiet zones
- Natural light, windows, spaciousness, many electrical outlets
- Holistic approach to design; area should “flow”
- Booth seating; smell of coffee
- Signage is important

Planners often must work with existing architecture. Committee members noted:

- Book shelves can be a buffer/divider between sections
- Low walls that separate space
- Tables around columns
- Sprinkler system hidden in fake beams
- Workstations should not be near windows due to screen glare
- No glass offices; office walls should go to ceiling
- Compact shelving for government documents

Technology should be ubiquitous, but not intrusive:

- Computers *integrated* into space
- Clusters of computers rather than rows
- Comfortable seats; movable seating
- Wireless

Other services noted were:

- Print release station
- Express stations for quick searches
- Self-serve scanning
- Flash drives that could be checked out at service desk

Group study areas:

- Small glassed-in areas for 3-6 people
- Should have projection in every room

Staff:

- Should be visible; service desks not too far from workstations; places for help are obvious
- Appropriate staffing (not entirely work study students)
- Technology help near computers

Other ideas:

- Photos of famous African Americans on wall
- Display cases along wheelchair ramp
- Exhibit cases that are easy to open
- LCD screen with news channel, alert system in public area

Mission Statement.

This is the draft mission statement developed by the Committee for the Learning Commons:

“In support of UMass Dartmouth’s academic mission, the Learning Commons creates and cultivates a vibrant, welcoming and integrated learner-centered environment.

We will do so by promoting an environment and support team that:

- ❖ inspires learners and fosters learning as an activity
- ❖ embodies and supports engagement & collaboration for individual and group work
- ❖ champions and supports the research process from search and discovery to synthesis and presentation
- ❖ provides easily accessible and adaptable physical spaces and resources
- ❖ excels at providing rich technological facilities, instruction, and support
- ❖ maximizes individual and group productivity by integrating scholarly information support services and information literacy instruction”

Student Connection.

D. Massano and S. Weiner met with the Student Senate to inform them about the LC and to learn how we could communicate with the general student body about it. The students recommended creating a blog and advertising it on Facebook; talking with students while they are studying or working in groups in the library; and distributing a survey through Facebook and the blog.

Components.

To reflect the ideas formed from this process, the LC Committee identified a number of components to be included in the Learning Commons. Although priorities need to be established and additional components identified, the working document, “Learning Commons: Tools—Services—Spaces (Attachment 1) incorporates many of these ideas.

Next Steps.

The next phase of planning will be the formation of three new teams: LC Management Team, Transition Team, and Implementation Team. The members of the Management Team are Bob Green, Donna Massano, and Sharon Weiner. The purpose of that team is to:

- Determine which functions will have office space or satellites in the LC
- Determine space needs for each function
- Develop policies in collaboration with the Implementation Team
- Refine the LC’s mission
- Develop a budget
- Map ongoing operational support

The members of the Transition Team are: Jessica Arruda and Charlie McNeil (Co-Chairs); Magali Carrera, and Linda Zieper. They are expected to draw on others at UMD to assist with accomplishing their charge. The charge of the Transition Team is to:

- Better integrate learning resources and services at UMD
- Modify current facilities/functions and determine changes needed to become an LC now

- Develop staff and student worker training
- Prepare documentation for procedures and a training manual
- Develop an assessment plan
- Make recommendations for signage
- Design components for a virtual LC

The members of the Implementation Team are: Peggy Dias and Catherine Fortier Barnes (Co-Chairs); Chris Allen, Allison Cywin, Jamie Jacquart, Charlie McNeil, Tim O'Neil, Liz Winiarz. They should draw on others at UMD to accomplish their charge. The charge of the Team is to:

- Develop physical space configurations for each function, including equipment, furniture, staff, types of connectivity, signage,
- Develop a public relations plan, including communication with the campus community about what the LC is, what are the services, and for whom they are offered
- Develop formal documentation for the LC
- Develop an assessment plan

The Management Team will meet with the Deans Council and the Chancellors Cabinet to present and discuss this report. They will meet with individuals who oversee services that might be integrated into the UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons.

February 10, 2008

Appendix I. Table of Recommended Tools, Services, and Space Needs for the UMass Dartmouth Learning Commons.

Get/Use/Do	Connect/Collaborate/Communicate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Write • View various forms of media - individually & in groups • Create/edit graphics, animations, presentations, web pages, podcasts • Scan/import/capture, edit, export (images, video, audio and text) • Interactive authoring, publishing, and presentation • Create and/or duplicate DVDs/CDs (bring own media) • Use adaptive technologies • Print – black and white, color/bulk • Photocopy, digitize, email • Quiet work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Study/Work/Presentation Rooms: 1- 4 people • Group Study/Work/Presentation Rooms: 5-12 people • Adaptable group tables • Large screens for connecting laptops to • White boards • Smart boards • Wireless access • Classroom/Training area • Digital media creation areas • LC blog – for communications and support • Personal response systems • Conference call phone • Power outlets

Support/Help/Guidance/Referrals	Equipment/Software
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference (in-person, email, instant messaging) • Librarian subject specialists • IT help (in-person, email, instant messaging) • Writing consultation • myCourses support for student/faculty/distance learning technology services • Statistical consultation • Data services • Government information services • Geospatial/GIS support • Computer account assistance, software support, and statistical software distribution • Digital media creation consultation and support • Presentation support • Instruction and workshops on information and computer literacy • Online tutorials/training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows workstations • MAC workstations • Software that supports all of above • Scanners • Checkout: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> laptop/tablets digital camera digital video cameras MP3/Video players graphing calculator flash drives audio recorders microphones headphones tripods projectors • Adaptive technologies room/area/workstations • Printers – black and white, color, large size, bulk • Class Capture • Technology vending machines • Supply table