

UMass Dartmouth's Pet Project: My Opinion on Transform 2020



What ideas do you have for improvements at UMass Dartmouth? (Nick Roppolo/UMass Facebook)

Earlier this year I wrote about how I believe that the campus up here at UMass Dartmouth is better looking than most people give it credit for, but my opinion on that didn't mean that there was no room for improvement. After all the food isn't the best, and security has always been somewhat laughable even though I myself have never felt particularly unsafe here. I mention this because seemingly all semester long I've been seeing the results of many recent improvements by the university as well as hearing about their big Transform 2020 initiative.

One such improvement is a recent massive renovation of the university's steam pipes, which had created a mountain of dirt in the middle of campus. In recent years the pipes, which are

used to control the temperature inside the buildings, had been leaking and thus reducing their efficiency. Other projects include installing Wi-Fi and new security cameras in the dorm buildings as well as resurfacing the Elmwood dorm's road and installing a nice fountain I now pass every day. The sight of the few flowers and the water bubbling over the rocks added a little extra something to my walk to and from classes.

In addition to these improvements UMass Dartmouth plans to initialize several other future renovations and goals as a part of the Transform 2020 project. Ultimately the university's goal is to become recognized as a premier research university. Theoretically this could have both a lot of benefits, for example such prestige would attract more students to the area and both the college and the immediate area would certainly benefit economically. This sort of prestige may also attract higher quality professors and benefit the student body as a whole. Now in order to achieve this goal the university has a specific requirement to fulfill, namely awarding over 20 doctoral degrees (excluding professional practice degrees like an MD or a JD).

Of course the Transform 2020 project includes much more than just a more increased focus on research, although that is the primary focus of the plan. In addition to more research UMass Dartmouth plans to continue building, renovating, and in general improving the buildings and facilities on campus. Some of these improvements I've already mentioned, others include the renovation of classrooms and research labs as well as other various maintenance projects.

The university has planned this project meticulously through a Strategic Planning Committee, along with several work groups and task forces comprised of a mix of students, alumni, professors, and of course administration members. Additionally, UMass Dartmouth has already invested hundreds of thousands of dollars funded by donations, certain fees, and of course money from the state into this project and according to

the university's strategic plan that number is only going to increase as the project continues.

If everything continues as planned then Transform 2020 should be completed in about 6 years from now, however I remain hopefully skeptical about this due in part to its size and scope. I hope that everything will be completed in the exact amount of time that the administration has promised, but past experiences lead me to think that a few years down the line the project name will be changed to Transform 2024. Either way once it's completed I'm sure that Dartmouth, the university, and many of the surrounding communities will benefit from this.
