



## UMass University Without Walls (UWW)

**Website:** <https://www.umass.edu/uww/>

**Summary of Innovation:** UWW is a bachelor's degree program focused on non-traditional students. It follows a traditional credit-hour model, allows for significant credit for prior learning (CPL) primarily through a portfolio process – including military training and other industry certifications, and transfer credits from other institutions. A student can earn up to 105 credits for prior course work, prior learning and work & life experience.<sup>1</sup> Of the 120 credits needed to earn a bachelor's degree, up to 75 can consist of transfer credits and at least 45 need to be residency credits, earned through UMass-Amherst). Up to 30 credits can be earned from a portfolio (one of the ways you can earn credit for your work & life experience) and count as residency credits.<sup>2</sup> Students follow traditional fall/spring semesters, but can also take winter and summer courses. Degrees can be customized and can be entirely online, a mix of in-person/online, or fully in-person.<sup>3</sup>

UWW was founded in 1971 with sixteen other universities across the country, with funding from U.S. Department of Education, to help non-traditional students gain access to higher education.<sup>4</sup>

The minimum requirements for admission are: have earned at least 12 transferrable semester credits of coursework and have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0. If you're a former UMass Amherst student the minimum GPA requirement doesn't apply.<sup>5</sup>

A student develops a program of study – called a concentration – with a faculty advisor. Students can choose from a number of traditional programs of study, or they can develop their own based on their own specific experience and career needs.<sup>6</sup> The final credential is a bachelor's degree that falls within twelve interdisciplinary areas of study. Business studies and health and human services are particularly popular.<sup>7</sup> There is a track that has been specifically developed to support early childhood educators earn their bachelor's degree to meet MA DEEC requirements.<sup>8</sup>

UWW charges several types of fees:

- \$135 Entering Fee (one time fee);
- \$75 Application Fee (one time fee; discounted to \$60 for former UMass Amherst students);
- \$75 Enrollment Fee (one time);<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/how-it-works>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/how-it-works/degree-requirements>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/why-uww>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/history>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/frequently-asked-questions-whyuwwfaq>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/areas-study>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://dailycollegian.com/2011/03/university-without-walls-experiences-highest-enrollment-in-40-years/>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/areas-study/early-care-and-education>;  
[http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Workforce\\_Dev/mapping/20110228\\_ibe\\_mapping\\_project\\_report.pdf](http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Workforce_Dev/mapping/20110228_ibe_mapping_project_report.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.umass.edu/uww/tuition-and-fees>.

- If a student chooses to apply for credit for prior learning, there is a \$1,190 flat portfolio review fee, no matter the number of credits;
- Courses cost \$390 – 525 per credit, if the student is taking a minimum of 2 courses per semester, tuition is eligible for federal financial aid;
- \$150 Program/Advising fee, paid each fall and spring semester;
- \$47 Registration fee, paid at the beginning of each enrollment term (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter); and
- \$75 Special Transcript Evaluation fee (if applicable), paid to have a student's prior trainings and certifications evaluated for academic credit.

**Targeted Population of Learners:** Adult, non-traditional students, first-time degree seeking students. Has earned accolades for working with active military and veterans.<sup>10</sup>

**Partners:** UMass Amherst (part of Continuing Education), UMass Online

**Bringing Innovation to Scale:** UWW has awarded over 3,000 bachelor's of arts and science degrees. UWW is one of the largest majors at UMass Amherst. Unlike many other online learning platforms, many of which operate on a sub-contractor, adjunct model, UWW at UMass has twelve full-time faculty and five full-time administrative workers to support the 800+ students who engage with the program each semester.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://dailycollegian.com/2011/03/university-without-walls-experiences-highest-enrollment-in-40-years/>.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jesse-seaver/tear-down-the-wall-between-you-and-your-degree\\_b\\_3053693.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jesse-seaver/tear-down-the-wall-between-you-and-your-degree_b_3053693.html).