Initial Comparator Research – University of Massachusetts-Amherst
>(UMass system-wide LMS = Blackboard, called UMassOnline. UMass local LMS = Moodle, only used for some classes. Online courses and hybrid courses delivered via CPE are via Blackboard.)

General impression: UMass-Amherst's division of Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) is similar in form and function to UO's Academic Extension unit, but it has scaled up in strategic areas to meet demand for professional certifications and online degrees that trade on UMass-Amherst's generally sound reputation. Their structure does de-couple online course delivery from on-campus pedagogy support, though some instructional design support and faculty training is available from within CPE. If UO continues to apply a decentralized approach to digital education, without also reforming and expanding teaching/learning support, we might end up in a similar situation.

1) What services does this institution's Extension unit provide to campus partners?
>As a land-grant institution, UMass-Amherst's Extension unit (http://ag.umass.edu/extension-outreach) is wholly external-facing, focusing on scientific, agricultural, and nutritional outreach to the public. It's housed in the Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment on the UMass-Amherst campus, with thirteen field offices across the state of Massachusetts.
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>Additional non-credit education for the public is provided through the Extension Program at the UMass-Amherst Labor Center (http://www.umass.edu/lrrc/laborextension/).
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>UMass-Amherst's division of Continuing and Professional Education (http://www.umassulearn.net), the closest equivalent to UO's Academic Extension, is housed in the University Business Park, a site near but not "on" the UMass-Amherst campus. All online courses (nearly 1200 per term from Amherst, with more from other UMass campuses) are administered through CPE. This includes online courses that might be taken by traditional (in-residence) students. Many of the online offerings appear to be taught by full-time faculty (if generally those off the tenure-track) or by advanced graduate students. CPE also offers a for-credit independent study program that might appeal to the rest of the UMass-Amherst campus. Finally, among their summer programming there is a study skills and college success class that is designed for incoming first-year students. "Power Up for College Success" (http://www.umassulearn.net/powerup) is clearly designed to serve the rest of the UMass-Amherst campus.

2) Where is digital education housed? Are there separate units for online learning and blended or hybrid courses? Are technology and pedagogy combined or separate? How much of this effort is centralized?
>Digital education at UMass-Amherst is largely the provenance of Continuing and Professional Education. Different academic departments on campus appear to collaborate with CPE to produce online courses, and they showcase these courses to varying degrees

on their departmental web sites (Political Science is one example: https://polsci.umass.edu/about/online_courses/). Courses offered via CPE also attract non-matriculated students. It is unclear what percentage of students enrolled in online courses are matriculated students in residence.

In using UMassOnline as the delivery mechanism for both their fully online and their blended courses, CPE is leveraging the benefit of UMass-Amherst's role as the flagship institution of a state university system—the LMS contract and day-to-day management are centralized, with UMassOnline's offices placed not on any one of the UMass campuses but in their own location in Shrewsbury, some 60 miles to the east of Amherst.

In addition to fully online courses, however, it is notable that UMassOnline has developed campus-specific blended learning programs (http://www.umassonline.net/blended-learning). Advertised as "combining the best of both worlds," these courses were developed using grant money from the Sloan Consortium (http://onlinelearningconsortium.org) and at Amherst include bachelors' degrees in individualized concentrations, health and human services, or general studies, a certificate in sustainable farming, masters' degrees in clinical nursing, engineering management, and public health, and a doctorate in nursing practice. Often, these courses combine online education with internships and field work, but also include some face-to-face instruction. (Brochure: http://www.umassonline.net/sites/default/files/pdf/UMOL_Blended_Outline_v092807.pdf.)

Pedagogy is not emphasized in the UMassOnline model, though access to the same illustrious faculty is certainly promised to the UMassOnline student. What pedagogical support exists on campus comes through the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development (CTFD; http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/), which is primarily interested in face-to-face learning but provides a small amount of support for blended learning. Their programming in this area is grant-funded and appears to have concluded in 2012; current UMass faculty interested in technology and pedagogy are encouraged to set up individual consultations with a particular member of the CTFD team (http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/about/saichaie.shtml).

At Continuing and Professional Education there is a support infrastructure—the e-Learning division includes Faculty Support & Instructional Design, Instructor Training, and a local LMS manager.

Finally, in addition to the system-wide Blackboard installation, UMass-Amherst has a local Moodle LMS, administered by campus IT. Faculty workshops on Moodle are given by their Instructional Technologies division, and consultations are also available in their Instructional Media Lab. It is unclear how many campus faculty are using Moodle instead of Blackboard, but it clearly is intended to serve a campus-based population. There may be political tensions between local campus faculty or IT staff and the UMassOnline system-wide model that caused UMass-Amherst to provide a local alternative?

3) What structures, formal or informal, are in place to encourage pedagogical innovation on campus? Is there any effort to centralize such activity?

UMass-Amherst's local IT department has an Instructional Technologies division where quite a bit of innovation is taking place (http://www.it.umass.edu/instruct). Here they are investigating flipped classrooms, untethered teaching via Apple TV, iClickers and other tools. They also have a blog for people who teach with tech at UMass-Amherst (https://blogs.umass.edu/teachoit/), and regularly offer workshops to faculty. But this is all very clearly a campus effort, quite separate from the online degree offerings, and rooted in their IT division.

Some support for innovation is available through CTFD. However, as an office that is focused on "the professional development of faculty across all career stages," teaching resources are only one part of CTFD's mission—they also provide resources and programming devoted to mentoring, scholarly writing, tenure preparation, leadership, and work/life balance. While the end result probably focuses less on pedagogical innovation per se, their comprehensive approach to faculty development is a valuable model.

4) Where are instructional design and instructional technology housed? What pathways exist to guide faculty to instructional technology services? Is access to instructional technology support uniform across different faculty groups at the institution?

Instructional design services are housed within Continuing and Professional Education, and instructional technology workshops and resources are housed within IT. Faculty are navigating multiple options and pathways at this institution—campus resources are largely supported by the local IT department, while system resources may be administered off-campus. There is no indication that access to support is uniform.

5) At what administrative level are digital education initiatives, endorsed, supported, or made a fundraising priority? For example, does the institution count, encourage, or otherwise track student enrollment or participation in digitally-inflected (hybrid, blended, tech-enhanced F2F) courses? What institutional investments have been made in hybrid and/or blended learning?

UMassOnline was a system-wide initiative from the outset, created by the University president and Board of Trustees in 2001. Major investment in digital education appears to be through the support of that unit, which is physically (and to some extent, psychologically) divorced from the Amherst campus. While the faculty development initiatives at UMass-Amherst appear to have a more robust presence than similar efforts at UO, having won some notice from relevant professional organizations, local pedagogical efforts do not appear to gain the same level of endorsement or publicity as system-wide online education efforts.