Warren Addresses Challenge of Student Debt

U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren brought her newest bestselling book to the UMass Lowell campus on Sept. 19, christening a new author’s series at University Crossing.

“UMass Lowell is where it’s happening,” she said shortly before taking a stage in the dramatic atrium of the new, $95 million student center. “I love this new building, which is representative of the UMass Lowell experience of serving its students while really opening up to the community.”

“A Fighting Chance” is Warren’s 10th book. It’s the story of her rise from poor Oklahoma roots to becoming a forceful voice for the disenfranchised. The book is laced with the message that it’s time to make government work for everyone, not merely the rich and powerful.

“Washington works for those who have money and power and can hire armies of lobbyists and lawyers,” she said.

Standing before a crowd of more than 200 people, Warren read sections of the book. The atrium was filled and students lined the stairs and upper-level walkways.

Warren, whose successful bid to unseat Scott Brown in November 2012 gained momentum at a nationally televised debate from the University’s Tsongas Center, also returned to speak to students in 2013.

Warren said there are 25 million Americans carrying an average of $30,000 of student loan debt, and that those are the people for whom she’s fighting. Warren has filed a bill that would allow those with student loan debt to refinance their loans at current, lower interest rates with a cap of 4 percent. Currently, she said, interest rates stretch into the double-digits.

In all, student loan debt totals $1.2 billion, more than U.S. credit card debt.

Warren said she was able to attend college because decades ago, she lived in “an America that was investing in the future ... that let us work together to make investments we could not make alone in things like education, infrastructure and research.” She blames deregulation, which, she said, “turned financial institutions loose on the backs of American families.”
Pradeep Kurup Named University Professor

Civil Engineering Educator Praised for Exemplary Teaching, Research, Service

Prof. Pradeep Kurup of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, a highly regarded educator and world-class researcher, has been awarded the title of University Professor, the highest accolade bestowed on a UMass Lowell faculty member.

“Prof. Kurup has been lauded by his peers and students for his exemplary teaching, for nationally and internationally acclaimed research and for outstanding service to the university community and to his profession,” says Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

An expert in geotechnical engineering, Kurup’s research has earned him respect around the world. He has obtained more than $3 million in funding from federal agencies. He has also published widely, with more than 50 papers in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings.

Among his research projects funded by the National Science Foundation is the development of a novel electronic “tongue” that can detect and identify traces of toxic heavy metals in soil and groundwater. He has also developed an innovative electronic “nose” that can sniff for traces of TNT and other explosives as tiny as one part per trillion, or even smaller.

A resident of Nashua, N.H., Kurup joined the UMass Lowell faculty in 1997.

The Center for Population Health and Health Disparities is conducting a study of 1,500 Puerto Rican adults living in Boston to reduce rates of heart disease.

New Research Center Studies Nutrition and Health

Heart-healthy Initiative Launched for Hispanics

Stress, lack of exercise and limited access to healthy foods increase the risk of heart disease. These risk factors are widespread among Puerto Ricans living in the United States, a Hispanic subpopulation with a disproportionately high prevalence of type 2 diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

Prof. Katherine Tucker of the Clinical Laboratory and Nutritional Sciences Department leads the university’s Center for Population Health and Health Disparities, which is tackling the problem. Her research team is conducting a longitudinal study of 1,500 Puerto Rican adults between 45 and 75 years old living in Boston.

She explains that although the study targets Puerto Ricans, heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the United States. Understanding the Puerto Rican study findings can be helpful for everyone, regardless of ethnicity.

For instance, the research showed that diabetes and heart disease risk are strongly associated with dietary quality. In particular, higher risk of these conditions has been linked with low intake and variety of fruit and vegetables, and high intake of refined carbohydrates such as white rice and white bread.

New Program Helps Students Prep for Job Market

ProPath Offers Structured Approach to Career Planning

Students now have a road map to career development and planning, from freshman year through graduation. The Career Services & Cooperative Education Center has launched ProPath, a program that offers students opportunities and activities every year, from exploring career options to finding internships and learning professional networking skills.

“The goal is to give students a clear path toward career development and make them aware of the many experiential learning options available at or through UMass Lowell so that they are better prepared for the job market,” says Martina Witts, director of career services.

The idea for ProPath grew out of feedback from upperclassmen, who said they wish they had gotten involved with Career Services sooner. The program includes career-building activities like résumé workshops, interview practice sessions and cover-letter writing and encourages participation in experiential learning opportunities such as volunteer jobs, the DifferenceMaker program or internships.

UMass Lowell has been expanding experiential learning opportunities for students across all disciplines, including the launch several years ago of a professional co-op program. Research reveals that students who graduate with hands-on, professional experience have better prospects entering the job market.
Irish Legacy in Massachusetts Examined

**Conference Explores Irish-American Impact on Culture, Politics**

Irish-Americans have had an enduring impact on local, national and even global politics through grassroots organizing, a commitment to their values and a bit of luck. That was the consensus of panelists discussing Irish-Americans and Massachusetts politics at a recent conference at the university’s Inn & Conference Center.

“We are all products of our environment. We bring with us the values of our family, our church and our community,” said former Boston Mayor and Vatican Ambassador Ray Flynn, who participated in the panel along with former Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and David Bartley, former speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Chancellor Marty Meehan moderated the discussion, which was part of the three-day “Irish in Massachusetts: Historical Significance, Lasting Legacy” conference.

Presented by UMass Lowell and Queens University Belfast, the conference drew more than 100 attendees and explored such topics as Irish history, sports, immigration and literary as well as the Irish in Lowell.

During the discussion on politics, panelists described how the discrimination against Irish-Americans that limited access to jobs, education and other opportunities was a formative experience for many.

Flynn said the ability of Irish-Americans to organize and mobilize at the grassroots level has changed the course of history in Massachusetts and beyond, from passing the state’s landmark special education law to impacting the Irish peace process.

The conference was the result of a 5-year-old partnership between UMass Lowell and Queens University that has also includes research collaboration, student exchanges and faculty visits.

**Nursing Students Work with Elders**

**Co-op Scholar Program Provides Professional Experience**

This summer, 104 students who had just finished their freshman year had the remarkable opportunity to earn money while getting hands-on professional experience in their chosen disciplines. The Co-op Scholar program places high-achieving students in jobs both on and off campus.

Among the 104 were four nursing students who worked for Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley in Lawrence, an agency that provides services to seniors in 23 cities and towns.

“It was an amazing experience,” says nursing student Emily Majeski. “How often is someone, much less a person who has just completed their freshman year of nursing school, presented with an opportunity like this?”

The students worked as transition coaches for Medicare patients who recently returned to their homes after long hospital stays. In follow-up phone calls, the students reviewed medication changes, upcoming appointments and the status of the patients’ health conditions. The students also made independent house calls that allowed them one-on-one time with patients.

Students also gained experience working on a research experiment using Care at Hand technology that detects early symptoms specific to patient diagnoses.

**Center Builds Relationships with Asian-American Community**

**Interdisciplinary Projects Key to Understanding Issues**

The UMass Lowell Center for Asian-American Studies, launched in 2013, is already humming with grants and community partnerships.

English Assoc. Prof. Sue Kim, co-director, along with psychology Assoc. Prof. Ivy Ho, lead an interdisciplinary group of core faculty and associates working to understand and benefit Asian-American communities. The center collaborates across departments to create suggestions. Through health, cultural and educational initiatives, they are gathering information while building relationships between the university and organizations supporting the Asian-American community locally and nationally.

Two of the center’s largest projects focus on success and education within the Asian-American community. “Understanding Triumphs and Challenges of Immigration: A Model for Economic and Social Integration Success” will study the ACRE Family Day Care system in Lowell, which enables many immigrants to become financially stable through caring for others. The team will assess its strengths and challenges with the goal of helping other communities implement similar programs.

“Southeast Asian-American College Readiness” will assess first-year student success within the community by working with university students and faculty members. The study is part of a partnership with UMass Boston’s Asian-American Student Success Program and will strengthen inter-campus relationships.

In addition to research, the Center for Asian-American Studies supports events such as the Celebrate Cambodian Arts Festival featuring the Angkor Dance Troupe.

**Ranking on the Up and Up!**

Five years ago, UMass Lowell was named a top-tier national university for the first time by U.S. News & World Report. In the 2015 National Universities rankings, UMass Lowell rose to no. 156 and is one of only six institutions to advance in the standings every year since 2010. The university’s 27-spot climb over the past four years is tied for the second-fastest rise in the nation.
New $95 Million Student Center Transforms UMass Lowell

As a massive burst of balloons was released from the top of the four-story atrium into the lobby of University Crossing on Sept. 16, UMass Lowell officially opened the new, $95 million student-engagement center and with it, a new era in the institution’s history.

A vibrant space for the campus and community, University Crossing is the hub that links UMass Lowell’s South, North and East campuses with the city’s downtown business district and cultural attractions. For UMass Lowell students, the center brings together under one roof all the services they need to complement their classroom experience. With its cutting-edge sustainable and contemporary design, four-story glass front and views of the Merrimack River, the complex is as beautiful as it is functional.

The new student-engagement center is the 10th building opened in five years by UMass Lowell, which has aggressively grown its academic and research facilities and student residence halls to accommodate nearly a 50 percent increase in enrollment over the last seven years.

More than 200 people—UMass Lowell students, faculty and staff, along with University of Massachusetts, state and local leaders—officially opened the center during an event in the lobby at the foot of a large latticework installation that hangs from the ceiling.

“The world-class student center at University Crossing stands at the heart of UMass Lowell’s unprecedented transformation by providing centralized access to critical student resources,” said UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan. “We will make this building a dynamic resource for current and future generations of students and neighbors.”

UMass Lowell’s offices of admissions, residence life, student activities and leadership, the registrar, financial aid and career services—among many others—are located at the student-engagement center and are connected through the one-stop Solution Center. University Crossing also serves as a “club hub” with team-building and workspace for more than 200 of UMass Lowell’s student-run organizations.

The building also includes features for the public, such as a new flagship bookstore, the River Hawk Shop, the Crossroads Cafe and a large, sunny lobby where free programs like the university’s new series featuring best-selling authors will be held.

University Crossing adds a total of 230,000 square feet to UMass Lowell’s footprint, with 144,000 square feet in new construction for the student-engagement center and 86,000 square feet of renovated space that houses other UMass Lowell departments including University Police, parking, transportation and environmental management.