Students Get Hands-on Experience Creating, Exhibiting Art

Art Students, Faculty Paint the Town

With the help of local gallery owners, the university’s artistic ventures are increasingly coloring the way people see Lowell.

This winter, the work of art and design undergraduates, faculty and alumni has bloomed around the city, with exhibitions at four local galleries. Students also had a hand in curating the exhibits, hanging the work, designing signage for the shows and planning the openings.

“This type of cooperation between the university and community brings an exciting and unique transgenerational vitality to the downtown. I look forward to the chance to build on it,” says Stephen Mishol, an associate professor of art & design.

“Having four UMass Lowell art exhibits featured in Lowell’s downtown galleries highlights the depth of the university’s and the city’s creative assets,” says Henri Marchand, the city’s director of cultural affairs and special events. “Lowell is blessed with a rich cultural life and a creative farm system that includes the opportunity for the public to experience artworks by UMass Lowell students, alumni and faculty.”

The four shows include “Burning Minds” at the Arts League of Lowell (ALL) Gallery, “UMass Lowell Printmakers” at the Lowell Telecommunications gallery, “Voice & Vision” at the Ayer Lofts Art Gallery and the UML faculty art show at The Brush Art Gallery & Studios.

Jennifer Vivier, the senior art major behind the “Burning Minds” exhibit, believes the arts thrive when there’s a strong connection between the community and the university.

“It’s important for both the city and the university to have these kinds of projects going. It definitely makes both places better,” Vivier says. “Being a resident, and being from here, I felt strongly about connecting to my community.”

UMass Lowell’s art & design program has gained a national reputation for the success of its graduates. Most recently, the university was No. 1 on PayScale.com’s Best Value Colleges for Art Careers ranking, based on return on investment and career potential.

Exhibiting their work off campus and working with the galleries around the city gave students exposure to arts management and promotion.

“It’s been a wonderful opportunity for all the participating artists, especially our students,” says Mishol. “Bringing their work off campus and into the community like this is an exciting moment for them as young artists. I know from speaking with many of them that they have been both impressed and moved by this generous gesture.”

Mishol co-founded the Arts Research Collaborative (ARC) on Prescott Street in downtown Lowell, which was established in part to offer UML students a chance to bring contemporary artists and the UML arts community together. ARC has long shown the work of UML art students as well as nationally recognized artists, including most recently an exhibit featuring the work of alumna Jessica Tawczynski ’14.
Faculty and Grad Students Lend Expertise to Local Schools

Center Helps School Evaluate Programs, Win Grants

When leaders at the Career Academy, an alternative program for Lowell High School students, were applying for a U.S. Department of Education grant to expand, they turned to UMass Lowell for help.

To get the grant, The Career Academy needed experts to evaluate students’ progress. They chose UML’s Center for Program Evaluation, which offered an evaluation that included not just data analysis, but also collaboration to help the school improve programs and services.

The Career Academy won the grant—worth $500,000 per year for up to five years—and it is now a full-service community school that partners with community organizations to offer programs, internships and support ranging from a food pantry to English language classes for students and their families.

With help from the Center for Program Evaluation, the academy has demonstrated improved behavior and achievement among its 150 day and evening students.

“They provide us tangible suggestions for improvement,” Principal Megan O’Loughlin says of the center’s faculty and staff. “They’ve been very helpful in planning next steps.”

The Center for Program Evaluation involves faculty and graduate students from across the university who are experts in evaluation methods, says Assoc. Prof. of Education Jill Lohmeier, the center’s director. They offer help with planning, grant writing and evaluation and workshops on evaluation methods to university faculty, staff and students as well as businesses and public agencies, especially schools.

Since its founding four years ago, the center has worked with school districts including Lawrence, Everett and Methuen and collaborated on several grants with the Lowell public schools.

International Exchange Program Earns National Recognition

Global Entrepreneurship Exchange Lauded for Innovation

What started as a pilot program in 2014 with nine Manning School of Business students visiting India over winter break to learn about entrepreneurship has grown into a nationally recognized model of international education.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) has named the university’s Global Entrepreneurship Exchange (GE2) program the winner of a 2018 IIE Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education.

The GE2 program, led by senior lecturer Ashwin Mehta, is being recognized with the “Best Practice Resource: Study Abroad” award.

“The award is an indication that UMass Lowell is at the forefront when it comes to global engagement and entrepreneurship,” says Mehta.

Since the program’s inception four years ago, more than 670 students from 12 countries have come together to experience multidisciplinary and multicultural immersion in entrepreneurship, complete with project-based activities and field visits to businesses in the region.

UMass Lowell students earn three credits as they study abroad for two weeks in India or China. They can also take part in a three-credit summer course on campus with students visiting from India, China, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Pakistan, Vietnam, Guyana, Haiti and Nigeria. The program is open to both undergraduate and graduate students and has included students majoring not only in business, but also engineering, science and nursing.

Avangrid, UMass Lowell to Collaborate on Clean Energy

Partnership Advances Research, Learning Opportunities for Students

A new research partnership between Avangrid, its subsidiary Central Maine Power (CMP) and UMass Lowell will expand the use of clean-energy technology, benefiting consumers, students and the environment.

The collaboration will bring together researchers from the company and the university to advance clean-energy technologies including hydropower, wind energy, power grids, energy storage and data sciences, as well as other technology innovations.

UMass Lowell students—from those seeking bachelor’s degrees all the way to doctoral candidates—will be able to participate in on-campus research. CMP will also explore opportunities for co-ops, internships and fellowships for students. The partners will also present joint conferences and workshops for researchers from across the clean-energy field.

“Through this new partnership, UMass Lowell’s world-class faculty will be able to lend their expertise to an important effort to expand clean energy in the commonwealth and beyond. This project will also create new opportunities for UMass Lowell students at all levels to gain valuable experience to complement what they learn in the classroom,” says Julie Chen, UMass Lowell vice chancellor for research and innovation.

“Our collaboration with UMass Lowell is one more way we can accelerate innovation and the development of technology to expand the range of solutions to today’s environmental challenges,” says Bob Kump, president and CEO of Avangrid Networks, CMP’s parent company.

CMP serves more than 600,000 customers in central and southern Maine. The research partnership with UMass Lowell is the first for the company in Massachusetts and could be expanded to other campuses in the UMass system.
UML Wins Green Design Award from City

New Business School Building Recognized for Sustainability

The city of Lowell thinks there’s a lot to like about the university’s new Pulichino Tong Business Center.

The LEED Gold-certified building, which opened last April and is home to the Manning School of Business, received the Green Design Award from the city at its annual Sustainable Lowell Awards.

Representatives from Facilities Management and the Office of Sustainability accepted the award from Lowell Mayor William Samaras during a reception at City Hall. The university was also formally recognized at a City Council meeting.

Now in their sixth year, the Sustainable Lowell Awards are run by the city’s Lowell Sustainability Council (LSC), whose mission is to promote citywide sustainability through education, communication and collaboration.

Research Project Targets Tissue Regeneration

Origami-Inspired Paper Structures Used to Grow Cells

Chemical engineering Asst. Prof. Gulden Camci-Unal and a team of student researchers are combining old technologies with cutting-edge tissue engineering to design new biomaterials that could someday be used to repair, replace or regenerate skin, bone, cartilage, heart valves and muscles and other organs. This research could help alleviate the acute shortage of tissue and organ donors.

Camci-Unal and her team are using paper to create tiny scaffolds in which the biomaterials can grow, and are then applying microfabrication techniques to engineer new tissues. The paper scaffolds were inspired by origami, the Japanese art of paper folding that dates back to the 17th century.

“Paper is a low-cost, widely available and extremely flexible material that can be easily fabricated into three-dimensional structures of various shapes, sizes and configurations,” says Camci-Unal.

The team uses origami-folded paper to grow bone cells, which are useful for treating patients with bone defects of irregular sizes and shapes. In another study, the researchers use paper structures to investigate the migration behavior of lung cancer cells taken from patients.

Pulichino Tong recently became the second building on campus to receive LEED Gold certification, joining its North Campus neighbor, the Mark and Elisia Saab Emerging Technologies and Innovation Center (ETIC). The university also has four LEED Silver buildings: University Crossing, University Suites, the McGauvran Center and the Health and Social Sciences Building.

LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is the rating system used by the U.S. Green Building Council to evaluate the environmental performance of buildings and encourage sustainable design.

The 54,800-square-foot Pulichino Tong building includes sustainable features such as occupancy sensors and daylight harvesting, “chilled beams” for heating and cooling, and a solar wall on the back of the building to preheat the intake air.

UML Hosts Second Annual Days of Giving, April 10-11

The goal: Rally 2,500 donors in 48 hours

Last year, 2,286 donors took part in UMass Lowell’s first-ever Days of Giving, a 48-hour challenge that raised more than $288,000 to support everything from scholarships to sports teams.

Graduate student Diana Santana was one of those donors. On April 10-11, when UML launches its second annual Days of Giving, she’ll be among the first in line. She knows firsthand how support from a stranger can help change a student’s life.

Six years ago, Santana and her two young children were living in a shelter. “I wanted a better life,” she says. “To get it, I knew I needed to pursue higher education.”

With scholarship support, Santana pursued her studies with a vengeance, first at Middlesex Community College and then at UML. Last spring, she graduated summa cum laude and earned the Chancellor’s Medal for Diversity and Inclusion. Today, she’s pursuing her master’s degree in community social psychology and working as a graduate assistant at UML’s Office of Multicultural Affairs.

“People who didn’t know me gave money so that I could pursue my goals,” Santana says. “Now, I will give whatever I can because I know what that gift meant to me.”

The Days of Giving are open to all alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff and friends of the university. The goal: rally 2,500 donors in the space of 48 hours and receive more than $40,000 in matching funds. “You can direct your gift to support a wide range of programs,” says Deidra Miles, associate director of annual giving. “Your gift of any size will help us reach our goal.”

To get involved and make your gift on April 10-11, go to uml.givecampus.com.
Effort Aims to Help Restore Crops Destroyed by Hurricane

Last fall, Hurricane Maria tore across Puerto Rico like a monster, decimating the island’s infrastructure, ravaging its water supply and trash its crops.

The territory, which had been undergoing an agricultural resurgence, lost 80 percent of its crop value. Many residents are still struggling to recover.

UMass Lowell has mobilized to help, from the ground up. Through an effort organized by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the university launched a drive to collect donations of seeds to help Puerto Rico re-establish its crops.

Elsie Otero, associate director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, says the disaster hits close to home for many people on campus.

“I know a lot of the UMass Lowell community, especially students, has family on the island who are deeply affected by Maria,” Otero says. “This particular project is an attempt to do something long-term that will have a lasting impact.”

Otero says the nongenetically modified seeds that were collected will be distributed in Puerto Rico’s communities and schools and will be used for small-scale market farm production. The community service effort was announced as part of the university’s MLK Awareness Week, which honors the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

Dozens of types of tropics-friendly seeds, from Asian greens to zucchini and cucumbers to sweet potatoes, were collected. There was an emphasis on gathering “fast crop” seeds, including beans, bok choy, cucumber, squash, okra, kale and radishes.

The seeds will go to the Puerto Rico Resiliency Fund, which is working to restore the island’s food supply and agriculture.

The donations were being delivered to Puerto Rico by David Lewis, a retired UMass Lowell business professor who has helped with other relief efforts in the past.

“I heard about this and asked, ‘What can I do to help?’” Lewis says.

The seed drive is not the first UML-sponsored project to deliver support to Puerto Rico. In October, the Multicultural Affairs and Events and Hospitality offices collected enough supplies to fill 50 boxes that were sent to hurricane victims. Also, during the Rowdy Cares with Stuffed Bears donation drive, student alumni ambassadors coordinated a collection of more than 350 stuffed animals for the island’s children. They were delivered to a hospital in Naranjito, a mountainous community particularly hard-hit by Maria.

UML Launches Seed Donation Drive for Puerto Rico