Inside This Issue...

2 Art Profs Named Fulbright Scholars

2 UMass Lowell Jumps to 22nd on Sierra Magazine’s ‘Cool Schools’ List

3 International Educators Learn How to Teach Critical Thinking Skills

UMass Lowell Welcomes Record-setting Class of 2022

University Kicks off the Start of a New Academic Year

The academic year has only just started, but UMass Lowell’s newest students have already distinguished themselves. At more than 3,200 strong, this fall’s first-year and transfer students are the largest group of new incoming students to join the university. They are also the most culturally diverse and have the highest average high school GPA (3.596) and SAT (1232) scores of any incoming group in UMass Lowell history.

“You have already made history, but we expect a lot more of you,” Chancellor Jacquie Moloney told students at the university’s annual convocation ceremony, which marks the official start of the new academic year. She encouraged students to find and add to the university’s sense of community and to know that administration and faculty are there to help them succeed.

Record Enrollment

For the second year in a row, UMass Lowell’s total enrollment topped 18,000, an increase of more than 57 percent since 2007, due to another record number of new students and climbing success rates, including an 86 percent continuation rate for first-year students. In addition, a growing number of students are participating in the Honors College, bringing its enrollment to a record-high of 1,750.

Convocation, held at the Tsongas Center at UMass Lowell, featured a talk by peace activist and YouTube sensation Ken E. Nwadike Jr., known as the “Free Hugs Guy.” He encouraged students to draw on the power of positivity to overcome the differences that divide people. Nwadike launched his Free Hugs Project in Massachusetts when he hugged runners at the finish line of the 2014 Boston Marathon as a show of support a year after terrorist bombs had killed three and injured hundreds in the same location.

“It is important for us to find common ground and solutions for change and to see each other as human beings,” he said.

Nwadike received a standing ovation.

“He was amazingly inspirational,” said business administration major Andrew Williams. “He does a lot of things people either don’t think to do or are afraid to do.”

Renovations Continue Campus Transformation

Students returning to campus for the fall semester were greeted by a number of renovation projects at familiar buildings. The North Campus building formerly known as Pasteur Hall was officially renamed Dandeneau Hall in May, in honor of plastics engineering alum James Dandeneau ’80. A $15.75 million renovation of the second, third and fourth floors of the 80-year-old building was completed over the summer.

Nearby Perry Hall is undergoing a $50 million renovation that will transform the building into a modern facility for academic research, teaching and industry partnerships.

On South Campus, Coburn Hall closed in May so renovation and expansion work could begin on the once and future home of the College of Education. The $44 million project is scheduled for completion in 2020.
that emphasized hands-on learning exercises and games, technology and
UTEC and TeenBLOCK, Angulo and Subreenduth designed a program
around the world.

Lowell's reputation and resources as a city that welcomes immigrants from
Exchange scholars, thanks to the curriculum, which takes advantage of
The grant from the State Department was highly competitive, too: UMass
Angulo says. “It’s very competitive, and it’s an honor for them to be selected,”
for the program.
The participants went through a rigorous selection process to be picked
part of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.
funded by the U.S. State Department’s Office of English Language Programs,
Education Prof. A.J. Angulo and Assoc. Dean Sharon Subreenduth and was
course in teaching critical thinking skills. The program was led by College of
India, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia came for a two-week intensive
Some 25 professors and teachers from northern Africa, the Middle East,
Teaching Prof. A.J. Angulo says.

International Educators
Learn How to Teach Critical
Thinking Skills

State Department-Funded Program Brings
Teachers to UML
Educators from around the world came to UMass Lowell this summer to learn skills that they will, in turn, take back and teach in their classrooms.

Some 25 professors and teachers from northern Africa, the Middle East, India, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia came for a two-week intensive course in teaching critical thinking skills. The program was led by College of Education Prof. A.J. Angulo and Assoc. Dean Sharon Subreenduth and was funded by the U.S. State Department’s Office of English Language Programs, part of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The participants went through a rigorous selection process to be picked for the program.

“It’s very competitive, and it’s an honor for them to be selected,” Angulo says.

The grant from the State Department was highly competitive, too: UMass Lowell beat out 16 other universities to host the Critical Thinking Skills Exchange scholars, thanks to the curriculum, which takes advantage of Lowell’s reputation and resources as a city that welcomes immigrants from around the world.

Working with faculty from the colleges of Education and Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, along with community partners including UTEC and TeenBLOCK, Angulo and Subreenduth designed a program that emphasized hands-on learning exercises and games, technology and curriculum development.

The rise in rankings reflects the university’s widespread sustainability practices in everything from transportation and energy reduction to recycling and composting.

Sierra received submissions from a record 269 schools in 36 states, the District of Columbia and Canada this year. Participation is open to all four-year, degree-granting undergraduate colleges and universities in the United States and Canada as well as two-year community colleges. Participating institutions are ranked in 18 categories.

According to the Sierra Club, the rankings offer guidance to prospective and current students, administrators, faculty and alumni to compare achievements in sustainability and environmentalism. The rankings also can spur healthy competition among schools and help raise environmental standards on campuses.

This year was the first time UML was able to report its full range of sustainability programs to the Sierra Club. The university received an overall score of 74.04.

The University of California Irvine and Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vt., tied for the top spot in the 2018 rankings with overall scores of 86.95.

UML Jumps to 22nd on Sierra Magazine’s ‘Cool Schools’ List

National Ranking Recognizes University’s Sustainability Efforts
UMass Lowell jumped more than 100 spots—to No. 22—in Sierra magazine’s 12th annual “Cool Schools” ranking of North America’s greenest colleges and universities.

Compiled by the national magazine of the Sierra Club, the Cool Schools rankings assess colleges’ performance in a host of areas such as what they teach, how they obtain their electricity and their sources of dining hall food.

Last year, UMass Lowell ranked No. 124; in 2016, the university was No. 165.

Learning with Purpose
Art Profs Named Fulbright Scholars

Program Aims to Improve Global Relations

Two members of the university’s Art & Design faculty have earned prestigious Fulbright Scholar awards.

Assistant professors Ingrid Hess and Pouya Afshar, both four-year veterans of the UML faculty, have earned 2018 honors from the Fulbright Scholar Program, the cultural exchange program designed to improve Intercultural and diplomatic relations around the globe.

Hess, who teaches graphic design, served a two-week Fulbright specialist stint in Ireland over the summer.

Afshar, an animator and visual artist, will be teaching at Yasar University in Izmir, Turkey, for the fall semester. While in Turkey, he also plans to conduct research and prepare for an art show he has in Paris in December.

In addition to teaching, Hess is an award-winning children’s book author, and the themes that run through her work include peace, economic justice and diversity. Her books include “Sleep in Peace” and “Doodling Dragons.”

Established in 1946, the Fulbright Scholar Program is funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. About 8,000 grants are awarded each year to representatives from 160 countries.

New Program Ramps Up for Women Engineering Students

Initiative Aimed at Building Bonds, Skills and Confidence

A program launched this summer in the Francis College of Engineering brought 20 incoming women students to campus to get a jump start on their college careers and prepare for success in a discipline where women are still significantly underrepresented.

The initiative, RAMP, for Research, Academics and Mentoring Pathways, was designed to help young women build a sense of connection and mutual support as they enter the engineering program. Led by Assoc. Dean Kavitha Chandra, who in 1992 became the first woman to graduate from the university with a doctorate in electrical engineering, the six-week program offered classes, guest lectures, hands-on projects and mentoring opportunities with faculty. Students also had the option of living on campus during the program to get a taste of college life.

“We understand what’s required to take young women and keep them in the field,” Chandra says.

The college advertised the camp to all incoming women engineering students and, if they expressed interest, asked them to fill out an application and commit to completing the program. All 20 participants received scholarships provided by industry partners that support UMass Lowell’s efforts to increase the number of women in engineering.

For women who go into engineering, the rewards are considerable. On average, women in STEM careers outearn both men and women in non-STEM jobs by 35 percent to 40 percent, and the gender pay gap is lower in STEM fields than in other sectors of the job market, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Hard Work Pays Off

Major New Scholarship Honors Virginia and James Comley

Hard work is a Comley family value.

In 1968, Virginia and James Comley of Bedford founded their own elevator service and repair business, and over the next four decades built it into one of the largest companies in New England. They also raised four children, and taught them the value of working and studying hard. “Nothing,” Virginia says, “beats a great education.”

Their daughter, Bonnie, took these lessons to heart. After earning her business degree from UMass Lowell, she went on to become one of Broadway’s top producers, earning three Tony Awards with her husband, Stewart Lane, and co-founding the streaming service Broadway HD. Along the way, the couple also became generous backers of UML’s Theatre Arts program. The university’s Comley-Lane Theatre, named in their honor, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

This year also marks a major milestone for Virginia and James, who will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary this fall. To honor the power of her parents’ example, Bonnie Comley and Lane have endowed a major new scholarship in their names.

At last spring’s Celebration of Scholarship, Chancellor Jacquie Moloney presented the first Virginia and James Comley Scholarship to Abdi Shariff-Hassan ’21, a business administration major, and recognized the Comleys as honorary UMass Lowell alumni.

“We believe that a college education creates opportunities for better-paying, higher-skilled jobs, and prepares people socially and intellectually for life,” says Virginia. Jokes James: “And we hope our many, many, many years of hard work set a good example for students!”

Honors Virginia and James Comley on becoming honorary UML alumni.

First-year engineering students Grace Remillard (left) and Stecie Norceide spent six weeks on campus over the summer participating in RAMP, a new program designed to support women engineering students.
Tyler Lagasse Wins Third Silver Medal in Golf at Special Olympics

Tyler Lagasse is running out of room to display all his medals, trophies and plaques.

His most recent accomplishment? He won the silver medal in golf—in the elite division—at the Special Olympics USA Games for the third time. He’s got 12 gold medals from Special Olympics Massachusetts and is a member of the organization’s Hall of Fame. He’s competed in several Pro-Am tournaments and has been featured as both a blogger and player on ESPN.

“I like golf because it fits my personality. I just want to be in a place where it’s calm, relaxed—and that way, I can show my true colors,” Lagasse says.

Lagasse, an environmental, earth and atmospheric sciences major, is living with autism spectrum disorder. He’s sensitive to sounds, smells and sights in his environment, yet in a quiet place, he can focus intensely on any task, including hitting a little white ball with accuracy and consistency.

The 31-year-old has many accomplishments to be proud of—and not all of them involve sports.

Ten years ago, Lagasse was asked to give a short speech at a celebration of the 40th anniversary of Special Olympics Massachusetts. His speech was so well-received that he continued giving talks at every opportunity. He’s the invited keynote speaker at this month’s Special Olympics Massachusetts’ 50th anniversary celebration at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

With his mother, he co-authored a book about living with autism, based on notebooks he kept.

Not least among Lagasse’s accomplishments is his tenacity as a student. He spent eight years earning his associate’s degree from Middlesex Community College, graduating in 2014 with highest honors. He takes classes part time and expects to complete his bachelor’s degree in another five or six years. Lagasse has taken advantage of programs offered through the university’s Disabilities Services office. He says he’s also gotten lots of support from faculty and other staff, especially in the Athletics Department.

His hard work and determination are paying off. He’s a member of Delta Alpha Pi, an honor society for college students with disabilities. He has also made progress toward his goal of getting a job that benefits the environment. With the help of staff in Disability Services, he recently started working part time for the university’s Office of Sustainability, where he oversees recycling of everything from light bulbs to batteries.

“It makes me feel rewarded and fulfilled. It means I’m playing a part in the changes going on at UMass Lowell,” he says.