Programs and Collaborations Will Expand Global Focus

In an effort to connect the University with the Portuguese community in Lowell and abroad, UMass Lowell recently launched the Saab-Pedroso Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture.

The Center will work closely with UMass Dartmouth’s Center for Portuguese Studies to sponsor local events, offer study abroad programs and coordinate faculty collaborations with Portuguese universities in Lisbon and Braga, says Luis Falcon, dean of the College of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

Funded by a $850,000 combined gift from Mark ’81 and Elisia Saab, and Luis Pedroso, a Lowell High School alumnus and CEO of Accutronics Inc., the Saab-Pedroso Center joins the University’s growing stable of global programs featuring nearly 100 countries on six continents.

The Saab family’s gift will establish a fellowship in Portuguese studies.

“I am personally committed to growing opportunities within the local Portuguese community,” Elisia Saab says. “There is a large and vibrant local Portuguese population and the UMass Lowell fellowship will enrich local Portuguese studies, assist community members in gaining a deeper understanding of the culture and help the Portuguese community preserve its heritage.”

The Saab-Pedroso Center was launched on March 28 at a reception featuring Portuguese food, music and literature at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center. California author Anthony Barcellos read from his novel, “Land of Milk and Money,” which is the story of a Portuguese family’s journey from immigrant farmers to American agriculture powers.

“I’m a little overwhelmed over this whole thing,” Pedroso told the crowd. “This is truly a huge occasion for the Portuguese community of Lowell and all of northern Massachusetts. I’ve been involved with the Portuguese community at UMass Dartmouth for 15 years or so and I said, ‘We need to tie that to the Merrimack Valley also.’ We’re going to do great things.”

Also celebrating the launch were Paulo Cunha Alves, consul general of Portugal in Boston; Chancellor Marty Meehan; UMass Dartmouth Chancellor Divina Grossman; Lowell Vice Mayor Joe Mendonca and New Bedford state Rep. Tony Cabral.

“The Portuguese language is the second most-spoken language in the state of Massachusetts after English,” Alves said.
Researchers to Explore Underrepresentation in STEM Fields

Gender biases in the workplace are nothing new, but a team of researchers from UMass Lowell and the UMass Medical School are moving beyond the individual to highlight the impact of hostile workplace climates, which create barriers to women’s productivity and advancement.

“What makes gender biases of today different from those of the pre-civil rights era is the shift from overt bias and sexism to a more subtle form of discrimination,” says Tran, who is the principal investigator for the NSF project. “But the more subtle, yet powerful, biases still go unnoticed. If we can measure this cultural phenomenon, it will enable us to take more effective action and better assess the success of our efforts. To date, no such measurement exists for quantifying subtle gender biases and other roots of micro-inequities in academia.”

$750K NSF Grant Launches Study on Workplace Gender Bias

Researchers from UMass Lowell are developing a subtle gender-bias index to better understand the micro-inequities being experienced by female faculty members in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

New Cyber Security, Forensics Center Formed

Program Will Strengthen National Cyber Defenses

President Barack Obama has declared that the “cyber threat is one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation” and that “America’s economic prosperity in the 21st century will depend on cyber-security.”

Indeed, in 2011 alone there were more than 5.5 billion malicious attacks online—over 81 percent more than the previous year—and more than 232 million cases of identity theft, according to a report by Symantec.

Those numbers will stop growing—if UMass Lowell’s new Center for Internet Security and Forensics Entrepreneurs (I-SAFE) has its way. The result of a merging of the University’s Center for Network and Information Security and its Center for Cyber Forensics, I-SAFE aims to strengthen our country’s cyber defenses and protect national security, jobs and privacy.

The Center “will play a critical role in public safety and security response by federal and state law enforcement and national cyber-defense forces, including the military,” says Prof. Jie Wang, chair of the Department of Computer Science and director of I-SAFE.

Areas of focus will include cloud authentication and encrypted storage, security and privacy of networks, mobile devices, databases and wireless and social networks, physical security via sensor networks, computer and network forensics and criminal justice and global studies.

Tsongas Plaque Honors State House Delegation

University’s Relationship With City Praised at Dedication Ceremony

The University community came together before the last River Hawks regular season hockey game to honor the Lowell State House delegation of 2010 by dedicating a plaque in the Tsongas Center foyer.

Former state Sen. Steven Panagiotakos and state Reps. Thomas Golden ‘93 ’01, Kevin Murphy and David Nangle spearheaded efforts to transition ownership of the arena from the City of Lowell to UMass Lowell three years ago—a complex process that included the enacting of legislation to permit the acquisition.

Since then, having a world-class arena has dramatically increased the prestige of the University.

“We wouldn’t have been able to go Division I in sports if it weren’t for this building,” said Chancellor Marty Meehan at the dedication. “We wanted to build a hockey program that would make everyone in our community proud, make everyone in the University proud. Without this building, we wouldn’t have been able to do it.”

Learning with Purpose

City Manager Bernie Lynch, state Reps. Tom Golden and David Nangle, former state Sen. Steven Panagiotakos, Chancellor Marty Meehan and Steve’s father, William Panagiotakos, from left, attended the dedication ceremony.
A Season of Firsts

River Hawks Win First Hockey East Title, Trip to Frozen Four

The River Hawks celebrated their first-ever Hockey East championship on March 23—just two weeks after they clinched the regular season title for the first time. One week later, the team shut out UNH 2-0 in the regional finals to earn their first trip to the Frozen Four. As of press time, the River Hawks were set to play Yale on April 11, in the first round of the tournament in Pittsburgh.

ESPN analyst Dave Starman predicted that the River Hawks would take the national title. “UMass Lowell is a team that … has managed to continue to play at that high level. …I love their jam. I love their snarl. I love their ability to battle and attack,” he said on air.

Also in March, Coach Norm Bazin was named Bauer Hockey East Coach of the Year for the second straight year, while junior defenseman Chad Ruhwedel was named to the Hockey East All-Conference First Team and senior forward Riley Wetmore, junior winger Joe Pendenza and freshman goalie Connor Hellebuyck were each named to the Second Team.

All in and Online

English Professor Excels at Cyber-instruction

Assoc. Prof. Todd Avery of the English Department likes the feel of chalk in his hands for jotting notes on a blackboard. He favors writing longhand, drawn to the tactile quality of pen and paper. So when the opportunity to teach his popular “Monsters, Apes and Nightmares” class online came up, Avery says he was “dubious.”

Despite his initial trepidation, Avery took the plunge into online teaching in 2009 after going through training provided by the Division of Online and Continuing Education. Experience proved his assumptions wrong.

“All get to know online students at least as well as students in a classroom,” he says. “To participate, students have to write a lot and contribute to chats and discussion boards. They volunteer a lot of information as they tell their own stories.”

Avery’s success in the digital realm earned him a recent award for excellence in online teaching from the University Professional & Continuing Education Association, a Washington, D.C.-based organization.

His is just one example of UMass Lowell’s robust online education program, which has grown from 80 students in eight courses in 1996 to more than 20,000 enrollments in 2012 in fully online graduate and undergraduate degree, certificate and individual courses. The online Master of Information Technology degree was recently ranked No. 12 in the nation in by TheBestSchools.org, and is the only New England public institution in the top 20.

The online program has won every major award from The Sloan Consortium, the leading international organization for quality in online education. These include excellence in teaching and academic programs, as well as a lifetime achievement award, which went to Executive Vice Chancellor Jacqueline Moloney.

New Breast Cancer Therapy Aims to Improve Patients’ Quality of Life

Drug-Delivery Method Would Enable Physicians to Customize Treatment

A UMass Lowell researcher who is developing a specialized drug treatment for breast cancer patients has received more than $725,000 from the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health to advance his work.

Chemical Engineering Prof. Prakash Rai is creating a drug-delivery method with an imaging agent that would enable doctors to see injected drugs as they target cancer cells.

The imaging agent delivered along with injected cancer medication will help physicians guide treatment, should help reduce the collateral damage to healthy cells and may decrease a patient’s drug dosage, reducing toxic side effects, according to Rai.

“If successful, these image-guided, targeted therapies should make a significant impact on the clinical care of breast cancer patients by improving survival and overall quality of life,” he says.

Rai and his team plan to combine several drugs that have shown potential in cancer treatment with the imaging agent into a single nanometer-sized targeted drug-delivery system called a theranostic nanoconstruct. The size of the nanoparticles, which measure only billions of a meter, make it possible to deliver drug molecules directly to cancer cells.

Rai’s research is at the forefront of theranostics, an emerging field in medicine that combines therapeutics and diagnostics to help doctors develop highly individualized and targeted treatments based on a patient’s health profile. Theranostic medicine uses nanotechnology to help detect, see and treat disease at the same time.

Assoc. Prof. Todd Avery of the English Department was recently recognized by a national education organization for online teaching excellence.

www.uml.edu
Co-op Experience Provides Job-Search Edge

Business Students Get Professional Experience

Getting professional experience as an undergraduate was part of Matt Johnson’s game plan when he entered the Manning School of Business.

“I wanted to work before graduating so I’d be more competitive,” says Johnson, who is currently on a six-month marketing and sales co-op assignment at Enterprise Bank in Lowell.

Johnson is among a growing number of business students signing up for the co-op program and getting three- and six-month placements at such companies as Arbor Networks, John Hancock, Fidelity Investments and Northwestern Mutual. This semester, 70 business students are enrolled in the program, up from 30 when it was introduced in the MSB in the fall of 2011.

The co-op program was piloted in the Plastics Engineering department in 2009 and has since expanded to all engineering disciplines, the College of Sciences and the Manning School. Students have gotten co-op positions at Fortune 500 companies, research hospitals, startups and emerging businesses locally and across the country.

“We like hiring UMass Lowell students. We’ve hired them before and they have done really well,” says Guilliany Ortiz, a technical coordinator with Putnam Investments.

Mayara Belasque, a junior who is on her first co-op job, working in payroll at The Boston Globe, says the experience has been invaluable.

“Even though I have learned a lot about accounting, what I’m really taking away from this is what it’s like to work full-time in a professional environment,” she says.

Manning School of Business junior Mayara Belasque says she is learning new skills and making professional contacts at her current co-op job at The Boston Globe.

More than 150 companies came to a recent Career Fair at the Campus Recreation Center, traveling from as far as California to interview students for co-ops, internships and full-time positions.

UMass Lowell Students are Work Ready, Life Ready, World Ready