Republican U.S. Sen. Scott Brown and his Democratic challenger Elizabeth Warren have agreed to participate in a debate this fall sponsored by UMass Lowell and the Boston Herald.

David Gregory of NBC’s “Meet the Press” will moderate the one-hour debate, which will be held at the Tsongas Center at UMass Lowell on Monday, Oct. 1.

“We are excited to host this important debate between the candidates, especially because of the vibrant atmosphere that the Tsongas Center will provide,” says UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan. “The event offers an important opportunity to educate and engage our students in the electoral process, as well as to bring the candidates to the people of the Merrimack Valley.”

Gregory will pose questions to the candidates. Students from UMass Lowell will also have a chance to ask questions. Students from other colleges and universities in Massachusetts will be invited to attend and participate, along with the public and other media organizations, including TV stations interested in airing the debate live. The public will also be able to take part in the debate via social media including Facebook and Twitter.

The debate will be presented through UMass Lowell’s Center for Public Opinion, which sponsors events and independent, nonpartisan public opinion polls on political and social issues. Through its work, the center provides UMass Lowell students and faculty with a variety of unique, real-world academic and research opportunities.

Last October, the center and the Boston Herald partnered to hold the first debate in the Senate campaign and featured Warren and five other Democrats seeking to run against Brown. At that time, UMass Lowell and the Boston Herald also sponsored the first poll measuring a potential Brown-Warren matchup and a subsequent poll in December.

Meehan moderated the October 2011 debate at UMass Lowell. A former member of Congress, Meehan said when he stepped down to become Chancellor of UMass Lowell that he would not endorse any candidate for public office and has not done so in the five years since.

Scott Brown, Elizabeth Warren to Square Off

UMass Lowell, Boston Herald to Host Senate Debate
Globetrotting Students Study Overseas

International Partnerships Expand Global Learning Options

More than three dozen UMass Lowell students kicked off their summer by traveling overseas in four different faculty-led study abroad programs.

One group of students collaborated with peers at Hong Kong City University on research projects and sampled local specialties like turtle jelly. In Beijing, others participated in business seminars, toured one of the world’s leading PC makers and visited the Great Wall of China. Another group studied Greek history in Athens, toured Greek ruins and debated theories about the Battle of Marathon at the site of the famed clash. And in Prague, another group studied immigration issues at Charles University and attended lectures with Czech faculty.

The faculty-led international programs are the result of the growing number of partnerships UMass Lowell has forged with universities around the world. The University has developed academic and research agreements with 80 universities in 25 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America and Australia.

“The rich array of international programs that combine rigorous academics with experiential learning and innovative research is preparing our students to become leaders in a global economy,” says Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

From left, Patrick Mulhern, Richard Poillucci and David Ferber of the UMass Lowell Skeleton Capstone Group helped the Israeli Bobsled and Skeleton Federation team design a better sled for Olympic competition.

Legal Studies Professor’s Art Featured at Olympics

Michael E. Jones’ Triathlon Poster on Display in London

Each member of the 2012 U.S. Olympic triathlon team owns a little bit of UMass Lowell—or, more specifically, a little bit of Michael E. Jones, a legal studies professor here. Jones, also an avid painter and triathlete, created the official triathlon poster for this year’s games—and the team’s competitors were among the first to receive a print.

The poster—made from a painting Jones created for the event—was sold at the U.S. Olympic Trials and national championship race and is now at the site of the British Olympic Committee and the British Triathlon Association.

“It’s a pretty cool honor,” says Jones, whose paintings were also turned into Olympic posters in 2004 and 2008.

The American Sports Art Museum in Alabama asked to display all three of Jones’ Olympic triathlon posters in recognition of the London games; they’ll be on display during the games.

Jones won’t be in London for this year’s events, but he did attend the USA Olympic Triathlon Trials and the USA Triathlon Hall of Fame awards event in San Diego in May.

Engineering Students Aid in Quest for Winter ’14 Olympic Gold

Israeli Skeleton Team Seeks UMass Lowell Engineering Expertise

In the high-speed winter sport of skeleton racing, a few hundredths-of-a-second can mean the difference between winning and losing a coveted gold medal.

Unlike luge, where one or two athletes slide down a frozen bobsled track face up and feet first, skeleton racing involves only one person balancing on a small, rectangular sled while lying face down and head first. The skeleton sled, made of a steel and fiberglass frame, has no brakes or steering mechanism—the racer controls the sled by shifting his head and shoulders. Racers can reach top speeds of up to 80 miles an hour with their chin and toes positioned just inches above the ice.

The Israeli Bobsled and Skeleton Federation team heard about UMass Lowell’s research capabilities and contacted Asst. Prof. David Willis to help it prepare for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Several students, advised by Willis and Asst. Prof. Stephen Johnston, took on the project for their senior capstone research. They worked closely with racer Brad Chalupski and sled designer Chad Omweg.

“UMass Lowell brings a level of resource to the Israeli skeleton program that was just a pipe dream two years ago,” says Omweg.

“Aerodynamics is a major factor in a gravity sport,” he says. “Unlike motor sports, a skeleton athlete can’t just step on the gas pedal to go faster, so any gain in aerodynamic efficiency is a bonus for the entire length of the race. In a sport that is measured to the hundredth of a second, every bit truly counts.”

Explains student Richard Poillucci: “We built a scaled-down wooden model of the sled that would fit inside the campus’s wind tunnel to test the sled and optimize its design to reduce drag. We also constructed a moving floor to make the boundary conditions more realistic and improve the accuracy of the test results.”

Omweg says that the students’ test results on the two sled designs he submitted will direct future sled development.
More Spectacular Changes on the Way

If you think UMass Lowell has changed in recent years, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet. Over the summer, more than 40 projects large and small will bring more stunning changes, including new buildings for learning and living, more and better dining options, increased parking spaces and updated research and lab spaces.

Driving the changes is a 37 percent increase in student enrollment over the past five years, as well as plans to bring the campus to new levels of excellence and accomplishment in teaching, research and partnerships.

New Buildings for Learning and Research

The two major new research and academic buildings—the Emerging Technologies and Innovation Center (ETIC) on North Campus and the Health and Social Sciences Building (HSSB) on South—are nearing completion. Plans are underway for an Oct. 11 grand opening for ETIC, an $80 million state-of-the-art facility that will be a hub of industry partnerships and new manufacturing technologies with nanotechnology, plastics engineering, biomedicine and electro-optics labs. The HSSB, a $40 million, 69,000-square-foot academic building—which will be home to criminal justice, nursing and psychology programs—is expected to open next spring.

University Crossing: New Campus Hub

The transformation of University Crossing, formerly St. Joseph’s Hospital, will begin this summer and include a complete interior renovation of the newer buildings at the rear of the site, the demolition of the older buildings at the front of the site and the construction of a new four-story campus center. Demolition will be completed by the fall and construction of the new building will be completed in 2014. Situated at the center of the UMass Lowell campus, University Crossing will serve as a hub of student activity with a large new bookstore, food court and event spaces.

New Places for Students to Live

Two new residential halls are also underway. University Suites, on East Campus, broke ground in April and is set to open in the fall of 2013, providing housing for 472 students in four- and six-bed suites. Riverview Suites, on South Campus, also broke ground in the spring. The all-suites facility, which will house 500 students, is also scheduled to open in the fall of 2013.

What’s for Dinner? Gets Better

Upgraded eating options include an entirely reimagined dining facility on the second floor of Fox Hall, to be ready in the fall. A new front entrance will open onto a large brick pizza oven and students will have their choice of seven cooking stations with different kinds of food. An after-hours room with fireplace, big-screen TV and comfortable seating will provide students a place in which to snack and socialize late into the night. Two corners are being fitted with large windows, bringing in bright light and striking views.

More Places to Park

The North Campus parking garage, which will add 550 parking spaces, will open this fall. A new garage on South Campus, located between Mahoney Hall and the Riverview Parking Lot, is also currently under construction. This will provide 600 new spaces when it is completed in the spring of 2013.

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Healthy Homes Project Improves Lives of Lowell Families

Emergency room visits for more than 170 local children with asthma decreased by 81 percent within one year thanks to a program that helps families in Lowell reduce environmental risks in their homes that trigger asthma attacks.

The UMass Lowell’s Healthy Homes Program team visited 160 Lowell homes with 237 asthmatic children. The project team assessed home risks, educated families and offered solutions. A year later, the researchers surveyed the parents of 172 of the children.

The results of the project, funded with a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, show a dramatic improvement in the health and well-being of asthmatic children in Lowell. Asthma attacks decreased by 76 percent, hospital emergency room visits decreased by 81 percent and the physical and emotional health of the children improved substantially.

“This is an amazing success story,” says David Turcotte, research professor of economics and senior program manager of UMass Lowell’s Center for Family, Work and Community. “It illustrates the power of prevention on health and well-being. By educating families on the triggers of asthma, providing an intervention plan and purchasing products families can’t afford or have difficulty accessing, we’re helping children breathe easier.”

Environmental health workers assessed risks such as mold and pests, and tested dust samples in a lab to identify the presence of dust mites, cockroaches and mice, which can trigger attacks. Significant scientific evidence suggests that dust mites cannot only cause asthma attacks, but can also lead to the development of asthma. The research team developed an intervention plan that addressed risks in the home and provided products to the families, such as HEPA-filter vacuum cleaners, pillow covers and pest control items.

The research team gathered health outcomes a year after the intervention for the previous four-week timeframe, the same period used in the initial evaluation. Children showed a dramatic decrease in episodes of wheezing, asthma attacks, hospitalization and emergency and doctor visits. This translates into an estimated four-week health care cost savings of $71,164.

Other positive results included a reduction in the use of asthma medication. Physical health scores within one year increased by 35 percent and the emotional health of the children increased by 29 percent, according to the researchers’ findings.

Ways to Lower Asthma Risks

- Allergy-proof bed and pillow covers
- Exhaust vent repair or replacement
- HEPA vacuum cleaner
- Pest control items (storage containers, baits, sticky traps)
- Seal entry points around pipes
- Carpet and mold removal

Training for Property Managers and Health Workers Sustains Program

To sustain the program, the project team also conducted training on healthy home practices with maintenance and facility managers of apartment buildings, housing inspectors, day care providers, first-time homebuyers and health professionals. The partners—Coalition for a Better Acorn, Community Teamwork Inc., Lowell Community Health Center, Lowell Housing Authority and the Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership—covered integrated pest management practices, “green” cleaning and use of healthy products such as low-VOC paints and adhesives.

David Turcotte, senior program manager of UMass Lowell’s Center for Family, Work and Community.

Healthy Homes Program’s asthma interventions dramatically improved the health and wellness of children in Lowell.