Oprah Winfrey Brings in $3 Million for Scholarships

Inspired by Students, Winfrey Gives $1.5 Million Matching Donation

Oprah Winfrey took command of her audience as soon as she walked into a master class for 200 students, all wearing blue T-shirts commemorating her visit to campus.

The room erupted in laughter as she pointed at one student after another and said, “You get a shirt! You get a shirt! Everybody gets a shirt!” in a nod to her famous giveaways on “The Oprah Winfrey Show.”

She held their attention for the next hour, answering students’ questions and discussing her path to success.

Hours later, her visit to campus ended with tears of joy and gratitude when, after a conversation with Chancellor Jacquie Moloney at the Tsongas Center, Winfrey made a surprise announcement that she would donate $1.5 million toward student scholarships to match more than $1.5 million raised through ticket sales and sponsorships for the event.

Gratitude, compassion, intention and education were Winfrey’s themes throughout her visit, first talking to students in the class, which was moderated by English Prof. Andre Dubus III, and then in conversation with Moloney at the Tsongas Center before a crowd estimated at more than 6,000 people.

Winfrey made it clear how much she values the power of education to transform people’s lives.

“You can change a life by changing the way someone thinks about their life. And the way to do that is through education,” she said.

At the conclusion of the sold-out Tsongas Center event, Winfrey was presented an honorary doctor of humane letters degree by UMass President Marty Meehan, UMass Board of Trustees Chairman Rob Manning and Chairman of the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs Trustee Imari Paris Jeffries. The first six Oprah Winfrey Scholars were also introduced.

Winfrey said her matching gift was inspired by the scholarship recipients, all of whom are paying their own way through school. They had each written her thank-you letters.

“It is an honor to meet each of you,” Winfrey told the students. “I have read each of your letters. I was so moved by each of your stories that coming here and speaking and sharing this beautiful evening with you all, I want to do even more. I would like to match the $1.5 million dollars so students like yourselves can continue in the path of the greatest, purest, truest expression of themselves.”

Winfrey’s visit was the third installment of the Chancellor’s Speaker Series, which was launched in 2012 to raise money for student scholarships. Previous guests were author Stephen King and actress Meryl Streep. Co-sponsored by the university’s College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Conversation with Oprah Winfrey was presented by Liberty Mutual Insurance, Suffolk Construction and the Marty Meehan Educational Foundation and supported by dozens of other sponsors.
A $7.9 million NIH grant will support an initiative to spur the development of innovative medical technologies.

New Center Will Help Medical-Device Entrepreneurs

Innovation Initiative Aims to Transform Patient Care

The Massachusetts Medical Device Development Center (M2D2) is launching an initiative to help inventors who are developing technologies that could improve care for millions of people suffering from serious illnesses.

Supported by a $7.9 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), M2D2 will establish a new center to assist inventors pioneering promising new devices and technologies for patients with heart, lung, blood and sleep disorders. The goal is to foster the development of breakthrough technologies that help patients better manage their health, reduce in-patient hospital stays and improve their quality of life.

A joint partnership between UMass Lowell and UMass Medical School in Worcester, M2D2 is a business incubator that helps medical-device and biotech startups bridge the gap between idea and market.

The NIH-funded initiative, called the Center for Advancing Point-of-Care Technologies (CAPCaT), will bring together entrepreneurs, scientists, business developers, legal experts and other resources available at UMass Lowell and UMass Medical School in collaboration with industry partners. The center is one of four being launched with support from the NIH to help revolutionize patient care and will provide entrepreneurs with seed funding.

Examples of the innovations to be developed at the center include portable devices and sensors that measure the amount of medication in a patient's blood, products that use smart devices to record heart or respiratory rates and technologies that alert patients to health changes such as worsening asthma.

Project Is Supported by $1.2 Million NASA Grant

Researchers from UMass Lowell and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., are teaming up on a project that could improve the technology used in GPS systems and lead to better monitoring of global climate changes and enhanced weather forecasting.

The team has won a two-year, $1.2 million grant from NASA's Earth Science Division to develop an instrument—called the Geodetic Reference Instrument Transponder for Small Satellites, or GRITSS—that would significantly improve the accuracy of the International Terrestrial Reference Frame (ITRF), which is the basis of GPS positioning and navigation. UML is the lead institution for the project.

The ITRF is a virtual map of the Earth that pinpoints not only specific geographic positions but also describes Earth's precise shape, physical topography, orientation and rotation with time, based on a stationary, Earth-centered coordinate system.

The ITRF is the foundation for virtually all airborne, space-based and ground-based Earth observations, says Christopher Beaudoin, a senior radar engineer at the university's Submillimeter-Wave Technology Laboratory who is leading the project for UML. Aside from GPS, the ITRF is also used in studying and monitoring global changes in the Earth's oceans, ice sheets, tectonic plates and atmosphere.

An improved ITRF will help scientists to more precisely measure the effects of human activity, climate change and rising sea levels. It will also lead to enhanced weather forecasting and better prevention and mitigation of the impacts of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Students in the Student Managed Fund course present an investment analysis during a recent class in the Pulichino Tong Business Center's trading room.

Senior Radar Engineer Christopher Beaudoin of UML's Submillimeter-Wave Technology Laboratory is leading a project to improve the technology behind GPS.

Project Managed Fund Bests Other Campuses

For the sixth time in 10 years, UMass Lowell's Student Managed Fund team won the annual investing competition among the UMass campuses.

Consisting of 30 finance students enrolled in Asst. Teaching Prof. Chan-Wung Kim's Student Managed Fund course last fall, the team received a certificate—and a $5,000 top prize to invest back into the funds—during a recent luncheon at the UMass Club in Boston.

Launched by the UMass Foundation in 2008, the competition gives teams from the Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth and Lowell campuses an opportunity to research and select stocks for investment during the academic year, using real money from the existing funds. The investment returns at the end of the year are benchmarked against the return on the S&P 500 index during the same period.

The stocks picked last fall by the Manning School team for the fiscal year ending June 30 gained an impressive 21.19 percent. That was 6.82 percent higher than the S&P 500 benchmark performance of 14.37 percent. Since starting with $25,000 in seed money from the UMass Foundation a decade ago, UML's fund has grown by 460 percent to almost $140,000.

At the end of the course, students write a detailed analysis report on their investments. The course also includes visits to companies and stock exchanges. Twice, students have traveled to Omaha, Neb., to meet billionaire investor Warren Buffett, most recently last winter.

With $25,000 from the UMass Foundation, the Manning School will launch a Graduate Student Managed Fund course in the spring.

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Business Student Eyes Big Break on ‘American Idol’

Aspiring Singer Advances to National Stage

The next “American Idol” may be on UMass Lowell’s campus.

Aspiring singer and musician Nicole Hayek, a senior in the Manning School of Business, recently auditioned for the reality show’s executive producers in Louisville, Ky.

Hayek, from Salem, N.H., advanced to the national round of auditions after winning the “New Hampshire Idol” competition in mid-October.

“It’s so exciting. It’s all really surreal,” says Hayek, who is not allowed to reveal how she did in the executive producer round on Day 1 in Kentucky. She was hoping to advance to the following day’s auditions.

Hayek had auditioned for “American Idol” twice before, but this is the farthest she’s advanced. Hosted by Ryan Seacrest, the long-running singing competition show moved from the Fox network to ABC last year. A premiere date has yet to be set for the 2018-19 season.

Students are usually grouped in trios, with two international students and one domestic student. Participants are required to meet monthly and to attend at least one on-campus event together each semester, such as a sporting event or art exhibit.

Interest from both international and domestic students in the program has been strong, with participation capped at 200 students this year. The program attracted 370 applicants for 2018-19, including 211 from American students, which was more than double the previous year.

Now in its fourth year, the Pair-Up Program fosters multicultural friendships by matching international and domestic students through mutual interests and majors. International students are able to connect with someone who can help them overcome language barriers and learn about their new campus and city, while domestic students increase their cultural understanding by getting to know people from different backgrounds.

Born from the DifferenceMaker Idea Challenge in 2014, the Pair-Up Program is now managed by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). Students are usually grouped in trios, with two international students and one domestic student. Participants are required to meet monthly and to attend at least one on-campus event together each semester, such as a sporting event or art exhibit.

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University Salutes Its Veterans and Alumni Who Served

Four Inducted into Vets Hall of Fame

UMass Lowell inducted four veterans into its Military Alumni Veterans Hall of Fame in recognition of their service.

Held at University Crossing, the ceremony featured the unfurling of an American flag and a presentation of the colors by UMass Lowell Air Force ROTC Detachment No. 345.

The four Hall of Fame inductees include Marty Martinez ’96, a U.S. Coast Guard veteran who studied criminal justice and is now a special agent with the Coast Guard Investigative Service; Michael Hubbard ’15, a retired U.S. Army staff sergeant and Green Beret; Henry De Lima ’15, also a retired Army sergeant; and Sgt. Maj. Josue Rojas, Massachusetts Army National Guard, retired, but was inducted for his “outstanding support” of UML students in his current role as educational services specialist for the Massachusetts National Guard.

Hubbard, who served as a former aide to U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, now works for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, helping to build the country’s infrastructure.

De Lima is a social worker in Lawrence, helping children and families recover from the chaos and disarray following the city’s recent gas explosions.

Against a backdrop of a 36-foot-by-20-foot American flag, participants in the ceremony praised the work of the university’s Office of Veterans Services, which serves more than 1,200 student veterans, aiding them in everything from adjustment to civilian life to landing jobs after graduation.

Chancellor Jacquie Moloney said student veterans enrich the university, bringing “unwavering determination, global insight and real-world problem-solving to our classrooms and campus.”

UMass Lowell’s student-veteran population is the largest of any university in the state. For the sixth consecutive year, the Military Times newspaper named UML a “Best for Vets” school.

Martinez, who enlisted in the Coast Guard after high school, found his lack of a college degree was a roadblock to several promotions. In 1992, after transferring to the Coast Guard’s Boston office, he moved with his wife and two daughters to Bedford and enrolled at the university. He retired from active duty in 1999.