The Jewel of the Merrimack Shines Again Thanks to State Support

UMass Lowell recently unveiled the results of two years of extensive renovations to the boathouse along the Merrimack River that is home to University, local and community rowing programs.

With $1 million in state funding that the University received in 2007 through the work of the Lowell legislative delegation, extensive remodeling and repairs were done on the interior and exterior of the 27-year-old boathouse. The building houses offices, locker rooms, storage bays for boats and equipment, and meeting and classrooms. Improvements included replacing the roof, windows, gutters, trim, siding and decks, as well as upgrades to boat docks, mechanical systems, fencing and signs.

“This first-rate facility is now truly the jewel of the Merrimack River and something that the entire community can enjoy,” says Chancellor Marty Meehan.

The facility has been renamed the UMass Lowell Bellegarde Boathouse in honor of both the landmark’s history and the University’s commitment to its restoration. The boathouse was constructed in 1982 and named for Edmund Bellegarde, a Lowell resident and avid boater whose family still has strong roots in the community.

At an open house, Sen. Steven Panagiotakos said the University’s stewardship was necessary to ensure upgrades to the facility. Panagiotakos, with Rep. Thomas Golden and the rest of the city’s State House delegation, sponsored legislation giving UMass Lowell care and control of the facility, as well as the $1 million for repairs.
UMass Lowell Chosen to Help Teach the Teachers
Governor Patrick Names University Partner in Readiness Center

The Lowell Normal School first opened its doors to teachers-in-training in 1894. Some 115 years later, the Normal School’s descendent—UMass Lowell—is still a leader in teacher education and support for the state’s public schools.

Most recently, the University’s Graduate School of Education was named by Gov. Deval Patrick as a partner in one of six new regional teacher Readiness Centers.

The centers will address key priorities of improving teacher quality and bridging the achievement gap across the Commonwealth. UMass Lowell is one of eight campuses north of Boston that form the Northeast Regional Readiness Center.

UMass Lowell’s Education faculty will share their expertise in the literacy and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields, says Professor and Interim Dean Anita Greenwood.

“The Readiness Center initiative represents a way in which higher education institutions can collaborate to serve the teachers of the region with education programs that draw on each partner’s strengths,” explains Greenwood.

The state’s Executive Office of Education will work with the regional partners to implement each center’s plans over the next year.

UMass Lowell has been chosen to partner in one of the state’s new teacher Readiness Centers to help improve teacher quality and bridge the achievement gap across the Commonwealth.

UMass Lowell Rocks Handel’s ‘Messiah’
University Choir’s Performance in ‘Messiah Rocks’ released on CD/DVD

George Frideric Handel might not have been known as a rock star, but members of the UMass Lowell Choir did their best recently to crank up the most famous of Handel’s works— “The Messiah”—as part of a national PBS tour dubbed “Handel’s Messiah Rocks.”

“This is a Broadway-style show featuring Tony Award-winning headliners, the Boston Pops Orchestra with Keith Lockhart, our University Choir and a rock band,” says Visiting Prof. Murray Kidd, who prepared the choir for the recording session in 2008.

Kidd says the recording process was very professional, adding, “It gave our singers a taste of the best of Broadway—except our performers were accompanied by none other than the Boston Pops Orchestra in the pit.”

“We’re pleased to announce that the terrific performance by our choir has been released as a CD/DVD - the show has already aired in many PBS markets, and will air this Christmas season in the Boston area,” says Kidd.

Kidd has performed “The Messiah” more than 100 times throughout the United States and Europe with some of the world’s foremost Handel experts, including Christopher Hogwood and William Christie.

Student-Designed Race Car Ready to Rumble

Student Ryan McIntosh test drives River Hawk Racing’s Formula SAE (FSAE) 2010 car, which was exhibited at the New England International Auto Show in Boston in early December. FSAE is an auto design competition for universities. UMass Lowell’s 2008 entry car competed at the Virginia International Raceway, placing 21st out of 44 teams. “River Hawk Racing’s 2010 formula-style car is on its way to becoming the most competitive vehicle yet in the team’s young but successful history,” says McIntosh. “We are looking to involve the community, inspire school spirit and win in 2010.” River Hawk Racing is a student club at UMass Lowell.

Baseball Bat Authority

The UMass Lowell Baseball Research Center is the official certification center for bats used by Major League Baseball and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.
Chelmsford Solar Power Fires Up Big Savings, Smaller Carbon Footprint

UMass Lowell Student Helps Water District Acquire $3.8 Million in Federal Funding for the Project

Thanks to a new photovoltaic system to be installed next summer, the Chelmsford Water District will harness enough solar energy to power its entire Crooked Spring Water Treatment Plant during peak operating hours. The project also will help reduce the district’s carbon footprint by 132 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually, which is equivalent to saving about 111 acres of forest each year.

Patrick Retelle, a graduate student in UMass Lowell’s solar engineering program, helped the district with its proposal to the state's Department of Environmental Protection for funding. The proposal was so well received that the agency appropriated nearly $3.8 million of federal stimulus money to finance the project, which will create one of the largest municipal solar projects on the East Coast.

Working with Todd Melanson, the water district’s environmental compliance manager, Retelle came up with a “shovel-ready” plan of using 2,300 photovoltaic panels that are estimated to generate about 588,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.

“First, I made sure that very efficient pumps and equipment were being used at the treatment plant. Then, I determined the plant’s overall square footage of usable space, the site’s orientation to true south and potential shading issues and the number of panels that could physically fit at varying tilt angles,” he says. “Afterward, I estimated the power outputs for various PV module types as well as the number of additional components needed such as DC to AC inverters and combiners. Finally, I calculated the project’s payback, which I estimated to be at least 12 years.”

Survey: UMass Lowell Is Top New England Public University in Graduates’ Salaries

PayScale.com Ranks Average Pay for Those With Bachelor’s Degrees

When it comes to translating a bachelor’s degree from a public university into a salary, UMass Lowell delivers the top mid-career pay in New England, according to a PayScale.com survey.

PayScale.com ranked institutions in order of graduates with the highest mid-career salaries. The goal of the study, which surveyed graduates who earned bachelor’s degrees from colleges and universities across the country, was to determine “which undergraduate educations are the best investment,” according to a New York Times online report.

UMass Lowell was the top-ranked public institution in New England and placed in the top 20 percent of public and private schools nationally, coming in at No. 124 of more than 600 institutions included in the survey.

UMass Lowell graduates with a bachelor’s degree earn an average mid-career salary of $90,000, according to PayScale.com. Other institutions with mid-career salaries in the same range include Boston University, Baylor, Purdue, Pepperdine and Kenyon, the survey found.

Field Hockey Team Scores High

Junior Sammy Macy cheers after scoring the game-winning goal against Stonehill College in the National Field Hockey Championship semifinal last month. The River Hawks lost to the Bloomsburg Huskies two days later, but finished the season with a winning 18-6 record. The Lowell team has made it to the National Championships for five years in a row. “Our success has put UMass Lowell high on the priority lists of many talented field hockey players in the New England area—along with some interest from players in California and Kentucky,” says Coach Shannon Hiebichuk. “Field hockey players who are looking for a first-rate and affordable education, along with a competitive Division II field hockey program, know that UMass Lowell offers that opportunity.”
Look Out Merrimack: There’s Another River in Town

Concord River Greenway Project Gets a Boost from UMass Lowell Partnerships

The Merrimack River gets most of the good press when the story of Lowell is told. It was the Pawtucket Falls on the Merrimack that brought the investors from Boston to build water-powered mills, after all, and the famous “mile of mills” was along the Merrimack.

In some ways, the Concord River has been a second-class citizen in Lowell, but the Concord River Greenway Park project aims to change that.

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust has partnered with the City of Lowell to create the Greenway and is working to broaden community outreach. The Greenway features a walking trail, public art, multi-lingual signage, benches and opportunities to appreciate the natural, historical, cultural and recreational richness of the Concord River area.

When completed, the Greenway will extend from the Lawrence Street entrance of the Lowell Cemetery downtown Lowell and connect to the Merrimack River Walkway already developed by the Lowell National Historical Park. Eventually, it will connect with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail at Crosspoint at the Chelmsford border.

Construction is completed on an accessible greenway on the Lawrence and Davidson Street ends of the project, opposite Middlesex Community College. Two in a series of educational signs describing the history of the river have been placed near the Middlesex Falls.

Recent collaborations among the Conservation Trust, UMass Lowell, the Tsongas Industrial History Center, and the Lowell National Historical Park will enrich the offerings for visitors even more.

A Lowell National Historical Park ranger shares the environmental and historical richness of the Concord River along the new Greenway with a group of school children.

A stroller enjoys the newly finished portion of the Concord River Greenway along the Davidson Parking Lot in Lowell this past summer.

Last month, UMass Lowell Assoc. Prof. Chad Montrie and Sheila Kirschbaum of the Tsongas Center received a grant for $159,999 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to bring teachers through a variety of site-based explorations of the history of the Industrial Revolution next summer. Educators will tour the Lawrence Street end of the Greenway, learn about the area’s history and review writings from mill girls. Then, they will travel to Concord, see a different section of the river, visit the Concord Bridge and study Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond.

In addition, Montrie and Kirschbaum have worked with Tsongas Industrial History Center and Park staff to create an educational module, called “Classroom by the Concord,” launched with great success this fall. Additionally, an editing crew is finishing work on a documentary film, “River Cycle: The Concord River in Lowell,” due for release in February.

“For the last few years we’ve been deeply engaged in creating resources that bring the Concord and it’s history to students, educators, residents and Lowell visitors, and now that’s really bearing fruit,” Montrie said.

Earlier funding for the Concord Greenway Project was provided through a Creative Economy grant from the UMass President’s office.

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