Meehan Recognized by CASE for Outstanding Contributions

Chancellor Marty Meehan has been recognized for steering UMass Lowell to higher levels of achievement, financial strength and visibility.

Meehan was honored by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) at the annual District I program in New York City on Jan. 23 when he was given the Chief Executive Leadership Award.

The award honors institutional leaders for outstanding contributions to their campus communities, for promoting public understanding of education and for support of advancement at their campuses. Winners have demonstrated the ability to increase their institution’s stature in the community and to establish a positive image for their institution while leading it to even higher levels of success.

“I am honored to receive the Chief Executive Leadership Award from CASE,” Meehan said. “I am also honored to be able to work with such a talented, focused team of professionals on campus. Without them, these accomplishments would not be possible.”

Added Meehan, “In today’s economy, philanthropic support is particularly critical. We have increased efforts to raise private funds to ensure that students continue to receive the best education possible. In the last five years, we have seen an 84 percent increase in overall fundraising, including several multimillion-dollar gifts, which has allowed us to increase scholarships, construct new buildings on campus and advance educational and research programs that benefit the entire region.”

Since assuming the chancellorship in 2007, Meehan has propelled UMass Lowell forward by every important measure of higher education. The institution has achieved record growth in enrollment, student retention, research and scholarship funding. The campus also has undergone a stunning physical transformation with new buildings, upgraded academic and research facilities, and enhanced student residence and activity spaces.

Understanding that philanthropic support is vital to sustain the progress that has been made, the chancellor has overseen the largest fundraising years in the history of the institution resulting in nearly $61 million in pledges and gifts.

While strongly focusing on academics and student success, Chancellor Meehan has made access, affordability and diversity a keystone of his vision to raise UMass Lowell’s image and impact on the region.

Meehan represented the 5th Congressional District of Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1993 to 2007. Previously, he served as Massachusetts deputy secretary of state for securities and corporations, and he was the first assistant district attorney of Middlesex County.

Meehan graduated cum laude from UMass Lowell in 1978 with a degree in education and political science. He earned a master’s degree in public administration from Suffolk University in 1981 and a juris doctor from Suffolk University Law School in 1986. He holds honorary degrees from Suffolk University, Green Mountain College in Vermont and Shenkar College of Engineering & Design in Israel.
Medical Lab Science Grads Receive Multiple Job Offers

Skills in High Demand Despite Down Economy

All graduates from the Medical Laboratory Science and Clinical Sciences programs have been successfully employed after graduation, in spite of the economy.

Why? Their skills are essential in the medical profession.

“Seventy percent of a physician’s decisions about patient diagnosis, prognosis and treatment are based on accurate and precise medical laboratory tests,” says Prof. Kay Doyle, director of the medical laboratory science program in the Clinical Laboratory and Nutritional Sciences. “This critical function will continue to grow as the baby boomer generation retires.”

The demand is so great that students are receiving multiple job offers during their laboratory internships. Before Aaron Stella graduated, he was offered positions at Lahey Clinic, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, Anna Jaques Hospital and Cambridge Hospital. He accepted a position at Mayo Medical Laboratories New England in Andover.

Graduates work in hospitals but also in management, reference laboratories, biotechnology, research laboratories and sales and marketing of medical devices. The UMass Lowell program teaches students about instrumentation and laboratory techniques as well as how to apply a high level of interpretation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

“The education I received at UMass Lowell is priceless. There are so many options that medical laboratory scientists can choose from after graduation,” says Stella.

Students Take Experience to Heart

Service-Learning Projects Bring Community to Classroom

As the son of struggling parents who faced unemployment and disability, Brandon Gardner knows what it’s like to need help. Now, thanks to a class offered by English Prof. Diana Archibald, he knows how it feels to be on the other side of things. And it feels good.

“I worked with the Career Center of Lowell as part of my experiential learning class,” says Gardner, who produced a technical brochure to help job seekers. “The work I did in this class was important—and meaningful—because I knew people were counting on me.”

A recent student showcase revealed an array of direct and meaningful assistance and introduced a new crop of talented and community-minded citizens.

“Students have the wonderful opportunity to use hard-won knowledge from their classwork and apply it to help meet the needs of community non-profit groups,” says Archibald. “The class promotes good citizenship and testing of personal values, leading students to a heightened sense of social responsibility.”

Other students showcased included:

• Amy Sifferlen, who joined the organizing committee for Dickens in Lowell, which will host more than 60 events in honor of the Charles Dickens bicentenary.
• Raymond Soto, who helped the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Lowell with its annual report—writing profiles of members, staff and alumni.
• Ianna Hondros-McCarthy, who wrote a new brochure and grant proposal for the Merrimack Valley Food Bank.
• Krystal Quezada, who helped Budget Buddies, a non-profit dedicated to “helping women help themselves through improved budget management.”
• Devan Hawkins, who devoted his energy to New Entry, a Lowell-based sustainable farming organization that needed help writing and publicizing farmers’ experiences.
• Nicholas Bernardo, who parlayed an internship with the Merrimack Repertory Theatre into a position with Washington, D.C.-based studio Red Eye Productions.
• Sara Afshar, who pursued her interest in adoption law with Child and Family Services in Lawrence. After the semester, she accepted a job offer from the organization.

Program Set to Launch in April

Manning School to Offer MBA in Japan

Working with Abitus, an executive education firm based in Tokyo, the Manning School of Business will begin offering the program in Japan in April. About 25 students, most of them mid-career managers and executives, are expected to enroll.

The program consists of two components: foundation classes, which will be conducted in Japanese by Abitus staff using UMass Lowell’s curriculum, and advanced classes, which will be offered online in English by Manning School faculty. Students will watch classes videotaped on UMass Lowell’s campus to hear the material in English. The program’s advanced classes will blend Japanese students with online MBA students based in the United States and elsewhere.

The MBA program adds to the University’s growing list of international offerings, which include academic partnerships with more than 60 universities in 25 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America and Australia.
Business Professors Help Secure Medical Records

$700,000 From NIH Supports Research Into Data-Masking Technology

Two Manning School of Business professors are developing technology to improve patient confidentiality while making high-quality data available to health-care researchers.

Prof. Xiaobai Li is leading a team that received a $700,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to develop data-masking technology that preserves patient privacy while providing researchers access to useful health-care data.

The availability of quality information contained in medical records has broad implications for policy, treatments and health-care finance, says Prof. Luvai Motiwalla, who, along with two researchers from UMass Medical School, is also working on the project. The data can be used by physicians who are searching for new treatments as well as health-care economists who are seeking to control the costs of care.

In a first phase of the project, the professors are collecting and testing data that is currently available under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which sets the rules about patient information confidentiality. A significant weakness in the system’s privacy mechanism has already been uncovered, Li says.

The data-masking techniques developed under the grant will complement existing encryption technologies that are used to shield patient identities in medical records. The researchers are taking what they describe as a “divide-and-counter” approach that consists of two main components: partitioning the data into subsets to preserve the statistical properties and masking the data to protect personal information from being disclosed.

Myanmar Takes New Direction

Professor Sees Changes Firsthand

In her recent year as a Fulbright Scholar in Myanmar—also known as Burma—Ardeth Thawngmung has witnessed the first steps toward a free civil society after decades of repressive rule by military regime.

“The international community was skeptical about the November 2010 national elections and considered them rigged,” says Thawngmung, an associate professor of political science at UMass Lowell. At the first elections held in 20 years, only government-approved parties could vote, while the new constitution already guaranteed that the government party would win the majority of votes.

“Nothing will change; that was the opinion of observers,” she adds.

But dozens of parties did participate, representing a spectrum of groups and political positions. More surprisingly, the outgoing leader of the regime, Than Shwe, withdrew from public life. The new president, U Thein Sein, has proved to be relatively progressive.

For the first time, the government formed a presidential advisory committee to seek advice from technocrats, academics and policymakers. The regime signed ceasefire agreements with armed resistance and opposition groups. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has been released from house arrest and is a candidate for an April by-election.

“For the first time I was able to give a public lecture on democracy and civil society, with reference to the current situation,” says Thawngmung, who is a native of Burma. “In my whole life, I have never seen this level of political freedom.”


Engineering Prof Named State Department Fellow

Gilbert Brown to Assist in Nuclear Education, Training

Nuclear engineering Prof. Gilbert Brown was recently appointed a William C. Foster Fellow by the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. The program gives academic faculty in the physical sciences and other disciplines a yearlong opportunity to use their research and expertise in support of nuclear arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament policies and activities of the State Department. Brown will be involved with the Office of Nuclear Energy, Safety and Security in the State Department’s International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau.

“I look forward to working with the State Department, helping the agency implement and support the diplomatic efforts of the United States toward peaceful nuclear cooperation throughout the world, particularly in the areas of nuclear education and training,” Brown says. “I also aim to gain real-world, international experience to bring back to UMass Lowell and my students.”

He will work with university faculties to build international academic relationships in nuclear engineering, safety, security, regulations, training and nuclear infrastructure requirements; work to strengthen domestic, bilateral and multilateral relationships related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the nuclear fuel cycle; and participate in technical analyses of advanced fuel-cycle issues, international negotiations and the nexus of peaceful nuclear cooperation and nonproliferation.
Ask the Sleep Doctor

Lack of Zzz's Linked to Chronic Diseases

Sleep deprivation does more than make people groggy. It increases the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, inflammatory diseases, mood disorders and cancer, says Prof. Geoffrey Phillips McEnany of Nursing. The worse part, he adds, is that doctors, nurse practitioners and patients are not discussing sleep issues as a possible underlying problem to medical conditions.

Phillips McEnany, co-author of “Sleep Disorders and Sleep Promotion in Nursing Practice,” recently answered questions about the link between sleep and disease:

Why is getting a good night’s sleep important to good health?

Inadequate sleep increases the risk for the onset of a number of serious illnesses. There's a direct link between inadequate sleep and obesity. In turn, obesity can lead to diabetes and hypertension. Unfortunately, what typically happens during a doctor’s appointment is that the symptoms of high blood pressure and diabetes are discussed and drugs are dispensed. The problem is that we are often not addressing the root of the problem—the condition is treated but the sleep disorder related to it is not.

Should we bring up sleep problems with our doctors?

I recommend that people raise the issue of sleep with their primary care provider. If a sleep medication is offered for a sleep complaint, then ask for a broader sleep assessment. The important question is “What's the cause of my sleep problem?” If obesity is a clinical issue, then discuss snoring and daytime sleepiness, which are the best indicators of poor or inadequate sleep.

You developed a new sleep certificate program for health professionals. Why?

Surveys of medical and nursing schools reveal that on average, nurses and physicians receive only three hours of training on sleep in their entire educations. The result is that sleep-related causes of disease are being missed. Diabetes is reaching epidemic proportions in the United States today but clinicians may not be aware of the direct relationship between sleep disorders and diabetes. How many times will a clinician prescribe an antihypertensive medication for someone with high blood pressure without asking about something as simple as snoring, a cardinal sign of sleep apnea? My goal is to help health-care providers better understand, diagnose and treat sleep-related health problems and related diseases.

Tips for getting a good night sleep

- Provide adequate time for sleep. If you need eight hours, sleeping six hours will not suffice.
- Avoid alcohol. It causes a lot of brief awakenings, impairing daytime alertness.
- Minimize caffeine. Remember that caffeine takes hours to clear the body.
- Have a regular bedtime and a regular wake time.
- Provide some down time before bed.
- Do not read, use laptops, watch TV or eat in the bedroom; all interfere with sleep quality.
- Avoid exercise within three hours of bedtime as it causes disturbances in sleep quality. Instead, exercise in the morning, which improves sleep quality.