University Acquires Former St. Joseph’s Hospital

The former St. Joseph’s Hospital, largely vacant since 1992, will soon be buzzing with students, faculty and community members.

University Crossing, as the facility is now called, will provide much needed space for the growing University, which has seen a 30 percent increase in undergraduates in the past three years. The facility will also offer an important connection between the University’s three campuses and the downtown business and cultural district, all located within walking distance.

Comprising six buildings and nearly 300,000 square feet of space (not to mention 300 parking spaces), University Crossing will increase UMass Lowell’s total square footage by 10 percent to top 3 million. Possibilities for the new property are great. Space for student services and activities, community programs, a centralized and expanded bookstore, student dining options such as a food court, and student housing are just a few of the options being considered as part of a multimillion-dollar renovation. Plans are already in place to relocate University Police and some administrative functions to the site as soon as possible.

“Acquiring the former St. Joseph’s Hospital building will allow the University to link its North, South and East campuses at a central point. Through this purchase, UMass Lowell is again making a significant investment to revitalize a Lowell landmark that has been underutilized for too long,” says UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan.

“We look forward to working with the city and neighborhood groups on plans to reinvigorate this vital area of Lowell.”

UMass Lowell has demonstrated a strong track record of making excellent improvements to important buildings in the community, most recently through acquisitions of the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center and the Tsongas Center at UMass Lowell, as well as with the renovation of the UMass Lowell Bellegarde Boat-house. Each project has proven to be positive for the local economy, community and the University.

The creation of University Crossing is expected to spur greater foot traffic and activity in the surrounding neighborhood and downtown, stimulating redevelopment. The site is located near what will be the south landing of the new bridge that will be constructed to cross the Merrimack River at University Avenue, creating a new and inviting gateway into the Merrimack Street corridor. The University’s new Emerging Technologies and Innovation Center, which is under construction, will be located on the opposite side of the new bridge on UMass Lowell’s North Campus.

This artist’s sketch gives an idea of how the former St. Joseph’s Hospital will come to life with people and activity in its new life as University Crossing.

The new University Crossing banner is the first sign in the changes to take place at the former St. Joseph’s Hospital, recently acquired by UMass Lowell.
Preventing Foodborne Illnesses

New Sensor Will Detect Salmonella, E. coli

A mechanical engineering professor is developing a new tool that will help ensure that what you eat or drink doesn't make you sick.

“My students and I are designing a simple sensor for rapidly detecting major disease-causing microorganisms in food, especially in raw chicken, eggs, ground beef and dairy products,” says Hongwei Sun, an expert in micro electro-mechanical systems.

The National Science Foundation recognized the importance of his work and awarded him with a three-year, $100,000 grant.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year, roughly one in six Americans—or about 48 million people—gets sick from bacteria, viruses and microbes. Of these, about 128,000 are hospitalized and about 3,000 die from complications.

These foodborne pathogens include norovirus, salmonella, clostridium, campylobacter, staphylococcus aureus, toxoplasma, listeria and E. coli O157:H7. The health costs associated with the resulting illnesses run in the billions of dollars.

“We will combine magnetic immunoassays with micro Coulter counting techniques to achieve simultaneous detection of multiple pathogenic bacteria in foods with high specificity and sensitivity,” says Sun. “Our method, once optimized, can potentially be applied to detecting a wide range of other targets, such as viruses, toxins and disease-related biomarkers.”

In addition to improved food and water safety and enhanced public health and homeland security, Sun says the project offers a multi-disciplinary training ground for undergraduate and graduate students involved in the research.

NRG Funds $400,000 in Fellowships

Health Physics, Nuclear Engineering Grad Students Eligible

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently awarded UMass Lowell $400,000 to help fund graduate fellowships in health physics and nuclear engineering for the next four years.

“The fellowships will be split between master’s degree students in radiological sciences and nuclear engineering,” says physics Prof. Clayton French, coordinator of the University’s radiological sciences program. “Each award is worth $25,000.”

Says Prof. Gilbert Brown, UMass Lowell’s nuclear engineering program coordinator: “We will use the program to attract highly qualified and motivated graduate students specifically for careers within the resurgent nuclear industry, especially in supporting the design, construction, operation and regulation of nuclear facilities and the safe handling of nuclear materials.”

UMass Lowell’s Radiation Laboratory is uniquely suited to providing interdisciplinary academic training and industry partnerships. Its facilities include a 1-megawatt research reactor (one of only 26 in the country), a 5-million-electron-volt Van de Graaff particle accelerator and a cobalt-60 gamma-ray source, as well as radiochemistry laboratories and complete health physics analytical and assaying facilities.

According to Brown, since the University first introduced the health physics and nuclear engineering programs in the 1960s, more than 700 bachelor’s, 400 master’s and 50 Ph.D. degrees have been awarded.

Calendar Snapshot

Horses at an urban campus are a bit surprising. But students at UMass Lowell come from all backgrounds and some of them ride, or want to learn, and the equestrian club team beckons to them.

Team captains Alycia DesMarais, an exercise physiology major, and Laura Mayhan, a mechanical engineering major, say a lot of people on campus don’t know about the team.

“Every year we find at least 10 people who already ride and didn’t know we exist,” says Mahan, who went on a trail ride at age 6 and has been hooked ever since.

“Everyone is encouraged to take lessons and beginners can compete in the walk track division,” says DesMarais, who was “on a horse before I could walk” at her family’s breeding horse farm.

Club members ride at the Midnight Moon stables in Chelmsford. They compete with a dozen other schools, including Wellesley College, Boston University and Boston College. Each team hosts a show at the barn where it rides.

Two classes—flat and jumping—and many divisions allow for riders at every skill level. And here’s the tricky bit: each contestant is assigned a horse by lottery, from among the horses at that stable.

“It definitely tests how well you can ride, rather than how you ride with your own horse,” says Mahan. “With riders from 10 or 12 other teams in the region, spending all day together, the events are a lot of fun.”

Equestrian Team Rides Forth

Each team hosts an event at the barn where it rides, and contestants are assigned horses by lottery.
Pumped for Poetry: New English Professor Maggie Dietz is Well Versed

Maggie Dietz recently joined the English Department faculty, where she will teach poetry. Her book “Perennial Fall” won the 2007 Jane Kenyon Award for Outstanding Book of Poetry. For many years she directed the Favorite Poem Project, Robert Pinsky’s special undertaking during his tenure as U.S. Poet Laureate. Her awards include the Grolier Poetry Prize, the George Bennett Fellowship at Phillips Exeter Academy, as well as fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. Her work has appeared widely in journals such as “Poetry” “Ploughshares” “Agni” “Literary Imagination” “Harvard Review” and “Salmagundi.”

We asked about her background, influences and plans—and what it was like working with Robert Pinsky.

How can language survive when text message shorthand like “K” for okay and “LOL” are everywhere?

The clipped, digital bytes and bits used to communicate these days strike me as lively. Some part of me wants to be fearful about this, but language has been suffled and enhanced by many jargons, and has survived—even thrived—so I’m hopeful. The anagrams, contractions and abbreviations of the digital world offer us efficiency, but haven’t yet changed the way we interact in person; we don’t say LOL to someone when they’ve said something funny. And we still recognize qualitative distinctions—the difference between a cell phone ringtone and an actual Beethoven sonata, or the difference between a poem and a grocery list.

What happened to iambic pentameter? Poetry hardly rhymes anymore.

Iambs are everywhere! English is a language of rising rhythms, which means it tends naturally toward strings of iambs. Consider how your question: “What happened to iambic pentameter?” scans as iambic pentameter:

u / u / u / u u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u / u

That penultimate foot is an anapest—two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one—which is a fine substitution in an iambic line.

Why did you pursue poetry?

As a child, sounds—particularly rhymes—were thrilling to me. I don’t think this is unique or special: rather, it’s intuitive, in-born (think of how babies will dance to almost any music, TV commercial or the warped noise of an electronic toy!). I think we’re born with a lot in us, and we specialize.

So, how did you specialize?

On my fifth birthday, my mother gave me “A Child’s Book of Poems” with enchanting illustrations by Gyo Fujikawa. I couldn’t get enough of it—traditional nursery rhymes alongside poems by Dickinson, Blake, Wordsworth, Tennyson and “children’s poets” like Eugene Field and Edward Lear. When I was 6, I wrote my first book, a stapled-together looseleaf volume with magic marker drawings titled “Poems for Children.” I still have it.

What was it like working with former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky on the Favorite Poem Project?

Robert’s great—I’ve learned so much from him. He was my professor in graduate school at Boston University when he was chosen for the position. He asked if I could help him with correspondence and phone calls; then he had this idea to create a video archive of ordinary Americans reading poems they love. When the project got going and we began to host favorite poem readings in different towns, Robert used to like to say, “Not bad for a professor and a kid.”

Favorite poem/poet?

Poets I return to again and again are Elizabeth Bishop, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Rainer Maria Rilke and Fernando Pessoa.
Lowell Native Lauded for Long, Successful Career

Bob Manseau was happy enough being voted “Kindest Teacher” by a student body—his “most cherished” moment in a long career packed with accolades.

But his most recent honor is giving that title a run for its money.

Manseau—who graduated in 1972 from Lowell State College’s music education program and in 1985 from the Graduate School of Education’s educational administration program—was named the Charles A. Napoli Secondary School Principal of the Year by the New Hampshire Association of School Principals.

“After serving 39 years in public education, this award meant a great deal to me,” says the principal of Campbell High School in Litchfield, N.H. “After working with literally thousands of students and their parents, as well as hundreds of colleagues, I consider the recognition a lifetime achievement award.”

He will represent the state of New Hampshire in the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ Principal of the Year contest this September in Washington, D.C.

Manseau, who grew up in Lowell and now lives in Amesbury, spent the beginning of his career as a music teacher, eventually serving as head of the music department at Triton Regional High School in Byfield. He stayed there for 30 years, the last several as principal. In 2007, he took the job at Campbell.

Throughout all those years, Manseau says he’s repeatedly looked back on the education he received at UMass Lowell.

“I saw many colleagues enter the profession without the training I was so lucky to have received at Lowell,” he says. “Teachers went out of their way to make connections and form relationships with students. Also, the teacher training I received was practical and real-world oriented. Once in my first job, I saw how true that was.”

Countless Grads Serve as Region’s Education Leaders

N.H. Principal of the Year Bob Manseau ’72 ’85 is just one of dozens of UMass Lowell graduates leading the region’s schools.

Here is a sampling of illustrious alumni of the Graduate School of Education:

• Curtis Bates, superintendent, Boxborough Public Schools
• Lisa Dana ’92 ’01, superintendent, Danvers Public Schools
• Joseph Dillon ’92, principal, Melrose High School
• John Doherty ’83 ’92, superintendent, Reading Public Schools
• Michael Fiato ’06, principal, Humanities & Leadership Development High School, Lawrence
• Ruth C. Gilbert-Whitmer ’09, superintendent, Whitney-Hanson Regional Schools
• Donna Georges ’87, principal, Amesbury Academy Charter Public School
• Charles Godron ’06, superintendent, Northborough-Southborough Public Schools
• Samaria Hashem ’03, principal, High School Learning Center, Lawrence
• Richard Hoffman ’97, superintendent, Nauset Regional Schools
• Marc Kerble ’84, superintendent, Newburyport Public Schools
• Kevin Lyons ’78, superintendent, Hudson Public Schools
• Margaret McDevitt ’70 ’85, principal Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School
• Bill McGowan ’01, principal, Winnacunnet High School, Hampton, N.H.
• Susan Nicholson ’09, assistant superintendent of Schools, Andover
• Anne O’Bryant ’75, principal, Chelmsford High School
• Judith Scannell, superintendent, Methuen Public Schools
• James Scully ’70 ’73, superintendent, Haverhill Public Schools
• Anthony Volpe ’91, principal, Curtis-Tufts High School, Medford