UMass Lowell is on track to own the 6,500-seat Tsongas Arena and surrounding grounds after a purchase-and-sale agreement was signed on Oct. 30.

“For us, this is about making UMass Lowell a place where students want to be,” said Chancellor Marty Meehan. “The arena will help us provide the array of activities and events necessary to keep them engaged and happy—important ingredients for ensuring that students succeed academically.”

City Manager Bernie Lynch signed the agreement with UMass President Jack Wilson and Meehan at an on-ice ceremony between the first and second periods of that evening’s River Hawks hockey game. David MacKenzie, executive director of the UMass Building Authority, had previously signed the agreement.

“Almost 12 years ago, the city forged a unique partnership with the University and the Commonwealth to bring a mid-sized concert and performance venue to Lowell. The Tsongas Arena is on the map regionally and nationally because of our stewardship of it. Now, we look forward to the arena’s next phase,” Lynch said.

“This agreement is good for Lowell and good for UMass Lowell,” said State Sen. Steven Panagiotakos of Lowell, who brokered the agreement between the city and the University. “This will be a major asset and resource for the University and a major savings for Lowell taxpayers.”

The University’s benefits from the agreement include: the $24 million 6,500-seat arena and surrounding grounds, debt-free; the three-acre adjacent parcel; year-round use of the arena for University events and increased opportunities to generate new revenues.

Among the benefits the city gained was an agreement that the adjacent parcel would be developed in a way that could generate revenue for the city, most likely as a hotel. The University will pay the city $800,000 because it will own that land as part of the agreement.

Additional benefits for the city include no further responsibility for running the arena and covering its costs; the opportunity to conduct five annual events; ice time for public use at cost and a transfer of University-owned parcel of land on Pawtucket Boulevard.

The University, through the UMass Building Authority, is committed to making $5 million of capital improvements to create a more vibrant event experience and enhance revenues.

Before the University can own the facility outright, a home-rule petition signed by the City Council must be passed by the state Legislature and signed by Gov. Deval Patrick. Both the University and city expect the transfer to be completed in January.

Signing the purchase-and-sale agreement that transfers the Tsongas Arena to UMass Lowell are, from left, City Manager Bernie Lynch, State Sen. Steven Panagiotakos, Chancellor Marty Meehan and UMass President Jack Wilson.
Student-Managed Fund Remains Unbeaten
UMass Lowell Bested the Competition in the System-Wide Contest.

With its second win, the UMass Lowell student-managed fund group retains its title as the only team to ever win the competition, which challenges business students from each of the UMass campuses to make the most money on a $25,000 seed fund through real investing in the stock market.

The winning team was determined by the best return on its investments. UMass Lowell posted a 2 percent decrease in value of the fund (which beat the performance of major stock indexes like the S&P 500 for the same period). UMass Amherst’s team came in second in the competition, followed by Dartmouth in third and Boston in fourth.

Each group started off in January 2008 with $25,000 from the UMass Foundation to establish student-managed funds; the goal was to give students a real-world opportunity to invest in the stock market. While the students make the decisions about which stocks to buy, the actual trades are handled by the foundation.

Although the team saw a small drop in the value of its fund this year, it outperformed the S&P 500 by 27 percent. The original investment of $25,000 now stands at approximately $31,000.

Asst. Prof. Ravi Jain, faculty adviser to the students, says as a rule, the group tries not to buy stocks with the goal of selling them in the near future. Instead, they take a long-term view toward investing.

Reducing Stress on the Job
Web Site Offers Prevention Methods for both Employees and Employers

Your job could be killing you. Stress at work can cause heart disease and stroke; in fact, researchers estimate that up to 23 percent of heart-related deaths could be prevented every year if levels of job strain are reduced. But the risk can be dramatically reduced.

A new website developed by UMass Lowell’s Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace encourages both organizations and individuals to identify sources of stress and tackle them head on for both health and financial reasons.

“Stressful working conditions can not only lead to heart disease and other chronic illnesses, they cost American companies more than $300 billion a year in health costs, absenteeism and employee turnover,” says Assoc. Prof. Nicole Champagne of the Community Health and Sustainability Department and co-investigator of the Stress@Work Education, Translation, Communication and Dissemination Project.

The new website offers strategies for both employers and employees, including tips for getting involved in unions or health-and-safety committees, negotiating improved work design and safety provisions, and offering coping skills classes. By clearly defining roles and responsibilities, making sure workloads match capabilities and resources and providing opportunities for workers to participate in decisions and actions that affect their jobs, managers could help prevent illnesses and improve productivity.

Visit the new Stress@Work website at: http://umasslowell.edu/WorkStress

Ten Ways Organizations Can Prevent Workplace Stress

1. Clearly define workers’ roles and responsibilities.
2. Matches workers’ capabilities and resources to their workloads.
3. Explore job redesign.
4. Provide opportunities for workers to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
5. Ensure work schedules are compatible with demands/responsibilities outside the job.
6. Improve ergonomics and work/environmental design.
7. Improve communication between workers and managers.
8. Establish career ladders.
9. Commit to ongoing team-building and diversity initiatives.
10. Enforce equitable pay structures and compensation.

— From Stress@work website
Fifteen years ago, online learning was not just new—it was obscure. Very few people in education or the media appreciated its potential. Yet Jacqueline Moloney, executive vice chancellor of UMass Lowell, began pioneering a program that has achieved a national reputation for excellence.

Moloney was recognized for her leadership when the Sloan Consortium recently awarded her the prestigious 2009 award for Most Outstanding Achievement in Online Learning by an Individual.

“Asynchronous learning was a new way to think about education,” she says. “What should be the class size, how would discussions and chats be set up, what were the issues of accountability—these were all unknowns. The design and development of our programs have been informed by faculty experience right from the start, by their creativity and commitment.”

A program that began with 400 students has become a powerhouse that is incorporated into UMass Online. The UMass program is growing rapidly, with 12,000 students currently enrolled; it generates more than $24 million in revenues.

Online learning may now be mainstreamed, but Moloney sees many challenges and possibilities ahead.

“Online learning is a problem-solver on multiple fronts,” she says. “Web-enhanced courses increase freshman retention rates, especially for our students at risk. Also, I’d like to see online and blended learning become truly commonplace—part of every calculus course, for example—along with the faculty development support that is needed to make that happen.”

For more information about UMass Online go to http://continuinged.uml.edu/online/.

UMass Lowell and University of Haifa to Offer Joint Degree in Peace Studies

Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture Launched

UMass Lowell officially launched its new Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture in October with a visit by University of Haifa President Aaron Ben-Ze’ev. Ben-Ze’ev and Chancellor Marty Meehan signed a memorandum of understanding that established a new degree in peace studies and conflict management to be offered by both universities.

In welcoming Ben-Ze’ev, Meehan said, “The partnership we are formalizing today is a momentous occasion for both of our outstanding public sector universities. Both universities stand behind incorporating social responsibility into the heart of our educational philosophy and both maintain a diverse culture of students.

“That is why I am so proud that we are launching a collaborative degree in peace and conflict resolution, which will lead to student and faculty exchanges, innovative research projects and hands-on education for our students.”

In his remarks, Ben-Ze’ev noted that the University of Haifa reflects all of Israeli society, including Arabs and Ethiopians. “Through our studies and leadership, we feel responsible for the future social structure of Israeli society,” he said.

The Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture is headed by UMass Lowell Prof. Paula Rayman, who had been a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Haifa. The Center will work with the University of Haifa and other institutions to further research and educational opportunities in science, humanities, engineering, social sciences, health and education. It will explore collaborative ventures in Middle East nations including Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Turkey.

University of Haifa President Aaron Ben-Ze’ev and UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan sign an agreement for a joint degree program. Behind them are Prof. Paula Rayman, director of the new Center for Middle East Peace, Development and Culture, and Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

For all UMass Lowell news go to www.uml.edu/news
If It’s Cold in New England, Blame it on Siberia

UMass Lowell Research Shows that More Snow in Siberia Could Mean Colder U.S. Winters

With winter just around the corner and the cost of natural gas, heating oil and electricity showing no sign of abating, many New Englanders are wondering if this season is going to be colder or snowier than in previous years.

Surprisingly, the answer might come not from our northern neighbor, Canada, but from a vast, sparsely populated region halfway around the world: Siberia.

A new ongoing study by Asst. Prof. Mathew Barlow of the Environmental, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Department and his co-researchers proposes that increased snowfall in Siberia can actually lead to colder winter temperatures in the Northeast; less Siberian snow means a warmer winter for us.

“Our project is motivated by two ideas,” says Barlow. “First, decreasing Arctic sea ice appears to actually increase autumn snow over Siberia. Second, the amount of autumn snow cover over Siberia appears to play a role in influencing—via a fairly complicated dynamical pathway—subsequent winter winds over much of the Northern Hemisphere, including the United States.”

The project, which started in September, is funded through a $175,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

“It’s a multi-institution project,” says Barlow. “I’m the principal investigator at UMass Lowell; Jessie Cherry is the PI at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Judah Cohen at AER Inc. is the lead PI for the whole project. The $175,000 is just UMass Lowell’s part of the pie.”

Barlow adds that while decreasing Arctic sea ice has received a lot of media attention in terms of its local impact—that is, on the polar bear population—it will likely have hemisphere-wide impacts.

“We’re investigating one of those possible impacts in this study,” he says.

Another interesting angle the team is pursuing is the recent apparent slowing of global warming.

“It turns out that this is due mainly to Northern Hemisphere winter, which has actually gotten slightly colder over the last decade while the other three seasons have continued their merry warming ways,” he says.

Barlow says several possibilities have been suggested as to why winter has not been following the warming trend recently, but he and his colleagues have published a paper that shows a link between recent winter cooling and snow over Siberia. That paper, co-authored with Cohen and Kazuyuki Saito of the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology and entitled “Decadal Fluctuations in Planetary Wave Forcing Modulate Global Warming in Late Boreal Winter,” appeared in the Aug. 15 Journal of Climate.

“We argue that the positive trend in [Siberian] snow cover has contributed a significant fraction of the observed cooling in eastern North America and northern Eurasia, where snow cover is significantly correlated with winter temperatures,” they wrote.