NASA Funds Video-Based Program to Help K-12 and College Students Sort Through Conflicting Information

If the scientific community and policy makers are at odds about climate change, what is an elementary, middle or high school student to think?

Concerned about the issue, NASA recently awarded $614,691 to a partnership that includes UMass Lowell to create a unique and stimulating approach to global climate-change education.

The project, “Climate Change Education: Science, Solutions and Education in an Age of Media,” will integrate climate-change science with video to create a unique and stimulating approach to global climate-change education for students in K-12, as well as in college. Students will gain an understanding of cutting-edge science and of the media through which they access information.

The award was announced at the recent Climate Change Teach-In at UMass Lowell.

U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, who kicked off the Teach-In, said “Not only is tackling climate change critical for our planet’s future, but the clean energy technology that allows us to do so holds tremendous economic opportunity for our country and the Fifth District, in particular, which has one the highest concentrations of clean energy employers in New England.”

Under the grant, videos produced by students will incorporate their peers’ questions, concerns and perspectives on climate change. Students will learn to “write” in the language of video and, through this experience, gain a deeper and more sophisticated literacy in the medium.

“In today’s media world of Twitter, blogs and sound bites, confusion about the scientific reality of climate change frequently dominates the discourse in classrooms and communities,” said biology Assoc. Prof. Juliette Rooney-Varga, who is the lead researcher on the project and an expert on the ecological consequences of climate change. “We aim to change this by integrating climate-change science with the expressive power of video to create a unique and stimulating approach to global climate-change education.”

The expected outcomes of the project include new climate-change courses at UMass Lowell, the development of a high-school summer video program and professional development training for teachers. UMass Lowell students may apply for paid summer internships working with Cambridge high-school students during a video production summer program.

UMass Lowell is partnering with Cambridge Educational Access TV, TERC, Sage Fox Consulting Inc., Carleton College and filmmaker Randy Olson.
Sexting Research Will Lead to Prevention Strategies

**Multi-State, Teen-Centric Project Looks Deeper**

The term “sexting” didn’t appear in print until late 2008. Since then, teen sexting—sharing sexually explicit content via cell phones and social networks—has received increasing attention from the media and policymakers.

Asst. Prof. Andrew Harris

Harris is leading a three-state, multidisciplinary team in one of the nation’s first in-depth studies of teen sexting. The research is funded by a two-year, $670,000 grant from the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Harris is working with Assoc. Prof. Judith Davidson of the Graduate School of Education, an expert in qualitative methodology; criminal justice Asst. Prof. Karin Tusinski-Mirowsky, who conducts school-based research on bullying; and colleagues in psychology from Miami University (Ohio) and the Medical University of South Carolina.

“To date, the issues surrounding sexting have been framed by generalized adult alarm and consternation, without full consideration of the behavior’s social context,” says Harris. “Our research aims to understand the problem through a more youth-centric perspective. We feel that this level of understanding will translate into actionable recommendations for prevention policy and practice.”

Study data will come from focus groups of teens, parents, educators and school-based law officers. The analysis will focus on teen and adult views of risk, social relationships and uses of technology.

**Calendar Snapshot**

UMass Lowell offers a wide variety of academic, cultural and athletic events, most free and open to the public. The following is a brief snapshot of some upcoming events. For the full roster, go to www.uml.edu/media/calendar.

**Annual Alumni and Community “Messiah” Sing**

Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m., Durgin Concert Hall, South Campus

Handel expert Murray Kidd will lead the choirs of UMass Lowell in a lively reading of the Christmas portion of “Messiah,” and ending with the “Hallelujah” chorus.

**Economy and Environment Seminar**

Dec. 6, noon, O’Leary 222, South Campus

"Global Governance for the Environment: From Copenhagen to the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development” with Maria Ivanova, professor, conflict resolution, human security and global governance, UMass Boston.

**UMass Lowell No. 1 in Mass. in Starting Salaries, Says PayScale.com**

University Again Tops List of New England Grads’ Mid-Career Salaries

For the second year in a row, a national survey says UMass Lowell graduates earn the highest average mid-career salary of all public colleges and universities in New England. UMass Lowell also ranked No. 1 in starting salaries among Massachusetts public institutions.

PayScale.com’s national survey of graduates with bachelor’s degrees found that the median mid-career salary for UMass Lowell is $91,000, the highest of any public institution in New England. The starting salary is $47,600, the survey found.

In the mid-career salary category, UMass Lowell placed No. 106 nationally among both private and public institutions, up from No. 124 last year, in the ranking of more than 900 colleges and universities around the country.

“My UMass Lowell degree is invaluable to me. I would not be an engineer if it weren’t for UMass Lowell and if I weren’t an engineer, I wouldn’t have the career or salary that I currently have,” said Lisa Brothers ’84, vice president and chief operating officer of Boston-based Nitsch Engineering. Brothers, who lives in Wilmington, is the president of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts.

**UMass Lowell MBA Program is Among Tops in Nation for Fourth Year in a Row**

The College of Management’s master’s degree in business administration was selected for the fourth consecutive year as one of the top programs in the nation.

Ashwin Mehta teaches College of Management students.

"The Best 300 Business Schools: 2011 Edition," was recently released by the Princeton Review and Random House. UMass Lowell and 239 other MBA programs nationwide were chosen based on student surveys. In those surveys, UMass Lowell’s MBA was called “a good balance between reputation and affordability” and an “excellent online program (that) allows you to blend online with on-campus courses” as students prefer for their “freedom and flexibility.”

Lisa Brothers, ’84
Shenkar, UMass Lowell Establish International Program

Israeli Engineering, Design School Honors Meehan at Event

An historic agreement between Shenkar College of Israel and UMass Lowell, establishing an international graduate engineering program, was established last month. The new international graduate program in plastics engineering includes the emerging fields of nanotechnology and the use of polymers for environmental, medical and industrial purposes.

Participating in the signing of this significant new agreement on Oct. 20 in New York City were UMass Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan and Prof. Yuli Tamir, president of Shenkar College of Engineering and Design.

“The study of plastics engineering is one of the most important disciplines that shapes our lives, from nanotechnology to biomedical research to environmental issues,” said Tamir. “This historic agreement gives us the opportunity to learn from each other and benefit from the strengths of each school.”

Courses offered by both Shenkar College and UMass Lowell will be recognized by each institution toward the completion of the graduate degree. The international agreement also provides for an annual exchange of students and faculty between the schools over the next 10 years, after which the agreement may be renewed.

“While in class, I am taking notes and reading the slides, but sometimes I need to fill in some information. I go online and watch and listen to the lecture. It’s amazing because when I am taking the test later, I actually hear my professor’s voice and can remember what she said. It really works.”

In addition to using Echo360 lecture-capture technology, Abdallah also uses a “clicker” system during class that lets her know how well students are learning the information she is presenting.

“The new technology lets us know on the spot whether critical concepts are understood,” says Abdallah. “When I use the clicker system in class, students are more engaged and I receive instant feedback on whether they are absorbing the information.”

The new teaching technology also includes computers, digital document cameras, DVD/VCR players, network connections, integrated sound and systems that control all audio and video from the lectern. Some classrooms also include an interactive LCD touch screen that acts like an electronic writing tablet with the ability to save, share and print class notes.

Beth Halaby, an instructor in the Clinical Laboratory and Nutritional Sciences Department, uses the integrated teaching podium in Weed Hall discussing and projecting information.

“Listening to lectures after class has really helped me remember information,” says Marcia Schleier, a junior from Wilmington who is taking Prof. Lisa Abdallah’s “Nursing Assessment and Skills” course.

In addition to Echo360 lecture-capture technology, a lecture-capture technology, Echo360 creates a digital media version of the classroom experience that includes video of the instructor and presentation materials used in class so students can access them later from any computer or mobile device to aid in studying.

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University, Energy Officials Host Electric Vehicle Summit

Commonwealth to Fund Up to 100 Charging Stations Statewide

Approximately 200 people got a firsthand look at the latest in electric-vehicle technology at an event presented by the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and UMass Lowell in October.

The Electric Vehicle Summit and Workshop, held at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center in downtown Lowell, featured presentations and discussions on the latest in alternative-fuel technology and promoting zero- and low-emission electric vehicle use in Massachusetts.

Vice Provost for Research Julie Chen said the University is eager to partner with area industry to move the Commonwealth toward a future where renewable energy sources are affordable for all.

In addition to conducting research into electric vehicle technology—such as that by electrical engineering Prof. Ziyad Salameh, who has helped keep the University’s fleet of 10 electric vehicles running for more than a decade—UMass Lowell educates students who want to pursue their own research in the field.

For more information go to: www.uml.edu/news

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Students are Flocking to Literature, Writing and Theater Arts Programs

To be or not to be? With apologies to Shakespeare, more students are, in fact, choosing to be English majors.

For years, the University attracted 150 English majors each fall, give or take a few. The pattern remained relatively steady until 2005, when the number jumped to 191. A fluke? No. In fact, every year the number has grown, charting an 85 percent increase in the past decade to a whopping 279 students in 2010.

Melissa Pennell, associate dean of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, explains the surge.

Customization—one size doesn’t fit all

“Ours program has expanded from two concentrations—literature and writing—to four, in literature, creative writing, journalism and professional writing and theater arts,” says Pennell. Other changes include requiring a different core of classes for each concentration and expanded opportunities for internships and practicum experiences. This customize model is appealing to students who seek course depth in their specific area of interest.

Giselle Sterling, a veteran of the armed forces and an English major in the writing concentration, feels the new structure benefits students like her. “There has always been the need for proficient writers and effective communicators—the University’s writing program really prepares you to be a well-rounded, analytical thinker,” she says.

No more waiting in the wings

The new theater major appeals to students who want careers in directing, acting and the many technical professions working behind the scenes of every theater production. Pennell also points out that theater is a popular secondary major and minor for a wide range of students pursuing degrees in everything from engineering to physical therapy.

Outreach brings them in

“For many years, we’ve nurtured relationships with our counterparts at Lowell High School and Middlesex Community College, among others,” says Pennell. By collaborating with English teachers and reference librarians, the University has a better understanding of what to expect from students, and how to attract them.

New concentrations, faculty additions and successful collaborations with area educators have resulted in a significant spike in English majors—nearly doubling in the past decade.

New Faculty Hired for Growing Ranks of English Majors

To support the burgeoning number of students, the English Department has recently made five new hires:

- Rita Sullivan and Dina Bozicas are full-time lecturers who will teach college writing. Sullivan will also advise undeclared liberal arts majors and Bozicas will work with the Common Text Program and first-year writing projects;
- Sandra Lim is a full-time faculty member who teaches poetry and Asian American Literature;
- Shelley Barish is a full-time faculty member teaching theatrical design; and
- Maggie Dietz will begin in January as a full-time faculty member who will teach poetry.

Giselle Sterling believes her degree in English will prepare her for any endeavor—from corporate America to the non-profit sector.