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HMFH Architects retained by UMass Lowell for student center

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HMFH Architects has been retained by the University of Massachusetts at Lowell (UMass Lowell) to undertake the first phase of a new student engagement center on the school's North Campus. HMFH was also the architect for the planning study that examined the existing buildings to determine how best to integrate the new center into the campus.

With UMass Lowell trying to foster more opportunities for student social and collaborative interactions on their North Campus, HMFH initially studied two existing campus buildings, the historic Alumni Hall and adjacent modern Lydon Library, as possible locations for the student engagement center. HMFH's plan will create a highly visible and accessible center to support not only student-to-student interactions but also communication among students, faculty and visitors by reinvigorating the historic interiors of Alumni Hall. A new accessible entrance lobby into Lydon will also serve to more fully integrate the two buildings, tying together the library learning commons both visually and physically with the new engagement center. The new center will feature seating and study areas, a café, and a lounge where educators and students can comfortably work and interact. Currently underutilized adjacent exterior spaces will be modified as part of the design of the center, providing a range of informal meeting spaces on campus both indoors and out. The first phase calls for the transformation of a little-used multi-purpose space into a central meeting space for North Campus to free up Alumni Hall for renovation. This will pave the way for the execution of the full student engagement center.

"UMass Lowell 2020, the university's strategic plan, calls for re-organizing and renewing facilities on North Campus to strengthen both the academic and the student life experience," said Laura Wernick, AIA, REFP, LEED AP, senior principal at HMFH. "The rejuvenation of Alumni Hall and the weaving together of the library and engagement center will create a venue where students can study, interact with one another and with faculty in an informal setting, will also help the University achieve both goals."

HMFH conducted a planning study to identify an optimum location for the proposed 60,000 s/f College of Management facility, as well as explore how best to integrate new features such as a conference center, administrative and faculty offices, dedicated classrooms for lectures and case study programs, and technology labs. The new student engagement center is adjacent to the planned College of Management and the two projects will be closely integrated.

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