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CELEBRATING 55 YEARS

University of Mass. Lowell opens $80 million academic building

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More than 400 people, including governor Deval Patrick, University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell) chancellor Marty Meehan, students, faculty and staff, industry leaders and public officials, recently attended UMass Lowell's $80 million Emerging Technologies and Innovation Center (ETIC) opening, the first new academic building constructed on campus in more than three decades.

The 84,000 s/f building will be home to research in nanotechnology, molecular biology, plastics engineering and optics, advancing fields such as life sciences, energy, national security, environmental protection and more.

Outfitted with specialized, high-powered laboratories and equipment, a plastics processing high bay and high-tech cleanrooms, the four-story ETIC will prepare students for jobs in emerging sectors, serve as the site of corporate- and government-sponsored research and foster industry partnerships in the global marketplace. The center - capable of supporting multiple research areas under one roof - is staffed by skilled technicians.

"Today, with the opening of the Emerging Technologies and Innovation Center, we step into the future, carrying forward UMass Lowell's rich history as a pioneer and leader in advanced technology. Students, faculty researchers and private-sector partners who work here will be planting the seeds of the next industrial revolution, fueling the state's innovation economy in ways we can only yet imagine," said Meehan.

The environmentally sustainable building is seeking a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold certification under the U.S. Green Building Council. The building's architect is HDR Inc. of Omaha, Neb. The general contractor is Turner Construction Co. of New York, N.Y.

The ETIC - which supported hundreds of jobs during its construction and will create hundreds more in the private sector into the future - was funded through $35 million from the Mass. Economic Investment Act of 2006, $5 million from the federal government, $25 million bonded through the UMass Building Authority, a $10 million grant from the Mass. Life Sciences Center, and industry and individual donors, including UMass Lowell alumni. The $10 million grant from the Mass. Life Sciences Center helped to fund equipment for the center's cleanroom facilities and supports the build out of the ETIC's third floor for nanomedicine research.

"Providing access to quality, affordable higher education is about giving all of our students the opportunity to succeed," said Patrick. "Education is Massachusetts' calling card around the world and central to our competitiveness in the global economy. We invest in education, and in projects like this one, because we believe that it is the single most important investment government can make in our collective future."

The grand opening included government officials who have supported the project, along with

members of the university community. Speakers included Meehan and Patrick, along with U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, state Sen. Eileen Donoghue, state Rep. Thomas Golden, former state Sen. Steven Panagiotakos, UMass President Robert Caret and UMass Lowell Vice Provost for Research Julie Chen.

"UMass Lowell is a leader in plastics engineering, nanotechnology, and bioprocessing - capabilities that are among the many reasons Massachusetts is considered a global leader in the life sciences," said Massachusetts Life Sciences Center president and chief executive officer Susan Windham-Bannister. "The opening of this new facility will enhance the university's capacity for innovation, and its emerging role as the heart of the life science cluster in the Greater Lowell region."

After the speaking program, attendees toured the ETIC, getting a firsthand look at the breadth and depth of the building's amenities. To date, corporate and individual private donations to the building total $7 million and include the following gifts:

* The Mark and Elisia Saab High Bay Manufacturing Center accommodates large-scale manufacturing equipment and includes an overhead crane capable of lifting up to five tons. The center enables plastics manufacturing research and development such as injection molding and extrusion. It will foster research in the blown film and injection molding areas and other plastics and rubber processing areas. Roll-to-roll equipment allows for continuous manufacturing operations. The center is named for UMass Lowell plastics engineering alumnus Mark Saab '81 and his wife Elisia, who own Advance Polymers Inc., in Salem, N.H. and live in Lowell.

* The William J. Kennedy Nanotechnology Research and Development Center houses wet and dry chemistry, biology and materials laboratories. Spanning the ETIC's entire second floor, the center is the focal point of the university's nanotechnology research and development and includes laboratories for the Center for High-rate Nanomanufacturing, funded by the National Science Foundation. Equipment includes a raman spectrometer, contact angle measurement, an analytical probe station surface profilometer and ellipsometer. The center is one of the first to adopt the dip-pen nanolithography instrument, a complete system that can create structures from a wide range of materials with nano-scale precision over a large area. UMass Lowell alumnus John F. Kennedy '70, a Naples, Fla., resident who is the retired president and CEO of Nova Analystics Corp. of Woburn, named this center in honor of his late brother.

* The Robert and Gail Ward Biomedical Materials Development Laboratory is designed to bridge medicine, biology and engineering, advancing UMass Lowell's research in biomaterials and medial device development. The laboratory will accommodate companies of all sizes - from startups to industry giants - to develop new biomaterial products and applications that may result in the formation of new and spinoff companies and jobs in the life sciences industry. The lab is named for UMass Lowell chemical engineering alumnus Robert Ward '71, and his wife Gail. Robert Ward is the chairman of Emergence Venture Partners LLC, a Berkeley, Calif.-based venture capital company that applies biomaterials technology to develop medical devices.

* The Perry Atrium and Lobby is the dramatic, central public space inside the ETIC where colleagues can meet to compare notes, conduct business and socialize. It is named for UMass Lowell plastics engineering alumnus Barry Perry '68, who in 2006 retired as the chairman of New Jersey-based Engelhard Corp., a chemical and metals company. Perry grew up in Dartmouth and now lives in Newtown, Pa.

* The Technovel Compounding Laboratory will provide state-of-the-art capabilities for extrusion melt

compounding. Laboratory- and manufacturing-scale research projects will support nano-materials and medical device development and more. The laboratory offers multi-screw extrusion compounding machinery that will provide research capabilities unique inNorth America. The laboratory was funded through UMass Lowell's partnership with Technovel Corp.

"The UMass Building Authority is proud to have managed the planning, design and construction of the Emerging Technologies andInnovation Center," said the authority's executive director, Katherine Craven, who attended the opening. "This cutting-edge facility is more than a building - it is a living reminder of what can be accomplished by the University of Massachusetts working together withMassachusetts elected and business officials to bring jobs, innovation and the best in new ideas for the benefit of UMass Lowell faculty and students and the entire Commonwealth."

Located at the intersection of University Avenue and VFW Highway in Lowell, the ETIC is the gateway to the university's North Campus and the first completed project in the UMass Lowell building boom that includes the new Health and Social Sciences Building on South Campus, the University Suites residence hall on East Campus, University Crossing student center, and two parking garages.