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UMass Lowell opens \$54 million residence hall - University Suites

October 03, 2013 - Owners Developers & Managers

UMass Lowell recently celebrated the opening of University Suites, a \$54 million residence hall that is drawing rave reviews from students for its design, amenities and positive impact on campus life. It is the sixth new building UMass Lowell has opened in the last year.

Located at 327 Aiken St. in UMass Lowell's East Campus, the 148,000 s/f, five-story University Suites is home to 472 students and represents a new housing model that includes:

- * 88 four and six-bed suites that feature living rooms, bedrooms, kitchenettes and bathrooms;
- * 8 common lounge areas with flat-screen TVs, couches and full kitchens;
- * A glass-fronted living room with a fireplace;
- * The Hawk's Nest Caf  , which is open to students and the public, and serves grab-and-go meals during the day and Asian-fusion cuisine in the evening, along with Red Mango frozen yogurt and Starbuck's coffee;
- * Wi-Fi and other technology throughout the building;
- * Quiet conference rooms and study lounges;
- * A multi-purpose room for groups of up to 126 people;
- * A courtyard designed for public events.

The building is one of two, brand-new suite-style residence halls that has opened for UMass Lowell students in the past month. University Suites and Riverview Suites together provide housing for nearly 1,000 of 4,000 residential UMass Lowell students, helping to accommodate climbing enrollment that numbers more than 16,000.

More than 150 people, including UMass Lowell students, staff and faculty, UMass system representatives, and state, city and community leaders toured University Suites after a brief speaking program, held in the residence hall's courtyard.

National research shows students who live in university housing are more apt to be academically successful and feel more connected to their campus community. Among the students living in University Suites are members of UMass Lowell's Commonwealth Honors Program who are a part of a living-learning community. Located throughout university housing, these communities enable students with similar interests and goals to live together to forge common bonds and participate in programming that builds on their educational experience.

"As part of UMass Lowell's unprecedented growth, University Suites is helping to enrich student learning and campus life as we reach new heights in enrollment, student satisfaction and retention, and alumni giving, among other advances," said UMass Lowell chancellor Marty Meehan. "This new residence hall is another example of UMass Lowell's commitment to excellence in all that we do. Last week, U.S. News & World Report acknowledged that commitment in its 2014 Best Colleges

and National Universities rankings, which placed UMass Lowell 158th - up 12 spots from last year and 25 over the last three years - a jump that is the second-largest climb among the top universities in the country."

Along with Meehan, speakers included state Reps. Thomas Golden Jr. '93, '01 and David Nangle; Lowell Mayor Patrick Murphy; Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education Richard Freeland; UMass Building Authority Chairman Philip Johnston; Laurence Siegel, associate vice chancellor of student affairs and events; UMass Student Trustee Philip Geoffroy, a UMass Lowell student from Chelmsford; and Alicia Negron, University Suites assistant resident director and a biology major from South Windsor, Conn.

"University Suites is another significant leap in the transformation of our student life experience," Siegel said. "The residence hall - coupled with our investments in residential dining, including national-brand eateries, along with UMass Lowell's variety of student activities and move up to Division I athletics - is creating a more exciting culture on campus than ever before."

Students are excited about University Suites' common spaces for studying and socializing, according to Negron.

"Seeing this university expand in just the two short years I've been here has been an incredible experience. I can't wait to see how much more the university will expand in the next couple of years," she said. "It's a great pleasure to be assistant resident director of this beautiful, new building. I'm proud to call myself a River Hawk."

In addition to housing students, University Suites will be open to community organizations that wish to host conferences in the summertime.

University Suites' architectural design and bold color scheme are a modern take on Lowell's textile and industrial heritage. The building is a striking addition to the neighborhood that includes the Campus Recreation Center, LeLacheur Park and other residence halls. Surveys of UMass Lowell students have shown that more want to live on East Campus, which is walking distance from the Tsongas Center at UMass Lowell and the city's vibrant downtown.

The University Suites construction project was overseen by the UMass Building Authority and managed by Joslin, Lesser + Associates, Inc. of Watertown.

"University Suites at UMass Lowell is transformational for the students living there," said Johnston. "Congratulations to Chancellor Meehan and his leadership team for mastering this innovative housing concept. The building authority is delighted to be partnering with the Lowell campus on this impressive project."

The building's architect was ADD Inc. of Boston; Walsh Brothers of Boston was the building's construction manager. Constructed in part with recycled materials and with the goal of maximum energy efficiency, the residence hall is seeking a Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Buildings Council.

Shown (from left) are: Lowell city manager Bernie Lynch; Lowell mayor Patrick Murphy; Mass. commissioner of higher education Richard Freeland; UMass Lowell executive vice chancellor Jacqueline Moloney; state rep. Thomas Golden Jr.; UMass student trustee Phil Geoffroy, a UMass Lowell student from Chelmsford; UMass Building Authority chairman Philip Johnston; UMass Lowell chancellor Marty Meehan; state rep. David Nangle; Alicia Negron of South Windsor, CT., a UMass student and assistant resident director; Joanne Yestramski, UMass Lowell vice chancellor for finance and operations; UMass Lowell vice chancellor of university relations Patricia McCafferty; Laurence Siegel, UMass Lowell associate vice chancellor of student affairs and events; and UMass

Lowell mascot Rowdy the River Hawk.

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