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Walsh Brothers completes \$54 million UMass Lowell residence hall; ADD Inc designs 148,000 s/f university suites

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More than 150 members of the UMass Lowell community gathered on September 19 to celebrate 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.

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

The building's architect was ADD Inc; Walsh Brothers 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.

Located at 327 Aiken St. on 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: Eighty-eight four- and six-bed suites that feature living rooms, bedrooms, kitchenettes and bathrooms; common lounge areas with flat-screen TVs, couches and full kitchens; a glass-fronted living room with a fireplace; The Hawk's Nest Caf  ; 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 and a courtyard designed for public events.

Chancellor Marty Meehan was joined by UMass Building Authority board chair Philip Johnston, UMass Lowell students, staff and faculty; UMass system representatives; and state, city and community leaders. Guests toured University Suites after a brief speaking program, held in the residence hall's courtyard.

Along with Meehan and Johnston, speakers included state reps. Thomas Golden Jr. '93, '01 and David Nangle; Lowell mayor Patrick Murphy; Mass. commissioner of Higher Education Richard Freeland; 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.

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"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," Meehan said. "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."

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.

"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."

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.

Working with UMass president Bob Caret and the board of trustees, UMBA strives to deliver the most cost-effective, highest quality construction of world class buildings to support the mission of the University. The new research facilities, venture development centers, dormitories and student life facilities and other buildings strengthen the University's reputation as one of the top educational institutions in the country and as a top economic development driver for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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