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Merrimack College Record

Merrimack College

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College's Agenda for Distinction Moves Ahead

As the college eagerly anticipates the fall opening of a new home for the Girard School of Business, it is prudent to take stock of all that Merrimack has achieved over the past eight years and the challenges that lie ahead, President Hopey said.

Through investments in student housing, dining services, athletic teams and, most important, academic programs and facilities — goals articulated in the college's 10-year strategic plan, the Agenda for Distinction — Merrimack has been transformed into a modern, residential institution, poised to compete with the best comprehensive master's colleges in the region and the country, Hopey said in a recent interview with the Record.

The college's reputation has never been stronger, he said, its position in the competitive New England higher-education landscape, never more favorable.

"From the day the Agenda for Distinction was created, it has been our mission to ensure that students attending this institution are doing so not solely to achieve graduation, but also to have the opportunity to develop as individuals with



Rendering of North Campus Academic Pavilion, future new home of the business school.

the creativity, imagination and knowledge to change the world," Hopey said.

But the college cannot afford to rest on its laurels, Hopey added. Further investments in people, programs and facilities are needed if Merrimack hopes to continue its climb to national prominence.

The North Campus Academic Pavilion, future home of the Girard School of Business, is one such investment, he said. The 50,000-square-foot building will house 14 flexible learning environments, the Mucci Capital Markets Lab, the

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Cordano to Step Down as Business Dean After Six Years of Success

Girard School of Business Dean Mark Cordano has announced that he will step down from his position at the end of the academic year and return to the faculty after a one-year sabbatical.



Mark Cordano

Cordano, who has led the business school since 2011, will leave a "remarkable legacy of accomplishment," Provost Allan Weatherwax said in an April 19 letter to the Merrimack community.

During his tenure, Cordano has hired 15 tenure-track faculty, established multiple specialty graduate programs, launched the Mucci Capital Markets Lab and its associated programming promoting investment research, and fostered creation of the Financial Capabilities Center.

Additionally, he built a student advising center for the school, designed an innovative co-op model for accounting students, inaugurated the Sigma Iota Epsilon honor society and began a series of alumni-student networking events, including area lunch sessions and regular

visits to firms in New York City.

Perhaps most noteworthy, Cordano was instrumental in the planning of a new home for the Girard School, which will open this summer on the North Campus Academic Pavilion.

Weatherwax said a national search for Cordano's successor will begin "expeditiously," with a goal of having a new dean in place by Jan. 1, 2018. The Faculty Senate will soon call for nominations to the search committee.

He added that Cordano's tenure will be celebrated at events later this spring.

Active Science Program Enters Third Year With New Funding

The success of Merrimack's Active Science program continues to grow under the leadership of its innovative creator, Associate Dean of Science and Engineering Kyle McInnis.

Since the launch of the novel learning and wellness program at the Merrimack Valley YMCA in 2011, McInnis has secured three separate grants totaling more than \$1.6 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, including a recent



Kyle McInnis

\$1 million award to further expand the initiative's national reach. Active Science currently operates at about a dozen YMCAs, schools and youth organizations in Massachusetts.

"We are excited to continue the process of bringing the program to other locations around the country," McInnis said. "Our students are

seeing firsthand the positive impact of social entrepreneurial ventures like Active Science."

Active Science blends fun physical activities with hands-on learning experiences and games to create opportunities for children to play, explore, discover — and gain a greater appreciation for science and healthful living.

In addition to McInnis, team members from Merrimack health sciences department include professors Kevin Finn and Zi Yan and administrators Jacquelyn Rudis, Lindsey Mattos and Breanne Dowdie. Additionally, more than 20 Merrimack undergraduate and graduate students participate in Active Science as research assistants, fellows or as part of directed-study courses.

Join College for Evening of Fun, Update on Fundraising Campaign

The Merrimack community is invited to join Kyle McInnis, community chair of the college's Together for Good campaign, for an evening of fun and trivia on Tuesday, April 25, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary Coffee House. Refreshments and appetizers will be served, and McInnis will provide a brief update on the college's \$50 million fundraising drive.

Register at merrimack.wufoo.com/forms/rmuatfy09401bv. For more information, email Danielle Hardee at hardeed@merrimack.edu.



Travis A. McCready (right), president and chief executive officer of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, presents Merrimack's \$500,000 award to Provost Allan Weatherwax at an April 10 ceremony in Cascia Hall.

College Receives \$500K Grant to Support Science Innovation

Merrimack's School of Science and Engineering received a major boost this month with receipt of a \$500,000 grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center to support development of a Center for Innovation in Science and Engineering on campus.

The award was Merrimack's first from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, an investment agency that supports innovation, education, research and development, and commercialization in the life sciences. It was among \$6 million in grants the agency handed out to middle schools, high schools and colleges in the region during an April 10 ceremony in Cascia Hall.

"The support of Mass Life Sciences Center helps us ready today's young women and men for the lives and the economy they will create tomorrow," said President Christopher Hopey. "They must be prepared to find and seize their opportunities while they work to solve the world's great problems. They will cure disease, they will reverse climate change, they will

explore galaxies and they will discover themselves."

The award will fund the purchase of three significant pieces of research equipment — a confocal imaging microscope, an ICP spectrophotometer and a bone densitometer — for use in a new interdisciplinary imaging and analytical science laboratory.

"Student and faculty researchers across a range of disciplines and fields will benefit from the new equipment," Merrimack Provost Alan Weatherwax said. "Funding for the equipment will greatly expand the analytical foundation for Merrimack students in their preparation for careers in the life sciences, while leveraging the college's capacity to cultivate new partnerships within the life sciences ecosystem of northeastern Massachusetts."

Merrimack's grant application was developed by Weatherwax, Vice Provost Jonathan Lyon, Dean of Science and Engineering Cynthia McGowan and Director of Corporate and Foundation Development Kathleen Redmond.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Videos, Google Quizzes Work by Design

First in a series on how Merrimack College faculty are using technology both in and outside the classroom. In this installment, Associate Professor of Graphic Design Nancy Wynn discusses methods she uses in her studio design course.

Every semester, in my studio courses, I lecture on various aspects of design thinking, a methodology for creative and strategic problem-solving.



Nancy Wynn

Design thinking is often employed in the world of professional design, but its methods translate nicely to college classroom. Just as scientists have a methodology, designers do, too.

Some might ask, “What is the necessity of lecture in a studio course?” Good lectures, supported by reading and writing assignments, create the foundation for design thinking.

My lectures range from a beginning talk on the design elements and principles, and how to use them in art and design, to more complex studies of design systems,

advertising campaigns or immersive design. I use a variety of visual aids, including websites, anecdotes and actual objects in my lectures, which usually run about 30 minutes, with extra time for discussion.

My desire to have more class time led me to create seven videos on design elements and principles. Students watch the videos outside of class, at their own pace, and develop talking points or questions.

To ensure my students watch the videos, and to help them retain the information, I have designed seven Google quizzes through Google Forms, a part of the suite of free Google products. The quizzes are anonymous, not graded and the results are shared right away. This enables me to quickly assess the concepts the students are having difficulty grasping, leaving plenty of class time for engaging discussion and in-class work assignments.

I recently chaired a panel session at the Foundations in Art: Theory and Education conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Four of us shared our innovative classroom techniques, including my videos and Google quizzes; student video-chatting; teaching drawing with video; and the development of an online textbook.



Christina Hardway

Practicing What She Teaches: Mindfulness for Stress Reduction

If Christina Hardway could offer one piece of advice to her Merrimack colleagues and students, it would be: Relax.

The associate professor and chair of psychology recently became qualified to teach courses in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, a program that helps manage pain and deal with life issues through meditation, body awareness and yoga.

As part of her continued training on the road to full certification, Hardway will lead guided meditation sessions open to all members of the Merrimack community on Mondays from noon to 12:20 p.m. in 205 Sullivan Hall. In order to become fully certified, she is required to teach several eight-week MBSR classes and submit the required course materials.

Hardway said she was inspired to teach MBSR after taking a class several years ago — an experience she described as life-changing.

“It helped me develop a better ability to be present-in-the-moment, rather than being consumed by some upcoming task or deadline,” she said. “I want to share that with my students and the campus community.”

Hardway has also been accepted into The Center for Koru Mindfulness program in June, where her training will focus on teaching mindfulness to college students.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

College Ramps Up Its Retention Efforts

Though “making the class” is a key dimension of Merrimack’s student-recruitment efforts, it’s just the beginning of an extremely important process that is critical to the college’s financial stability and reputational success.

Ensuring that new matriculants receive the academic and social support they need throughout their Merrimack experience is crucial to retaining those students and putting them on the road to successful careers.

In response, Merrimack has invested in — and continues to explore — new and

innovative methods for identifying and helping students who may be struggling or at risk for dropping out.

“The goal is to continuously improve the overall quality of student life and learning,” said Tricia Pineda, associate vice president of program development and retention.

One such investment is the Academic Success Center, created last year to provide students with the tools they need to develop strong foundations in a wide range of academic skills. The success center comprises the Tutoring and Math Center and the

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Business School Competes With Best in Region

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Comprehensive Business Advising Center and the Financial Capability Center, making it an ideal center for academic and social growth.

“It is not the construction of the building, or what will be housed within its walls, but the opportunity it will offer our students to use additional resources on campus where they may come together to learn, grow and develop into leaders,” Hopey said.

Further enhancements are already in the works. By 2021, the president said, Merrimack will establish a School of Health Sciences, construct buildings to support engineering and make improvements to current academic spaces such as psychology and the performing arts.

“Our trajectory is amazing. Our future is bright,” Hopey said.

“But,” he added, “with the higher-education environment changing as rapidly as it is, we must ask ourselves the question, ‘What are the investments we need to make in order to move the institution forward and serve the next generation of students so that they may thrive?’”

New Grant Provides Internships for Undergraduate Students

A new 10-week paid internship program for undergraduates represents the intersection of the college’s focus on student preparedness, corporate and community relationships and Augustinian traditions.

The Yawkey Nonprofit Undergraduate Internship Program, funded by the Yawkey Foundations, is being offered for the first time this summer.

Students chosen for the program will be placed with one of six participating nonprofits in the area: Catholic Central High School, CLASS Inc., Family Services of the Merrimack Valley, the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, Groundwork Lawrence and the Merrimack Valley YMCA.

They will perform work in such fields as marketing and communications; program development and community engagement; and social-justice advocacy, and are eligible to earn up to \$2,800 for the summer.

“The program is truly an alliance of faculty, corporate partners and nonprofit organizations,” said Jay Caporale ’87, vice president of corporate and foundation engagement, “and will help students

gain experience while actually getting paid.”

The selection process is competitive. Interested students must apply through the O’Brien Center for Career Development and, if advanced, interview with the hiring firms on campus in early May.

Those selected will meet with a mentor at the nonprofit organization, who will help craft a learning agreement and develop a process for evaluating the student’s work and progress. At the conclusion of the internship, students will present their experiences to their respective organization’s leadership team.

In addition, participants will be required to write a reflective essay at both the beginning and end of the internship.

Though the focus of this internship is providing students with hands-on workplace experience, the collaborative nature of the program knows no bounds.

“The program meets our mission of preparing students through experiential learning, and also calls on our Augustinian traditions of working in the community,” Caporale said.



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Student Retention Critical to Success

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Writing Center, among other support programs and initiatives.

A retention leadership team, led by Senior Vice President for Planning and Strategy Neal Fogg, has recently rolled out other new programs, including:

- Provost’s Colloquia, in which an invited group of first-year students participate in monthly gatherings with a dean, vice provost or the provost for intellectual exchange.
- New living and learning communities, such as Women in

STEM, and Global Leadership.

- Expanding high-impact practices such as first-year seminars, writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research and community-based learning.
 - Mack Tasks, a “one-stop-shopping” concept to help current students more easily access the information and documents they will need throughout their matriculation.
- “We want to create a culture of support and retention where every student on campus can become successful,” Pineda said.