

A New Canvas in Fitchburg

Gateway City Looks to Art for Downtown Revival

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Fitchburg's public and non-profit sectors are preparing to roll out a \$100 million red carpet to entice private developers, retailers and restaurateurs to join in revitalization efforts of the city's downtown area.

There have already been a number of encouraging private-sector initiatives in the once-booming mill city along the Nashua River, mostly on the periphery and well outside the downtown area: the recently converted Yarn Works mill into 96 residential units by Winn Development, and development of the massive Fitchburg Game On Sports and Performance Complex.

This central Massachusetts city has also seen, or will soon see, other private-sector developments, such as the recent \$10 million renovation of the Sanitoy Mill into office and industrial space and AVJ Group LLC's planned conversion of the former Iver Johnson firearms and bicycle mill into a mixed-use residential, commercial and retail complex.

But Fitchburg's tired downtown, where even the old City Hall has temporarily closed up shop, is where public and nonprofit officials are now focusing their attention in the hope of spurring private development in the city's core district.

The downtown projects include the planned conversion of the old BF Brown School and two adjoining buildings into artist live/work residences and studios, in coordination with the Fitchburg Art Museum; renovation of the Main Street Theater Block by Fitchburg State University, including restoration of a now-vacant 1,200-seat theater; and rehabilitation of the old City Hall, which had to be abandoned a few years ago due to a fractured roof truss.

Combined the downtown proposals, many of which are still awaiting word on various state and federal tax credit approvals, add up to about \$100 million in public and nonprofit investments, officials say.

"We've got a lot going on," said Mayor Stephen DiNatale, noting the city's recent designation by the state as a "Transformative Development Initiative" (TDI) district, entitling Fitchburg to state assistance on its downtown redevelopment efforts. "Our goal is to make the downtown noticed as a place to go and we want to be known as a business-friendly city."



Locals hope to spur private development in Fitchburg's tired downtown, where even the old City Hall has temporarily closed up shop. Photo Courtesy of Nick Allen / CC BY-SA 4.0
From Schoolhouse to Creative Economy Housing

NewVue Communities, a nonprofit community development corporation, is spearheading the more than \$20 million BF Brown redevelopment project, across the street from the Fitchburg Art Museum on Elm Street. The goal: Turning the boarded-up historic buildings into 62 residential units and work spaces for artists and others within the "creative economy," such as graphic designers and video technicians. The ground floor of the "Fitchburg Arts

Academy" will likely include exhibition space for artists.

"It's going to be a real attraction for artists," said Marc Dohan, executive director of NewVue. "Many artists in Cambridge and Boston are getting priced out of their market and there's fairly high demand for artist housing [in the region]."

Nick Capasso, director of the Fitchburg Art Museum, said his institution will coordinate artist programs and is currently consulting with NewVue on what might be needed to make the center more artistically vibrant and attractive.

"We think it's going to be a real shot in the arm for Fitchburg's downtown," Capasso said of the center, which is still several years away from getting off the ground.

The planned Main Street Theater Block is being spearheaded by Fitchburg State University, which three years ago purchased the abandoned, 1,200-seat theater across from the old City Hall for \$350,000.

The planned Main Street Theater Block is being spearheaded by Fitchburg State University, which three years ago purchased an abandoned, 1,200-seat theater on Main Street across from the old City Hall for \$350,000. The first phase

of the project – a \$3 million renovation of adjoining space into offices and classrooms – has already been completed and school officials and student have moved in, said Jay Bry, FSU’s vice president of finance and administration. The new space will also host a new “Ideas Center,” aimed at helping small businesses and entrepreneurs get off the ground. The project’s second phase, renovation of the now-vacant theater at an estimated cost of \$35 million, is still in the design stage, but Bry said FSU envisions the theater being used by the school for performing arts and school events, with retail space on the ground floor. The project would be paid via state and federal tax credits, private donations and possibly some borrowing.

“We want it to be a catalyst for the economic revitalization of the downtown,” said Bry.



As for the old City Hall, originally built in 1853, officials hope to start on its \$23 million renovation this spring. It sat empty for four years due to structural problems, including a fractured roof truss that forced the city to evacuate the building in favor of temporary offices.

Boston-based **ICON Architecture** is involved in both the BF Brown and City Hall projects – and Janis Mamayek of ICON said she sees their rejuvenation as vital components of redeveloping downtown Fitchburg as a whole.

“We’re very excited by the momentum we’ve seen in Fitchburg,” she said.



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THE LARGEST MBA PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS

RANKED BY ENROLLMENT AS OF FALL 2018

	School/Prior rank (*unranked in 2018)/ URL	Address Phone	Total MBA enrollment	No. of full-time MBA students	No. of part- time MBA students	% of male MBA students	% of female MBA students	Head of MBA program
1	Harvard Business School ① hbs.edu	Soldiers Field Road, Boston, MA 02135 617-495-6128	1,858	1,858	NA	59%	41%	Jana Kierstead, Executive director, MBA and doctoral programs
2	University of Massachusetts Amherst (Isenberg School of Management) ② isenberg.umass.edu	121 Presidents Drive, Amherst, MA 01003 413-545-5608	1,461	85	1,376	55%	45%	Linda Enghagen, Associate dean, professional programs
3	Boston University (Questrom School of Business) ④ bu.edu/questrom	595 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215 617-353-9720	1,020	371	649	56.6%	43.4%	Karen Phillips, Assistant dean, graduate programs
4	Northeastern University (D'Amore-McKim School of Business) ③ damore-mckim.northeastern.edu	360 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115 617-373-2000	976	206	770	60%	40%	Kate Klepper, Associate dean, graduate business programs
5	Fitchburg State University ⑨ fitchburgstate.edu	160 Pearl St., Fitchburg, MA 01420 978-665-3000	828	575	253	45.9%	54.3%	Joseph McAloon, Graduate program chair
6	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Sloan School of Management) ⑤ mitsloan.mit.edu	100 Main St., Cambridge, MA 02142 617-253-1000	813	813	NA	58%	42%	Maura Herson, Assistant dean
7	Babson College (F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business) ⑥ babson.edu/academics/graduate-school	231 Forest St., Babson Park, MA 02457 781-235-1200	771	344	427	61%	39%	Keith Rollag, Dean
8	University of Massachusetts Lowell ⑦ uml.edu	72 University Ave., Lowell, MA 01854 978-934-4000	728	73	655	63%	37%	Sandra Richtermeyer, Dean, Manning School of Business
9	Boston College (Carroll School of Management) ⑧ bc.edu/mba	140 Commonwealth Ave., Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 617-552-8000	637	155	482	66.9%	33.1%	Andrew Boynton, Dean
10	Bentley University ⑩ bentley.edu	175 Forest St., Waltham, MA 02452 781-891-2000	362	90	272	52%	48%	Jill Brown, MBA director

LocalNews

THE SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE, FITCHBURG, MASSACHUSETTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

FSU has biggest female Mass. MBA enrollment

FITCHBURG — The Boston Business Journal's latest rankings of MBA programs in Massachusetts shows Fitchburg State University boasts the largest program with majority female enrollment.

The university, which offers face-to-face and 100 percent online iterations of the MBA program, was ranked fifth in the state for overall enrollment, according to the Business Journal. Of those top five, only Fitchburg State had a majority of women in its program, with more

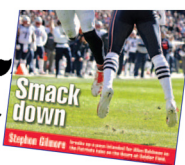
than 54 percent female students.

Professor Joseph McAloon, who chairs the MBA program at Fitchburg State, said the accelerated 17-month program and online options have helped increase enrollment in the program.

"People are increasingly seeking new options and greater flexibility as they pursue advanced degrees," McAloon said. "Eighty percent of working adults are 25 or older. A successful MBA program requires frequent start dates, affordable

tuition, a streamlined admissions process, and a high-quality product. These attributes have made our nationally accredited program, which can be completed for just \$12,500, attractive to a diverse group of students. Our graduates are enhancing their careers on a schedule that works for them, and lets them preserve a meaningful work-life balance."

To learn more about Fitchburg State's MBA options, please visit fitchburgstate.edu/mba.



Fitchburg State senior Jules Stackhouse addresses the crowd during the grand opening of FSU's video game design studio and entrepreneurship lab in the Theater Block on Main Street.

SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE PHOTOS/JOHN LOVE

Tomorrow's visions start here

Fitchburg State, city leaders celebrate opening of Theater Block game studio, entrepreneurial lab — and new downtown energy

By **Mina Corpuz**

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FITCHBURG — After remaining vacant for nearly 40 years, Main Street's Theater Block has found new life as a Fitchburg State University video game design studio and entrepreneurship lab that brings the school and community together.

"Part of what we're doing here is to create an opportunity to convene different groups of people and to have opportunities to look at problems, share ideas, and realize dreams," said university President Richard Lapidus.

University and city officials, students, and members of the community gathered Tuesday for a ribbon cutting of Phase One of renovations for the Theater Block — the completed game design studio and ideaLab.



Cutting the ribbon are, from left, state Rep. Stephan Hay, FSU senior Jules Stackhouse, FSU President Richard Lapidus and Mayor Stephen DiNatale. See slide show at sentinelandenterprise.com.

Please see **THEATER/8**



Fitchburg State senior Tyler LaValley of Newburyport talks with junior Rolinda Marcelino, right, of Brockton about the Game Studio Capstone course during the grand opening of FSU's video game design studio and entrepreneurship lab in the Theater Block on Main Street.

SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE PHOTOS/JOHN LOVE

FSU studio, lab bring fresh energy to Main St.

THEATER/From Page 1

Lapidus said university faculty and students came up with the concept for the lab as a place off-campus to connect with the community and pursue interdisciplinary work.

The game design studio is where students can get real-world experience through internships or capstone projects.

"This is really a place where I feel like I can get my ideas down," said Jules Stackhouse, a senior studying game design.

He's excited to come to the studio every day and for the opportunity the university has given him.

On the way to the ideaLab, attendees peered into the game design studio and saw about 20

students behind computers on their projects.

By the end of the semester, Stackhouse hopes he and his classmates can show off their work.

He wants to work for a video game design company or develop his own game after graduation.

Fitchburg State purchased the Theater Block in 2016 and plans to renovate it in three phases.

The university is working with NewVue Communities on the Theater Block. Construction for Phase One of the \$2.8 million

project began in the fall of 2017.

Now that the second floor is complete, they can move toward renovating the first floor to put in storefronts and rehabilitate the theater.

"This is really a place where I feel like I can get my ideas down."

Jules Stackhouse, FSU senior studying game design



FSU professor Jeff Warmouth, left, who teaches the Game Studio Capstone Course at the IdeaLab, listens with the crowd.



FSU President Richard Lapidus addresses the crowd at the ribbon cutting. Below, FSU senior Denzel Weatherspoon of Leominster talks about the game he designed called *Obsolete Souls*.

Mayor Stephen DiNatale said Fitchburg state has been a good partner, especially for economic development in downtown.

"Fitchburg does collaboration better than any other city I've encountered," he said. "We really do."

The Theater Block project is among ongoing redevelopment projects in the city, which include the Fitchburg Arts Community and City Hall renovations.

Rep. Stephan Hay said he is impressed by how much the city and university have grown over the years. He's also looking forward to work that will come from the lab.

"I can't wait to read the New York Times or watch CNN to see some idea from the Fitchburg State ideaLab germinated here," Hay said, "so get to work."

Follow Mina on Twitter @mlcorpuz.



FSU students recognized at national moot court



From left, Fitchburg State University's Matthew Murphy, Riley Grinkis, Kajahna Matos and Theresa Klobucher recently participated in the American Moot Court Association national championship.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University continued its streak of strong showings at the American Moot Court Association national championship this month, with a team finishing in the top 10 percent of teams in North America.

Riley Grinkis, Class of 2018, of Gardner, and Matthew Murphy, Class of 2020, of Milton, made it to the second day of oral arguments in the national competition, and also finished second overall in the brief writing contest.

Fitchburg State students Kajahna Matos, Class of 2020, of Lawrence, and Theresa Klobucher, Class of 2020, of Lowell, finished 10th in the brief writing competition.

The competition pits students on opposing sides of legal issues in a simulated federal appellate court setting. The students are grilled by panels of judges who analyze their arguments and question their perspectives. Fitchburg State's program, overseen by Professor Paul Weizer, has a long history of success in the competition.

Grinkis graduated from Fitchburg State in December and is headed to Northeastern University Law School on a full

scholarship. Matos and Klobucher will graduate from Fitchburg State in May and will enroll this fall at UMass Law School through the "3+3" compact whose graduates will complete bachelor's and law degrees in six years.

Grinkis was competing for the second time in the program this year.

"It is truly an honor to have represented Fitchburg State these past two years and I couldn't have asked for a more rewarding experience," she said. "I honestly cannot think of a better program or experience to prepare me for my next endeavor at Northeastern University Law School.

"Moot court has allowed for me to gain

experience in legal writing, oral argument, and case reading and briefing before entering law school, all of which will be an advantage to have experienced beforehand," she continued. "Moot court has created an environment for me to have a taste of the legal field and ensure that it was something I wanted to do and loved. I couldn't be more grateful for the knowledge and skills I've gained from participating in moot court."

Murphy, who plans to compete again in 2019, said the course is challenging but rewarding.

"The greatest lesson I've learned from moot court is that preparation

Please see **COURT/6**

FSU students recognized

COURT/From Page 3

and practice are everything,” he said. “The difference is night and day between teams that are well prepared and well-practiced and teams that just try to wing it. Our Fitchburg State teams more than held their own against some of the best teams and most prestigious schools in the country.”

Participating in the class has shown Murphy that law school will be his next educational endeavor. “Every student considering law school should take moot court,” he said. “The experience gained is invaluable.”

Matos and Klobucher, both bound for law school this fall, concurred.

“Moot court made me 100 percent prepared for law school,” said Matos. “I learned strategies to read-

ing cases and how to present an argument before the court. Being a part of the 3+3 program allowed me to be ahead of the game and pushed me to further limits in my college career. Students like me, who work two part-time jobs and are full-time students, need flexible programs like this to finish school as fast as possible.”

Klobucher, who called moot court the most challenging course of her college career, said her critical thinking skills and confidence in public speaking were enhanced greatly by the class.

“By the end of the course, I no longer doubted my ability to speak in front of an audience and no longer feared being questioned,” she said. “Moot court gave me the confidence I lacked and I am extremely grateful for Dr. Weizer’s coaching.”

Klobucher has always imagined a career in law,

and her experiences with this program confirmed her goals.

“I have always wanted to be a lawyer,” she said. “The 3+3 program was the main reason why I chose Fitchburg State. Having the opportunity to start law school a year early was an opportunity I felt I couldn’t refuse. However, it forced me to work extremely hard and I had to juggle both school work and studying for the LSAT. Balancing this work was very stressful and limited my time. However, being able to start my dream career early was my motivation throughout the semester and drove me to work harder.”

To learn more about the 3+3 program, visit fitchburgstate.edu/academics/academic-departments/economics-history-and-political-science-dept/get-a-law-degree-in-six-years/.

COMMENTARY

T & G FACULTY FORUM

What can we do to reduce our negative impact on the environment?

While Central Massachusetts has been battling regular snow and sub-zero temperatures, other areas of the country and planet have seen devastating wildfires and other types of natural disasters. A recent United Nations report shows that if nothing is changed, not only will environmental problems get worse, but they will also affect more people. What can be done by the average person to reduce our negative impact on the environment, and decrease the likelihood of natural disasters, here in Central Massachusetts, and elsewhere in the world?



**Christopher Picone,
Fitchburg State University**

Studying climate change can leave us depressed and despairing.

Climate scientists are increasingly confident about our “carbon budget,” or how much more carbon dioxide we can add to the atmosphere before global warming exceeds 1.5-2 degrees celcius. We have already warmed 1 degree celcius, so we now must leave most fossil fuels in the ground.

Yet that necessary solution feels almost impossible. Five of the ten largest corporations on Earth are fossil fuel companies, and they impede any real progress on climate change. Another challenge is that we have been spoiled by the cheap, abundant energy in fossil fuels. While the science is clear that we need to reduce emissions dramatically, global emissions have been increasing by 1-3% every year. For decades!

So what can we do?

We must rapidly transform our energy infrastructure towards renewable sources, as the Green New Deal and the MA 100% Renewable Energy Act would do. Such ambitious change requires massive, informed social movements, as well as elected leaders who value scientific reasoning.

We must also change the way we produce and eat food, which accounts for 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Those emissions are reduced by agroecological techniques such as diversified crops, perennial plants, integrated livestock, organic fertilizers, and reduced tillage. Eating less meat is also necessary.

Focusing on food develops solutions that beget more solutions. Agroecological farming builds soil organic matter which pulls carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Such farms are more resilient to droughts and extreme rainfall, which are more common as our climate changes. These farms also serve as refuges for biodiversity, require less pesticides, and improve nutrition for farming communities.

Just a few generations past, we defeated global threats of fascism by transforming our economy, trusting science, and fostering a sense of duty and self-sacrifice. If we did it once, we can do it again.

Christopher Picone, Ph.D., is a professor of ecology and environmental science at Fitchburg State University.



Fitchburg State University students, from left, Tyler Lavalley, Jaime Vasquez, and Jules Stackhouse give each other feedback on their projects Monday in the IdeaLab on Main Street, Fitchburg. [PHOTO/BRITTANY VERMILYEA]

That's the idea

FSU opens IdeaLab for game design, entrepreneurial ventures

By Paula J. Owen
Correspondent

FITCHBURG - Fitchburg State University officials envision the space in the renovated Theater Block on Main Street as a hub of intellectual capital that will attract creative minds to start their businesses in Fitchburg.

The IdeaLab, at 717 Main St. in downtown, includes interdisciplinary entrepreneurship space as well as a state-of-the-art game design studio for FSU students in that program, which is the first of its kind in a public institution in the Northeast.

Fitchburg State University is working to generate interest in the lab and has targeted prospective entrepreneurs in the area.

Though it recently opened the IdeaLab, Fitchburg State plans an official ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

FSU is completing renovations to the theater block in phases, in partnership with NewVue Communities.

In the first phase, 7,000 square feet of space on the second floor was renovated. The area includes a computer lab and co-working space for the game design program, and an entrepreneurship

center with "idea lab" and flexible event and meeting space.

Renovations also are planned to 6,000 square feet of space on the first floor that will include the reconfiguration of retail space for student-led businesses, as well as restaurant and other retail businesses. The university also plans to restore and rehabilitate the 25,000-square-foot, 1,600-seat theater for the theater program with potential use by community organizations.

FSU purchased the Main Street theater block, which was vacant for nearly 30 years, for \$350,000 in November 2016 to help revitalize the distressed section of downtown, and embarked on a multimillion-dollar renovation project.

FSU President Richard S. Lapidus said the university bought the property in an effort to expand the campus footprint downtown and create opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and entrepreneurship studies. The university is also hoping the project will make the area more appealing to students, to help keep them in the city.

Game design classes started in the space last week, and NewVue Communities, Reimagine North of Main and MassDevelopment have set up offices in the space, Mr. Lapidus said.

"It is a centralized location of activity," he said. "Part of the

vision was to establish one-stop shopping for students to understand how to start, build and grow a business. All the resources required are right there in their hands to do that."

He said the IdeaLab also gives students in the game design program an authentic experience.

"Every student puts their hands on a meaningful project that supports their interests," he said. "When we first started talking to faculty and students, there was tremendous interest to go and play, get off campus and try new ideas. As a public institution, we're responsible to leverage expertise we have here to help the community thrive. The ideaLab is for those who have interesting ideas and need expertise or a place to convene. We see it as a triangulation point for all different populations to get together and talk."

NewVue Communities Executive Director Marc Dohan said the IdeaLab will bring prospective entrepreneurs together. Expertise from his organization and the university will make it a great place for Fitchburg residents, FSU students and alumni to learn from each other and help spur Fitchburg's creative economy.

"It's taking people who have a dream and helping them realize

See IDEA, B2

IDEA

From Page B1

it,” Mr. Dohan said.

Jeff Warmouth, FSU professor in the department of communications media, said the game studio course offered in the Theater Block is a capstone graduation requirement course for FSU’s game design program. The 12-credit class that Mr. Warmouth team-teaches with colleague Jonathan Amakawa attempts to mirror the experience of working full-time in a professional game studio startup company, he said. Students are required to complete 36 to 48 hours a week of supervised and/or independent practice.

This semester 22 students are enrolled in the course, he said, working on industry-standard workstations running professional game engines and development software.

“The class started (Tuesday) morning,” Mr. Warmouth said last week. “The students will spend their first week developing pitches and prototypes for games they would like to spend the semester developing. Next Monday they will present these prototypes to the faculty, and we will determine - with their input - which projects to green-light. We will then organize into game development teams.”

One of the main goals of the course is to enable students to transition to professionals, he said.

“The Theater Block is an excellent satellite location for this to happen,” he said. “It is just far enough from the main campus to get students out of their comfort zone and to start thinking like professional game developers. We hope that they will have conversations with the other users of the

IdeaLab, and begin thinking about business plans.”

Each semester, students decide how they will manage copyright of their work, Mr. Warmouth explained, and so far, all students have opted for the MIT license that allows anyone to modify, release, distribute, publish or sell the product.

“The idea is that a project that is co-developed by a large team should have a relatively permissive license,” he said. “If any team members wished to take the project created in game studio and rework it and add content, they could do so and then sell the project. For students trying to break into the industry, it makes more sense for their works to be available for potential employers to see, rather than behind a paywall.”

This year is the fifth time FSU has offered the game studio program, Mr. Warmouth said, though the first time in its new permanent location in the Theater Block.

“We are the only bachelor’s degree in game design in a public university in New England,” he added.

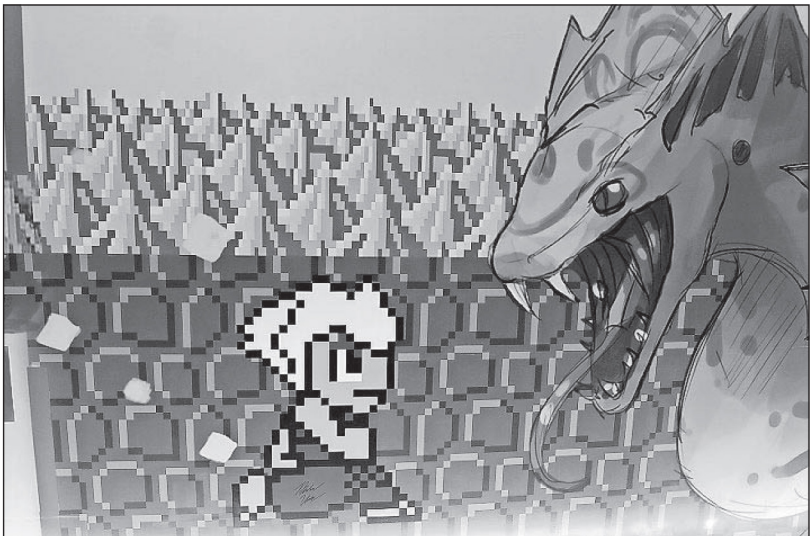
FSU sees itself as an anchor in the community, Mr. Lapidus said, and the additional visibility on Main Street “can’t hurt.”

“A couple of years from now we’ll realize our dream of opening the theater,” he said.

Architects have produced renderings of the proposed theater and engineers have gone through the theater, Mr. Lapidus said, and confirmed the project’s viability, suitability and safety.

“It’s solid as a rock,” he said.

Consultants are helping with philanthropy and financing, he said, that will be “cobbled together” and include historic and new market tax credits.



The ceiling of the IdeaLab in Fitchburg is adorned with a mural displaying various styles of digital game artwork. [PHOTO/BRITTANY VERMILYEA]

EDITORIAL

For gateway cities to thrive, partnerships matter

Gateway cities face challenges unique to their roles as welcoming communities for new arrivals in this country from all over the world.



At the same time, these old mill towns strive to reinvent themselves into economic engines of the 21st century.

And while success in accomplishing these daunting tasks may vary, Fitchburg and Lowell have been able to forge working relationships with the higher education community, to the benefit of both parties.

The phase-one ribbon-cutting earlier this week of Fitchburg State University's renovation of Main Street's Theater Block serves as the latest example of that town-gown partnership.

After sitting virtually vacant for nearly two decades, the Theater Block initially will house FSU's video game design studio and entrepreneurship lab.

When the university purchased the Theater Block in November 2016, it announced plans to rehab the structure in three stages, to bring students and foot traffic downtown.

Construction for the \$2.8 million project's first phase, funded by the university's operational resources, began in the fall of 2017. That entailed stripping the roughly 6,000-square-foot space to the studs.

FSU President Richard Lapidus said the Idea Center will provide support and planning for students and community members interested in entrepreneurship. For example, game design students will get real-world experience through internships.

With the second floor completed, first-floor renovations will commence, rehabilitating the theater and providing storefront space.

Mayor Stephen DiNatale

praised FSU for its role in spurring economic development downtown.

Fitchburg's experience with FSU mirrors Middlesex Community College's effort to transform an historic building in downtown Lowell into a home for its theater, music and dance program. The 1876 Rialto Building, once a Boston & Maine railroad depot, debuted as the Richard and Nancy Donahue Family Academic Arts Center last September.

The multi-purpose structure, which once housed theaters and bowling alleys, dodged demolition in 1989 thanks to the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission. The Lowell National Historical Park renovated the exterior. MCC took ownership in 2008.

The renovated center features a large, egg-shaped structure with a 190-seat proscenium theater, 103-seat music recital hall and 900-square-foot dance studio.

Of the \$21 million spent, about \$13 million came from the state Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance and about \$8 million came through the college.

That funding couldn't have occurred without the city's Statehouse delegation and other stakeholders. As City Manager — and former state senator — Eileen Donoghue said at the unveiling of this inviting new gateway, "it really does take a village" to move something of this scope from concept to fruition.

And now Fitchburg State University, like MCC and UMass Lowell, have experienced the concrete results that come from being a partner in its city's urban revitalization.

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Among those at Fitchburg State University talking about Title IX were Laura Bayless, left, the vice president of student affairs, and Amanda Sapienza, the Fitchburg Anti-Violence Education co-coordinator.

SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE/JOHN LOVE

Title IX changes? FSU officials say they're ready

By **Mina Corpuz**

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FITCHBURG — As the U.S. Department of Education considers changes to the law that lays out how schools investigate sexual assault and harassment, Fitchburg State University officials say the school has built a system that supports survivors, educates students and focuses on prevention.

“We’re making very good strides,” said

Vice President of Student Affairs Laura Bayless. “We have all the right people at the table to address the problem.”

Campus sexual assault and misconduct are often addressed through Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex for education programs and activities that receive federal funding.

Fitchburg State has an investigative

model to handle complaints, a policy that it shares with the other state universities. It addresses sexual violence such as rape, assault, domestic violence as well as stalking and harassment.

Students can file a formal complaint with the Title IX coordinator, campus police, residence life, and other university staff. There is the option to report anonymously and on

Please see **TITLE IX/5**



Dean of Students Affairs Bill Cummings, left, and Robert Hynes, the co-coordinator of the Fitchburg Anti-Violence Education program, discuss Title IX at Fitchburg State.

SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE/JOHN LOVE

FSU makes 'strides' to combat sexual assaults, harrassment

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behalf of another person.

Investigations include a private interview with the person who filed the complaint, witnesses, and the person who allegedly committed the act, according to university policy.

Alternative dispute resolution is also possible.

Kristen Murphy, the university's Title IX coordinator, said there is an individualized approach to handling complaints and providing accommodations for survivors.

Bayless said she wants to make sure that the university is doing what it can to help all students involved in the process whether they are the one who filed the complaint and or is the subject of it.

In November, the U.S. Department of Education proposed changes to Title IX.

"That starts with having clear policies and fair processes that every student can rely on," Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said in a statement. "Every survivor of sexual violence must be taken seriously, and every student accused of sexual misconduct must know that guilt is not predetermined."

Schools would have to respond to all known reports of sexual harassment and investigate formal complaints.

The proposed rules would require live hearings, written notice of allegations with the opportunity to review evidence, and the right cross-examine.

DeVos's office is collecting public comments about the proposed rules.

The American Council on Education wrote a 33-page letter to the education secretary expressing concerns that about 60 educational organizations signed.

Among those are groups that some Massachusetts state universities, University of Massachusetts schools, and public community colleges belong.

A main concern expressed in the letter was having live hearings and cross examination.

Another is how the changes could require schools to dismiss complaints that don't fall under the definitions in Title IX, like if a sexual assault involving two students happened at an off-campus house owned by a fraternity or while students were abroad through a school program.

Fitchburg State officials said they are

watching for any changes to Title IX.

In the meantime, it is focusing on education about sexual assault and harassment and prevention efforts.

Amanda Sapienza and Robert Hynes are co-coordinators of the Fitchburg Anti-Violence program at the university, which was started in 2010 through a Department of Justice grant.

In the past year, Fitchburg State implemented a program for all incoming students that teaches students about sexual harassment and assault.

Sapienza said in April, FAVE is planning for Sexual Assault Awareness Month that could include Title IX programming.

She and Hynes have noticed that students are more aware about sexual assault and are finding ways to address the issue, like by participating in events on campus like Take Back the Night and helping organize exhibits like "What Were You Wearing?" to share stories of people who have been sexually assaulted.

"People want to have the conversation and be involved," Hynes said.

When the FAVE program began, there was a slight spike in the number of complaints, Cummings said, which reflects how some students have felt comfortable reporting sexual harassment or assault, crimes that are often underreported.

"We see students are more willing to engage in the process," he said.

Fitchburg State University Police received 11 rape reports between 2015 and 2017, according to the university's most recent annual security and fire report. Most of the crimes occurred on campus.

In that same period, there were 13 reported domestic violence crimes and two reported crimes relating to dating violence, according to the report.

It also included five reported crimes for fondling and 33 for stalking.

There has also been more awareness about Title IX and what it means for students.

When Cummings began as dean about a decade ago, people didn't know what the law was. Now students are coming in aware of their rights under the law and are paying attention to federal policy that could change it, he said.

Some students reached out to his office about submitting letters to the U.S. Department of Education.

Follow Mina on Twitter @mlcorpuz

Fitchburg State to celebrate women in arts

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University's observations of Women's History Month continue next week with a showcase celebrating women in the arts.

"Women in the Arts" will be celebrated at 4 p.m.

Thursday, March 21 in Kent Recital Hall in the Conlon Fine Arts Building, 367 North St. Admission is free and open to the public. The program will feature music, visual art, poetry, and film by women from the university community, including students, faculty, staff, and administration.

"We're celebrating the creative force of women artists, including exhibiting paintings, musical performances, poetry readings, and short film screenings, all in one place, and for free," said Professor Jonathan Harvey, a member of the committee organizing Fitchburg State's month-long series of events.

The event is co-sponsored by Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; Feminist Conversations; and the Department of Economics, History and Political Science at Fitchburg State University.

Performances, lectures highlight Women's History Month at FSU

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University will observe Women's History Month with a series of talks and performances highlighting the work of students as well as guest lecturers including Boston Globe associate editor and columnist Renée Graham.

The observations begin with International Women's Day on Tuesday, March 5, when empowerment-themed student organizations will make presentations from 1 to 2 p.m. in room G01 of Hammond Hall, 160 Pearl St.

Participating organizations include Feminist Conversations, Fitchburg Anti-Violence Education, the Gay Straight Alliance, Sigma Sigma Sigma, Phi Sigma Sigma,



Graham

professor Viera Lorencova's intercultural communication class and Professor Ozge Ozay's political economy of gender class.

The International Women's Day observations are co-sponsored by Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; the International Education Office; Communications Media

Alpha Sigma Tau, and World Integrated Nations.

The event continues at 2 p.m. with the "Herstory" discussion circle facilitated by students in Pro-

Department; and the student club Feminist Conversations.

Also at 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 5 acclaimed novelist, playwright, poet, and journalist Dacia Maraini will discuss her work in the Falcon Hub at Hammond Hall, 160 Pearl St.

The daughter of a Sicilian princess and a Florentine ethnologist, Maraini was interned in a Japanese concentration camp with her family for refusing to recognize Mussolini's Republic of Salo. She went on to become one of the clearest voices for social justice of her generation. During a life of world travel, she has written novels,

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Performances, lectures highlight Women's History Month at FSU

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short stories, plays, several investigative studies, and collections of poetry and essays, and her works have been translated into more than 30 languages and adapted for award-winning films.

Mariani's talk is sponsored by the Center for Italian Culture and the Division of Arts & Sciences.

Music, poetry, dance and more will be featured at Women in The Arts: A Celebration for Women's History Month at 4 p.m. Thursday, March 21 in Kent Recital Hall in the Conlon Fine Arts Building, 367 North St. The event is co-sponsored by Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; Feminist Conversations; and the Department of Economics, History and Political Science.

The annual Lead(h)ership Conference will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. Friday, March 29 in Hammond Hall. The theme for this year's event is "Breaking Boundaries," and is co-sponsored by Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Feminist Conversations. Feminist Conversations, a recently formed student group on campus, has designed this conference as a series of workshops in which participants will literally break barriers in their explo-


ration of contemporary gender-linked issues. Aligned with the theme of the conference, this year's sessions will challenge traditional conference formats, and offer instead practical, interactive, and collaborative sessions in which attendees will be active and engaged participants focused interviewing skills, brand management, and self-care. While there will be sign-ups to reserve a spot, the registration process will not be prohibitive; students will be able to walk into any of the sessions. This event is open to anyone who would like to attend, regardless of their gender practice or identification. Please email femcon@student.fitchburg.edu to register.

Boston Globe Associate Editor and Columnist Renée Graham will deliver the annual Nancy Kelly Memorial Lecture at 4 p.m. Thursday, April 11 in Presidents' Hall in the Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave. "Women on the Hill: 2018 and Beyond" is co-sponsored by the university's Economics, History and Political Science Department; the English Studies Department; Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; and Feminist Conversations.

The university's Women's History Month observances are organized by a committee including

MARCH 5, 2019

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY




MARCH 5, 2019 1:00 - 3:30 PM
HAMMOND HALL G01

1-2 PM: Women's Empowerment-themed Student Organization Fair featuring tables by Feminist Conversations, Gay Straight Alliance, FAVE Club, Sigma Sigma Sigma, PhiSigma Sigma, Alpha Sigma Tau & World Integrated Nations

2-3:30 PM: "Herstory" discussion circle with international students co-facilitated by students from Dr. Viera Lorencova's Intercultural Communication class and Dr. Ozge Ozay's Political Economy of Gender class

Co-sponsored by Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, International Education Office and Communication Media Department

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FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

faculty members DeMisty Bellinger-Delfled (English Studies), Katharine Covino-Poutasse (English Studies), Viera Lorencova (Communications Media), Ozge Ozay (Economics, History and Political Science), Jonathan Harvey (Humanities) and student Kaitlynn Chase, from the Feminist Conversations club.