

'A SPECIAL PLACE'

Lapidus to retire as Fitchburg State president

He's departing at end of academic year

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus announced Monday that he will be retiring at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year. Lapidus joined Fitchburg State in July of 2015 and is the university's 11th leader.

Lapidus has led school during the creation of new academic programs such as the expansion of online offerings, has deepened ties between the campus and the city, and has guided the University through the challenges of the global pandemic.

During his time as president, Fitchburg State's institutional accreditation was renewed and a new strategic plan was adopted.

"From the day I first interviewed for the position on campus, I knew that Fitchburg State was a special place, and it has been an honor to have contributed to its positive evolution," Lapidus said. "This is a campus of dedicated individuals who care deeply about our students, and as I have said many times, each of you makes a difference every day and for that I can't be more appreciative."

C. Deborah Phillips, chair of the Board of Trustees, said it has been an honor and a privilege to serve during Lapidus' tenure. She cited his navigation of the Univer-

LAPIDUS » PAGE 8



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus, who joined Fitchburg State in July 2015, will retire in 2024.

Lapidus

FROM PAGE 1

sity during the pandemic as an example of his contributions to the Fitchburg State community.

"During the COVID-19 health crisis, President Lapidus demonstrated strong and compassionate leadership as the University faced uncharted territory," Phillips said. "Because of his foresight in upgrading the university's technology platforms in the years prior to the COVID crisis, Fitchburg State was uniquely positioned for the virtual teaching and learning environment essential for the campus community to function during those uncertain days and months."

The Board of Trustees chair said that, under the leadership of Lapidus, Fitchburg State didn't just

survive COVID but was able to also thrive.

"Not only did the university function during COVID, but new ways of serving the student body were developed, new programs were implemented, and even new traditions were established," said Phillips. "For nine years President Lapidus has led Fitchburg State with calmness and agility. His intuitive and gracious leadership will be missed, but he leaves the University well positioned to face the challenges ahead."

A comprehensive national search will be undertaken for Lapidus' successor.

Founded in 1894, Fitchburg State has more than 30 undergraduate programs and 22 master's degree programs; in total the school serves 6,000 full and part-time students. Learn more at fitchburgstate.edu.

Fitchburg State president to retire



PHOTO | COURTESY OF FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus will retire at the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

By Timothy Doyle

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus will retire at the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

"From the day I first interviewed for the position on campus, I knew that Fitchburg State was a special place, and it has been an honor to have contributed to its positive evolution," President Lapidus wrote in a letter to the campus community included in a Tuesday press release from the school. "This is a campus of dedicated individuals who care deeply about our students, and as I have said many times, each of you makes a difference every day and for that I can't be more appreciative."

In the letter, Lapidus said he intends to spend more time with family and friends and pursue interests outside of the university. He was hired by the University in July 2015.

During his tenure at FSU, he saw the school through the COVID-19 pandemic, launched a new strategic plan, and worked to deepen ties between the City of Fitchburg and the university.

Lapidus was named a member of [WBJ Power 50 Class of 2022](#) for the effect he has had on the redevelopment of Downtown Fitchburg, of which FSU has played a crucial role in redeveloping older buildings, particularly along the [theater block at 717 Main St.](#), where it has installed new school facilities. One of the focuses of the school's efforts has been the restoration of the Main Street theater.

Fitchburg State will undertake a comprehensive national search for a new president, according to the Tuesday press release.

Fitchburg State is the seventh-largest college in Central Massachusetts, as ranked by 2022-23 full-time enrollment, according to the WBJ Research Department. The school has 6,000 full- and part-time students enrolled, according to the Tuesday press release. Its endowment is \$24.4 million.



EDUCATION

Fitchburg State receives Moderna research grant

Moderna Charitable Grant to support student researchers

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University will launch a community of research fellows mentored by faculty this fall with a newly-announced grant from the Moderna Charitable Foundation.

The University's Biology and Chemistry departments will lead the effort, targeting traditionally underserved populations to engage students in mentorship and high-impact practices as an undergraduate research community. Students will also be paid stipends for their time in the program.

"We are grateful for the support of the Moderna Charitable Foundation for this initiative that will lead to meaningful educational experiences for our students," Fitchburg State President Richard Lapidus said. "The faculty mentorship and instruction that is built into this program will encourage student success while fostering the next generation of researchers."

The program is designed to help students navigate a post-COVID higher education landscape by increasing the retention and graduation rates of traditionally underserved populations.

"We are grateful for funding that allows us to expand our capacity to mentor students through a unique, powerful program, supporting students' skill development, career exploration, and financial needs," said Fitchburg State Dean of Health and Natural Sciences Jennifer Hanselman.

Receiving a stipend and academic credit, the student research fellows will work 10 hours per week, receiving one-on-one mentorship and instruction on cutting-edge techniques in their fields of interest.

Over the life of the grant, a total of 36 students (six per semester) will each be paired with a faculty mentor to conduct credit-bearing research. The students in the program will be paid for all aspects of their work, including performing experiments in the lab, analyzing data, preparing for weekly presentations, and career development activities.

At the end of the spring 2024 semester, the 12 students in the inaugural cohort will present their work at the university's annual Undergraduate Conference for Research and Creative Practice, as well as a statewide research conference.

Courtesy Fitchburg State University

EDUCATION EVOLVES

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IGNITES CREATIVITY



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

The North Worcester County Symphony Orchestra and Fitchburg State University recently started a new partnership. Seated from left are Associate Professor/Concert Band Director Amy McGlothlin and Associate Professor/Director of Choir Jonathan Harvey. Standing from left, are Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Patricia Marshall, NWCSO Vice President Tinson Lam, NWCSO Conductor Jared Bloch, NWCSO Clerk Olivia Minchello, Jason Cote, Logistic at NWCSO, Joshua Sabourin, FSU Concert Band member, NWCSO President Michael Hoffmann and Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus.

Partnership benefits North Worcester Orchestra and Fitchburg State

By Sara Arnold
Correspondent

Fitchburg State University and the North Worcester County Symphony Orchestra have formed a new partnership that both the school and regional musical performance group are very excited about.

“This partnership is going to ignite a fire throughout the college community and our corner of the music world,” said Michael Hoffmann, President and Executive Director of North Worcester County Symphony Orchestra (NWCSO).

In March of 2023, Fitchburg State University Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choirs Jonathan Harvey had learned that the NWCSO was searching for collaborators and reached out to eventually form the partnership that is now getting off the ground.

Part of the orchestra’s mission is to provide educational opportunities to music students in the area, as well as to reach and fos-

“This collaboration will create learning opportunities for students as well as providing another source of cultural enrichment for the campus and wider communities.”

— Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus

ter new relationships with underserved parts of the community via professional classical music, like students on the Fitchburg campus and area residents.

It also fits the university’s goals of bringing the community together on campus.

Weston Auditorium is a large, state-of-the-art performance venue for the orchestra and it already has percussion instruments and a new Steinway Model D grand piano on site. The performing partnership with Fitchburg State’s Humanities Department, concert and chamber choirs, and concert band was already in the works,

so it was a natural progression.

“I am always seeking opportunities for our music students to work with new musicians and new venues... Students tend to love these collaborative opportunities — to make music next to someone new always yields growth, and often new friends,” Harvey said.

The choir and band students will be performing with the orchestra throughout the concert season, which will be scheduled around the university’s academic schedule so both the needs of the college and the orchestra are met.

“Benefit to the music students at Fitchburg State will be

tremendous. Collaboration is all about learning and growing from working with each other, so it’s a great learning experience to see how different organizations function, how different artists approach their craft, and to perform alongside new and different folks,” Harvey said.

He continued, “It’s always exciting to bring the wider community onto Fitchburg State’s campus — as a regional public university, we strive to be a resource and a hub of cultural activity. Finally, I am optimistic about future professional learning for our music students, such as student interns working with the orchestra on marketing and publicity, non-profit management, and other experiential learning opportunities in arts entrepreneurship.”

The benefits to the orchestra include community engagement, increased visibility of the orchestra in the region (and in a new city where they haven’t previously performed), diversi-

Orchestra

FROM PAGE 1

fied musician demographics, and nurturing a passion for music on campus and in the wider community. They also save money with the instruments already available for use at Fitchburg State and get to perform in a large, modern auditorium with excellent acoustics.

“This collaboration will create learning opportunities for students as well as providing another source of cultural enrichment for the campus and wider communities. We want members of the community to feel a sense of ownership and belonging on our campus, and hosting performances is just one means of accomplishing that,” said Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus.

It’s also about accessibility of the performing arts, for students and the community. Student musicians should be able to see and perform with profes-

sional musicians, students of other stripes should be able to enrich themselves with live music, and they shouldn’t have to travel long distances to do that. Tickets are free of charge to students, staff, and faculty of Fitchburg State so there is no financial barrier, which there often is with other live music.

Community members should also be able to consistently attend local performances at affordable prices.

“Live performances of classical music are very important because you are there in the moment to experience music in a way that can not be replicated through tv programs, YouTube, Apple Music or other recordings,” said Camie Hoffman, NWCSO Director of Education and Outreach, retired teacher, and Fitchburg State University alumni. “Live performances are where the real sound is heard. It is a far more powerful and meaningful experience; there is nothing like it!”

Their first concert to-

gether will be “A Symphonic Christmas Carol” on Dec. 8 and 9 at 7:30 p.m. in Weston Auditorium on the Fitchburg State campus. Fitchburg State students, staff, and faculty are free with valid college ID. Tickets for the public are VIP seating for \$30, adults are \$25, seniors are \$20, and non-Fitchburg State student tickets are \$15. All seats are reserved.

It will be an evening of music based on Charles Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol” which features music of Christmas past, present & future.

In that concert, they will be playing “music of the future” with a portion of the show being five selections that reimagine old classics. Most of the pieces will be in the style of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra which incorporates rock and roll music into the songs, providing a different sound for the audience to enjoy.

There will be up to 300 musicians on the stage at once during the performance. Additional ensembles such as the Greater Gardner Community Choir, Nashoba Valley Chorale, Westford Chorus, and local rock band Perfect Alibi will also be participating. They intend it to be an annual tradition.

“Music is by nature a collaborative effort and to be able to bring all of these performers together is very exciting,” said Jared Bloch, musical director of MWCSO.

The logistics of getting so many musicians together have been daunting, but the orchestra and the university will be ready, with lots of rehearsals and pre-planning for easy musical and physical transitions between numbers in the show.

“This is a huge group performing together, but it is worth it through every challenge due to the opportunity it will create for all involved, musicians and audience members alike,” said Olivia Minchello, NWCSO board member.

“Rarely in our region do you see concerts of this magnitude”, Hoffmann added, who said it would be a “holiday spectacular.”

The university has public funding, endowments, and its own capital campaigns, but NWCSO relies on financial support from people and businesses in the community to continue to thrive. They would love to broaden their financial base with donations, sponsorships, and other monetary assistance for their future endeavors and contribute to their success.

NWCSO will still be partnering with Leominster City Hall and the mayor, with their main concert season taking place there; they are also attempting to renovate the auditorium in city hall with grants and the Massachusetts Cultural Council to make it more accommodating to the performing arts.

Their ancillary concert series will be at venues throughout Leominster and other local towns.

“It is our goal in the future to also collaborate with high school [and college] bands, choruses, and other professional orchestras throughout Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire,” Mike Hoffmann said, as well as other musicians, groups, venues, and organizations.

To contact NWCSO, collaborate, donate, or buy tickets for any of their concerts, please go to nwcsorchestra.org.



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FITCHBURG STATE

Exploring the Italian immigrant experience

By Cheryl A. Cuddahy
Correspondent

FITCHBURG » The Center for Italian Culture at Fitchburg State University will present two film screenings by award-winning directors Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee in November as part of its year-long exploration of the Italian immigrant experience.

The series, titled “Nuovo Mondo: A Century of Migrations from and to Italy”, will present a screening of acclaimed director Martin Scorsese’s documentary “Italianamerican” at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 9, in Ellis White Lecture Hall, Hammond Hall, Fitchburg State University, 610 Pearl St. Admission is free and open to the public.

“Italianamerican” (1974) features the director’s parents, Catherine and Charles Scorsese, who reflect on their experiences as the children of Italian immigrants to New York City.

The series will continue with a screening of Spike Lee’s celebrated “Do the Right Thing” (1989) at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 30, also in Ellis White Lecture Hall, Hammond Hall. Admission is free and open to the public.

Lee’s classic comedy-drama explores the sim-



COURTESY OF FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

A free screening of Martin Scorsese’s documentary “Italianamerican” (1974) will be shown at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 9, at Fitchburg State University. The film features the director’s parents, Catherine and Charles Scorsese, who reflect on their experiences as the children of Italian immigrants to New York City.

merging racial tensions in a Brooklyn neighborhood between African-American residents and the Italian-American owners of a local pizzeria, culminating in violence and tragedy on a hot summer day.

In addition, the Fitchburg State University Archives and Special Collections, the CIC, and the Fitchburg Historical So-

cety have collaborated to present a digital exhibit on Fitchburg’s Italian-American neighborhood, the Patch. All materials were sourced from the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library, the Center for Italian Culture Archives, and the Fitchburg Historical Society.

This digital exhibit was created by Ross Caputi, archival assistant at the Cen-

ter for Italian Culture Archives, and Asher Jackson, archivist at Fitchburg State University, in collaboration with the Fitchburg Historical Society. It can be viewed at FitchburgState.libguides.com/cicarchives.

For more information on The Center for Italian Culture, and the Nuovo Mondo series, visit at fitchburg-state.edu/nuovo-mondo.