A DECADE of TRANSFORMATION

Fitchburg State University
President Robert V. Antonucci
ROBERT V. ANTONUCCI: A DECADE OF CHANGE AT FSU

When I first arrived on this campus 50 years ago, a first-year, first-generation college student commuting from my parents’ Leominster home, I certainly never dreamed I would one day have the honor of serving as president of the institution. Not a day goes by that I don’t consider myself fortunate to have been given this opportunity.

Much has changed here since my days as an undergraduate, but not the university’s underlying mission. Not the role it plays in the lives of its students and graduates. Not the impact it has on the city and the region.

We have had a great run this past decade, and I am proud of what has been accomplished. When I say “we” I refer to an extensive list: students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, corporations, civic and business leaders. All have devoted themselves to our cause, and that cause is of great import. We are educating the leaders of tomorrow, offering opportunity to those in need, serving our region, volunteering our support for critical services, enhancing the arts and serving as an economic engine. I am deeply thankful to the countless ambassadors who have championed our goals.

The campus has been transformed — physically, academically and attitudinally. There is excitement in the air, a sense that our recent accomplishments portend future distinction. And the list of accomplishments is impressive: new buildings and renovations, additional green space and parking, gathering areas indoors and out, technology enhancements, enrollment increases, new classrooms and laboratories, and a successful $12 million capital campaign. Transcending all is enhancement of the central activity to which we are fundamentally devoted — teaching and learning.

Particularly impressive has been our ability to thrive in the midst of a long-term recession. It is testimony to our collective strength and commitment.

On the cusp of our 120th anniversary, I can’t help but think of the countless men and women whose vision and tenacity paved the way for us. We celebrate their legacy and pledge to build upon it in a bold and thoughtful manner. We stand strong, united and filled with optimism as we face the challenges, and seize the rewards, of a new era.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci
President

In time of transformation, Fitchburg State stays true to its mission

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Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci
President
Antonucci presides over the rise of FSU

By Alana Melanson
amelanson@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — To President Robert V. Antonucci, Fitchburg State University will always be “the number one state university.”

“Any president that doesn’t believe their school’s the best shouldn’t be there,” he said on a late May afternoon, while proudly showing off the recently renovated Hammond Campus Center and its student-friendly amenities.

Antonucci, 67, also knows that statements like these have to be backed up — with outstanding faculty, curriculum and retention rates, among other criteria — and he has.

His 10 years at the university have been marked by vast academic and infrastructure improvements, rising enrollment among students and increased full-time faculty, and an ever-blossoming relationship with the local community.

Part of his love for the community comes from the fact that he grew up in it.

“You never forget your roots,” he said. “My father said, ‘Never forget where you came from.’ It’s stuck with me for years.”

Antonucci grew up in a triple-decker on Lancaster Street in Leominster in a tight-knit, Italian neighborhood, and is still close to his childhood friends. A surprise later in his parents’ lives, he was the youngest of four boys, who ranged from 13 to 20 years older than he.

Antonucci’s parents were of modest means. Before he was born, they had owned a restaurant in downtown Leominster that they lived above. Following the fire that destroyed the building in the early 1940s, John (formerly Giovanni; he changed his name when he immigrated) and Josie Antonucci moved their family to Lancaster Street. By day the parents worked at the former Star Manufacturing Co. and at night his father operated a barbershop out of his home. To this day, there is still a barbershop attached to 321 Lancaster St.

Antonucci said his father instilled in him a strong work ethic — he had his first job at age 12, sweeping his church — as well as a sense of punctuality and taking care of others.

Antonucci’s family was a patriotic one. His brother Anthony served in the Army and his brother Vincent in the Navy during World War II. The brother closest to him in age, William, a Marine, was killed in the Korean War at the age of 19, when Antonucci was only 7.

He met his wife, Jeanne, who also grew up in Leominster in an Italian family with an immigrant father, during their high school years.

Jeanne Antonucci, who will celebrate 47 years of marriage with her husband on June 25, says he hasn’t changed over all these years.

“When he was a teenager, he was exactly the same as he is today — high energy, in charge, trying to move something to the next level,” she said.

Antonucci had planned to go to UMass Amherst to study business, but his father became sick the summer before he was to leave for college. Having been taught the importance of family, he decided to stay home to take care of him.

Fitchburg State, then known as the State College at Fitchburg, was the only

Please see ATONUCCI/D4
Family strong influence on Antonucci’s life, work

Robert V. Antonucci: A Decade of Change at FSU

Fitchburg State University President Robert V. Antonucci talks to commuter students at Percival Auditorium in September. Enhancing the student experience has been one of the hallmarks of Antonucci’s administration.

ANTONUCCI/From Page D3

school he could afford to attend. His parents encouraged him to further his education, and he became the first member of his family to attend college. At the time, the only programs the school offered were education and nursing, and he didn’t want to become a nurse. He earned his bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the school, which changed names while he was attending, so his master’s degree came from Fitchburg State College.

Robert and Jeanne Antonucci have held a true partnership throughout their lives and careers, as he worked his way up in education and as she moved away from teaching and entered the banking industry.

“We’ve never discouraged each other from taking on another adventure,” she said.

“If you keep the students at the center of what you’re doing, you can’t go wrong,” he said.

Antonucci said the academic programs come first and foremost.

“Facilities are great. You need them. They’re tools,” he said. “But the academic programs are key.”

Working with faculty and administrators, academic programs were enhanced, curriculum redesigned, new labs put in for programs like nursing, and more full-time professors and instructors hired across the content areas.

The result has been higher test scores, as evidenced by the high achievements of nursing graduates. Between 97 and 100 percent have passed the national licensure exam the last five years.

The additional faculty has also enabled the university to maintain reasonable class sizes — the university has a student-teacher ratio of 16 to 1, Antonucci said. All of the classes are also taught by qualified full-time or adjunct professors, he said — no graduate students teach at Fitchburg State.

New subject areas have also been added to academic

Please see ANTONUCCI/D6
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President Robert V. Antonucci welcomes people into the new Mara Village 8 dormitory at Fitchburg State University in October 2009. From left are Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong; Edward Adelman, executive director of the Massachusetts State College Building Authority; Peter Alcock, vice chairman of the Massachusetts State College Building Authority; Antonucci; Gregg Lisciotti, chairman of Fitchburg State College Board of Trustees; and state Rep. Stephen DiNatale.

Antonucci builds bridges between FSU, community

While the entire university is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, many of its programs — such as business, nursing, education — have secondary accreditation by their respective professional associations, something Antonucci said was started with the support of the board of trustees when he first became president.

“It’s just another seal of approval that your program meets the needs of students,” he said.

For majors such as communications media, Antonucci said, the seal of approval comes in the form of high job-placement and job-retention rates among graduates.

He said staying current in academics and technology has been a key part of student and graduate success.

“We can’t sit back and say, ‘We’re all set. We don’t need to do anything differently,’” Antonucci said. “Students change, academic programs change, content changes, faculty needs change — and it’s important for us as an institution to be the best in class.”

When the state colleges in Salem and Bridgewater called for change to become universities, Antonucci led the charge for the rest of the smaller state colleges to receive the same designation. Fitchburg State had always had the ingredients to be a university, he said.

President V. Robert Antonucci: A Decade of Change at FSU

offerings, including game design and chemistry.

Please see ANTONUCCI/D7
FSU fosters welcoming atmosphere for students

ROBERT V. ANTONUCCI: A DECADE OF CHANGE AT FSU

ANTONUCCI/From Page D6

university, he said, it just needed a push. Antonucci said the university label “better described who we were and what we did,” as well as offered students a benefit in terms of competition with graduates of other institutions.

One of the first infrastructure projects he took on when he came on board was to create a bridge from the center of campus to the Holmes Dinning Hall, providing safe passage over North Street to the residence halls located on the other side, making it more accessible for the handicapped and tying the campus together.

Antonucci noted that when he first arrived on campus as president, he didn’t see students out and about, hanging out on campus. That made him realize he needed to give students and faculty comfortable places to congregate, leading to a policy of installing chairs, tables and benches anywhere they could be fit, indoors and out.

The university also helped to clean up the adjacent neighborhood and some existing substandard housing. Antonucci said, purchasing about 25 houses on and around North Street and connecting the campus to Main Street. Some houses were torn down to make way for new structures and parking lots to serve the campus, while some were renovated into university housing.

Antonucci said neighborhood cleanup and crime reduction have made more parents feel comfortable with their children attending the school. He said the efforts to not just “blacktop or brick everything over” and to add trees and small parks throughout the campus are part of giving it a small New England campus feel in an urban area — and those aesthetics have also helped with recruiting.

“One once people get here, they love it,” Antonucci said.

He’s helped to make Weston Auditorium a community resource through modernizing and making it handicapped accessible, and allowing community groups to use it for functions — something else that gets people on campus and helps to spread the word.

Throughout Antonucci’s time as president, dorms have increased to 15 facilities, through both new construction and renovations of properties the university acquired; a portion of Highland Street has been shut down to through-traffic and turned into a promenade for students, connecting the academic and residential sides of campus; and the Hammond Campus Center has undergone a transformation that has truly made it the hub of the university.

The way the center had been built previously, it blocked Main Street with a brick wall, he said. Its new glass facade is more welcoming, Antonucci said.

He learned from the business world that branding is important, and that people have to feel good about the institution in order to sell it — and that begins with the first impression.

When Antonucci was a student, the admissions office was located in the basement of the Sanders Administration Building, and trucks traveled in and out of the heart of the campus to the neighboring Anthony building, which served as a warehouse and maintenance shop.

Please see ANTONUCCI/D9

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TEN THINGS YOU DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENT ROBERT V. ANTONUCCI

10. He has traveled the world, but now lives just a few miles from where he grew up — on Lancaster Street in Leominster.

9. He is one of the few “triple Falcons” on the planet — those who have earned three degrees from Fitchburg State: bachelor’s, master’s and an honorary doctorate.

8. His wife, Jeanne, also has undergraduate and graduate degrees from Fitchburg State, bringing the couple’s total to five.

7. He has held a near-record number of positions in education: public school teacher, administrator, principal, assistant superintendent, superintendent, state commissioner of education, university faculty member and university president.

6. Favorite activity: spending time on Cape Cod with his family.

5. His two children started out in business but eventually followed his footsteps into education: son John Antonucci is superintendent of schools in Westwood, and daughter Karen Karson is principal of an elementary school in Falmouth.

4. The Antonuccis have five grandchildren — all boys.

3. He is notoriously selective about his diet, and has been known to travel to foreign lands with stashes of peanut butter crackers. And he eats one meatball with his breakfast each morning.

2. He was president of one of the first and largest online colleges: Harcourt Higher Education.

And the No. 1 Thing You Probably Don’t Know About President Antonucci: The “V” in Robert V. Antonucci stands for “victory.” He was born on Aug. 15, 1945, also known as Victory over Japan Day, which ended World War II.

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President Robert Antonucci
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and success.
To make admissions more student friendly and reduce the truck traffic, the university purchased a warehouse near Coolidge Park and moved those operations there, and in 2010 turned Anthony into a one-stop Student Services Center, where students can visit admissions, register for classes and pay their bills.

Around the same time, work began on the new Science Center, set to open this summer, a $57 million project that Antonucci says was directed by faculty and student needs. It includes the most sophisticated science labs and will allow new research opportunities on campus.

The existing science facility, the Condikey Building, will also be renovated into classrooms and faculty offices as part of the project.

An institution on the move, the improvements and renovations continue around the university. The Ross Street parking lot is being expanded, a new lot at McKay will hopefully solve street parking problems, and residents of Aubuchon Hall will return in the fall to all new bathrooms, Antonucci said.

All of the changes at Fitchburg State have increased enrollment — there will be about 3,600 students welcomed next semester, he said — and are making the school one of choice rather than a “safety” school.

“People want to come here now, and that’s refreshing,” Antonucci said.

He acknowledges that his leadership sets the tone for excellence, but that he’s backed up by at least 500 people who are all “pushing the cart in the same direction.”

“If we have issues? Sure we do. We’ll never conquer every issue that’s out there, but if we stop moving forward and come to a standstill, the school will come to a standstill,” he said. “The day I can’t keep moving is the day I need to leave.”

Antonucci said he’ll retire, but not just yet.

“This is it. This’ll be my last job — my last full-time job,” he said. “I don’t think I’ll ever stop. I won’t go to another school. This is it.”

Follow Alana Melanson at facebook.com/alanasentinel or on Twitter @alanamelanson.

Congratulations
President Robert V. Antonucci on your 10th Anniversary at Fitchburg State University.

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Students and community close to Antonucci’s heart

By Alana Melanson
amelanson@sentinelandeenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — A love for the students and for the community.
That’s what longtime friends and those who have worked closely with Fitchburg State University President Robert V. Antonucci say drives him in all of his efforts to make FSU “the number one state university,” as he often declares.

Antonucci’s passion for the region and for FSU began when he was growing up in Leominster, and then later as a student at then-Fitchburg State College.

“I think what drives Bob is a true love and passion for public higher education and a deep empathy for the students,” said Peter Alcock, who was chairman of the FSU board of trustees at the time Antonucci was hired.

He called Antonucci’s impact on the school “immeasurable.”

“His leadership, in terms of moving forward substantial projects over at the college, both educational as well as the physical plant, have been unparalleled, frankly, in the school’s history, and this during a time of very difficult economic circumstances for the state,” said Charles Gelnas, a Leominster-based lawyer and longtime friend of Antonucci.

Former Sen. Robert Antonioni of Leominster said Antonucci has “an ability to relate to people which transcends politics and enables a cooperative and constructive relationship.”

“The amazing thing about Bob is he hasn’t lost an ounce of energy since he’s been at Fitchburg State. In fact, his energy level has probably gotten even higher,” said local developer Gregg Lisciotti, a former FSU board of trustees chairman and a member of the board that hired Antonucci.

Lisciotti said Antonucci is a community builder who was able to forge a closer relationship among the administration, students and faculty.

“You see him around campus. He goes to every event he could possibly go to — student government, just talking to students sitting out in the quad, various athletic events — he’s just everywhere,” Lisciotti said.

“He’s very student-centric,” said Martin F. Connors Jr., president and CEO of Rollstone Bank & Trust and a current member of the FSU board of trustees.

North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce President David McKeehan called Antonucci “one of the prime movers in this region.”

He said Antonucci’s leadership of FSU has turned the perception of the school around both locally and across the state. The impacts of his efforts are felt across the region, McKeehan said, with FSU being one of the area’s largest employers.

“He’s made the school part of the community,” said United Way of North Central Massachusetts President Phil Grzewinski.

He called Antonucci “an incredibly caring individual” who has made FSU the “go-to place” for assistance with good causes, whether it’s volunteers or simply making a facility available. Most recently, Antonucci — who is currently the vice chairman on the United Way board of directors and will be chairman in the fall — opened up the Wallace Civic Center for

Please see FRIENDS/D11
The 2004 graduation was the first of many graduations that President Antonucci has presided over. His sense of excitement was contagious; it was at that moment I knew Fitchburg State was well on its way to becoming “the number one state university” in Massachusetts.

Keeping pace with the needs of the students, Fitchburg State University has morphed from primarily a “teacher college” to a diverse and well-rounded university with many competitive academic programs. Anticipating the future needs of the university, President Antonucci was a tireless advocate for renovating the science building on campus. I was happy to participate in the groundbreaking and the steel topping ceremony for the expansion of the Condikey Science Center. The 54,700-square-foot addition will house classrooms, teaching and research labs, and faculty offices for the biology and chemistry departments, as well as for physics and the geophysical sciences. When completed, the facility will provide students with cutting-edge technology and give students the opportunity to work with the types of equipment they will encounter in future careers.

Fitchburg State has the highest regarded program offerings in Massachusetts. These academic programs are the solid foundation that has given Fitchburg State graduates the opportunity to work for the best companies and institutions across the United States. Giving students the opportunity to expand their horizons has been a hallmark of Fitchburg State University under President Antonucci’s leadership. Since coming to Fitchburg State, Bob has realized the endless potential of the student body. His first priority is making sure students are able to access the tools they need for a successful future. President Antonucci’s excitement has never dwindled, and his passion for education and for the city of Fitchburg and the surrounding communities is palpable as you walk around the Fitchburg State campus. It is under his leadership that Fitchburg State has expanded and reached downtown Fitchburg. It is one of President Antonucci’s finest accomplishments. The expansion of the campus toward downtown signaled an investment that Fitchburg State was making in the city of Fitchburg and in its residents, one that is very evident today. Over the past 10 years, the campus has flourished; it is a vibrant, meticulously cared for, inviting destination for students, their families, faculty members and staff.

Personally, I am so proud to be an alumna of Fitchburg State. I received a quality education close to home, which is something that is often taken for granted. As a state senator representing more than 150,000 people, I’d like to express my gratitude for Bob and his entire team at Fitchburg State University. We are extremely fortunate to have our public university in northern Worcester County under the direction of my good friend Bob Antonucci. He has a vision for the institution like no one before him. The future is bright for Fitchburg State University!

Jennifer Flanagan, a Leominster Democrat, represents the Worcester and Middlesex District in the state Senate.

Friends praise Antonucci’s love of community, students

Friends praise Antonucci’s love of community, students
FITCHBURG — As state resources for higher education dry up, universities are increasingly choosing leaders outside the academic world.

While more than half of college presidents have never worked outside higher education, the share of presidents whose immediate prior position was outside higher education has increased since 2006, from 13 percent to 20 percent, according to a 2011 study by the American Council on Education.

The move comes as university leaders are being forced to spend more time raising money and finding ways to increase efficiencies.

In 2003, when Robert V. Antonucci was selected to lead Fitchburg State University, his resumé was an amalgam of a traditional academic and a nouveau university leader. A decade later, Antonucci said his experience in both the public and private sectors, along with his knowledge of the state budget, has made him the right person to lead the university.

“The combination of my private and public experience before coming here made me a much better president,” said Antonucci. “It really helped me as I began to move Fitchburg State to an institution that people saw as stellar. And it worked.”

Antonucci served as Massachusetts’ commissioner of education in the 1990s. He later worked for a private educational company and also served as superintendent of schools in Falmouth beginning in the early 1980s.

As commissioner of education, he established a capital campaign that raised more than $12 million for state education initiatives and helped get the Education Reform Act of 1993 passed.

“That job put me in touch with legislators, senators, reps, the Department of Education,” said Antonucci. “That experience helped me tremendously when I came back because I really understood education from a state and national perspective that I could bring back to Fitchburg.”

Antonucci began working in Falmouth just after voters statewide passed Proposition 2 1/2, a measure that forced him to cut programs and positions to balance the budget.

“What I learned when it came to cost cutting and budget reductions, as difficult as it was, was that I never wanted to forget the impact it had on the employee who was the focus of attention, whether it was a custodian or a professor or a faculty member,” he said. “Going through a reduction in force is very traumatic to those individuals.”

His experience as an educator also included serving as an adjunct faculty member at Boston University, assistant superintendent of Leominster public schools and teacher and administrator in Lunenburg’s schools.

But when Antonucci was named a finalist to lead Fitchburg State, he was the only candidate who had not held a top position at a college. The 10 of 11 trustees who voted to appoint Antonucci said that although he lacked the experience in higher education the other candidates had, they felt his political knowledge and familiarity with the college and the community made him the best choice to push the university forward.

“My academic experience was different from the traditional academic experience people have,” he said. “I think that was an asset to the institution. I came with an understanding of the academic world, but I also had the business world behind me. I came with both dimensions being covered.”

Follow Chris Camire on Twitter @camirereports.
ROBERT V. ANTONUCCI: A DECADE OF CHANGE AT FSU

High standards draw diverse, motivated students to FSU

By Jack Minch
jminch@sentinelandeenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — This isn’t your parents’ Fitchburg State College.
It may be cliché, but it’s true.
This is the new, more academically challenging Fitchburg State University.
It’s more than just a name change. Expanded curriculum, improvements to the campus, stronger admission standards, and the economy are also contributing to a higher caliber of student and faculty member at the university.
The number of applications in the state university system has been growing in recent years, and that is letting Fitchburg State University and other schools in the system be more selective from the application pools.
“We haven’t done any surveys, but we think part of it, not the only part of it, is what has happened to the state of the nation’s economy since 2007, when many middle-class families have been more pressured financially,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Richard M. Freeland. “The public campus has looked more attractive to private campus.”
The economy is only part of the story, he insisted.
The trend for increasing interest in the university system started before the economic downturn, Freeland said.
Tuition with room and board is about $17,312 a year for the last school year and about $8,710 for commuters.
Public campuses are getting more love for the quality of education they offer, he said.
“Which is to say a quality education at a far more affordable price,” Freeland added.
Incoming freshmen need a 3.0 grade point average in high school or must meet specific thresholds for the SAT or ACT if their GPA is lower.
Freeland took over as commissioner about 4 1/2 months ago, so he has a short history with FSU President Robert V. Antonucci, but he was impressed he was elected to a second term as president of Council of Presidents.
“So I saw him from the beginning as a leader statewide among the presidents, and I think that is still true,” Freeland said. “He is one of the stronger and more influential presidents.”
FSU’s crowning academic jewel is its new science center.
“The transformation of the campus under President Antonucci has been quite remarkable,” Freeland said.
“I’ve been out to quite a few groundbreaking and openings, and I’m impressed by the science center.”
Antonucci is well respected in the university system and was a leading voice in lobbying to change the name from “college” to “university.”
The name change is more reflective of FSU’s academic mission, which includes issuing master’s degrees, Antonucci said.
It also helps Fitchburg and other schools that changed their names compete for the best of students and professors.
State colleges across the country are changing their names to university, including just south of Massachusetts in Connecticut, where all the state schools are universities.
“It was a competitive thing I felt strongly about,” Antonucci said. “I didn’t want our students to be at a disadvantage when they graduate. The word university better describes what we do and how we do it because we do have grad and undergrad programs.”
Universities carry more prestige, so it is easier to attract higher quality instructors, he said.
Antonucci is happy with the initial results.
“I think it has worked,” he said. “It’s been well-received.”
Follow Jack Minch on Twitter @JackMinch.

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Antonucci makes FSU a key player in community

By Jack Minch
jminch@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — Even before Robert V. Antonucci sat down behind the president’s desk at Fitchburg State University, he kicked open the gates of the metaphorical ivory tower, not only to let in outsiders but also to look out onto North Central Massachusetts.

Antonucci has spent 10 years using his leadership to push the university physically and psychologically closer to the community around him.

Through partnerships and acquisitions of property, the school has moved down North Street toward Main Street. The school even has leased space in the intermodal station on Main Street.

The university changed the entrance to Hammond Hall overlooking the intersection with Pearl Street a couple of years ago to create a welcoming entrance to the school.

“For the first time, Fitchburg really feels like a college town,” said Mayor Lisa Wong. “Before, there happened to be a college in the city.”

The gregarious Antonucci is a star around campus and the community, where he is easily recognized.

Antonucci grew up in Leominster and taught in the Lunenburg school system before his career took him to Falmouth as a superintendent, and he was named the state commissioner of education.

He was in the private sector when he was named to lead then-Fitchburg State College in 2003.

“From the day I stepped on this campus, I’m a big community-involvement guy,” Antonucci said. “We have an obligation to give back to the city and the region and work with its residents.”

Antonucci’s position brings a cachet of authority, but he has been able to renew relationships he developed growing up and working in the area, Wong said.

He has been a consistent presence in Fitchburg throughout his decade at the university’s helm.

The school has a symbiotic relationship with the community.

Fitchburg’s glory days as a powerful mill town appear to be over, so under Antonucci’s leadership the university’s science and technology center not only should help the school’s reputation but attract private industry to the region as well, Wong said.

Leominster Mayor Dean J. Mazzarella has known Antonucci since they were children growing up in the same neighborhood.

Antonucci has been a member of the economic, social and academic community as Fitchburg State president.

“I think Bob Antonucci is one of the most important people not only in the city but the entire region,” Wong said.

He has used his position as president of a major institution to make huge changes in the region, she said.

He’s a results-oriented person who can motivate people around him to accomplish his goals and objectives, Mazzarella said.

Those include everything from health care to education to promoting the area for economic development, he said.

“He’s done a good job of tying all the communities in the area to Fitchburg,” Mazzarella said. “He’s done a good job of making us all feel we’re part of (FSU) instead of one community. I think his fingerprints are everywhere.”

Antonucci brings credibility from his position alone, but his lifetime of relationships in the region helps him in the community, Wong said.

He has broken down barriers between the city and college community, and that has benefited Fitchburg, she said.

“He’s definitely been a consistent presence in the city,” Wong said. “As I’ve really grown in my own career here, he’s been supportive along the way.”

Antonucci joined the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors several years ago and has been its president the past year.

“Clearly, he’s got extraordinary gravitas. His leadership skills are vital in this entire region and have been beneficial to the entire chamber,” said President David L. McKeehan.

Antonucci has a clear focus on economic development and economic opportunity throughout the region, he said.

As chairman of the chamber, his primary responsibility is organizational and policy issues.

The economic factor of FSU shouldn’t be underestimated for the region, McKeehan said.

“So having a vital leader of that institution as a chairperson of the chamber is a huge benefit to the organization and our mission,” McKeehan said.

Follow Jack Minch on Twitter @JackMinch.
Robert V. Antonucci: A Decade of Change at FSU

Alumni: FSU’s personal touch a big factor in success

By Katina Caraganis
kcaraganis@sentinelandenterprise.com

His interests, passions and a desire to succeed were only encouraged through the constant guidance and support from President Robert V. Antonucci. I went to his inauguration and I served on student government, so I got to know him pretty well. One of the things that really impressed me about him is his diehard enthusiasm for the school," Logan said. "He's a self-proclaimed cheerleader for the school. He really cares about the school and the students, and that's pretty evident. You always judge an institution by its leader.

After graduating from Fitchburg State, Logan earned his master's degree from Boston University but said personal attention he got while at Fitchburg State was missing. "Antonucci) has an intimate relationship with everyone at the school. It's so small that he can afford to have that. I went to BU and you never knew who the people were," Logan recalled. "Fitchburg is a close community, and anyone in leadership will have close contact with you."

He said he developed as a person during his time at Fitchburg State. "I was a witness to his enthusiasm, and I couldn't help but be impacted by that. I would hit instant replay on those four years in a heartbeat," he said.

Eric Gregoire, a 2011 Fitchburg State graduate in political science, is now chief of staff to Amesbury Mayor Thatcher Kezer, and said his involvement on campus was invaluable in helping him learn the ropes of his new job. "Fitchburg really opened the door for me to explore my interests. If I went somewhere else, I'm not sure I would have gotten the same opportunity," he said. "You can be as involved as you want to be here, and you can be on the front lines. Fitchburg gave me those experiences where I was seamlessly able to move into a position in municipal government."

He said Antonucci's open-door policy and willingness to do anything for the students shaped how he handles constituents' concerns. "I can speak from firsthand experience. No matter how busy he is and no matter how engaged he is on other things on campus, he takes the time to sit down with people and listen to their concerns," Gregoire said. "He constantly reminds everyone about placing the needs of the students first. When a constituent walks into my office, I'm dropping what I'm doing and trying to meet their needs."

Leslie Boudreau, a 2007 graduate, echoed the sentiments of fellow alumni, saying her experiences at Fitchburg State helped develop her passion for owning her own photography studio a reality. Her business, which she runs out of the home in Lunenburg, she shares with anyone in leadership will listen to their concerns. "I can speak from firsthand experience. No matter how busy he is and no matter how engaged he is on other things on campus, he takes the time to sit down with people and listen to their concerns," Gregoire said. "He constantly reminds everyone about placing the needs of the students first. When a constituent walks into my office, I'm dropping what I'm doing and trying to meet their needs."

Leslie Boudreau, a 2007 graduate of Fitchburg State University, runs a photo studio out of her Lunenburg home. She says her four years at FSU made her a better business owner.
her husband, focuses mostly on wedding photography and some portraits. Like Logan, she never imagined where her education would take her.

“I really wanted to go into film and video. I took a photo class because that’s what was available. After three days in the class, I wanted nothing more than to continue with photography,” she said.

Boudreau said there are many options out there for aspiring photographers in terms of education, including getting a two-year degree or doing a 10-month intensive program.

But for her, four years at Fitchburg enabled her to take other classes besides photography and have made her a better business owner.

“I got to spend thousands of hours in the darkroom that I wouldn’t have otherwise, and the connections I’ve made are great,” she said.

Boudreau said there are many options out there for aspiring photographers in terms of education, including getting a two-year degree or doing a 10-month intensive program.

But for her, four years at Fitchburg enabled her to take other classes besides photography and have made her a better business owner.

“Be who you are. That is one of the hardest lessons that took me a few years to grasp. The more personality that I’ve infused into my work, the more people have responded well to it,” she said.

Follow Katina Caraganis on Twitter @kcaraganis.
Joana Dos Santos and her family moved to Fitchburg from Uruguay when she was 12 years old not knowing a word of English, and she began her education at one of the local middle schools.

Now 26, she speaks English fluently, is pursuing a master's degree in communications at Fitchburg State University, and is working to bring about positive change to the city.

While the university does not track the number of students who opt to stay in the area after graduation, approximately 85 percent of public higher education graduates remain in Massachusetts to live and work, according to Matt Bruun, a spokesman for the college.

Dos Santos is one of those people, and she has no plans to leave Fitchburg anytime soon.

Dos Santos, executive director of the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, said one of the biggest challenges she's faced over the years is a misconception people have about the neighborhood.

“This really is a beautiful part of the city. Years ago, there were a lot of drugs and things in this neighborhood. People didn’t want to come here.”

Joana Dos Santos, a 2009 FSU graduate, is director of the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center in Fitchburg.
area, but that has changed. People are taking pride in their neighborhood,” she said. “One of the things we’re doing is having people talk to each other. This neighborhood used to be French Canadian but they’ve moved to Upper Cleghorn. Now, it’s a lot of Latinos, and nobody is talking to each other. I think conversations about unity can really be helpful here.”

Dos Santos has filled various roles at the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, including working with children, teaching language classes and doing community organizing.

Her passion for community hasn’t always led her to wanting to stay local, however.

“As I was doing my undergraduate course study, I knew I wanted to remain a part of this community and bring about some change. I toyed with the idea of going into the Peace Corps,” she said. “But after reflecting on the idea, I said why would I consider going abroad when there are so many things I could be doing here. … I just knew this is where I was truly needed.”

Fitchburg Ward 5 City Councilor Nick Carbone, a 2009 political science major at Fitchburg State, grew up in the city and said the idea of staying in the city.

“It’s good to have them there. Fitchburg State has moved toward Main Street so well. They’re really cleaning up this area and cleaning up a lot of Fitchburg and changing perceptions. I think the more Fitchburg State does with the community, the better,” he said.

At 26 years old, Carbone brings a unique perspective to the council, he said.

“I’m still pretty young, so it’s nice to think these are things I want to do or these are things I would want to do. I think it takes someone who’s younger who has been around awhile to push for certain things to happen,” he said.

He would often hear negative comments about the city or the decisions being made, so instead of just sitting back and doing nothing, he wanted to get involved.

“I think the draw of staying here is that wherever I go, there are people who always tend to complain about their city. If there’s something you want fixed … why not have it be your hometown?” he said.

He and Ward 4 Councilor Dolores Thibault-Munoz have come together in the past year to form an informal group known as Ward 9.

Their district border the university on either side, and he said this was a way for the college community to get involved in city politics.

“We meet and try to engage the students as well as the people surrounding the schools,” he said. “A lot of times, someone from the school will show up, and if someone has a concern regarding the college, whether it’s loud or something happened, we can figure out a way to collaborate on things.”

This collaboration is one of the major reasons he enjoys staying in the city.

“It’s good to have them there. Fitchburg State has moved toward Main Street so well. They’re really cleaning up this area and cleaning up a lot of Fitchburg and changing perceptions. I think the more Fitchburg State does with the community, the better,” he said.

Greg Wheeler, a 2003 political science major from Fitchburg State, was born and raised in Central Massachusetts, and has owned and operated his law firm in downtown Leominster since 2010.

Wheeler practices general civil litigation and doesn’t regret maintaining a practice in the city where he grew up.

A 1998 graduate of Leominster High School, Wheeler felt a strong connection to the area.

“Staying here obviously has a lot to do with what I chose for my career. If I had chosen a political career, I would have moved to D.C.,” he said.

Wheeler graduated from law school in 2007. He took a position with a firm in Worcester and stayed there until June 2010, when he opened his own practice.

“The goal was always to open my own practice, and the most logical place was to open it here. I know the area well. I live here. It just made perfect sense,” he said.

Follow Katina Caraganis on Twitter @kcaraganis.
Fitchburg State University and Dr. Robert V. Antonucci

A Decade of Transformation
Creating a Lifetime of Possibilities

Everyone at Enterprise Bank would like to congratulate Robert V. Antonucci on a decade of remarkable growth and achievement as President of Fitchburg State University. Formerly the Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you answered the call to return to your Alma Mater and create a renaissance in the school that is truly amazing.

As your 10 Year Anniversary as the President of Fitchburg State University approaches, it is clear that you have succeeded in enhancing the school's reputation as a community resource, providing leadership and support for the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs of North Central Massachusetts.

Beginning with a vision of what the “number one state university” could accomplish, you maintained a dedication to the core principles of teaching, learning and service. Your ability to take a step back, evaluate the short and long term needs of the school, and prioritize those needs into a hierarchy of action, has motivated and inspired a talented team of faculty, administrators and staff. Together, you developed and executed a $12.5 million capital campaign that has revitalized the campus.

Please accept the warmest wishes and most sincere congratulations from all of the employees and shareholders of Enterprise Bank. As we reflect on the tremendous strides you have made in your first 10 years, we are also very excited to witness the growth and transformation you will certainly create at Fitchburg State University over the next decade.

978-353-6777 | Cheryl.Gaudreau@ebtc.com

EnterpriseBanking.com
FITCHBURG — As Fitchburg’s largest employer, the university brings 500 full-time jobs to the region.

David McKeehan, executive director of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, says the income, taxes and spending habits of those workers is only the beginning of Fitchburg State’s impact on the regional economy.

“Clearly, they are in themselves a significant part of the local economy,” he said.

“They’ve got about a $75 million operating budget.”

He said the students who attend state colleges tend to stay in the state as well.

“What we have in Fitchburg State is a resource for the future workforce,” said McKeehan.

Joshua Spero, an associate professor of political science and the faculty director for Fitchburg State University’s Regional Economic Development Institute, or REDI, said the university also helps grow the local economy by helping workers gain skills and knowledge that can make them more successful.

Through REDI the region also receives research on the state of the local economy that allows entrepreneurs and local governments to make informed decisions.

“We’re a university that is public that is trying to help the area to grow,” said Spero.

“We’re still the city’s largest employer, and that’s wonderful
... but I don't think it's productive forever.”
He said it would be a positive sign if a private employer grew larger than Fitchburg State.
“We're part of the public sector, so we're not in it for profit. We're trying to help the profit-making in the region,” said Spero.
He said current trends indicate the area’s best bet for economic development is a patchwork of smaller businesses to take root and become strong enough to survive in the long run. He said the revitalization of a large business in the Fitchburg area would be much more difficult.
Spero said President Robert Antonucci formed REDI with the intention of reconnecting Fitchburg State to the city of Fitchburg.
“FSU is playing a unique role in the comeback of Fitchburg,” said Spero.
He identified six different skills students can get from Fitchburg State that benefit the economy and help students transition into careers.
Employers, Spero said, “need people who can think and act critically.”
Besides critical thinking, he said strategic planning and scenario planning are both important ways to handle businesses' challenges. He identified six crucial skill sets:
• Entrepreneurship and small-business development, which allow people to craft their own business and fill niches in the market. Those skills also help business owners deal with problems on a limited budget.
• Environmental science and green technology, to take advantage of the huge potential alternative energy sources hold. In time, alternative energy sources should become normal energy sources, Spero said.
• Human resources. Spero said modern management techniques involve embracing and mastering cutting-edge technology that goes beyond the latest iPhone.
• Management of information, from the news media all the way to the school’s new computer game design major. These skills lend themselves to cyber security as well.
• Robotics, which allow individual workers to be more productive. Spero said while robots and automation will not lead to an explosion of jobs in area factories, they allow local manufacturers to be internationally competitive in areas like advanced plastics and medical equipment.
• International studies, which is Spero’s area of expertise. This skill allows people to understand the role globalization plays in their industry and how local and regional competitiveness plays on the international level.
“You understand how everything is connected,” said Spero. He said the region has a role in the global economy as well as the local one.
Follow Michael Hartwell at facebook.com/michaelhartwell or on Twitter @Sehartwell

Happy 10th Anniversary!
Congratulations

to Robert V. Antonucci
on 10 years of excellence in higher education at Fitchburg State University!

Through our LifeDesign approach to banking, Fidelity Bank has been committed to serving individuals, families, businesses and non-profits in Central Massachusetts for 125 years.

Fidelity Bank
Helping You Get Where You Want To Be
FITCHBURG — The finishing touches are being applied to Fitchburg State's new science center, a 55,000-square-foot facility that will prepare the next generation of students. The space will be open for business for the university's second summer session in early July.

Three years in the making, the new science center was erected adjacent to the Condike Science Building. That structure, built in 1963, is now getting its own yearlong makeover. When complete, the $57 million science center will encompass more than 100,000 square feet of peerless instructional space.

Bright, sunlit atriums will look out over the main quadrangle. The structure itself will become a physical bookend of the main campus, helping to define the boundaries of the university's core academic space.

The modernized facility will also be another step in the university's pursuit of energy sustainability, designed and built to the maximum possible standards.

“Our students and faculty will be the beneficiaries of this building,” President Robert V. Antonucci said at the groundbreaking ceremony in 2010. “This state-of-the-art structure will provide our students and faculty with classrooms, laboratories, offices and support spaces that are second to none.”

The new building will have laboratory and classroom space for biology and chemistry, while the geophysical sciences will be housed in the renovated Condike building.

Bruce Duncan, who chairs the Geo-Physical Sciences Department, said the new science space has been a long time coming. He recalled the charge given to him when he served on an earlier iteration of the building committee for the new structure: “Dream!”

And the committee members did.

“This is our chance to get things the way we’ve always wanted them to be,” he added. “We had to think not just for who is here now, but who’s going to be here in 30 years. We need a space that’s also flexible. I like to think we have planned for such a building.”

New laboratory space will be better oriented to modern teaching and learning techniques, including peer instruction. There will be room to display collections that for years have been hidden from view in closets. There will also be space for group presentations and exhibitions of student work, which is lacking now.

The addition will include shared science components that encourage collaboration among the disciplines explored within its walls. Hydrology, oceanography, vivarium and greenhouse space will be among the offerings in this modern facility.

“This building comes at the time of a perfect storm of activity,” said Margaret Hoey, chair of the university’s Biology/Chemistry department. “We have many new faculty who come with research momentum, ideas and interests in collaborating on professional activities. We have seen a recent surge in student interest in research projects. And just as these forces are emerging, we now have a space where that research can be carried out. We owe a huge thank you to the legislature, and especially the taxpayers, of Massachusetts.”

Every student at the university will benefit from the new quarters, as each is required to take a laboratory science in order to graduate. And for those students majoring in the sciences, the space will be critical.

“These lab spaces will make students feel valued and professional,” Hoey said.

“The opening of the new building is really exciting and I’m happy for my colleagues in chemistry and biology,” Duncan said. “It makes me look forward to getting into our own space.”

Matthew Bruun is Fitchburg State’s director of public relations.
A campus transformed

Fitchburg State experiences building renaissance

By Matthew Bruun
Fitchburg State University

Visitors to the Fitchburg State campus who have been away for even a few years are routinely stunned by what they see when they step back onto the grounds. The past decade has been a time of unprecedented transformation for the campus, redefining the student experience at the university and deepening the commitment to the city in which it resides.

The challenge for university leadership has been to retain the character and history of the campus while updating facilities and amenities for students and faculty.

The North Street corridor is just one example. Formerly lined by dilapidated triple-deckers, the Fitchburg State University Foundation purchased more than two dozen parcels along the street in order to create an entryway to the campus. While the purchases were begun before President Antonucci's tenure, the final vision came to pass on his watch.

As this project neared completion, a long-planned renaissance of the Hammond Campus Center was launched. The first phase of the project, a $25 million overhaul of the building, created a new front door to the campus. Where a wide brick wall had once bounded the campus, in its place is a six-story glass tower facing the intersection of North and Pearl streets. The space is an ideal forum for community outreach efforts.

Across from the train station, the foundation purchased a former music store that had been closed for years and was falling into disrepair. The boarded-up structure was demolished and replaced with fenced-in green space, and talks are moving forward for commercial and residential development on the site. The former eyesore will be replaced by a taxable revenue source for the city.

Community investment was also evident in the siting of the university's campus police station on Clinton Street. The university's 24/7 professional police force was formerly housed in one of the campus residence halls, but was moved into an adjoining neighborhood to improve quality of life for the university's neighbors as well as its students. The force enjoys a strong collaboration with the Fitchburg Police Department.

On the other side of campus, the Mara Village complex of residence halls welcomed an eighth building in 2009. The hall, known as Mara 8, became the university's first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified structure, using less energy and resources than other buildings of similar size and function.

Green building principles also guided the development of the Exercise and Sports Science Building on North Street, across from the Athletics and Recreation Center, in 2010. The former house was purchased and transformed into a space for offices and classrooms, and is home to the campus' first geothermal heating and cooling system.

This reinvention of space has also occurred at the campus core. Thompson Hall, built in 1897, still boasts its historic façade and its main lobby has been restored to resemble its original condition, but the remainder of the building is transformed. In addition to modern classrooms throughout, the third floor is home to the university's state of the art nursing laboratories.

Miller Hall, built as a women's dormitory, has long housed the English and economics, history and political science departments. But the space has been reborn in the past few years, its formerly cramped offices completely remade.

A similar metamorphosis has taken place in the mathematics and computer science offices at Edgerly Hall, another of the campus' oldest buildings.

The Condiike Science Building, erected in the 1960s, is getting a yearlong makeover as the campus prepares to open its newest edifice, the $60 million science center on North Street. And Conlon Hall, built in the 1970s, is getting a significant renovation this summer as the university prepares to launch its newest academic major, game design, within the site.

Matthew Bruun is Fitchburg State's director of public relations.
The transformative era of President Antonucci’s leadership at Fitchburg State has not been achieved in a vacuum. The Fitchburg State University Foundation was a critical partner, bringing resources to bear in strategic property acquisitions. And the foundation has been a major player in student success at the university, providing thousands of dollars annually in scholarship support.

While the cost of a public higher education is offset by government funds, the level of state support has been shrinking for years. Where once the state paid 75 percent of a student’s cost, today that figure is less than 40 percent. Most Fitchburg State students rely on financial aid to complete their studies.

Center for Italian Culture

For Anna Mazzaferro, who came to Fitchburg State in the 1970s after raising a family, philanthropic support is a way to create opportunities for future generations. Mazzaferro was brought into the philanthropic community by her close cousin, the late Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio. The women were among the original founders of the university’s Center for Italian Culture in 2000. The center’s mission is to encourage the understanding and appreciation of all aspects of Italian language and culture, including ancient and contemporary studies, and the Italian experience in the New World.

In support of that mission, each year the center sponsors Fitchburg State students on monthlong educational journeys to Italy.

“We’ve sent hundreds of students to Verona, Rome and other cities in Italy,” Mazzaferro said. “These students would not have had that opportunity without the Center for Italian Culture.”

Dozens of other students have learned the Italian language. Faculty grants have brought speakers and programming to the university and the community that otherwise may have never happened.

“Literally thousands of schoolchildren in local elementary and high schools have been given the opportunity to learn Italian language and about Italian culture through programming support from the CIC,” Mazzaferro added. “Historical lectures, book clubs, food tastings, an extensive oral history project, multiple movie premieres and discussions, cultural exhibitions of music, dance and photography round out our work.”

The center also made it possible for hundreds of local students to attend a preview performance of the university’s spring theater production, “(Sacco-Vanzetti) Vince, Al & Teddy,” which discussed the Italian-American immigrant experience.

Mazzaferro’s support also led to the creation of the Aldo and Anna Guglielmi Mazzaferro Center on Highland Avenue. The building houses the university’s Office of Alumni and Development, as well as Presidents’ Hall, which is regularly used by campus and community groups.

“I think the university is a treasure. They’ve got a pearl right there on Pearl Street,” she said. “It’s so necessary to keep supporting the institution. The students need the help. We have students who really want to learn, who have a strong work ethic.”

Pay it Forward scholarship

Don Irving, president of Data Guide Cable Corp. in Gardner, has been well-served...
Donors’ generosity enhances quality of education

by that work ethic since his graduation from Fitchburg State in 1972. In his early career as a teacher he gave some money to his alma mater, but in recent years has become much more engaged in the life of Fitchburg State, including becoming a member of its board of trustees.

“I realized how little support the state provides,” Irving said, noting a yearlong decline in state funding for public higher education. With his wife, Karen — herself an alumna of Fitchburg State — Irving established the “Pay It Forward” scholarship, which awarded the first of its five annual $5,000 scholarships this spring. Students who receive the award are encouraged to give back to the institution in the years to come.

Irving said his original inclination may have been to support building projects, but is pleased that his family’s direct support is now helping students achieve their educational goals.

“When you see these students graduating, it’s just the best day of the year,” Irving said. “They’re going on to the next chapter of their lives, and to be just a small part of that is very rewarding. If you can provide some education for someone, you can have a lot of impact, even more than bricks and mortar, sometimes.”

For the Pay It Forward program, three scholarships will be awarded annually to women with children living at home — recognizing the challenges that Karen Irving faced when she resumed her studies at Fitchburg State — while two others will be presented to nursing students.

Irving said the investment in Fitchburg State was worth making and one he hopes will pay off for future generations. “These kids will hopefully get an inkling of what philanthropy is,” he said. “I’m fortunate that I can do it. Life’s been good to me.”

The need for private support is integral to the success of the university. My grandmother told me, ‘To whom much is given, much is expected.’ I was happy to get involved.”

Gregg Lisciotti, chairman of Lisciotti Development Corp. of Leominster, who served for 10 years as a member of Fitchburg State University’s Board of Trustees

10 years on the Board of Trustees, a period where he also saw diminishing state support for the institution. “The need for private support is integral to the success of the university,” said Lisciotti, who added he was proud to give of his own resources to support its mission. “My grandmother told me, ‘To whom much is given, much is expected.’ I was happy to get involved.”

The investment in students and it’s important to the success of the region,” he said. “It’s a huge economic engine and a resource.”

Like other benefactors, Lisciotti said he is hopeful that students who receive scholarship support will give back in the future. “Someday, when they become hugely successful, they can give back,” Lisciotti said. “Every dollar counts and every gift makes a contribution to the institution.”

Matthew Bruun is Fitchburg State’s director of public relations.
By Andre Ravenelle

In life, you are blessed to come across a handful of people in your field to whom you can look as a mentor and teacher. For me, Robert Antonucci is one of those people.

I first met Bob when he was the superintendent of schools in Falmouth and I was a junior administrator in another Cape Cod district. We interacted from time to time when he was the state commissioner of education and I was an assistant superintendent. But our paths became permanently intertwined seven years ago, when Bob served on the superintendent search committee that resulted in my joining the Fitchburg Public Schools.

His philosophy of education is identical to mine, emanating from the belief that all students can learn, and it is the job of our public schools to help students meet their goals to achieve the greatest possible success. This commitment has been demonstrated in the myriad of collaborations the public schools and the university have enjoyed during my years in Fitchburg. The school system has benefited from the university's Center for Professional Studies, which is a major provider of professional-development opportunities for our teachers. And we have collaborated on grants and the joint interests of having one of our schools on the Fitchburg State campus.

I will never forget the time a boiler at Crocker Elementary School failed, and I didn't know whether the repairs would take days or months. I called Bob, and he immediately invited me to the campus to show me three different locations where we could temporarily house our students, asking which location I preferred. The next morning our kindergarten students reported to Fitchburg State and remained there for two weeks. This summer we will have the opportunity to, in a small way, return that generosity when we host some university science classes in our high school laboratories as finishing touches are made to Fitchburg State's new science center.

As superintendent, I have had the benefit of Bob's counsel and his broad educational experience during our monthly breakfast meetings. What starts as a half-hour conversation can easily become a two-hour discussion, because Bob brings such a broad view to educating our youth. He's recognized not just here in Massachusetts, but across the country as a leader in his discipline. He makes decisions centered on the needs of the students he serves, and is also mindful of the impact those decisions will have on the people who work for him.

Bob's professional success has not made him forget his origins or the effort it took for him to achieve his own goals, and he wants that same success for all the students who come to Fitchburg State University. So it's no surprise that he is a tireless and tenacious champion of his cause and never fails to remind virtually any audience he addresses that Fitchburg State is “the number one state university.” He sets a powerful example for other leaders to emulate.

Last but not least, I do not take our professional camaraderie for granted. Fitchburg State has flourished during Bob's 10 years as president, and I look forward to many more years of being able to pick up the phone to discuss an issue or concern with such an eminent scholar, leader and friend.

Andre Ravenelle is superintendent of the Fitchburg Public Schools.
Building the leaders of tomorrow

Extraordinary leadership and energy for our Fitchburg State University... and the city it calls home.

For the last 10 years, Bob Antonucci has been the guiding hand and driving force for change and growth at Fitchburg State University. His efforts to assure the students of FSU receive a quality education is matched only by his work to keep Fitchburg a vibrant, growing city.

Fitchburg is fortunate to have a strong leader like Bob guiding the way and making sure the future for both the university and the city remains bright.

Congratulations from your friends at Unitil
Antonucci leaving mark on all aspects of university

By Sean C. Goodlett

During his 10-year career at Fitchburg State, President Robert Antonucci has overseen the transformation of the physical plant, the rapid growth of student enrollments, and most recently the development of new academic programs. Bob came to us after a long and successful career in K-12 education, which he capped with a stint as the state’s commissioner of education.

During the last four years, I have worked opposite Antonucci as the president of the faculty and librarians. On occasion our policy disagreements have become public, at one point even in the pages of this newspaper. Nevertheless, at the end of the day we both recognized that we were debating professional differences, not personal ones, and more often than not we found areas we could agree upon.

Our interactions began during the first round of strategic planning under his leadership, in the academic year 2003-2004, when I chaired one of several task forces. I learned there the value of a distributive model of planning, one that involved as many faculty, librarians, staff and administrators, from as many departments as possible. In the second round of planning, five years later, Antonucci sought to advance the institution toward university status, and in 2010 Fitchburg State College became Fitchburg State University.

Ten years after the first strategic-planning effort, the physical plant is now much improved. The campus has added several new dormitories, installed instructional technologies in every classroom, completely remodeled faculty offices in Edgerly, Miller and Thompson halls, reconfigured the Anthony building for “one-stop shopping,” added a new façade and remodeled most of the student spaces within the Hammond building, and we just opened a brand new wing of the Condike Science Building, the first new academic space on campus in 40 years.

The facelift was a necessary one. For decades the commonwealth has neglected the facilities of all the public colleges and universities. In the process, Fitchburg State accrued a backlog of more than $100 million in deferred maintenance, and every year Antonucci has had to grapple with devoting ever-increasing proportions of the university’s budget to capital planning and maintenance.

It is also the case that even as enrollments have risen, the Patrick administration and the state Legislature have kept the university’s appropriations flat. In consequence, we are increasingly reliant on student fees, and the institution has been saddled with an additional $40 million in debt. It is no coincidence, either, that class sizes have grown. To his credit, in the last several years Antonucci has made a significant effort to hire new full-time, tenure-track faculty and librarians.

The future of Fitchburg State now lies with the development of its academic programs. Here, too, we have seen innovation and improvement. The institution has moved into online offerings, even developing entirely online graduate degrees in forensic nursing and business administration. More recently, the university created a new major, game design — the only one of its kind at a public institution in New England. We are, similarly, moving ahead with plans to revive the chemistry major.

With so many new, dynamic, and energetic faculty on campus, and with the renovations of the physical plant edging toward completion, Fitchburg State has bright prospects. What gives me the greatest hope is that in the forthcoming round of strategic planning, the academic plan will be the first priority.

Please see GOODLETT/D31
FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University President Robert V. Antonucci said it wasn’t easy keeping rising tuition costs under control for next year in a time when state revenue is falling, but he said a little bit of creativity went a long way.

Antonucci said at one point Fitchburg State was getting about 70 percent of its funding from the state. That number plummeted to just under 30 percent. He said the decrease in state funding isn’t because of choices from any particular politicians but because of the failings of the economy as a whole.

“Tax revenues dropped, the economy tanked. All of those have an impact on the revenue the state collects,” said Antonucci. “At the same time, we have to run an institution where we have increased enrollment and demand.”

He said the school does not have the option of letting its standards slip to save money.

With the current plan for next year’s fees and tuition rates, students will pay the same tuition rate but will see an additional fee of $250 each to pay for renovations to the campus center. Antonucci said this figure assumes the state Legislature does not change its course in state funding amounts.

He said Gov. Deval Patrick has also put forth a plan that would increase the amount of money that goes toward educational institutions like Fitchburg State, but Antonucci said that issue is still being debated on Beacon Hill, and it is tied to a tax increase, which harms the odds it will pass.

Antonucci said the state funding system is notoriously difficult and labyrinthine, which adds to the challenge of working out a cost-saving solution.

“We’ve got a banker and CPA on our Board of Trustees who say I don’t really understand state funding,” said Antonucci. He said there are many different pools of money with different rules on which funds can be used for which purposes.

Thanks largely to private fundraising efforts, the university has reserve funds that can be tapped to cover state funding reductions.

Antonucci said one trustee asked him how they can have a budget that appears to have a deficit while they are building a $57 million science building. The answer, he said, is that earmarked state funding was used for that building. The $57 million came from a state bond issue that the university received a portion of. The money could not be used for anything else. He said the science building will not have any direct cost to the students through fees or tuition.

Fitchburg State is also one of nine state universities that has its revenue-generating buildings such as dining halls and athletic buildings constructed and financed by the Massachusetts State College Building Authority. All of the residence halls at FSU are built by authority bond issues. The money can’t go toward every building on campus, but the university uses it where it can.

The university also got a $5 million grant from the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance to repair the roof of the Hammond Building. This state entity will provide money for the upkeep of state buildings.

Antonucci said the school’s grant office helps make ends meet with applications of all sizes. The school also received a $350,000 grant to run its anti-violence campaign.

It also appealed directly to the public, including generous alumni and local institutions with a capital campaign that pulled in $12.5 million.

He said creativity and the willingness to look for savings have gone a long way to helping students afford to attend Fitchburg State.

Follow Michael Hartwell at facebook.com/michaelhartwell or on Twitter @Sehartwell

Fitchburg State University President Robert V. Antonucci in front of the science building.

Congratulations to President Robert V. Antonucci

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.

John Quincy Adams

From your friends at the Nashua Valley Council, Boy Scouts of America
Fitchburg State, Mount Wachusett forge beneficial ties

By Chris Camire
ccamire@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — Shortly before Robert V. Antonucci became president of Fitchburg State, then-Gov. Mitt Romney proposed merging the school with Mount Wachusett Community College to save money.

Although the proposal stalled, Antonucci got the message. From the outset of his tenure, he vowed to do more with the Gardner-based community college.

Over the past decade, Antonucci has kept that promise, most notably by working to make it easier for students to transfer seamlessly between the two institutions.

“Both Mount Wachusett and Fitchburg have to be on the same page,” said Antonucci. “And I think in the last seven to eight years (Mount Wachusett Community College President) Dan Asquino and I have worked extremely hard to ensure that takes place, and the state has done that also.”

In 2011, Fitchburg State and Mount Wachusett entered into an agreement allowing students who transfer from the Mount to Fitchburg State to still get their associate degree. The agreement includes Worcester State College and Quinsigamond Community College, as well.

The so-called “Finish First” may be the first reverse-transfer program in the country, officials said.

“It gives students an additional credential sooner,” said Pamela McCafferty, Fitchburg State’s dean of enrollment management. Several students have taken advantage of the program since its founding.

The program is an addition to the Mount Wachusett Institute at Fitchburg State, which lets Mount Wachusett students live in university residence halls so when they complete their associate degree and transfer to the university they are already acclimated.

“That, to me, is a model program,” said Antonucci. “I think that could be replicated statewide. What it says out front is, ‘I am going to go for a bachelor’s degree.’”

And just last year, the schools announced a landmark collaboration that will allow a more seamless transfer of credits between the two institutions, with benefits such as guaranteed admission, transfer credits and a tuition discount for those students who earn a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Normally, those who want to earn degrees often have to “shop around” at different institutions to determine what programs they offer and if they will be useful in the long run. In the past, credits have been lost when students transfer between schools as their career paths become clearer.

While Antonucci believes Romney’s merger proposal would have been unwise, he said the schools have pooled their resources. For example, when the university bid for a banking contract several years ago, it partnered with Quinsigamond Community College of Worcester and Mount Wachusett to save money.

“That’s where we have put our efforts in the last 10 years,” said Antonucci.

“That they’re two different kinds of institutions that provide different kinds of education to a whole host of different people.”

Follow Chris Camire on Twitter @camirereports.
By Matthew Bruun
Fitchburg State University

For 17 years, Fitchburg State has been a cultural resource for the region, bringing national and international performers to the stage, celebrated authors for readings and lectures and talented artists to its galleries.

All of these disciplines will merge this fall, when the CenterStage at Fitchburg State University arts and culture series will present a multimedia exploration of the ideas and issues behind Ray Bradbury’s celebrated dystopian novel “Fahrenheit 451” on the 60th anniversary of its publication.

Film screenings, live performances, art exhibitions, panel discussions and a communitywide read-aloud of the novel will form the spine of this unique partnership between Fitchburg State and the city of Fitchburg’s historic and cultural institutions.

The university launched its cultural series in 1996 under the direction of Mary Chapin Durling, the cultural affairs director who continues to develop its programming guided by the principle that CenterStage is Fitchburg State University’s front door for the community.

“It is thrilling to bring national artists as well as cutting-edge, emerging artists to our stage and to the community,” Durling said. “That part of my work is exhilarating. My heart and passion lie in the community aspects of CenterStage’s mission and vision — when I can bring an artist and have that artist authentically connect with the community, or expand a single performance into a monthlong, multifaceted project as we are doing with ‘Fahrenheit 451.’”

Legendary performing artists such as Judy Collins, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and James “Superharp” Cotton are among the musicians who have performed on the university’s stages. The Alvin Ailey dance troupe and the lauded Irish theater company Gare St. Lazare Players have also moved audiences, among many, many others.

The power of the arts to inspire and provoke thought will be on full display with the “Fahrenheit 451” project. In his novel, Bradbury created an imaginary world that would come to pass in our daily lives today. From the technology of flat screen monitors, interactive devices and ear buds to the blurry line between censorship and apathy, Bradbury’s work was stunningly prescient.

The monthlong “Fahrenheit 451” project begins with a marathon read-aloud of the novel on Saturday, Sept. 14, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Fitchburg Public Library. There will be screenings of Francois Truffaut’s adaptation of the novel on Tuesday, Sept. 17, at 3:30 p.m. on the university campus and Thursday, Sept. 19, at 7 p.m. at the public library, to be followed by conversations about the film and the topics it explores.

The acclaimed Aquila Theatre company of New York will perform Bradbury’s own stage adaptation of his novel on Tuesday, Sept. 24, at 7 p.m. at Weston Auditorium. Using multimedia, the nationally renowned company ignites Bradbury’s world where firemen burn books and refugees secretly memorize them. All the while, we are invited to examine that world and our own. The performance is sponsored by Fitchburg Federal/Webster First Federal Credit Union with additional support from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the New England Foundation for the Arts and the Amelia Gallucci-Cirio Endowment at Fitchburg State.

The series will also include presentations about burned books and banned books with Fitchburg State faculty members at the Fitchburg Historical Society, as well as workshops on altered books at Rollstone Studios and the Fitchburg Art Museum. The three sites will also host a progressive art exhibition on Saturday, Oct. 19. A full schedule of events relative to the “Fahrenheit 451” project will be found online at fitchburgstate.edu/cultural.

Matthew Bruun is Fitchburg State’s director of public relations.

Judy Collins performs at CenterStage at Fitchburg State University.
FITCHBURG — Superb technical training and access to a robust alumni network. David Shilale credits both with defining a career that has led him to Viewpoint Creatives in Newton, a creative-services agency where he serves as general manager and executive producer.

And both were attained at Fitchburg State, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in communications/media in 1991. “If it wasn’t for the people I met and the internship experience, I wouldn’t be here talking to you,” he insisted.

He joined the firm in 1997 and quickly moved up the ranks. He was named partner and now oversees the entire operation.

Viewpoint specializes in visual promotional materials for clients in the entertainment industry. It now has 30 employees.

“We’re marketing ourselves as the best-kept secret in Boston for design and animation,” he said.

Shilale said the university’s communications department prepared him well for life in the real world. Students in that program, he noted, start working with equipment during their first year.

“The first semester at Fitchburg State I was doing hands-on production, which I love,” he said.

The college experience has changed his life in other positive ways as well. The Fitchburg campus is where he met his wife, Donna, as well as a number of lifelong friends.

“I wouldn’t have my wife and children if it wasn’t for Fitchburg State,” he added. The couple have three children.

Shilale still spends time with his college buddies. Recently, he and some friends competed in the “Tough Mudder” race in New Hampshire, a 10- to 12-mile obstacle course designed by the British Special Forces.

Recently, he and some friends competed in the “Tough Mudder” race in New Hampshire, a 10- to 12-mile obstacle course designed by the British Special Forces.

“Our college years were the best years of our lives,” he concluded.

Shilale isn’t alone in crediting Fitchburg State with offering studies that lead to careers in innovative businesses.

Barbara (O’Connor) Wilson also attended Fitchburg State, graduating in 1980 with a special education degree. She worked in a school district immediately after college, but then enrolled in a one-year program at Massachusetts General Hospital to study language disorders.

Over the next five years, she and her husband, Edward, founded Wilson Learning Center. She also wrote a manual called Wilson Reading Systems that explains how to teach people with dyslexia how to read.

She said one strength of this program is that it offers a lot of teacher training. Wilson said students are taught word and sentence structure in depth, including the structure and the meaning of the word.

“We go into the school districts,” she said. “We partner with school districts to create a plan.”

Her company is now named Wilson Language Training and employs 188 people. It’s based in Oxford, but it also has a location in Newburyport.

On average, Wilson’s company has contracts with 100 school districts across the country. Some, she noted, are very small systems. Currently, the company works with elementary schools in Washington, D.C., and the city of Los Angeles, for which they have a contract to work with children at risk of dropping out of middle school.

Please see INNOVATION/D35
Wilson Language Training is growing and has recently hired five literary specialists.

“Fitchburg State University prepared me well,” she said of her alma mater. “Of course, you continue your learning. … No doubt about it, it was a tremendous start to my knowledge base and set me off on this path.”

Sean Devereaux left Fitchburg State in 1999 with a double major in communications/media and film and graphic design.

He and his wife, Jennifer (Pouliot) Devereaux, whom he met at college, moved to Los Angeles. Sean Devereaux spent eight years freelancing for various companies.

About four years ago, the couple was expecting their first child, so they moved back to the East Coast. In January 2010, he and a business partner, Brain Drewes, founded Zero, a visual-effects company based in Boston.

Zero now employs 22 people, but Deveraux said he plans to double the number of staff by the end of the year. He noted that he tries to hire as many Fitchburg State grads as possible.

Devereaux also believes it was the technical training at Fitchburg State that has made such a rewarding career possible.

“We have access to the latest technology, right from our very first class,” he said.

David Shilale is general manager and executive producer at Viewpoint Creatives in Newton, a creative-services agency.

“Inelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

We are proud to say that President Antonucci has brought both of these to his life and work in Fitchburg.

Congratulations from the Fitchburg Public Schools on ten years as president of Fitchburg State University!
By Anne O’Connor
Correspondent

FITCHBURG — Across the region, businesses, non-profit agencies and people are reaping the benefits of the resources at Fitchburg State University.

Special programs, teams of faculty and students, and individuals all partner with the greater community.

“The city of Fitchburg and the university are really a part of a larger team,” said Joshua Spero, faculty director of the Regional Economic Development Institute and professor of international politics. REDI studies the economic development trends of North Central Massachusetts.

The work is done by teams of faculty and students in partnership with the North Central Chamber of Commerce and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission. The institute, funded by the university and private donations, has been supplying crucial business data for three years.

The group recently began collecting cost-of-living data, a task performed in the past by the chamber of commerce. The information is used in quarterly reports comparing major cities across the nation. The results could drive new business to the area.

“You see that the Fitchburg/Leominster region does have a lower cost of living than most other areas,” Spero said.

In addition to contributing...
to the community, the students gain valuable experience that pays off for them in the future.

“The REDI interns are very competitive. A high percentage land jobs right after graduation,” he said.

The University Project, funded by the Douglas and Isabelle Crocker Center for Civic Engagement, provides another avenue for the university to partner with the community. Currently, the “U Project” is teamed with the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, an organization that works with the Latino and Latino immigrant community in Fitchburg. The association allows students to grow while contributing their own knowledge and skills.

Faculty and staff assessed the center’s needs, architectural students made drawings to reconceptualize the center’s space and nursing faculty and students run a group for young women dealing with obesity. Students from the university’s volunteer center provide tutoring, arrange on-campus events and give to parties at the center. Other volunteers help with tax preparation. The U project has supplied 30 computers that will be used by adult learners at the center.

Service learning and internships have been a part of the school for many years, said John Chetro-Szivo, director of the Crocker Center and a communications professor. More than 2,000 hours are donated each year.

“Looking to the future, that’s probably just going to grow,” he said.

The volunteer center works with clubs and organizations on campus that want to do something to help the community. The Greek community, the sororities and fraternities, have volunteer requirements, but most clubs don’t, said Rebecca Lindley, coordinator of commuter affairs and leadership. She oversees the center.

New projects might be suggested by a member of the campus community, or an outside organization might call for help. Recently a group of 18 volunteers, encouraged by a biology teacher, planted a garden at the Head Start School in Fitchburg, said Jessica Lawrenson, a graduate assistant.

Ongoing traditions kept alive by the volunteer center are very important in connecting the university with the community, said Lindley. The entire campus is involved with a Care and Share program run at the McKay school on campus. Each year 35 families in need, with roughly 100 children, are chosen to receive presents and food donated by the campus community.

“It’s a great way to build a bridge between the university and the community,” Lindley said.

The Center for Professional Studies offers programming for the community. The annual Leadership Summit, run in partnership with the Fitchburg and Harvard police departments, brought law-enforcement professionals to the campus for six days this spring. The Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area program, a popular series for lifetime learners, is run through the center. ALFA provides academic and enrichment courses and other activities. The CPS’s downtown facilities can be used by outside groups.

Faculty and staff members contribute to the community by serving on boards across the region, bringing their knowledge and experience to community groups. Leading by example, President Robert Antonucci serves as chairman of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce.

Fitchburg State University has become a vital part of the community. Here, Fitchburg State University President Robert V. Antonucci, right, attends a press conference at Fitchburg City Hall with Gov. Deval Patrick, left, and Mayor Lisa Wong in October 2008.
School partnerships stimulate teaching at all levels

By Anne O'Connor
Correspondent

FITCHBURG — Partnerships between local school districts and Fitchburg State University provide innovative teacher training, up-to-the-minute professional development for current educators and exciting opportunities for school-age students.

“We want the best education for all students,” said Pamela Hill, dean of education at the university.

Changes in student teaching have increased communication between professors and mentor teachers, so teachers know better what to expect from the university students in their classrooms. Practicums are scheduled so small groups of students get more involved with the classes and provide more assistance. The public school teachers love the changes, Hill said, because they are able to use the university students in a much deeper way than ever before.

Students in the education program spend more time in the field and will give one-on-one reading and math assessments to the youngest students. Work-study options have expanded to include tutoring in the schools, giving the university students more experience and improving the classroom experience in regional schools.

Professors teach in local classrooms, modeling lessons for the education majors. This not only helps the aspiring teachers, it can change the dynamics of the local school.

“We had a number of Fitchburg State University teachers over at the high school co-teaching. They were embedded in the high school. It really rejuvenated part of our math program,” said Andre Ravenelle, superintendent of the Fitchburg Public Schools.

Teachers and other educators working in the schools can become certified without having to leave their classroom for a semester through the education department. Currently 40 science, technology, engineering and math educators are taking courses to earn English as a Second Language licenses. The program, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, is offered as a partnership among the university, the Leominster, Fitchburg and Lowell school districts, and the Collaborative for Language licenses. The program spend more time in the schools, giving the university students more experience and improving the classroom experience in regional schools.

A new statewide curriculum, teacher assessment process and changes in requirements for teaching English language learners are priorities for the center and the education department. The new common core curriculum is hands-on and activity based. It encourages professional relationships and more reflective teaching practices, said Hill. The common core curriculum is already a part of the training required for new teachers.

Teachers already in the classroom need to find out what is new and what has changed with the common core, Moison said. The CPS and education department will be there to help. The changes in teacher assessment mean that principals will need training from the center.

Most classrooms now have English language learners among the more proficient speakers. Teachers without an ESL license will be required to take a course on Sheltered English Immersion to better serve students who are still learning English. The university is at the forefront of developing a program to teach the course, Moison said.

Grant-funded programs also increase the skills of current teachers. Two recent programs at Fitchburg State enabled teachers to earn advanced degrees or gain a license. More than 100 teachers who taught some American history took classes at the university. After taking these classes, more than 13 continued on to earn a master’s degree.

“We're really getting a sense for what are the immediate needs of the schools,” she said.

Teachers can attend courses at the center’s facilities on Main Street in Fitchburg at the Intermodal Station. The offices provide a university presence in the community and comfortable rooms with air-conditioned and adult-sized desks.

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“Meeting the Challenge,” funded by the U.S. Department of Education, paid the full fees and tuitions for 50 high school teachers in high-needs areas to take master’s level courses and earn a special-education license. Many of these excellent educators were certified in other areas and had been teaching special education on a waiver, said Karen Frank Mays, director of grants and special programs.

“We made a huge difference,” she said.

Other campus-based programs offer opportunities for area students. Upward Bound, a four-year program for academically motivated students, has been at the school since 1989. This summer, the university will host the Gateway Summer Academy, a four-week program for English language learners that includes an overnight stay. Artists on campus to perform as part of the Center-Stage series have included young students in their performances and worked with groups in the classroom.

The last 10 years under President Robert V. Antonucci have been an exciting time for new programs, Frank Mays said.

“He really is about access and affordability and serving students. It’s always about the results. If you say it’s going to benefit the students, it’s there,” she said.
“Using Web-based resources, today anyone can learn anything, anywhere at any time. The abundance of knowledge and information is creating a world of richer experiences and deeper meaning for everyone.”

Fitchburg State University Professor Paul Beaudoin

By Matthew Bruun
Fitchburg State University

Fitchburg State Professor Paul Beaudoin is recognized for his innovative teaching practices and beloved by his students. And he connects with them without a classroom or ever meeting in person.

That’s because Beaudoin’s specialty is online education, where bricks and mortar are replaced by Internet connectivity.

“If you have ever used Google, Wikipedia, Facebook or YouTube? Beaudoin asks. “If so, you have already experienced what learning on the Web is like. We live in an age of information and knowledge abundance. Web-based resources bring my students scientific research long before it is published, it offers my students lectures by the world’s leading subject experts, it allows them virtual tours of the Sistine Chapel or the Louvre and it brings them live video feeds from the Hubble spacecraft or the deep-sea explorations of the Nautilus. We can see social, political and economic events unfold right before our eyes.”

Beaudoin also sees the Internet’s capacity for conversation as an advantage: “The Web is not one-sided. My students receive multiple points of view, giving them an opportunity to develop valuable decision-making skills.”

While Beaudoin enjoys working in a new paradigm for academia, he knows that a skilled teacher is still crucial to the educational experience.

“Using Web-based resources, today anyone can learn anything, anywhere at any time,” he said. “The abundance of knowledge and information is creating a world of richer experiences and deeper meaning for everyone. Whether you want to learn how to grow heirloom tomatoes or want to learn about artificial intelligence, the online learning environment is open and waiting for you.”

Fitchburg State offered just 36 online courses a decade ago; this summer alone there are more than 125 online courses (with roughly 1,500 students enrolled), according to Michael B. Leamy, the university’s director of distance education.

The university offers several programs and certificates completely online: the master of science in forensic nursing; master of business administration (with tracks in human resources or management); registered nurse to bachelor of science in nursing; business administration; and certificates in forensic nursing, Web development and business. Additional programs are also being reviewed for online delivery.

Leamy said most of the online students hail from Massachusetts, but also attend from 20 other states while another student in the online MBA program is studying from Vietnam.

“When I think about the future of online education, I am excited,” Leamy said. “I am excited because of both the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead of us. I think we are at a historical time in higher education. We have a better understanding of how people learn and what they need to be successful. We have a robust set of technological tools that make online learning an engaging and academically rigorous experience. I have been involved in online learning for more than a decade and I am proud of the work we do in this field at Fitchburg State.”

Students find the online experience fulfilling and convenient.

“Because of my busy life and work schedule, I didn’t have many alternatives and searched around for an affordable program that met my needs in pursuing my bachelor’s degree in nursing,” said Amber Collins of Pocasset. “I decided on Fitchburg because of the affordability as well as the prerequisite requirements and the options I’d have for pursuing my master’s in forensic nursing. The online program gives me the flexibility I need to be present with my family and friends, and juggle two jobs, and maintain my sanity.”

Collins said the professors had for her online courses — including Beaudoin — were helpful and accessible when she had questions or concerns.

“Professor Beaudoin made the material very accessible and his style of teaching worked perfectly for the material,” she said. “It felt like I got to develop a relationship with him despite the fact that I have never set eyes on him in person.”

Beaudoin is receiving the 2013 Blackboard Exemplary Course Award for his Fitchburg State course “Commonwealth of the Arts.” The program identifies and disseminates best practices for designing engaging online courses. The award will be presented this summer at the Blackboard World conference in Las Vegas.
Programs give students skills they can use

By Kathryn Mahoney
Fitchburg State University

It’s clear that with the ever-changing economy, the workforce and job landscape have changed significantly over the last five to 10 years. To adapt to these changes, Fitchburg State is constantly re-evaluating its academic offerings to make sure its students develop the knowledge, skills and experience they need for the jobs that will be available upon graduation.

This fall, Fitchburg State becomes the first public institution in New England to offer a bachelor’s degree in game design, preparing students with immediately marketable skills in a fast-growing industry. This bachelor of science program is part of the university’s heralded Communications Media Department.

“The video-game industry is well established in Massachusetts, with dozens of game studios operating in the commonwealth,” Fitchburg State President Robert V. Antonucci said. “Even in the midst of economic difficulties, the video game industry, in New England and nationwide, continues to grow and to search for talented and well-prepared applicants. With this new major, Fitchburg State continues to move forward with a spirit of innovation and an emphasis on preparing students for rewarding careers.”

According to the Massachusetts Game Design Institute, the state is one of the largest digital games clusters in the United States, representing a $2 billion industry and employing approximately 4,000 people.

Fitchburg State professors Jeffrey Warmouth and Samuel Tobin, both from the communications media department, have played a major role designing the university’s game-design curriculum.

“It was clear to me that for students that really wanted to do game design, we needed to build a major,” said Warmouth.

“It addresses a desire that’s been there,” added Tobin. “Students are already trying to do this, and this will allow them to do it.”

Additional faculty have been hired to help teach courses in the major, and will work with students in newly created game-design laboratory space on campus. Students will explore game design and development, art and visual design, computer programming, 3D modeling and animation, level design, creative writing, and game studies. Other course topics include serious games, mobile platforms, history of games, and aesthetics.

Another Fitchburg State program meeting workforce development needs is its licensed practical nurse to bachelor of science in nursing program. Graduates of this program are prepared to meet societal health-care needs in a variety of settings.

Earlier this spring, Commissioner of Higher Education Richard Freeland applauded Fitchburg State for its role in creating this innovative, first-of-its-kind program. He noted that health-care industry employers, especially hospitals, are demanding more and more nurses with higher training. This bridge program gives working LPNs credit for their professional experience that can be applied to their bachelor’s degrees.

The university continues to expand its footprint in online education, as well, with entire degree programs available for students who would never have to set foot on campus.

Kathryn Mahoney is Fitchburg State’s digital marketing manager.
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By Chad Garner
cgarner@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University veteran ice hockey coach Dean Fuller has witnessed the good, bad and everything in between at the university during his prestigious coaching career.

But Fuller, entering his 30th season as head coach, certainly is thrilled with all the wonderful things currently going on at Fitchburg State.

"Obviously this has been a huge portion of my life," said Fuller, who is nearing 500 career victories, which ranks him in the top 10 of all active Division 3 coaches. "It's great to see the university going in the right direction and getting better. To get student-athletes to come, I say get them on campus to see Fitchburg State. When they see the campus, facilities and the academics, you're in the hunt right there to get those top recruits.

"Before, I always felt like we were playing catch-up." The programs at Fitchburg State have experienced a rise in success recently, and Fuller is quick to throw the credit at President Robert V. Antonucci.

"To me, I wouldn't still be coaching if it wasn't for Bob Antonucci," Fuller said. "He's doing everything possible for our teams. He's upgrading facilities and helping put us in a position to win. Things keep getting better and better here. There are a lot of good things going on and it's all Bob Antonucci-driven.

"Winning isn't easy. To get the good athletes to come to Fitchburg State, it's a challenge, but he's given us the chance. I'm really pleased with what's happening here."

Winning also took Fitchburg State by storm this winter, as coach Derek Shell's men's basketball team went on a magical ride and garnered the program's first NCAA tourney berth, upsetting Mass. College of Liberal Arts, 80-72, to win the Massachusetts State Athletic Conference championship.

"The basketball team found lightning in a bottle," Fitchburg State Athletic Director Sue Lauder said. "They got better and better as the season progressed."

After winning the MASCAC title, the Falcons had to win three straight road games over Bridgewater State, Westfield State and MCLA to secure the title.

"The basketball team found lightning in a bottle," Fitchburg State Athletic Director Sue Lauder said. "They got better and better as the season progressed."

Fuller said that conference title impacted the program "because kids want to go somewhere you can win." He added: "We’ve been consistent with our level of play since I’ve been here, but I want to get to the national level. That’s my goal here."

Fitchburg State University teams have also appeared in the ECAC Tournament several times in the last 10 years. The softball, football, field hockey, women’s basketball and women’s soccer teams have all advanced twice each, while baseball and men’s basketball once during that span.

"I think we’ve been consistent with our level of play since I’ve been here, but I want to get to the national level. That’s my goal here."

Fitchburg State University teams have also appeared in the ECAC Tournament several times in the last 10 years. The softball, football, field hockey, women’s basketball and women’s soccer teams have all advanced twice each, while baseball and men’s basketball once during that span.

"I think we’re catching a lot of peoples’ eyes with the recent success," said Kimber, a two-sport athlete in football and basketball at Fitchburg State. "People want to go to Fitchburg State."

Please see TEAMS/D43
FALCONS ON ALL TEAMS INSPIRE SCHOOL PRIDE

By Nick Mallard
nmallard@sentinelandeenterprisenow.com

FITCHBURG — Ask Fitchburg State University’s Sue Lauder about the correlation between the men’s basketball team’s run to the NCAA Division 3 tournament this past season and an uptick in school pride, and her explanation is simple.

“Everyone loves to be involved with a winner.”

Fitchburg State’s director of athletics has seen her fair share of success in her 15 years at the helm of Falcon sports, and this winter’s run by the basketball team served as another reminder of what happens when a collegiate team gets hot. Lauder says success serves as a rallying point for the university.

“You see people getting excited to be a part of the Fitchburg State community,” Lauder noted. “We conduct surveys with our athletes after the seasons are through, and for the first time in a while, I had an athlete respond with, ‘I’m proud to go to Fitchburg State and play for the school.’ It was a girl who played another sport, but having a program make the tournament builds pride throughout the campus.”

The Falcons soared to the Massachusetts State College Athletic Conference (MASCAC) tournament as the fifth seed, claiming an automatic berth in the NCAA Division 3 tournament with a stunning 80-72 victory over second-seeded MCLA in February.

Fitchburg State — winners of three straight road games en route to the MASCAC crown — were sent on the road again to face the University of Rochester in New York.

Immediately after the NCAA tournament seedings were announced, the news quickly spread across social media outlets, with students and faculty reacting and showing pride in the school’s success.

“I know there were a lot of students excited about it,” Lauder said. “And there were lots of professors and faculty members who were just as thrilled. There was a lot of talk on campus about what the team had accomplished.”

With the game taking place nearly 400 miles away, school officials had a live stream of the game broadcast at Fitchburg State’s Recreation Center. That school pride didn’t go unnoticed by the players on the team.

“I think we’re catching a lot of peoples’ eyes with the recent success,” Jeremy Kimber, a 2013 grad and member of the men’s basketball team, said. “People want to go to Fitchburg State.”

And though the Falcons fell 91-86 in the NCAA tournament contest, there was a noticeable buzz on campus about the team’s run.

“People really cared about how the team was doing. Students were invested in the team’s success,” Lauder said.

Follow Nick Mallard on Twitter @nmallard.

A WINNING TRADITION AT FITCHBURG STATE

FROM PAGE D42

In the last two years, four Fitchburg State student-athletes — Zach Desrochers, Joseph Caveney, Matt Muolo and Anthony Bizzotto — have been tabbed All-Americans.

In 2012, former Leominster star linebacker Bizzotto earned BSN College Network Division III All-American third team honors, while Muolo starred on the track-and-field team in the weight throw.

This season, Fitchburg hockey product Caveney was an All-American and led all of Division 3 in points per contest, assists per game and power-play goals. He was the MASCAC Player of the Year. Zach Desrochers powered his way to All-American status as a thrower this season.

Taylor Van Ahnen became an All-American in field hockey in 2009, while women’s basketball player Amy Fahey, who scored her 1,000th career point during the 2013 season as a junior, was named All-Region.

Lauder calls recent team and individual successes “just a starting point for us. We’re building success and winning creates interest.”

Follow Chad Garner on Twitter @CGARNER23.

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A look at Fitchburg State University from Hammond Hall down onto the intersection of North and Pearl streets shows how the university is integrating itself into the city.

The North Street Bistro inside Hammond Hall at Fitchburg State University is one example of how the university has become more welcoming to students.

The wall of windows at Hammond Hall at Fitchburg State University presents a welcoming view from North Street.

**Fitchburg State University Over the Years**

1894: Fitchburg Normal School established by the Massachusetts Legislature to educate and train teachers for the region’s schools opened in an old high school building on Academy Street.

1896: College moved to new building on present site, Thompson Hall, named after the Normal School’s principal, John G. Thompson.

1901: Edgerly Hall (School of Observation and Practice) opens.

1909: The Practical Arts teacher training course for men, the first of its kind in the country, is instituted.

1910: Edgerly became one of the first junior high schools in the U.S. Manual arts building dedicated.

1912: Athletic program begins with basketball competition against local high schools and colleges.

1915: First summer extension course offered, representing the beginning of continuing education at the college.

1932: Normal School becomes the State Teachers College at Fitchburg, offering four-year degrees in all areas of education.

1935: College authorized to establish graduate courses.

1943: Nursing program begins with cooperative nursing education effort with Burbank Hospital.

1960: Name changed to State College at Fitchburg and began offering more than just education degrees.

1962: Nursing program, in conjunction with Burbank Hospital, established on campus.

1965: Name changed to Fitchburg State College.

1971: McKay Campus School opens. Special-education program established.

1975: Business Administration program established.

1977: Communications Media program approved.

1978: President Vincent J. Mara establishes the Fitchburg State College Foundation and launches extensive fundraising program. First Honors Convocation.

1981: Montachusett Economic Center established to assist area businesses.

1988: Sweeping new Liberal Arts & Sciences program approved.

1994: College celebrates its centennial. Successful campaign brings overall endowment to $3.5 million.

1996: MBA and forensic nursing graduate programs established.

2000: Recreation Center opens on North Street, marking the start of vast investment along “college boulevard.”

2003: Dr. Robert V. Antonucci inaugurated as president. Oversees extensive new construction and renovation and establishment of “wireless” campus.

2008: 3,500-square-foot campus police station completed on North Street.

2010: Name change to Fitchburg State University. Construction begins on new science center.

2012: First phase of Hammond Hall renovations completed and game design major announced, making Fitchburg State the only public institution in Massachusetts to offer this major.

2013: New science center completed. Renovations to Condike Science Building begin with completion date of late 2014.
Congratulations on your 10th anniversary, President Antonucci!

It’s been a pleasure helping you build a better Fitchburg State University.

— Gregg Lisciotti
Our students succeed — everywhere!

- Quality, affordable education
- Internships that lead to jobs
- More than 60 degree & certificate programs
- Day, evening and online courses
- Small class sizes—16:1 student to faculty ratio
- Hands-on career oriented learning
- Accessible faculty

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

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