

UMass Dartmouth secures approval to offer accredited public interior architecture design program

Program, which originated at Mount Ida, will prepare students to excel in a fast-growing profession and is the only one of its kind in New England.

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education approved a Bachelor of Science in Interior Architecture and Design (IAD) at UMass Dartmouth yesterday, establishing the only accredited program of its kind at a public university in New England. The program had previously been approved by the UMass Board of Trustees.

The program grew out of a Mount Ida College program that was brought to UMass Dartmouth in 2018 to be taught out after the abrupt closure of the small, private Newton college. Of the 221 students that transferred to UMass Dartmouth from Mt. Ida College, 38 students were from the IAD program. Nine of those 38 students graduated this past May. Soon after the program arrived on campus, university officials recognized the quality of the program and began the process of making it a permanent major.

“When we adopted this program, the excellence of the faculty, the passion of the students, and the need across the Commonwealth for highly trained designers immediately convinced us that we should make this a permanent program at UMass Dartmouth,” said UMass Dartmouth Chancellor Robert E. Johnson. “Now, we are proud to be the only public university in New England with an internationally accredited interior architecture and design program that will create outstanding

job opportunities for our graduates.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for the IAD profession nationwide is up four percent since 2016 and total IAD firm revenues are projected to increase from \$9 billion in 2016 to \$12 billion in 2019. The job placement rate for students graduating from the program has ranged from 90 percent to 100 percent over the last three years.

“I want to personally thank all those who recognized the potential of this program to thrive at UMass Dartmouth, and worked hard to make it a permanent offering to our students,” said UMass Dartmouth Provost Mohammad Karim.

“The Board’s approval of the Interior Architecture and Design program at UMass Dartmouth comes with recognition of the University’s role, along with Framingham State University and Cape Cod Community College, in accepting students displaced by the abrupt closing of Mount Ida College last year,” said Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner of Higher Education. “It is a reminder of the vital role that our public colleges and universities play in providing expanded educational opportunities across the Commonwealth.”

The IAD program focuses on the artistic, technical, and functional aspects of space design and compliance with safety codes and standards. The program prepares students for professional level entrance into the design field and upon graduation to sit for the National Council for Interior Design Qualifications exam (NCIDQ).

IAD graduates will provide the region and the Commonwealth with designers who can address and facilitate the growing needs of senior citizens, special needs populations, and the tourism industry while helping to revitalize historic areas and address environmental sustainability. Both NCIDQ and the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) govern the

standards for the education and examination of IAD professionals.

Of the students enrolled in CIDA accredited programs across the nation, 63% are in public institutions, 18% are in private non-profit institutions, and 19% are enrolled in private for-profit institutions.

“I am excited about the opportunity to develop and launch the only public Council for Interior Design Education (CIDA) accredited Interior Architecture Design program in New England,” said Dr. Rose Mary Botti Salitsky, who joined her students from Mount Ida to UMass Dartmouth. “Since our arrival, we have been embraced by the community and tried to give back.”

As the university pursued BHE approval of the program, the faculty and students embedded themselves in the SouthCoast community, assisting schools and non-profits with design projects, including:

- Redesign of the Carney Academy library in New Bedford.
- Collaboration with Bristol Community College, New Bedford Art Museum Teen Arts Council, and the Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical School to design lighting, furniture, and interactive games to enliven Wings Court, a park space in New Bedford.
- Development of a prototype therapeutic multi-use classroom at the Meeting Street School in Dartmouth. Post-occupancy research will be conducted prior to launching the final prototype model.
- Redesign of New Bedford YMCA childcare development spaces.
- Redesign of the lobby and atrium at the UMass Dartmouth Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Fall River.