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UMass eyes final approval \$3.8 billion, five-year construction plan

Posted by Matt Rocheleau September 11, 2013 05:51 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A proposal that would allow the University of Massachusetts to spend up to \$3.8 billion over the next five years on construction and renovation across its five-campus system received preliminary approval Wednesday, officials announced.

The capital plan was backed Wednesday by a subcommittee of the UMass Board of Trustees, university officials said.

The entire trustee board is scheduled to vote next Wednesday on whether to give final approval for the plan.

The proposal, which spans fiscal years 2014 through 2018, includes 184 total projects that would build, expand, repair or renovate basic infrastructure and facilities for research, academic and student use, including housing, officials said.

The capital plan comes with "the understanding that projects will go forward based on the availability of funding and based on the priorities of the campuses," said a statement from the university.

The plan calls for UMass to pay for about 72 percent of the work and the state would pick up the remaining 28 percent of the costs, officials said. UMass borrows money to finance much of the work, though some of its current funds are spent to pay for the projects.

The university updates its five-year capital plan annually. Twenty-seven new projects, worth a combined \$261.8 million, have been added to the latest proposal, officials said.

Those new projects would include a \$12.5 million renovation of Healey Library at UMass Boston; \$12.6 million in repairs to Machmer Hall at the Amherst campus; \$11.4 million for UMass Dartmouth to buy the Advanced Technology and Manufacturing Center in Fall River; \$10 million in improvements to campus athletics and recreation facilities at UMass Lowell, including some projects due to the school's move to the Division 1 level in athletics; and \$15.5 million to upgrade research and lab facilities at UMass Medical School in Worcester.

"Interest in the University of Massachusetts continues to reach record levels and that is a function of many things, with the dramatic transformation of our facilities certainly being a key factor," UMass President Robert L. Caret said in a statement.

Over the past decade, UMass has spent more than \$2.4 billion on capital improvements

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at its campuses, officials said.

During the past year alone, the university has completed construction of the \$350-million Albert L. Sherman Center at UMass Medical School, a \$46-million expansion and renovation of the Claire T. Carney Library at UMass Dartmouth, and a \$13.7-million renovation of Goessmann Laboratory at UMass Amherst.

"These facilities are critical to our ability to attract and retain outstanding students and faculty and will assist in keeping Massachusetts competitive in the global economy," Henry M. Thomas III, chairman of the trustee board, said in a statement.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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