



## Christa McAuliffe Center for Integrated Science Learning Facility Redesign & McAuliffe Simulation Lab

The Christa McAuliffe Center is a vibrant educational facility established in 1986 to honor the legacy of the first teacher in space, FSU alumna Christa McAuliffe '70. Today, the Center functions as a hub for much of the University's informal STEM education activity and outreach serving students and educators across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and beyond. Since 1994, the Center has been serving between 10,000 and 12,000 K-16 students every year.

The Center hosts the only Challenger Learning Center (CLC) in Massachusetts, a digital planetarium and an exhibit hall. Framingham State is the only state university in Massachusetts with a planetarium and the first higher education institution to integrate a CLC on its campus.

### Proposed Reconceptualization Project

Faced with the need to address inevitable major repairs, we propose to transform the current McAuliffe Center into a suite of five multifunctional, technology-enabled learning spaces, and to introduce modern visualizations and simulation capabilities

Our goal is to serve K-16 audiences with cradle-to-career learning opportunities aligned with the needs of Massachusetts employers, increase services to underserved and underrepresented high school and college students and contribute to the formation of a diverse STEM workforce.



- Equipped with modern simulation technology for applications in a range of STEM disciplines, the McAuliffe Center will offer learning experiences that would be either logistically difficult, expensive, or physically impossible for many students, especially those who are underserved and underrepresented.
- The re-designed Center will deliver simulation-based skill training aligned to regional economic and workforce development priorities, from the life sciences to environmental science and technology.
- The Center will provide students with no previous experience in lab or field work with immersive learning experiences that lead to the development of the content and confidence necessary for advancement in a wide range of STEM fields.
- This project will provide a continuum of services, from pre-college activities to college courses and undergraduate internships, dedicated to increasing college enrollment and retention and contribute to diversifying the Commonwealth's green economy workforce.

## Impact on Framingham State and the Commonwealth

Framingham State University and the McAuliffe Center seek to align their existing partnership to benefit the continuum of K-16 students they collectively serve and support FSU's and the state's strategic goals.

- The McAuliffe Center will expand programming in afterschool hours, during evenings, weekends, and summer, resulting in 8,000 additional middle and high school students served.
- Overall, we expect pre-college visits to the re-designed Center to generate an increase in applications to FSU, resulting in 2.5% of the total number of visiting pre-college students to join FSU. We expect to boost retention rates by 3% among FSU students attending classes in the re-designed Center.
- New offerings in the Center's multifunctional environment will allow students from local high schools and FSU students to explore environmental science and policy, conservation, sustainability and clean energy.
- The McAuliffe Simulation Lab will contribute to the formation of a well-trained and diverse workforce to join the ranks of the growing life sciences and green economy sectors.
- An upgraded planetarium and new VR capabilities will provide large scale visualizations of global environmental and earth science datasets to be shared and discussed by teams comprising STEM and sustainability professionals, policy makers and members of the community. This will facilitate community engagement and an inclusive and participatory approach to problem-solving of climate challenges.

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