THE NEW FACE OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

If the blocked-off streets, construction dust and pile driving are starting to wear on your nerves, take a tour of the new School of Education facilities at 86 Wentworth. This airy, professional building is a reminder of just what all this on-campus construction is for and what this school is all about: educating, learning and going out to teach in our communities.

“We’re all here in the name of education,” says Fran Welch, dean of the School of Education. “All of us on this campus are here to facilitate the education of students as they pursue their degrees and go into the world to use what they’ve learned and – we hope – to pass some of that learning along.”

Situated on the border of the campus and the city, with its large windows overlooking both the Memminger Elementary School playground and the College’s N.E. Miles Early Childhood Development Center – two places where teaching fellows work – the new center connects the campus to the city and to the College learning communities.

“The building will be abuzz with people going out into the community to teach,” she says. “It’s the window of education onto the city and into our community.”

But all the allegorical value in the world can’t compare with what the new center has to offer the School of Education in the way of a sense of community and a new, more professional identity. The teacher education staff and faculty that now call 86 Wentworth home were once scattered all over campus. Now, under the same roof, there is a sense of cooperation and teamwork.

“Education is not a solitary discipline,” says Welch. “It requires constant collaboration. Now we have a place where we can learn from each other, a place to call home.”

The place they call home is actually two buildings: the Jeremy Warren Vann Teacher Education Center – a new, L-shaped building, named in memory of Sara and Chuck Davis’ son, a 1997 College alumnus and aspiring teacher who died in a car accident eight years ago – and the original Wentworth Street building. The exterior walls of the two buildings never actually touch, but are connected by a hallway, a feature that Jacque Robertson, one of the architects, refers to as “where the old kisses the new.”

Two architectural firms – Cooper, Robertson & Partners and Watson Tate Savory Architects – designed the buildings and, says Welch, “did a great job of creating a sense of movement from the old to the new. They really respected the old building, bringing in the new to complement it, which really speaks to education.”

While the outside of the facility blends perfectly with its old Charleston surroundings, the inside boasts crisp, modern decor and cutting-edge features like LCD monitors and wireless Internet connections. Its main lobby has laptop computers for students to use; its Curriculum Resource Center offers state-of-the-art access to teaching resources; and its airy Alumni Center is equipped with laptops and projectors for group presentations and seminars.

But perhaps most noteworthy is the facility’s connectivity. Its Alumni Center opens out onto a central courtyard; its staff and faculty lounge spills onto a piazza, visible from any of the courtyard-facing windows; and every office has a window to connect it to the campus and the greater community.

“We’ve always been one big community,” Welch says. “The only difference is now we’ll feel like one.”
UNDERWATER HOCKEY: A Method to the Madness

The teenaged lifeguards argue over whose sister is hotter, which band rocks more and what the best KFC recipe is. They seem oblivious to the odd, silent frenzy going on in front of them. Maybe they’ve seen it before, or maybe – like many teenagers – they’re completely unaware of adults and their corny activities (a bad trait for a lifeguard, to be sure). To any other casual observer, however, an underwater hockey game is something to behold.

Fins flip, sticks wave, snorkels surface momentarily before disappearing again. The bright orange puck slides across the bottom of the pool, chased by the players, who scramble around it, passing it toward their goal and trying to block each other to dive for the puck like hungry dolphin – there is no opportunity for team members to direct one another.

“We might tap on the bottom or something, but you’re mostly relying on visual communication,” says Peters.

Indeed, except for the teams’ pre-game discussions of approach – which take place on the pool wall before a designated player yells, “Ready” and smacks the water with his stick, sending the two teams rushing toward each other to dive for the puck like hungry dolphin – there is no opportunity for team members to direct one another.

If you’re thinking this whole thing sounds a little crazy, don’t tell that to Peters or the other 25-30 members of Charleston’s underwater hockey club, the Blockade Runners (which, incidentally, was started by two College of Charleston adjunct faculty members – Patrick and Lynn Harris – who are from South Africa, where the sport is extremely popular). Having recently won the 2006 national championships and with several members going to the world championships, the Charleston Blockade Runners are not fooling around.

But don’t be intimidated, either. “Everyone can do it – kids, adults, men, women,” Peters says. “We always have a good time, and we’re always looking for new players. When new people come, we really take time to teach them skills and help them along, as there really is a lot of strategy in hockey, despite the fact that it often seems somewhat frenzied on the bottom.”

Try it out on Tuesdays, 7:30–9 p.m., and Fridays, 6–8 p.m., at the St. Andrew’s Family Fitness Plus. Contact John Peters at 953-1422 or petersj@cofc.edu for further information.
Chances are, you’ll never know the College quite like Moses Stepter does. You’ll never climb into its bowels – underneath its brick walkways, between its walls, within its elevator shafts – to see the campus the way he sees it. And, even if you do, you’ll have a hard time catching up with the 26 years of campus pipe navigation that he has under his belt.

“I know these pipes,” says Stepter, one of the two plumbers in physical plant. “I know how things work around here. That’s why they call me to make sure the contractors do things right.”

Of course, Stepter also gets calls when things aren’t done right. “Oh, we get it all,” he says. “We get popsicle sticks in the drains at the cafeteria, corndog sticks, silverware. You don’t know what’s going to happen around here.”

Before residence life took over its own plumbing several years ago, it was the students that kept Stepter guessing. He has cut open pipes to remove their beer cans; he has repaired pipes they’ve kicked while riding atop elevators; he has rescued their rings, contact lenses, teeth, even their pet fish. “I guess some student didn’t want him, so he put him down the toilet. He was still alive,” Stepter chuckles. “These students, they know how to mess up things, especially over the weekends and during the night.”

And yet, it doesn’t matter what time it is, Stepter will come to the rescue. “A plumber is just like a doctor – you’ve got to be on call 24 hours a day,” he says. “You can’t ignore the problem – that just makes it worse.”

Although Stepter understandably prefers to get a full night’s sleep without being interrupted by a busted fire main at the College, he loves his work. “There is always some new challenge I’ve got to figure out,” he says. “You have to use your brain to figure out problems. It’s like I’m in school every day.”

His years of study – performing preventive maintenance and installing, troubleshooting and repairing the piping, equipment and plumbing systems and fixtures around campus – have rendered him something of a walking blueprint of the College’s pipes. He recalls being asked for diagrams of the pipes running underneath the bricks when the Cougar Plaza was being renovated. “I told them, ‘I don’t need a diagram. I’ve got it all in my head.’”

Before he started studying the College’s pipes, Stepter studied plumbing at Denmark Technical College in Denmark, S.C., where he was subsequently offered a teaching job. Instead, however, he decided to teach plumbing at Burke High School. But, he says, “The kids didn’t want to learn or work or get dirty,” and so he eventually decided to take his expertise to the College.

And he’s glad he did. “I enjoy my work,” he says. “We have some times around here. We have good days and we have bad days, but it’s always a trip around here.”

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**GARDENER’S PICK**

**Oriental Paper Bush**

**NAME:** Oriental Paper Bush, *Edgeworthia papyrifera*.

**ON CAMPUS:** Found directly behind 57 Coming Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Distinctive, tiered branches are a source of high-quality paper; clusters of fragrant, yellowish-white, tube-shaped flowers nod from branch tips in late winter/early spring before leaves appear; leaves turn yellow in fall.

**WHERE TO PLANT:** Full sun or part shade; best on a south- or west-facing wall; well-drained soil.

**TIPS:** Water regularly, without over-watering; prune only if necessary; propagate from cuttings in spring.
The Walkers from Admissions Step It Up

The telemarketer bugging you at dinnertime, the concierge taking your reservation, the wireless service provider explaining your bill: They all gush that they absolutely love visiting Charleston and walking its historic streets, “ooh-ing” and “ah-ing” over its charm.

And we all know the feeling. A walk through Charleston is a treat. But pick up the pace and add a few friends and you’ve got something downright addictive. Just ask the group of women in admissions who use their lunch hour to see the town, get their hearts pumping and clear their minds.

“I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to tour the historical streets of downtown Charleston and along the Battery each day on our walks,” says Joan Graesch, transcript evaluation coordinator for transfer admissions and one of the group’s most devoted walkers – second only to associate director of transfer and adult student services Cami Meyer, who started the trend back in 2003 to raise her spirits after some personal hardship.

“I needed to get out of the office to regain my mental, emotional and physical well-being,” Meyer remembers. “I started walking alone for the pure pleasure of having one hour to not have to think or talk to anyone.”

Eventually, however, others in the office started joining Meyer – something that she now appreciates more than the alone time. “We just talk and laugh the entire time,” she says. “It’s really been a great common bond for many of us in the office.”

Although Meyer and Graesch are the most dedicated to their daily walk, three or four others join them about three days a week. And when you see this group coming, you’d better step aside. These ladies mean business, and they’re not stopping for anything. In fact, on rainy days they’ve been known to hit the treadmills in the fitness room at the Theodore S. Stern Student Center. “It’s truly a habit,” says Meyer. “I get mad if I don’t get to go on our walks.”

Graesch agrees: “Cami is the diehard one. She stays on me all day until we go. Having Cami as a motivator to get out and walk is better than purchasing a gym membership.”

And not just for the body – for the mind, too. “I’m a much more productive employee when I’ve had the chance to get out, exercise and breathe some fresh air,” says Meyer, and all the women agree that a brisk, midday walk helps them clear their heads and de-stress.

Of course – as any telemarketer will tell you – it doesn’t hurt that it’s a midday walk through the streets of Charleston. 

Pictured above (l-r): Lauren Scott, Mackenzie Chastain, Cami Meyer, Joan Graesch and Carrie Lyndrup.
**Golfing With Friends**
Practice your putt, get some golf tips and enter a raffle for two week-long passes to the Senior PGA Championship at Kiawah Island, among other things.

**When:** Thursday, April 19, 1–2:30 p.m.
**Where:** Rivers Green, behind the Marlene and Nathan Addelstone Library
**Fee:** None
**Contact:** Jenny Fowler, 953-6526, Fowlerj@cofc.edu

**Openings of the School of Education Buildings**
Enjoy refreshments, greet familiar faces and witness the official opening of the new School of Education facilities.

**When:** Friday, April 20, 4 p.m.
**Where:** 86 Wentworth Street
**Fee:** None
**Contact:** Nancy Waller, 953-5272, Wallern@cofc.edu

**State Employee Continental Breakfast**
Fill up on all your favorite breakfast treats, made especially in your honor.

**When:** Tuesday, April 24, 8:30–10 a.m.
**Where:** Alumni Hall
**Fee:** None
**Contact:** Jane Evans, 953-1925, shararj@cofc.edu

All information is subject to change. Please verify times, places and registration requirements with listed contact.

**News Briefs: News You Can Use**

- **Theatre student and Human Resources Training Specialist Linda McClanaghan** recently won the first prize from the National Critics Institute at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Region IV, where she represented the theatre department with her review of The House of Bernarda Alba. She won an intensive experience in play criticism at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., where she will work with some of the nation’s leading critics.

- **Executive Chef Robert Hylton** won the silver medal and the People’s Choice Award at the Southeast Regional ARAMARK Culinary Excellence Challenge held at Charleston Southern University last month. Hylton represented the College with his stuffed pork loin, seared sea bass and almond sesame tuille.

- **The Friends of the Library and the College’s special collections** are celebrating the history of golf at the College and throughout the Southeast with an exhibit, opening April 16, that will feature antique golf equipment and trophies as well as rare books, prints, photographs and paintings. For more information, visit cofc.edu/~library/friendsofthelibrary/events or contact Jenny Fowler at 953-6526.

- **The College is now using Business Card Express** for all business card orders. All orders should be made at bcesouth.com/cards/sc/coc.

- **The Gold’s Gym in West Ashley** is offering College employees a free one-week membership throughout April. Once five employees enroll in the program, all employees will be eligible for discounted membership. For more information, contact Thad Morgan at 329-4653.
I know I’ve seen it somewhere...

Thanks to everyone who participated in last month’s photo quiz, and congratulations to Wilfred Fields, electrical supervisor in physical plant, who was the first to guess that the picture was of the downspout elbow of one of the copper gutters on campus. No one correctly guessed which campus building this particular new gutter is on: the dean of humanities and social sciences offices at 2 Greenway.

This month’s object can be found on campus. What is it? The first person to submit the correct answer will get their name in the May issue of The Portico and will win a yummy lunch for two at Craig Cafeteria, compliments of ARAMARK. Good luck!

Send your submission to lutza@cofc.edu by Monday, April 16, 2007. Please include your name and your department in the e-mail. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff. One submission per person, please.