Framing Our Future, Piece by Piece

Students are not the only ones with homework assignments around here.
Professors, deans and vice presidents have their share of required reading, too — at least if they’re part of the College’s new Strategic Planning Committee.

When the committee first met in December, President P. George Benson handed out copies of Jim Collins’ *Built to Last* and asked the 19 committee members to read the chapter titled “Building the Vision.” The reading assignment, however, was just the beginning. The committee has a whole lot more in store for it.

“Our goal for the committee is to build on the College’s strong foundation as a public liberal arts and sciences university, and to design a strategic plan that will continue to lead us down the path to a world-class institution,” says President Benson.

With weekly meetings having begun in January, the faculty, staff and students on the committee are already making some progress, reviewing the College’s core values and purpose.

“The weekly meetings have been great,” says Jim Deavor, chair of the chemistry and biochemistry department, who is also co-chairing the Strategic Planning Committee with Amy McCandless, dean of the Graduate School. “Everyone is energetic and enthusiastic. After we finish our work on the core values and purpose, we will be talking about building on our strengths, exploring new initiatives that can address opportunities before us and determining what resources we’ll need to accomplish those initiatives.”

The committee has organized into five subcommittees, with representatives not just from faculty, staff and students, but from alumni and the greater Charleston community, as well.

“We’re encouraging everyone to get involved,” says Deavor.

The involvement of as many constituents as possible is imperative to this research stage and, in the next few months, the College community will be asked to fill out surveys, answer online questionnaires and participate in focus groups.

The focus groups — led by none other than the Focus Group Subcommittee — have already begun, and are intended to gather information about what participants think is necessary for the College to be recognized as a world-class institution. Other research will be conducted by the Competitive Analysis Subcommittee, which will examine higher-education institutions with core values and purposes similar to those of the College to determine its competitive advantages and challenges; by the Environment Subcommittee, which will look at the College’s external economic, academic, social, cultural, demographic, technological and political environments to identify factors that may affect its future; and by the SWOT Subcommittee, which will work with the president’s executive council to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (i.e., SWOT) of its various areas of responsibility. All of these subcommittees will be assisted by the Assessment Subcommittee, which will educate them about assessment tools and measures.

Once the research is over and the subcommittee reports are complete, the Strategic Planning Committee will be faced with its biggest challenge yet: creating an umbrella plan that spells out new goals and objectives and identifies necessary changes for guiding the future development of the College.

It’s hard to say what this new strategic plan will mean to the College community in the end, but one thing is certain — the Strategic Planning Committee has its (home)work cut out for it.

For more information, contact Amy McCandless, 953.1426, mccandlessa@cofc.edu, or Jim Deavor, 953.8095, deavorj@cofc.edu.
LITTLE HISTORY: Randy Beaver Sweats the Small Stuff

For Randy Beaver, the devil is in the details. Whether it’s the button that popped after supper, the shadow that fell with dusk or the feather that was lost in battle – if it isn’t accurate, nothing else is.

“What’s the use in a historical figure without its historical context?” points out Beaver, who has been building and painting historical miniatures for some 30 years. “The whole idea is to recreate a moment. You have to consider the events leading up to the moment if you want to capture it.”

In capturing the moment when Stonewall Jackson was accidentally shot at the Battle of Chancellorville, for example, Beaver considered the raincoat Jackson had put on over his uniform to protect him from the cold and the branch that had struck his face moments before he was shot. He considered the scene unfolding around Jackson (“What would he be seeing?”), the expression on his face (“You have to take the time to prepare for emotion”) and his physical reaction (“As shock sets in, one of the first things that happens is your lips turn pale”).

“These are things I’ll think about for months,” says Beaver, director of environmental health and safety in academic affairs. “I’ll research for a long, long time before I start a project.”

And, even when he gets started, things don’t always speed up. “It can take anywhere between a week and six months, depending on my mood (as all great artists say),” jokes Beaver. “You get these bursts of energy, and you’ll really make some progress. But then you might sit on something for a few months – researching, studying the way something looks in a certain light, trying to figure out the best medium to use.”

Despite the slow pace of his craft, Beaver has managed to complete somewhere around 150 miniatures since he first started a Lord of the Rings figure back in 1975 – and that doesn’t count the Indy cars, five of which he donated to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum and the rest of which he sold at shows.

Not that Beaver was ever in this for the money. A kit – including the resin, pewter or lead pieces of the figure, but not the glue, paints or brushes – costs around $30; the finished product might sell for $50.

So what does drive Beaver to this fairly expensive, time-consuming pastime? “I used to build thinking I’d win something at a show,” says Beaver, who – until recently – attended a couple of trade shows a month, winning awards here and there for pieces like his B17 pilot. “But now I do it for myself. It’s a stress relief. It’s one of those things that if you don’t do it, you say, ‘Wait a minute, why am I so tense?’”

He may do it for himself, but – once he’s done – he doesn’t mind sharing. He gave three of his Tecumseh figures to the Tippecanoe Battlefield Museum in Lafayette, Ind.; shared his model of the 1987 Titanic expedition with a Lafayette grade school every year for 12 years; and built countless American Indians for his mother-in-law.

“It doesn’t matter who I’m building for,” says Beaver, “my goal is always to capture the details of a real scene, not to capture how it would be in a perfect world. Nothing is perfect in real life.”

The real-life scenes he typically builds represent moments between the French and Indian War and 1865 – a period in U.S. history that fascinates him.

“I can read about it, but I need more,” says Beaver. “This is a way I can do in an event more – get my hands in it, really become a part of that very moment. It’s the idea that I can be a part of history that I wasn’t really a part of.”

And to do that, of course, the moment has to be just right.
IN THE DARKROOM: Townsend Davidson Sheds Some Light

Call it what you will – to Townsend Davidson, the College’s darkroom is anything but dark.

“It is really a lively, energetic place,” says the photography lab technician. “There is always someone here working, creating, sharing ideas. It’s an inspiring place to be.”

As the (jokingly) self-described darkroom czar, Davidson ’02 is responsible for keeping the darkroom functioning safely for students. This means cleaning and maintaining the facility as well as mixing and stocking the chemicals. His favorite part of the job, however, is interacting with the students.

“They may need help developing their film, or they may ask for creative help,” says Davidson, who is also an award-winning painter. “I never make creative decisions for them, and I don’t tell them how to do their work. I just lend advice regarding how they might aesthetically and compositionally enhance their images. Basically, I’m here to help the students when they need it.”

He may be there to help the students, but – more often than not – it’s the students who end up helping him.

“I’ve learned a lot as a result of my interactions with them,” says Davidson. “Just witnessing their growth has helped me to grow as an artist and as an individual.”

As an artist, he has learned to let go, to submit to the “unbridled creativity” he sees in students. And, as an individual, he has become “more engaged, more connected” to people.

“Artists have to have the ability to shut everything and everyone else out, and that can really have a grip on you,” Davidson explains. “You become so wrapped up in that solitude, it’s like leaving one country and going to another country. You get so involved in this world you are creating, when you step outside that world, you have to readjust and reorient yourself.”

Working at the College has eased that process for Davidson. When he arrives at the College at 4 p.m. every day – after spending his mornings and early afternoons painting in his studio at Redux Contemporary Art Center – he finds the darkroom inviting and refreshing.

“It’s good to come from that creative and solitary mode to such a vibrant, youthful, energetic environment,” he says. “I think I’m more inspired by the students’ energy than anything else.”

It’s that creative energy that keeps students’ artistic perspective fresh, keeps their imaginations uninhibited. And, Davidson thinks it’s something we could all learn from.

“They’re not bogged down by rules – that’s the real asset, I think. They’re not afraid to take risks,” says Davidson. “It’s a good approach that you can extend to your whole life. I think it’s a great way to live.”

You never know what life lessons will come to light in the darkroom.

EDITOR’S NOTE

Thanks to everyone who participated in The Portico reader survey last month. We are happy that 91% of you rate the overall quality of the newsletter as very good or better, and we’re pleased to announce that people off campus agree with you: The Portico received the 2007 Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) III Grand Award for Best Internal Newsletter. This is your newsletter, and we appreciate all of your support, feedback and suggestions. To see the complete survey results, please visit cofc.edu/theportico/readersurvey.

– Alicia Lutz

GARDENER’S PICK

Carolina Silver Bell

AKA: Halesia carolina, snowdrop tree, opossum-wood, mountain silver bell.

ON CAMPUS: Found just inside the gate on the west side of the Stern Center Garden.

DESCRIPTION: Elegant deciduous tree grows to 40’ tall with 35’ spread in this area; clusters of white, ½”, bell-shaped flowers hang along length of branches as leaves appear; dry, oblong, four-winged drupes hang throughout winter.

WHERE TO PLANT: Somewhere accessible, so blooms can be seen from below; under partial shade of taller trees; at corners of buildings; along borders; in moist, well-drained, acid soil.

TIPS: Sprays of these flowers go well with cut-flower arrangements.
**SCRATCH AND SNiff:** Tom Hutchinson Knows the Smell of Success

Forget standardized tests and report cards. In elementary schools across America, students measure their own success by a hierarchy of stickers. As arbitrary and yet undisputed as the playground pecking order, this complex system of shiny stars, smiley faces and applauding characters is in constant flux. One thing, however, does not change: A scratch-and-sniff sticker means a job well done.

Tom Hutchinson, university professor in the School of Sciences and Mathematics and inventor of the scratch-and-sniff technology, couldn’t agree more.

“It was exciting for me,” he says. “Not because I wanted to make fruity stickers. Because it’s a concept that has multiple uses and implications – and because no one expected it.”

Least of all Hutchinson.

Having recently earned his Ph.D. in nuclear physics, he and five other young physicists were hired in 1962 by 3M Company to come up with some new, exciting product ideas.

“They just turned us loose in a lab and told us to think of things that would make them lots of money,” says Hutchinson. “We were kind of like the 3M dream team.”

When he emerged from the lab, it was with some microscopic water droplets encapsulated in wax – a byproduct of his primary project dealing with super-conductivity. He had a hunch that the “dry water” he’d made was worth the distraction from his other work.

“Oh, yeah, we knew,” Hutchinson says. “We were in the middle of the Cold War, and there was a lot of concern about preserving water in case of an attack. These tiny capsules could keep water pure – they’re so small, microbes can’t grow in them. And, even if they did, they couldn’t spread because of the wax covering.”

Something else that couldn’t spread through the wax: smells. The first scent that Hutchinson tried out with his new technology was some cheap perfume from the five-and-dime.

“We collected the perfume-water capsules on a piece of Scotch Tape, folded the tape and took it to my supervisor,” he says. “When he opened up the tape, it was like walking into a bordello.”

And the perfume sample was born.

“We were just getting started,” Hutchinson says. “The ultimate test was liquid skunk – this repellant people use in gardens. We encapsulated it, collected it in an envelope and sent it to the vice president of central research, with a little note saying, ‘Here’s what the dream team is doing down in the lab!’”

Despite the stench, Hutchinson’s bosses were pleased with what they saw (or smelled), and soon began commercializing the technology.

“It took off in different directions from there,” Hutchinson says.

Looking back on the success of the technology, one might say that Hutchinson did an all-around “Grape Job!” for 3M.

And you can’t do much better than that.

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**TECHNO BYTES**

With vendor support for the College’s version of WebCT ending in 2009, it is time to find a new, more supportive, interactive and faculty-friendly Learning Management System (LMS) with tools that:

- Make instructional materials easily accessible
- Use media and Internet resources to enrich content
- Accommodate the technological diversity among learners
- Take advantage of the new Web 2.0 tools
- Enrich faculty-student-peer interactions
- Provide anywhere/anytime web-based opportunities for assessment, feedback, grading and record keeping

Your input about the new LMS is crucial. For more information about the LMS project, visit cofc.edu/it/tlt/lms/timeline.html, or contact your departmental IT representative or an instructional technologist.

For further information, contact Susan Beatie – director of teaching, learning and technology in information technology and the LMS project director – at beaties@cofc.edu or 953.7998.

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**UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

- Last month, decking rebar and post-tension cables were placed on the second floor of the School of the Arts addition. This month, third-floor decking will be erected and rebar will be placed.
- At the site of the new science center, pile driving and underground utility-vault installation began in February and will continue throughout March.
- At the Carolina First Center/John Kresse Arena, drywall was hung and arena roofing and east-wing steel erection, brick and windows were completed in February. In March, ceilings will be placed and priming and painting will start on the arena level.
- Painting and window treatments began last month at 7 and 9 College Street. The post-construction phase of both buildings will continue through March. The communication department is scheduled to move into the buildings in mid-May.
**SOUTHERN CIRCUIT FILM SERIES**

Watch and discuss with its filmmakers Guerrilla Radio: The Hip-Hop Struggle Under Castro, which explores how the anti-authoritarian nature of hip-hop culture and music played out in Castro’s Cuba.

**When:** Friday, March 7, 8 p.m.

**Where:** Simons Center for the Arts, Room 309

**Fee:** None

**Contact:** Teresa Smith, 953.5660, registration requirements with

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**STATE-OF-THE-COLLEGE ADDRESS**

Hear what President P. George Benson has to say to faculty and staff after one year at the College.

**When:** Thursday, March 13, 2 p.m.

**Where:** Stern Center Ballroom

**Fee:** None

**Contact:** Monteith Mitchell, 953.6067, mitchellml@cofc.edu

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**MULTICULTURAL ExCEL AWARDS RECEPTION AND PROGRAM**

Celebrate diversity and honor members of the College and Charleston community who have enhanced multiculturalism on campus and beyond.

**When:** Wednesday, March 26, 4 p.m. (reception) and 5 p.m. (program)

**Where:** Physicians Memorial Auditorium

**Fee:** $10

**Contact:** Teresa Smith, 953.5660, smithtl@cofc.edu

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

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**NEWS BRIEFS: News You Can Use**

- The Division of Marketing and Communications won the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) III Special Merit Award for the Graduate School admissions publication. It also won a Charleston Advertising Federation ADDY Design Award for College of Charleston Magazine.

- Martin Perlmutter, philosophy professor and director of the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, received the Brith Sholom Beth Israel Synagogue’s Aaron Solomon Memorial Award for Service to Humanity in recognition of his distinguished service to Charleston’s Jewish and non-Jewish community.

- Joyce Barrett, adjunct faculty member in the Department of Communication, received her second Fulbright Fellowship and is traveling this month to Burkina Faso to work with the government’s directors of communication and with students and faculty at the University of Ouagadougou.

- The College received an A and was ranked 25 out of 135 in a campus-safety survey conducted by Reader’s Digest.

- The College of Charleston EMS (COFCEMS) is offering CPR and AED classes for the discounted rate of $20, with all proceeds going to COFCEMS. For more information, visit cofcems.com/cpr.
Who’s seen it?

Thanks to everyone who participated in last month’s photo quiz, and congratulations to Vince Benigni, associate professor of communication, and John Campbell, dean of residence life and housing, who simultaneously guessed that the object in question was the gold medal that Coach Bobby Cremins brought home from the 1986 FIBA Men’s Basketball World Championship in Madrid, Spain. Hanging in his office, the medal is a souvenir from Cremins’ days as assistant coach for the USA team, which won the gold medal game against the (then) Soviet Union 87-85.

Take a look at the picture above. The object can be found on campus. Do you know what it is? The first person to submit the correct answer will win a tasty lunch for two at Liberty Street Fresh Food Company, compliments of ARAMARK. Good luck!

Send your submission to lutza@cofc.edu by Monday, March 17, 2008. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff. One submission per person, please.