Campus Construction Projects Near Completion

Members of Western’s board of trustees recently donned hard hats and braved dust and dirt for an up-close update on several major campus construction projects, including a $16.8 million student recreation center expected to be ready for use in fall semester. The center also includes two multipurpose courts, a 9,800-square-foot area for strength training and cardiovascular equipment (more than three times the amount of existing space in Reid Gym), two 2,100-square-foot exercise studios, fitness assessment rooms and locker rooms.

The recreation center is just one part of a major transformation of the core of campus designed to create a traditional “college quad” feel with green space and a pedestrian-friendly environment, said Chuck Wooten, vice chancellor for administration and finance, as he and his staff led members of the board of trustees on a recent tour.

Redesign of the central campus began in 2005 with the relocation of a road that bisected the campus. Rising beside the recreation center is a $17.2 million dining facility, which is being constructed on the site where Helder Residence Hall used to stand and which will replace Dodson Cafeteria, built in 1966. The new 53,000-square-foot dining hall will include a Starbucks coffee shop, McAlister’s Deli, food courts and convenience store. The facility is expected to be completed by spring semester 2009.

“We believe students will enjoy having the programs of the University Center, the recreation opportunities of the rec center, and the amenities of the dining hall all located side by side,” said Wooten.

Board members also walked through the Stillwell Building, where final touches are being completed on a $27 million renovation project that includes replacement of antiquated science laboratory space hampered by inadequate ventilation systems with new, state-of-the-art labs featuring contemporary safety equipment. The renovation project also increased office, conference and meeting space. The building is expected to be completed by the end of this semester.

The Stillwell renovation is one of the final remaining projects funded through WCU’s $98.4 million share of the $3.1 billion state higher education bond issue approved by N.C. voters in 2000. Inflation has pushed the cost of the Stillwell project up from its original $16 million pricetag, Wooten said.

“Because the Stillwell Building is so critical to the mission of the university, we have had to pull money from other projects, such as the Forsyth Building renovation, to be able to do what we need to do to bring the science labs up to standard,” he said.

“That has left us scrambling to find the dollars to complete those other projects, but we will find them.”

The renovations at Western are not over yet. Groundbreaking is set for 2 p.m. Thursday, April 3, on a new 800-bed residence hall that will replace Helder and Leatherwood halls. Current schedules call for demolition of Dodson in January 2009, with Leatherwood to come down that summer.

“The entire campus is going to be so different in two years,” said Joan MacNeill, board chair. “We’ve already seen this once before, but here it comes again, so get ready.”

–By BILL STUDENC
Five Finalists Named for Distinguished Teaching Award

Five faculty members are nominees for the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, one of the highest teaching awards bestowed by WCU. Winners are chosen through a two-stage process that includes nominations by students and faculty members. The winner, who receives $1,000, will be announced at the General Faculty Meeting and Awards Convocation at 3:30 p.m. Friday, April 25, in the Fine and Performing Arts Center. A reception precedes the event at 3 p.m.

Meet the Finalists:

Kathleen M. Brennan
Assistant professor of sociology

Hometown: Chardon, Ohio
Joined WCU Faculty: 2003
Philosophy: “My teaching philosophy is rooted in effective communication, trust, encouragement, enthusiasm and engagement with my students. I view the student-teacher relationship as a reciprocal relationship.”
Class Notes: Brennan co-facilitated the Adventure Sports in the Mountains freshman interest group in 2006. The initiative, which won funding from the Integration of Learning Award, featured activities such as class trips in the outdoors and service-learning activities for the Mountain Heritage Center. Brennan also supervises students who join her in community engagement activities with Jackson County Habitat for Humanity, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River.

Jane L. Nichols
Assistant professor of art and design

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Education: M.A., interdisciplinary studies, Arizona State University-West, 2005; M.S., design and facilities planning, Arizona State University, 2004; B.A., Liberal Studies, Governor’s State University, Ill., 2002; A.A., interior design, Milwaukee Stratton College, Wis., 1979. (Note: Nichols is a Ph.D. candidate at Prescott College in Arizona)
Joined WCU Faculty: 2004
Philosophy: “To enable students to refine their talents and find pathways for healing the earth, they must learn how to solve ill-structured problems in an unpredictable environment. Allowing the creative process to unfold is chaotic at the beginning, but students learn how to problem-solve and apply these skills to their own lives.”
Class Notes: Nichols incorporates sustainable architecture, green design and social equity themes into her courses. She facilitated participation of more than 1,000 WCU students in January’s Focus the Nation, a national teach-in centered on finding solutions to global warming. She also fulfilled a Fellowship for Service Learning in 2005-06.
Teaching Inspiration: Nichols was working with apprentices at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture when she realized she loved teaching design more than designing itself. “I traded a professional career for the professoriate and have never looked back.”
Burton R. Ogle
Environmental health program director

Hometown: Bristol, Va.
Education: Ph.D., public and environmental health, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1998; M.S., environmental health, East Tennessee State University, 1985; B.S., University of Tennessee, 1979.
Joined WCU Faculty: 2002
Philosophy: “My teaching reflects my own personal enthusiasm for environmental health. I’m confident that not a single student I’ve ever taught would dispute that. I gain a particular sense of gratification in my ability to communicate not just the facts, but the very heart of environmental health.”
Class Notes: Ogle has been awarded a faculty fellowship for the past three summers (and another for this summer) for collaborative projects with Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The most recent was with ORNL’s Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences. “I have been able to bring students with me each summer with paid internships, and I am able to incorporate my research at Oak Ridge into my teaching.”
Teaching Inspiration: “My father, who died the year I received my doctorate, was always a tremendous support to me and taught me that I could do virtually anything I attempted. My brother Randy is an excellent teacher and my best friend. His influence led directly to my career choice.”

Debby Singleton
Visiting instructor of health, physical education and recreation

Hometown: Lynchburg, Va.
Joined WCU Faculty: 1996
Philosophy: “I believe that individuals learn by doing. I am constantly creating new ways to reach each of my students and build relationships to support them academically and personally.”
Class Notes: Singleton developed a “Physical Activity and Aging” course in response to a need for quality activity programs for older adults. Singleton’s health and wellness students also train for and complete a 5K race with Cullowhee Running and Social Club members, including 85-year-old retired professor Jim Hamilton. “It is a tremendous motivator to have him running beside you, encouraging you to do your best.”
Teaching Inspiration: One of Singleton’s students, with her help, fulfilled a dream of guiding trips in New Zealand, British Columbia and Patagonia. “In fact, she is returning to Western soon to make a presentation for the same class that initially inspired her.”

Jill Manners
Athletic training program clinical education coordinator

Hometown: Palatine Bridge, N.Y.
Education: M.S., athletic training, West Virginia University, 1995; B.S., athletic training/exercise science, Ithaca College, N.Y., 1993.
Joined WCU Faculty: 2004
Philosophy: “It is important that our future athletic trainers become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Therefore, I strive to make my classes interactive and use a variety of methods to ensure that all students ‘see’ and understand the material presented. Additionally, I incorporate numerous case studies to prepare students for real-world situations.”
Class Notes: Manners aided the creation and growth of WCU’s athletic training program. She has created more than 35 clinical education sites in seven states where students get experiences ranging from working with professional athletics to medical offices.
Teaching Inspiration: Manners planned to become a high school athletic trainer in order to serve an underserved population when a graduate school mentor did not ask but told her to go to an interview the next day for an instructor position at West Virginia University. “I was offered and accepted the position and have never looked back.”

- Compiled by TERESA KILLIAN
The Fine Art Museum recently received a “Kristallnacht” portfolio, a series of 10 vitreographic prints by artist Erwin Eisch depicting scenes from a Nazi attack on German Jews, from Harvey K. and Bess Littleton of Spruce Pine.

In November 1938, in an event that portended the Holocaust, the German government orchestrated an attack against German Jews that included the destruction of Jewish synagogues, cemeteries and businesses. As many as 2,500 deaths resulted from what the German government termed “Kristallnacht,” or “Night of the Crystal Death.” Eisch, a glass sculptor from the village of Frauneau, in the German state of Bavaria, was 12 years old at the time. He created his “Kristallnacht” portfolio in 1992 in response to the event.

“I want to try to come to terms with the burden, the shame, the anger and the fear which shaped my childhood,” Eisch wrote in the “Kristallnacht” preface.

Eisch, who comes from a family of glassblowers, is considered the “father” of European studio glass. He has exhibited in Germany, Austria, the United States, Japan, Czechoslovakia, France and Switzerland, and his work is represented in the collections of the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, N.Y.; the Elvehjem Museum of Art in Madison, Wis.; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington; and the Toledo Museum of Art.

Harvey Littleton, also a glass artist, pioneered vitreography, a printmaking medium that uses a glass matrix to transfer an image to paper. Artists, including Eisch, whom Littleton befriended in Germany in 1962, have long traveled to Littleton Studios in Spruce Pine to create these prints.

For more information, contact Martin DeWitt, museum director, at 227-2553 or Hillary Brett, assistant curator, at 227-3591.

Enjoy.

New drink machine covers originally designed by John Balentine, a graphic designer in University Publications, are giving customers in Ramsey Regional Athletic Center a splash of athletic action, too. Meghan Reilly, a graphic artist in the University Print Shop, who adapted Balentine’s design for the Catamount golf, tennis and track and field cover, is pictured here helping install the covers with Coca-Cola representative Ben Shelton and Jason Thompson (far right), who runs the large format printers in the University Print Shop. After seeing drink machines on other campuses decorated with university images, Rick Nicholson and Jeff Bewsey in Auxiliary Services asked Coke officials to fund covers for several machines on campus. Two more are in the works this year.
WorldCom Whistleblower Shares Advice About Ethical Decisions

With intense pressure to succeed combined with feelings of pride and a fear of failure, students at Western and elsewhere face many of the same stresses and strains that led to the fraudulent accounting practices that brought down communications giant WorldCom.

That was the message March 11 from Cynthia Cooper, the whistleblowing accountant at WorldCom who exposed one of the largest corporate scandals in U.S. history. In a talk more about ethics than accounting, Cooper met with about 400 WCU students and later with community members in the Fine and Performing Arts Center as part of the Chancellor’s Speaker Series.

“I challenge you to think about decisions you might have made along the way, how those decisions might have impacted you, your co-workers, your friends, your family,” said Cooper, who, as vice president of internal audit at WorldCom, helped uncover questionable accounting activities that turned a $662 million corporate loss into a $2.4 billion profit, resulting in the collapse of what was then the nation’s No. 2 long-distance carrier. “We can all give in to pressures from peers or supervisors to make decisions that go against what we know in our hearts to be right.”

Students face those types of decisions every day – from whether to cheat on a test or plagiarize someone else’s work in a paper to downloading music illegally from the Internet, Cooper said. As was the case at WorldCom, where the first decision to use accounting trickery was seen as a short-term fix to a short-term problem, bad choices can lead to a downward spiral from which you will never recover, she said.

“Character is not forged at the crossroads of a major decision in your life,” she said. “Character is built upon the decisions you make throughout your life. Character is built decision by decision by decision.”

Cooper’s appearance at WCU was sponsored by the university’s Chancellor’s Speaker Series and the College of Business. The Chancellor’s Speaker Series is designed to bring significant national and international leaders to campus to discuss major issues of the day, and to provide Western students with an opportunity to interact with some of the people who shape and influence the world.

“Save the Dates
Scheduled to participate in the Chancellor’s Speaker Series in 2008-09 are Kathy Reichs, forensic anthropologist and best-selling author whose novels inspired the Fox television series “Bones,” on Nov. 18; and Garrison Keillor, storyteller and humorist best known as host of “A Prairie Home Companion,” on Feb. 2.

UAC to Discuss Smoking Policy Recommendation

About 35 students, staff and faculty members participated in a campuswide Town Hall meeting March 10 to discuss the possibility of creating no-smoking areas around campus buildings. About 100 students also attended at least one of five forums hosted by the Wellness Center in residence halls, and dozens of campus community members e-mailed comments to leaders of the University Advisory Council, Staff Forum and Faculty Senate.

The UAC will review the information gathered and post an update to the UAC’s Web site at www.wcu.edu/uac. Members will discuss at the April 8 meeting whether to recommend a policy.

--By BILL STUDENC

--March 24, 2008

The Reporter — March 24, 2008
The demand for Chinese language and exchange programs is growing at Western, and a bilateral exchange agreement for students, faculty and staff with Chongqing Technology and Business University is under consideration. Four delegates from CTBU recently toured the WCU campus, visiting facilities from science labs to residence hall rooms. They talked to students, faculty and staff, and said they looked forward to the delegation from WCU visiting them in China in May.

“The trip was not only impressive but fruitful,” said David Yunchao Chen, vice president of CTBU. “I am confident about developing an exchange agreement between our two universities.”

CTBU is a fully residential university serving more than 21,000 students on a campus in Chongqing, a provincial-level municipality that has a population of about 31 million. Similar to WCU, the university is public and comprehensive and located in a mountain region, said Chen. Differences include student schedules, with CTBU students maintaining the same daily schedules, from getting up at 6:30 a.m. to lights out at 11 p.m.

Major areas of study at CTBU include economics, management, arts and literature, engineering, law and science. There also is an emphasis on science and technology research, which has won national awards. Eighteen products developed at CTBU from a high-efficiency vacuum to a cardiovascular parameter test have earned national patents.

Lois Petrovich-Mwaniki, director of international programs and services at WCU, said the exchange agreement would create opportunities to learn Chinese language and culture, and also to collaborate with CTBU faculty on research initiatives. “The agreement we are discussing would allow students, faculty and staff to spend a summer, semester or year at CTBU,” said Petrovich-Mwaniki. “We also may utilize CTBU’s resources in Chinese language to provide Western with a Chinese instructor each year as we grow our Chinese language program.”

Western began offering Chinese language courses in Fall 2007 taught by Jing Sun, a visiting instructor from Fudan University, which has a partnership with the University of North Carolina system. The partnership also has enabled groups of WCU students to travel to China.

“We are sending our third group of students to Japan and our second group of students to China on faculty-led study abroad trips this summer,” said Petrovich-Mwaniki. “The demand for visiting and studying in China is growing. We sent our first students — four total — to China and Japan this year on one-year exchanges.”

Chen said entering an exchange agreement with WCU would help deepen the relationship between the United States and China and support new cooperative opportunities for development in both countries. Petrovich-Mwaniki said this would be the first bilateral exchange partner for WCU.

“This summer, the delegation hopes to make contact with other Chinese institutions to expand exchange and internship possibilities for our students in the humanities, business, education, sciences, arts, technology and health sciences,” she said.

- By TERESA KILLIAN
Are Responding to the Growing Demand for Accountability

National Education Leader to Discuss How Universities Are Responding to the Growing Demand for Accountability

George L. Mehaffy, vice president for academic leadership and change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, will visit WCU from Wednesday, March 26, through Friday, March 28, to discuss the changing role of higher education in the 21st century.

Universities are being asked today more than ever to prove to the public that they are valuable institutions and that students are actually learning, said Mehaffy.

“In great contrast to the 20th century when there was an assumption universities were educating students, now universities are being challenged by the public’s assessment and accountability expectations to demonstrate that students are, in fact, learning,” said Mehaffy, whose public keynote address will be 7 p.m. Thursday, March 27, in the theater of A.K. Hinds University Center.

“We are going to talk about the roles of faculty and staff in creating truly learning-centered institutions and what it takes to be able to demonstrate success in educating students,” he said. “In addition, we are going to talk about what students are learning because the public is asking is not only ‘Are students learning?’ but also ‘What are they learning?’”

Mehaffy is a colleague of Provost Kyle Carter’s. They met through the AASCU Association for Chief Academic Officers, which Mehaffy directs. “I have wanted George to come to our campus for some time,” said Carter. “He is a highly entertaining and engaging speaker who causes his audience to think about issues in higher education. Whether you are a student, faculty member or member of the local community, you will become engaged by George’s persuasive style and interpersonal flair. I really encourage the campus community to take advantage of his visit.”

Carol Burton, assistant vice chancellor for undergraduate studies at WCU, said Mehaffy’s presentation is particularly valuable as WCU participates in the UNC Tomorrow initiative, a comprehensive effort to assess University of North Carolina institutions and explore how they can better prepare students to meet the future needs of the people of North Carolina. Work groups at WCU are currently drafting plans and recommendations in response to the UNC Tomorrow final report.

Mehaffy also will discuss the importance of WCU’s Quality Enhancement Plan to the academic development of students. The plan, titled “Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning,” has refocused the institution on student learning and faculty engagement inside and outside of the classroom.

“Dr. Mehaffy will offer our campus and our community powerful insight into what we can do to be a more learning-centered university and how we can help our students embrace the ideals of civic engagement and service,” said Burton.

Mehaffy will talk about student leadership and AASCU’s American Democracy Project, which he founded and directed, during meetings with student groups, classes, faculty and administrators. The project encourages institutions to highlight the civic value of the college experience and restructure coursework, programs and activities to increase the number of students who understand and are committed to meaningful civic action. American Democracy Project efforts at Western, for instance, have included a voter registration effort in which students examined the effectiveness of different voter registration methods while working to register hundreds of voters on campus.

Mehaffy will meet with Scott Philyaw, associate professor of history and director of the Mountain Heritage Center, to discuss an academic monograph Philyaw is working on that captures the outcomes of three summers of a national ADP project at Yellowstone National Park. “We are soliciting essays on how faculty who participated implemented the ADP on their respective campuses,” said Philyaw. “Some have focused on public land questions in urban settings. Others, such as Sean O’Connell and Chris Cooper at WCU, have taken a field experience approach.”

O’Connell, the H.F. “Cotton” and Katherine P. Robinson Professor of Biology, and Cooper, director of the master’s degree program in public affairs, are teaching a two-week field course titled “Politics in the Parks: This Land is Your Land?” in which students will spend time in national parks and talk with the many different stakeholders in biological and political issues surrounding national parks.

Mehaffy’s visit is sponsored by the Office of the Provost and the Office of Undergraduate Studies. For more information, including a complete schedule of events planned during Mehaffy’s visit, please contact Burton at 227-7497 or burton@email.wcu.edu.

By TERESA KILLIAN

Want to go?

George L. Mehaffy’s campuswide address, which is free and open to the public, will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 27, in the theater of A.K. Hinds University Center.
Tuesday, March 25
Catamount Concert Series — Christopher Palestrant. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)
Catamount baseball — vs. East Tennessee. 7 p.m. HS/CF. $ (227-7338)

Wednesday, March 26
Faculty Senate meeting — Open to the public. 3-5 p.m. Room 104 Killian. (227-3800)
Seventh annual gender conference — “Gender Gaps: Fact or Fiction” topics will include wages, promotions, happiness, education, housework. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. UC. (227-3359)
Women’s History Month — Equity bake sale. 11 a.m. -1 p.m. McKeel. (227-3839)
French Film Festival — “Les Parapluies de Cherbourg.” A musical about two lovers separated by war. Hosted by the department of modern foreign languages. 7 p.m. Room 121 McKeel. (227-3872)

Thursday, March 27
George Mehaffy, VP for Academic Leadership and Change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities — campuswide session on the role of the learning institution in the 21st century. 7 p.m. UC Theater. (227-7495)
Visiting Artist Series — New York sculptor Jo Nelson will speak and present her work. 5 p.m. Room 130 FAPAC. (227-3601)
Women’s History Month — Reception for the women of Student Affairs. 4 p.m. Bird Alumni House. (227-2276)

Friday, March 28
Catamount baseball — vs. UNC Greensboro. 7 p.m. HS/CF. $ (227-7338)
Catamount track and field — Western Carolina Invitational. CAC. (227-7338)

Saturday, March 29
Lady Catamount tennis — vs. Wofford. 11 a.m. CAC. (227-7338)
Catamount baseball — vs. UNC Greensboro. 4 p.m. HS/CH. $ (227-7338)

Sunday, March 30
Quilt Identification Day — Tennessee quilt historian Menkay Waldvogel will examine visitors’ quilts. 2-4 p.m. MHC. (227-7319)
Orchestra Masterworks — 4 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7242)
Student forum — “Four Years of Leadership and Learning” Sponsored by the Committee on Student Learning. 7 p.m. UC Multipurpose Room. (227-7184)
Lady Catamount tennis — vs. Furman. 1 p.m. CAC. (227-7338)
Catamount baseball — vs. UNC Greensboro. 2 p.m. HS/CF. $ (227-7338)

Tuesday, April 1
Catamount Concert Series — Lisa Sain Odom, soprano, and Andrew Adams, piano. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Wednesday, April 2
Appalachian Lunchtime Series — New Voices of WCU, student readings. 12:20 p.m. MHC. (227-7129)
Catamount baseball — vs. UNC Asheville. 7 p.m. HS/CF. $ (227-7338)

Thursday, April 3
Groundbreaking — New residence hall. 2 p.m. Next to Leatherwood Residence Hall and dining hall under construction near Dodson. (227-7441)
38th annual High School Mathematics Contest — 9 a.m. -2:30 p.m. RRAC. (227-3946)

Friday, April 4
WCU Wind Ensemble — 8 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7242)

Saturday, April 5
Women’s History Month — “Women in the Wilderness,” day-hike and gourmet meal plus discussion of history, vegetation and more. 9 a.m. -5 p.m., meet at the Women’s Center. $ (227-3625)
WCU Symphony Band — 1 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7242)
WCU Honor Band — 7 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7242)

Sunday, April 6
Western Carolina Civic Orchestra — 4 p.m. RH. (227-7242)
Catamount tennis — vs. Chattanooga. 11 a.m. CAC. (227-7338)
Catamount baseball — vs. Davidson. 6 p.m. HS/CF. $ (227-7338)