Western Purchases Cullowhee Commercial Business District

Western Carolina University is now the proud owner of the strip of commercial property known locally as the downtown Cullowhee business district.

The property on Centennial Drive contains 2.18 acres and includes the buildings that currently house Subway, Cat Chow, Mad Batter, Bob’s Mini Mart, Simply T’s, Hair Station and the State Employees’ Credit Union automated teller machine.

The university purchased the tract from EFMB Properties Inc. earlier this month because of the property’s strategic location in the middle of campus, said Chuck Wooten, WCU vice chancellor for administration and finance. The change in ownership, however, does not reflect a change in the property’s status as a business district.

“It is our desire to see commercial shops remain in the area, and we anticipate that all of the existing merchants will remain,” Wooten said. “We met with the commercial tenants prior to Christmas to emphasize our desire for them to be on campus as tenants of the university, and discussions are under way about new lease agreements for these commercial tenants.”

The property also contains six two-bedroom apartments, which are located above the commercial businesses. “These will be occupied by the current tenants for the spring semester, but in all likelihood they will not be occupied beyond the end of the semester,” Wooten said.

The purchase price of $1,585,000 was established through a market appraisal performed by an independent commercial real estate appraiser using industry-standard valuation methods.

The university’s short-term objectives for its latest addition to campus include painting the exteriors of the buildings, cleaning up around the strip of businesses, looking at the relocation of large trash containers at the rear of the complex, and improving parking for customers and employees.

“Our long-term goal is to redevelop the entire area from the Wachovia Bank building to the Centennial Park,” Wooten said. “We want commercial businesses to have a presence in this area of the campus, and new building plans all across campus will have space for commercial businesses.”

The purchase of the property and the continued operation of the businesses are in keeping with the university’s plans for development of 344 acres of property west of N.C. Highway 107 and part of its existing campus through the Millennial Initiative, an ambitious and comprehensive regional economic improvement strategy that will enable WCU to partner with business, industry and government.

Western intends to create multiple-use neighborhoods at key locations that will become home to a mix of academic buildings, research facilities, business, industry and housing. Those plans include development of “town centers” where restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores and other businesses would provide services to help keep students on campus and attract visitors. The recently purchased Cullowhee business district is not intended to become one of those town centers, Wooten said.

Professor Advocates for Education Access in Turkmenistan at Global Meeting

Victoria Clement has discussed her dissertation research about Turkmenistan’s education system and language before, but never when there was as much at stake as there is now for the people of the Central Asian country.

Turkmenistan’s political climate took a dramatic turn in December when the president-for-life, who had been in power for 21 years, died suddenly after suffering cardiac arrest.

“The president had a system where he had absolute power, and there was no named successor. He was essentially a dictator,” said Clement, whose multiple trips to Turkmenistan include a nearly two-year stay that began Sept. 12, 2001.

“Some analysts feared after his death that there would be a violent contention for power, but my friends in Turkmenistan say things are calm and moving smoothly. We’re in a period of waiting to see what happens.”

For a week starting Jan. 21, Clement, assistant professor of history, will be in London as part of an international panel rapidly convened at the School of Oriental and African Studies in advance of the February elections in Turkmenistan. Developing that panel alone is a challenge, as the field of scholars who have continued on page 2
Western Carolina University, has been invited to perform at the internationally famous St. Bart’s Music Festival. Ulrich will be performing an orchestra concert and an opera at the French West Indies island, St. Barthelemy, or St. Barts as the locals call it, from Jan. 29–Feb. 4.

Since 1984, St. Barts has hosted a performing arts festival unlike any other in the world. Each year during January the festival offers more than a dozen nights of some of the finest live music and dance performances in an informal, island setting. Ulrich will be performing as principal trumpet for the orchestra concert and second trumpet with the opera orchestra.

For more information, visit http://www.stbartsmusicfestival.org/.

Brad Ulrich to Perform at St. Bart’s Music Festival

P. Bradley Ulrich, professor of trumpet at Western Carolina University, has been invited to perform at the internationally famous St. Bart’s Music Festival. Ulrich will be performing an orchestra concert and an opera at the French West Indies island, St. Barthelemy, or St. Barts as the locals call it, from Jan. 29–Feb. 4.

Since 1984, St. Barts has hosted a performing arts festival unlike any other in the world. Each year during January the festival offers more than a dozen nights of the finest live music and dance performances in an informal, island setting.

Audiences are treated to intimate concerts by some of the world’s most prominent classical, opera, ballet and jazz stars. These performers have the level of artistry that one would normally have to attend Carnegie Hall in New York or the Opera Garnier in Paris to experience.

The musicians are soloists and principals from symphony orchestras and philharmonia from all over the world: Montreal, Boston, New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, London, Paris, the Juilliard and Curtis schools of music, and many others.

The singers are from the likes of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and La Scala in Milan.

The dancers have performed with the American Ballet Theater of New York City, the Paris Opera Ballet, the San Francisco Ballet, the Boston Ballet and the famed Bolshoi company in Russia.

Turkmenistan continued from page 1

focused their research on Turkmenistan is small compared to other areas of research, said Clement. An international conference two years ago drew only about two dozen people, she said.

The pre-election panel will discuss what could be possible now in the desert country, a former republic of the Soviet Union, that borders Afghanistan and hosts the world’s fourth largest reserves of natural gas.

“I am going to focus at the forum on social developments we hope will occur under the new leadership,” said Clement, whose talk will specifically detail the history of education in Turkmenistan and the proposed changes in the presidential candidates’ platforms.

She sees the chance to speak not just as an academic but also as an advocate—to speak for Turkmen such as Ogulgerek Garriyeva, a textbook editor who invited Clement to live with her family so her three daughters could practice English and improve their education.

Clement will point out effects of the government of Turkmenistan reducing the years of school available to children from 11 to nine years. “That prevents the students from participating in higher education abroad because they do not have enough credits to attend universities in other countries,” she said.

Meanwhile, some of the nation’s schools of higher education limit enrollment to only students who can prove they are ethnic Turkmen, which is only a portion of the country’s 5 million people.

The memory of long lines at libraries and international centers to use the Internet remind her how strong the desire is of the people in Turkmenistan to learn more and to be connected to the world. In some places, 1,500 people are signed up as members to access just three to five computers.

“At an international conference two years ago, we talked about whether we were optimistic about the future of Turkmenistan,” Clement said. “In a way, we are continuing the same discussion.”

Clement is hopeful.

Ogulgerek Garriyeva edits textbooks at the Ministry of Education in Turkmenistan.

In the final year in a 10-year reaffirmation of the SACS Certification Process to the SACS Review,” at the annual meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in Orlando, Fla. in December, Brian Castle, associate professor of international and multi-cultural studies and editor of WCU’s SACS Compliance Report, and Carol Burton, director of the SACS review, presented a session titled “Writing and Editing for Compliance.” Also, A.J. Grube, assistant vice chancellor for operations and research, Beth Tyson Lofquist, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, and Burton facilitated a roundtable discussion, “Applying the NCAA Certification Process to the SACS Review,” at the meeting. One of the largest organizations in the Northeast, SACS accredits approximately 800 institutions of higher education. WCU is completing the final year in a 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation process.

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January

Monday, Jan. 22
Catamount basketball—vs. Elon. Southern Conference game. S. 7 p.m. RRAC. (227-7338)

Tuesday, Jan. 23
Reception—for “Three Lenses Abroad.” 4–6 p.m. Fine Art Museum, FAPAC. (227-3591)
Appalachian Folk Life Series: Telling Mountain Stories—Cherokee stories with Davy Arch. 5:30–6:30 p.m. MHC. (227-7129)
Catamount Concert Series—faculty showcase. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Wednesday, Jan. 24
Appalachian Cultural Lunchtime Series—“What Travels With Us,” Darnell Arnould, poet. 12:15–1 p.m. MHC. (227-7129)

Thursday, Jan. 25
Meeting—Faculty Senate. 3–5 p.m. Room 104, Killian Building. (227-7495)

Friday, Jan. 26
Robbie Burns supper—U Club members celebrate the life of poet Robert Burns. 5:30–8:30 p.m. University Club. (227-2203)

Saturday, Jan. 27
Dance clinic—for girls ages 6–12; WCU Dance Team fundraiser for travel expenses to attend Southern Conference basketball championship tournament. S. Includes performance at today’s women’s basketball game. 8:30 a.m.–noon. Reid Gym. (227-7069)
Lady Catamount basketball—vs. Wofford. Southern Conference game. 4 p.m. Ramsey Regional Activity Center. (227-7338)

Sunday, Jan. 28
Memorial service—honoring recently deceased students: Kyle Cashwell, Andrew Sides, Drew Anderson, and Mary Tucker. 3 p.m. Cullowhee United Methodist Church. (227-7147)

Monday, Jan. 29
Lady Catamount basketball—vs. Elon. Southern Conference game. 5 p.m. RRAC. (227-7338)
Catamount basketball—vs. Wofford. Southern Conference game. 7:30 p.m. RRAC. (227-7338)

Tuesday, Jan. 30
Lectures, Concerts and Exhibitions Series drama—“Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till” chronicles the murder, trial and confession of the men accused of lynching the 14-year-old black Chicago youth in the Mississippi Delta. 7:30 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7206)
Catamount Concert Series—Abysmal: Will Peebles, bassoon, and Michael Schalloch, tuba. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

February

Thursday, Feb. 1
Legends on Stage—“Ol’ Time Religion,” The American Spiritual Ensemble. $7–30 p.m. FAPAC. (227-2479)

Old Time Music and Bluegrass Jam Series—concert featuring Cullowhee Creek followed by jam for all musicians. 7–9 p.m. MHC. (227-7129)

Friday, Feb. 2
Groundhog Day

Sunday, Feb. 4
Arti-Facts!—“Party Foods: 1920s Style.” 2:30–3:30 p.m. MHC. (227-7129)

Mountain Heritage Center

Exhibits

Mountain Heritage Center

Gallery A:
“Migration of the Scotch-Irish People.” Includes text panels, illustrations, artifacts and vibrant murals that trace the Scotch-Irish Appalachian settlers from Ulster to Pennsylvania, through the Shenandoah Valley, and into Western North Carolina. Permanent exhibit.

Gallery B:

Gallery C:
“After the War: Conflict and Domestic Change in the North Carolina Mountains.” Through December.

Lobby:
“People of the Land,” and “Mountain Heritage Day Award Winner.” Ongoing exhibitions.

Slideshow Spotlight

FOR JANUARY: “Irons in the Fire” describes the role of blacksmithing in pioneer and Cherokee culture in the Southern Appalachians.

FOR FEBRUARY: “Mountain Trout” tells the 10,000-year history of the relationships among humans, trout and running water in the Southern Appalachians.

Mountain Heritage Center hours:
8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday (227-7129 or www.wcu.edu/mhc)

Fine Art Museum

Fine and Performing Arts Center

“WORLDVIEWS. Selections from Western Carolina University’s Permanent Collection and New Acquisitions.” Continuing exhibit.


“Alburt Kresch: Painting the provocative Landscape.” Through March 3.


OPENING MARCH 13: Undergraduate Portfolio Exhibit, Department of Art & Design. Through March 23.


Museum hours:
Tuesday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m.–4 p.m.; first Saturday of each month 1-4 p.m.

Submit items for the university's online calendar at least one week prior to the event.

Key: $ Admission fee; BB-Belk Building; CAC-Catamount Athletic Center; CAT-Center for Applied Technology; CCB-Cordelia Camp Building; CSC-Catamount Softball Complex; FAPAC-Fine and Performing Arts Center; HA-Hoey Auditorium; HFR-H.F. Robinson Administration Building; HS/CF-Henson Stadium/Chulieus Field; MHC-Mountain Heritage Center; NSA-Natural Sciences Auditorium; RH-Recital Hall, Coulter Building; RRAC-Ramsey Regional Activity Center; UC-A.K. Hinds University Center; WS/W–Whitmire Stadium/Bob Waters Field.
Scholarship Created to Benefit Cancer Research

For Western Carolina University assistant biology professor Sean O’Connell and his sister Monica Fleming of Enfield, Conn., the fight against breast cancer is personal. The disease claimed the life of their sister, Anastasia “Stacy” O’Connell of Connecticut, earlier this year.

That’s the reason behind Fleming’s recent memorial gift of $33,500 to establish the Anastasia “Stacy” M. O’Connell Endowed Scholarship and Research Fund at Western.

The endowed fund will provide one annual $1,000 scholarship for a junior or senior at Western who is majoring in biology with interests in pursuing further studies in fields related to the study of breast cancer. It will also provide $500 annually to the biology department to enable the scholarship recipient to work with a member of the biology faculty in conducting research in molecular genetics, immunology, the ecology of disease and other fields.

“I think Stacy would greatly appreciate the meaning of this sort of award and the promise that it holds for getting young students started in biology careers, especially with the hope of helping to find cures for cancer,” said Sean O’Connell. “We take comfort in believing our loss will be a gain for the causes that Stacy supported and will also act as a permanent memorial to her life and spirit.”

Stacy O’Connell died at age 39 on April 21, 2006, in Enfield, after her third battle with breast cancer. She had been healthy for nearly 10 years after her first diagnosis, and had become an advocate for breast cancer awareness and other causes, family members said. Fleming decided that a scholarship and research fund would be a fitting tribute to her sister, who had earned her undergraduate degree in biology.

The first recipient of the scholarship will be Jamie Tidmore, a senior biology major from Bryson City. O’Connell said Tidmore, like his sister, has participated in fundraisers to support cancer research and volunteered her time to work with young athletes.

“Jamie is a very positive, motivated and energetic person,” O’Connell said. “I would think my sister would be proud that she will be the first recipient of this award.”

Tidmore watched her aunt battle breast cancer and struggled, as an 11-year-old, to understand why — why it happened and why the doctors couldn’t make her better.

The experience helped guide her to Western, where she is preparing for a career in medicine or biological research. She currently works with O’Connell studying bacterial species from Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

“I study biology to seek answers and, hopefully, someday be able to do my part to help in the fight against disease,” said Tidmore. “In the 12 years since my aunt’s death, biological researchers have made tremendous gains in the field of cancer, and the survival rate has increased with every year. I am confident that had my aunt been diagnosed today, her chances of survival would be great. Yet with all of the advances there is still no cure or answer to the questions: why and what can we do?”

— by BESSIE DIETRICH and TERESA KILLIAN