U.Va. Breaks Ground on South Lawn Project

University of Virginia dignitaries, alumni and friends broke ground on Sept. 29 for a long-anticipated complex of buildings and grounds that will extend the axis of Thomas Jefferson’s original Lawn across Jefferson Park Avenue and will reinforce the atmosphere of community that characterizes the U.Va. student experience.

The South Lawn Project groundbreaking followed the April 7 approval by the Board of Visitors of schematic drawings for the project’s first phase, and the completion of a $41 million milestone for raising private money in support of the project on June 30. The groundbreaking took place shortly after the University’s Board of Visitors publicly launched the $3 billion campaign.

Edward L. Ayers, the Buckner W. Clay Dean of Arts & Sciences, spoke of the connections that the project made possible — both within and beyond the University community.

“It is so exciting to have a chance to connect all the things that the South Lawn Project has to offer,” Ayers said at the event. “This gives us a chance to connect all the things that the South Lawn Project has to offer.”

The groundbreaking launched the $3 billion campaign.

In addition to Ayers, remarks were made by three members of the College Foundation who have been instrumental in the fundraising for the project — Jeffrey D. Nuechterlein, president of the College Foundation; John L. Nau III, past president of the College Foundation; and vice chair of the Campaign for the University of Virginia; and David E. Gibson, trustee emeritus of the College Foundation.

I hope you find this current edition of the Emeritus Newsletter interesting and informative. Our goal is to keep you up to date on some of the most noteworthy activities and personalities of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

The newsletter, with over 300 recipients on the distribution list, is only one part of the College Foundation’s ongoing initiative to recognize the dedication of its emeritus trustees and encourage their continued involvement.

The other parts of our initiative include:

• Emeritus Weekend that brings emeritus trustees back to Charlottesville and face-to-face with major issues and developments here; current academic and administrative leadership; and outstanding faculty, students and old friends.

• Foundation forums that give emeritus trustees an opportunity to interact on a personal level with small groups of students, and to provide these students with useful perspectives on major career and personal issues.

You represent one of the College’s most valuable assets. The size of the current group, its projected growth, its history of engagement and interest, and its high level of financial support provide clear insight into the potential for the future.

To put some of this in perspective, approximately 65 current and future trustees will become emeritus trustees in the next 10 years, adding significantly to the current group of 96, about 40 of whom are active. The level of emeritus and current trustee financial support has been extraordinary (as of June 30, 2006):

• Lifetime giving: For the 50 percent (52,300) of all A&S and GAS alumni who have ever given to the University, average lifetime giving is $20,000. Among the 96 current emeritus trustees, average lifetime giving is $921,000. And for the 38 current trustees, average lifetime giving totals nearly $1.26 million. While the emeritus and current trustee group represents just 0.13 percent of all A&S and GAS alumni, they have contributed 13 percent of all gifts received by U.Va. from the entire A&S and GAS alumni population.

• The South Lawn Project: 49 emeritus and current trustees contributed 73 percent of the initial commitments for the South Lawn, or $36 million of the $49 million in pledged gifts.

• Annual giving: 83 emeritus and current trustees contributed 18 percent of total annual giving for FY ’06. This is an exciting and challenging time for the College, and it needs every bit of support it can get. You have been, and can continue to be, a tremendous resource — I encourage you to be as active as you possibly can. Please contact me anytime with comments and suggestions. Thank you for all that you do.

Don Lating
Trustee, Chairman of the Emeritus Society
Better Connections, Better Advising

COLLEGE ADVISING SEMINARS (dubbed COLA from their course mnemonic), new this fall, are promoting better connections between incoming students and their faculty advisors. First-year students take COLA seminars in a department that especially interests them; the faculty who teach them also serve as their undergraduate advisors.

“Some of the most meaningful relationships students have with faculty are formed in classroom settings,” says Lori Schuyler, assistant dean of Arts & Sciences. “The idea was to create a classroom environment for students and their faculty advisors to get to know each other. The students who sign up for these courses know they have something in common with their faculty advisor because they are interested in the topic of the course.”

Compared to other first-year advising experiences in which students may interact with faculty advisors only once a semester, COLA students will have weekly access to their advisors in the classroom. This will help students forge better relationships with their advisors, who Schuyler believes will remain a vital academic resource as the students continue their college careers.

COLA instructors were selected based on their experience as faculty advisors and as a result of their participation in focus groups used to develop the program. The dean’s office will expand the program beyond this year’s seven COLA 101 classes by inviting faculty members to propose topic-specific new COLA courses. The program is funded by private donations, and faculty members who participate are compensated with a modest research account.

Capped at 18 students, the graded, one-credit seminars are offered on a variety of topics, such as Awakening Creative Potential, with Gwenneth West, and Paul Freedman’s Watching the Election.

Search for New Perspectives a Guiding Force for Student Leader Erica Siegmund

Spend a few minutes with third-year Erica Siegmund and you are sure to get some “perspective.” The word pops up in conversations almost constantly, whether relating to her own experiences as a student, as a leader, or as a young woman who does not seem interested in waiting to make a mark on the world around her.

In fact, the search for new perspectives has guided her educational career from the very beginning. “I personally was born for a liberal arts education,” she says. “Even when I was in elementary school, I could never pick a favorite class and you always think that you have to. Do you like science or do you like English? For me, I thought I was wrong because I felt, ‘I don’t know … I like everything!’

The economics major has an academic resume that clearly backs this point, from a for-the-fun-of-it first-year foray into African religions to a current course on the economy of China that was inspired by a clipping on outsourcing sent by her mom.

But it is her passion for exploring and sharing different perspectives much closer to home that may well be Stegmuß’s lasting legacy at the University. On a recent afternoon, she sat in Alderman Café and discussed her adjustment to life from elementary school to college, among other graduate school options.

It’s hard to have perspective on what the University is about, especially in your first year, in terms of what kinds of resources are out there. So it is really good to be taken under wing and hear people say ‘Look, these are the kinds of things you can do.’

Stegmuß is on the other end of the “under-the-wing” equation thanks to her participation in the College Foundation, which has provided an opportunity to work firsthand with a broad spectrum of leaders from throughout the University and alumni communities. “The first time I went to the College Foundation meeting, the first thing I thought was that I wished everyone else could be there too so they could really know what is going on. I realized that it was really important to get that information across, especially as it related to the capital campaign.”

She also has been actively engaged with the College Foundation Emeritus Society, meeting with Emeritus Chairman Donald Laing III to help plan emeritus initiatives.

A big woman in the world from a single perspective? ✨