The College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech

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On the cover:
A collage of CAUS graduates and other students this spring

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Dear Alumni and Friends,

This semester, we have been faced with a new set of challenges: Virginia, like many other states, is facing a serious deficit as a result of revenue shortfalls, and the university is facing significant, permanent reductions in funding over the next biennium. We are a College full of momentum and with some bold and exciting plans, yet this externally-imposed situation represents a significant setback.

Nevertheless, the news items and articles in this newsletter attest to the caliber and vitality of faculty and students, and give reassurance that we shall be able to rally to the additional challenge that is posed by a fiscal squeeze. Moreover, the College enjoys strong comparative advantages over many others because of numerous items — the breadth of the undergraduate, professional, and graduate degree programs offered; the academic strength of the student body; the research capacity and productivity of the faculty; the quality of the physical infrastructure; the network of international linkages and strengths in international programming; and the vitality of the Washington-Alexandria Center and Community Design Assistance Center.

I know you will find these comparative advantages evident in the work and achievements that are highlighted in this issue of Facets.
Landscape Architecture Team Has the Right Feng Shui

It’s a little early to be talking about bringing home gold medals from the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, but a team of students and faculty from the Landscape Architecture department recently returned from China winners in an international design competition. The “very Virginia Tech” team also consisted of alumnus David Hill of Hill Studio in Roanoke, and Binyi Liu, chair of the landscape architecture department at Tong Ji University in ShangHai, and former visiting professor of the Landscape Architecture department. Together the three groups, led by Hill, were charged with the task of designing a new resort community on what is now a 1,000 acre rice paddy in China.

The group was the only team from the United States, and one of only four teams in the world invited by the city of Zhang Jia Gang, China, to compete in Phase II of the design process. The competitors included Canada, Australia, and Europe. More impressive, the team competed against purely professional consulting teams, with the exception of the Canadian team, who also employed a university consultant.

Zhang Jia Gang, already known for being one of the most successfully planned award-winning cities in China, wanted a fresh approach for the site design. Being a fairly new 20th century city sandwiched between historic Shanghai and populous Nanjing, with the Gardens of Suzhou to the south, they wanted an identifying feature and something to draw visitors and tourism to the area. Looking for ‘out of the box’ design concepts from around the world, they found what they were looking for from the U.S. team.

The city’s basic design guidelines included the incorporation of a 5-star resort and residential area on the site, but teams were encouraged to include other creative features into their designs. The VT design included a culinary institute, equestrian and sports training facilities, wildlife island, and large business and retail centers. They were also charged with being sensitive to the existing lake, and deal with the site’s water and ecology issues.

A trip back to China this summer will be the next step for Professor Ben Johnson and Research Associate Catherine Xu, who along with two students, will present the final plans to city officials. The entire project will not be complete for a decade or more, but when fully built, the site will be similar to the size of the VT campus, and house approximately 35,000 people. Project drawings and documents can be viewed on-line at www.lar.arch.vt.edu/resources/china/concept.html.

Note: This project was recently featured in the Roanoke Times. You can view the full article on the CAUS website at the “in the news” section.

Administrative Changes Signal Growth

The College has strategically positioned key players to take the lead in helping the university obtain “Top 30 research” status. Architecture Professor Jack Davis, FAIA, will assume the role of the College’s Associate Dean for Academic Affairs beginning in summer 2002. He replaces Max Stephenson, who will be returning to the Urban Affairs and Planning department. Davis is the Reynolds Metals Professor.

Building Construction Professor Ron Wakefield will take over directing the Environmental Design & Planning doctoral program, formerly held by Stephenson, beginning this summer. He is charged with developing a focused strategy for the program, taking into account its pivotal relationship to faculty research. Wakefield has also been appointed to a new position of Associate Director for the Center for Housing Research. He will hold these positions in addition to his current role in the building construction department.
CPAP’s 25th Year

The Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) proudly celebrates its 25th anniversary, as graduates were invited back to the Blacksburg campus in April for receptions, conferences, and the special ‘Silver Jubilee High Table’ to celebrate the successes and growth seen in this quarter century.

The High Table has been an annual ritualistic way of building cohesiveness for current and former CPAP students and faculty. Following the Oxford academic tradition, participants eat a “Spartan lunch” consisting of bread, cheese, fruit, and wine. This year participants were treated to a talk given by Dr. George Frederickson, Distinguished Professor of Public Administration at the University of Kansas, who is a prominent figure in the public administration field.

Founding professors Gary Wamsley (pictured right leading the processional) and Philip Kronenberg continue to play a big part in the center and have seen it grow and make a unique contribution to the field of public administration. The center has emphasized the values embedded in the Constitution as the basis for the ethics and values that underlie public service. “The prominence the Center has achieved has resulted from the quality of the faculty, students, and alums. Their hard work and successes have built a reputation that is not only national, but international,” says Wamsley.

Kronenberg feels the development of new research and outreach centers through the department have been a big part of its success. “Beyond fulfilling our original ambition to create a doctoral program of international stature, I feel great satisfaction at our faculty’s success in responding to the needs of the people of Virginia with our many research centers,” he says, citing by name the many fruitful research and outreach programs within the department led by Renee Loeffler, Carole Kuhns, Ray Pethtel, and Susan Gooden.

CPAP offers graduate and doctoral degrees in the theory and practice of public administration, management, and policy. The department was established in 1977, and currently serves approximately 250 students in locations across the state including Blacksburg, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Roanoke. Several programs continue to place in the Top 25 nationally, including the graduate program in Public Affairs (24th) and the graduate program in Public Management/Administration (10th) ranked by U.S. News & World Report.
Report Shows Housing Impacts in Appalachia

The Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research (VCHR) has prepared a report for the Virginia Housing Development Authority that shows potential impacts of socioeconomic changes on housing development in the Appalachian region.

The region studied — Appalachian counties in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia — is considered to be the central part of the 13 state Appalachian area. The report showed that counties in the periphery of this region have strong economic and population growth, while counties in the core had slower or no growth, which has a direct impact on housing development. “Appalachia as a whole no longer fits the reputation of being underdeveloped,” says VCHR Director Ted Koebel, adding though, that there are many counties in the core region still severely underdeveloped and in need of cost efficient building solutions for the rugged terrain.

The report was presented at the Appalachia Summit in April, sponsored by the state housing finance agencies from the participating states and is available on the web at www.caus.vt.edu/CAUS/RESEARCH/vchr/VCHR.html.

New Minority Academic Mentoring Program Starts this Fall

by Ashley Tyler

A new minority student academic mentoring program will be in full swing in the College this fall. The program trains mentors to assist students with course selection, project challenges, campus life, and course work and expectations. Dr. Max Stephenson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College, in tandem with student leadership, has been overseeing the development of the program which is a direct outgrowth of the College’s involvement with the university’s Minority Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP). The goal of the new program is to provide another avenue through which minority students can feel comfortable with the pace and expectations of academic life in the college. Stephenson says giving these students the tools to succeed is important, “as many minority groups are underrepresented historically in the professions and disciplines of the college.”

There are currently 50 students lined up to participate — 25 current minority students paired with their mentors. Each mentor has been through a training program, and once matched with a participant, will be paired with that student throughout their entire college career. In addition to the CAUS program, the College of Engineering and the College and Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) run similar programs.

“Mentoring is a well-known method of making students feel comfortable,” said Dr. Bevlee Watford, the director of minority engineering programs. “It helps with recruitment and retention of students traditionally underrepresented in certain colleges including engineering and architecture and urban studies.”

The CAUS program is modeling itself after CALS, in its 10th year of successful operation, in which mentors meet with their paired students several times a month on an individual basis, as well as in monthly group settings. Natasha Wilson, graduate mentor and mentoring coordinator for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, says that both the mentors and the mentored students gain much from the experience. “It makes me feel good to know that I am helping students that may not have had the opportunity or the self-confidence to step out on their own.”

Alrue Brumskine, a mentored student, says she would highly encourage students to participate in the mentoring program. As a freshman engineering student, Brumskine says she found comfort knowing that if something was needed, there was always someone to call.
BC Department Hosts International Schools of Construction

The department of Building Construction hosted the 38th annual international conference for the Associated School of Construction (ASC) at the Hotel Roanoke in April. This year’s theme was “The Scholarly Pursuit of Construction Knowledge.”

ASC is the professional association for the development and advancement of construction education. (www.ascweb.org)

New International Agreements

Within the past year, the College has signed two new exchange agreements which form important partnerships with prestigious universities abroad. By partnering with the University of Stuttgart in Germany, and Milano Polytecnico in Milan, Italy, the College enhances its international presence, and further expands the students’ opportunities to study abroad. At the same time, these agreements enable the College to reciprocate, offering similar opportunities to interested international students.

A Window of Opportunity in Downtown Blacksburg

The College is renting a display window in downtown Blacksburg to showcase its programs and student work to the public. The first display features the Industrial Design program, bringing public attention to this growing field, and presenting fragments of the history of the profession. It is situated near the farmer’s market in a high traffic area near the corner of Main and Roanoke Streets. The window is part of a recently renovated building designed with a modern flair by Architecture Professor Dennis Kilper. If you are in the area, please stop by and take a peek.

Peru scholar speaks...

The Henry H. Wiss Center for Theory and History of Art and Architecture hosted Professor Roberto Samanez Argumedo from the National University of Cuzco, Peru, at a special April meeting. Samanez spoke of contemporary architecture examples found in Cuzco that have attempted to address the sensitive issue of contextual integration with the historic fabric of the area.

A New View...

The Community Design Assistance Center has relocated. The design offices were previously located in the old bank building on Main Street, but have recently moved to a “store-front” location just down the street beside Xanadu gift shop in downtown Blacksburg.

Recent CDAC projects for communities in Virginia include designing master plans for an arboretum for Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave, a greenway system for Wytheville, and a 7.5 acre community park in Roanoke. The center is also working on an open space study for the town of Farmville.

A guide to enjoy the ride...

The Center is also in the process of developing a motorcycle tour guide of “lost communities” in Virginia. This is a spin-off of a book currently being produced by CDAC to uncover and rediscover the remnants of once thriving communities. The guide will provide motocyclists with routes and destinations, and hopefully unveil to the riders the heart and soul of Virginia for an experience that can’t come through the windshield of a car.
This seminar for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students took shape around critical discussions, demonstrations, and interpretations that used as their base original architectural drawings and texts, to inform and reveal modern architecture. While some, perhaps most, projects studied and discussed in the class originated from a time known as ‘modern,’ others skipped, bridged, or ignored this ‘period of time’ in order to discover the ‘modern.’ Thus we ‘lean’ within, onto, and from the modern, in order to ‘glean’ questions, rather than assumptions contained within architectural modernity.

In this seminar, students studied modern architecture and design in three ways: close readings of seminal architectural and other writings on modern design and thinking; studies of buildings or designs that are considered models of modern architecture; research using projects that are housed in the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA.)

The first half of the semester were full of readings and projects that provided lively and surprising discourse and dialogue, often upsetting or pointing towards new directions in our study of modern ideas and projects in architecture. The second half of the semester was given to research and presentations. Each student identified an architect and project housed within the IAWA to continue the questions and ideas that were opened during the first half of the semester. The students then led a seminar (presenting their initial research materials and questions) all within an atmosphere of a work in progress. The discussions moved each student towards further independent research that led to specific questions that dispersed within the subject of modernity and modern architecture.

Each student will present their original research during a symposium that occurs in conjunction with the October 2002 IAWA Annual Meeting. All are invited to attend. Please contact me at mfeuerst@vt.edu or 540-231-5260 if you have questions.
CAUS faculty members and students are always participating in notable projects, but many have been recognized recently through extra media attention. A few notables follow...

College Dean Paul Knox was recently featured in the Blue Ridge Business Journal in an article entitled “Working toward ‘world class’ at Tech” in the March 11, 2002 edition. The article focused on Knox’s leadership in the College, and outlined his thoughts and goals for putting the College in the national and international spotlight.

Metropolitan Institute Director Rob Lang was quoted in the March 13 edition of USA Today in response to his report “Learning to Love the Monster Home” to be published in an upcoming issue of Planning. The report supports the idea of tearing down existing older suburban houses, and building a larger home on the lot which will revitalize older neighborhoods, lessen traffic congestion, and reduce sprawl. Lang has been published and cited in other national publications including the Los Angeles and New York Times and Boston Globe.

Jesse Richardson, assistant professor in the Urban Affairs and Planning Department, was a featured guest on WVTF Radio’s Evening Edition with Gene Marrano. The panel discussed Virginia’s system of taxation and the possible effects a reform would have.

Landscape Architecture faculty members Ben Johnson and Catherine Xu, along with participating students, were featured in the Roanoke Times for winning an international design competition in China. Details of this project can be found on page 4.

Landscape Architecture associate professor Wendy Jacobsen and her senior studio (pictured above) were featured in the Roanoke Times Extra section on April 14th for their work with the Harrison Museum of African American Culture. Details of this project can be found on page 12.

CPAP Professor Receives Distinguished Public Administration Award

Dr. John Rohr, professor in the Center for Public Administration & Policy (CPAP), was awarded the American Society for Public Administration’s Dwight Waldo Award for 2002 at the ASPA national conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in March. Rohr received this distinction for outstanding lifetime career contributions to the literature and leadership of public administration. He will also be featured in the Public Administration Review.

Rohr holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago, and graduate degrees in philosophy and theology from Loyola and Georgetown Universities respectively. He has written and lectured extensively on the constitutional foundations of public administration and on ethical issues that confront the career civil servant. He is the author of six books and has another, Civil Servants and Their Constitution, which is now available to the public.

In 1988, Rohr received the Distinguished Research Award presented jointly by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The following year he received a Fulbright Research Scholar Award and spent nine months in Paris at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris.

During his professional career, Rohr was also selected as a Fellow by the NASPAA and during this fellowship served as Associate Director of the General Management Training Center of the U.S. Civil Service Commission. Dr. Rohr retired from the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1991 with the rank of Commander. In 1995 he was selected as a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and in 1997 received the College’s award for teaching excellence.
When Patrick Miller stepped down from serving as the Landscape Architecture Department Head two years ago, he stepped up to the job of expanding relationships with other scholars across the world. This past year, several trips have afforded Miller invaluable personal experiences, as well as broadening the University’s international reach.

He attended the ICOMOS conference (International Council on Monuments and Sites) held in Australia and presented a paper addressing the issue of globalization and its impact on vernacular environments. He says the conference’s hot topic was ‘post modern cultural preservation.’ “It sounds like an oxymoron, but a lot of the international criteria for cultural preservation, particularly if it’s being applied in developing countries, is based on Western values, which primarily focus on the preservation of significant pieces of architecture.” He feels there is a need to involve other processes and look more at cultural meaning.

In December, Miller visited Iran. The visit was a culmination of a relationship he formed two years ago while serving as Vice President of Education for the American Landscape Architecture Society (ASLA). He advised a professor at Shahid Beheshti University in Teheran on establishing a new landscape architecture program. The motivating factors for the trip included a desire for greater cultural understanding, and to figure out how landscape architecture can play a role in helping solve some of the problems associated with September 11 by improving environmental conditions in developing countries that create a breeding ground for terrorism, and building good will with fellow scholars. “We need to be looking beyond our boundaries in the U.S. and recognize that as members of environmental design professions in the U.S. we can play a leadership role in helping these professions in other parts of the world improve their own quality of life,” says Miller.

Most recently, Miller visited Saudi Arabia. He was one of three international scholars, including individuals from Great Britain and France, invited to speak at a conference on Design Education at King Faisal University in Dammam. The others did not attend due to the situation in Palestine, but he’s glad he went despite the tension. “There was a great deal of hostility toward our government for its support of Israel, however, people were appreciative of an American who would come and encourage peace and understanding,” he says. As an individual he was treated very well, and he found the people to be friendly and welcoming. Miller gave lectures on newer learning theories for design education currently being explored in the U.S.

A common theme running through all of Miller’s visits has centered on the dilemma associated with being an American in a developing country. “Because America is seen as being prosperous and advanced in developing countries, they expect you to tell them everything that’s wrong with whatever they’re doing. And yet, we’re always criticized for imposing our values and having a heavy-handed influence on other parts of the world. I had barely arrived in Iran, and they were handing me all of the course syllabi for their curriculum and wanted me to tell them what was wrong with it. A lot of times I would say ‘I don’t have an answer to that question – we spend great deals of time debating this issue among our own faculty, and even if I did have an answer, it would probably not be right for you.’ ”

Miller’s next stop includes a summer trip to Malaysia where he’ll speak at the International Federation of Landscape Architects’ conference. Again he’ll talk about the issue of globalization and how to address Western influence on their cultural environment. “If you want to preserve culture, sometimes you have to change it. It sounds like another oxymoron, but what it’s doing is recognizing that culture is not static, it is not just preserving bricks and mortar, but recognizing that it is an evolving thing and that you can guide that evolution rather than replace it with someone else’s model.”


Dean Paul Knox’s book Human Geography, has been recently published in a German edition.

Shop technician Tim Castine received an honorable mention in 2002 Industrial Design Magazine’s Annual Design Review which was featured in the August issue of ID Magazine.

Architecture associate professor Shelly Martin has served on the state design committee of the Virginia Society of the AIA for the past four years. She has helped plan their bi-annual Design Forum, and helps yearly to select national jurors to award state level VSAIA awards to projects of architects in Virginia firms.

Associate Dean Bob Dunay has served on the VSAIA Design Committee for the past three years.
Persistence and scholarships helps one young student study architecture...  

and study abroad.  

Fourth year architecture student and Hagerstown, Maryland native Matthew Swope has had more than a few obstacles stand in his path, but that hasn’t stopped him from pursuing his passions.

While growing up, Matthew’s parents knew he had an interest in architecture and encouraged him to become one, always buying him Frank Lloyd Wright books and other items. “My mom used to tell me that I’d sit in church and sketch churches on the bulletin when I was a kid,” he says. But when he met with his high school counselor, he was told his math grades weren’t high enough to become an architect, so he dropped the idea and attended a community college to study business.

Visiting a longtime friend who was pursuing an architecture degree at Virginia Tech, Swope once again became excited about the idea of studying architecture. He decided to take art classes, three-dimensional design, sculpture, and drawing classes, slowly starting to ignore what his high school counselor had told him.

After two years at the community college, he applied to the architecture program, but was denied. This time, he decided he wasn’t going to give up so easily. Another visit to campus was in order — this time, to meet with Professor Gene Egger to present some of the design projects he’d been working on. After a year’s worth of being in constant contact with the college, with support and encouragement of his hometown friend, and help from Gene Egger pulling the strings from the inside, he finally received an acceptance letter.

As a freshman, Swope was immediately intrigued at the possibility of studying abroad during his time at Tech. “The professors talked about it a lot, and told us to start talking to students who had recently returned from their trips to give us a better idea of what study abroad path we might want to take,” he said, “but when that time came for me, I had a difficult time convincing my parents it was worth the money.”

Tackling another obstacle, Swope decided to take out a loan to pay his parents back for the upfront travel expenses. He was also fortunate enough to receive two travel scholarships to supplement the rest. He would finally be able to study at the Center for European Studies and Architecture in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland — his first trip to Europe, and admittedly the first trip outside the eastern part of the U.S. “Living in Riva was great,” Swope says. “There was so much to do and see, I don’t know if I can pinpoint what was the best part.”

When reflecting upon his 16-week study abroad experience, and how it will apply to the rest of his academic career, he says it has helped him in the way he looks at things, and the way he approaches his work. “I can really see cultural differences now, which I think will influence my work.”
Students Help Ridgeway Residents Plan their Future

With a little help from 20 urban planning students, residents in the small town of Ridgeway, Virginia may be seeing a clearer picture of the future of their town. This spring, the students, led by UAP Professor Diane Zahm, created Ridgeway’s first comprehensive plan to facilitate the orderly growth and development of that community. Ridgeway’s comprehensive plan incorporated several factors important to the town’s future development including land use, housing, the natural environment, transportation, public facilities, and historic preservation.

“The residents of Ridgeway decided which elements were to be included in the comprehensive plan,” explained graduate student Brad Belo. “The future of Ridgeway could be whatever the town’s residents want it to be. They just had to communicate to us what they wanted that future to look like.”

As part of the class, students went door to door and interviewed community members and coordinated public meetings where dozens of residents offered further input into the plan. Graduate student Theresa Kanter said the whole class was very excited about helping Ridgeway create its first plan. “It’s a big responsibility, but with plenty of input from the residents, we hope we were able to help the community plan for the future it deserves.” Kanter also says the class stressed the ‘touchy-feely’ stuff not covered in the census, asking questions like ‘are people happy with their commutes,’ ‘do they like to walk around their town,’ and ‘do they want more commercial businesses.’

More information on the development of Ridgeway’s Comprehensive Plan is available at the Ridgeway Public Library and at www.filebox.vt.edu/uap/ridgeway/.

Providing Vital Revitalizing Tools

Seniors in Wendy Jacobson’s landscape architecture class worked with the Harrison Museum of African American Culture and the Northwest Neighborhood Improvement Council (NNIC) in Roanoke, VA, to propose several landscape master plans to address street and public spaces improvements in the Harrison neighborhood. Using the neighborhood as their classroom, the students developed proposals to be used by residents as vehicles for visualizing and evaluating alternative scenarios for public spaces as part of neighborhood revitalization initiatives that are currently in the works.

The master plans addressed both physical and perceptual considerations such as pedestrian improvements and neighborhood image. The Harrison Museum was an existing key community resource that students were able to highlight in their designs.

This project is a beginning phase of a larger outreach effort initiated through the College’s Community Design Assistance Center.
History Revisited...

Architecture students in professors Fernando Ruiz and Joe Wang’s 3rd year design lab provided ideas to help the town of Hillsville, Virginia envision the future use of an important historic and cultural structure -- the Carter Building.

A final report was presented to town officials in March, citing the student’s multiple renovation and reuse plans, like retail, dining, and community uses for the structure. “We wanted to bring the urban scale into the project,” says Ruiz. “It’s the whole community, not just the building.”

Students Provide Communities On-line Environmental Checklist

Graduate students in the Urban Affairs and Planning Department have developed a manual called “Check Your Success: A Guide to Developing Indicators for Community Based Environmental Projects” as part of their Environmental Planning Studio.

The students, under the supervision of Dr. JoAnn Carmin, worked in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop the manual to be used as a resource for organizations and groups throughout the United States working on environmental protection at a community level. The project shows how groups can move beyond a narrow focus and start thinking about how activities can be used to address the connections between the environment, economy, and society.

The on-line version of the manual can be found at www.uap.vt.edu/checkyoursuccess/manual.html

Proposed Research Project Would Provide Community-Based Plans for Sustainable Economic Development

by Kelly Corace

Three small rural communities in the Clinch River Watershed area of Virginia have received attention from faculty and students in the Landscape Architecture Department. The proposed project, Empowering Clinch River Communities: Ecologically Sensitive and Economically Viable Development in Southwest Virginia, is an applied research initiative. The project will support these communities in their efforts to create additional businesses, reduce the negative effects of stormwater runoff on water resources, and safeguard the community by conserving cultural and natural resources.

With local citizens leading the way, the interdisciplinary project team intends to help each community craft a vision that effectively considers economic, social, and environmental concerns within the region and creates a process for implementing more detailed planning/design ideas.

Located along a vital section of the Clinch River, the three towns -- St. Paul, Cedar Bluff, and Honaker -- were selected for this project as a result of strong local interest, and because of threats to their quality of life and ecosystem integrity.

This spring, Ken and Anna MacBean, graduate research assistants in the landscape architecture department, are helping to jump-start the project by working on a studio project that explores opportunities within the upper Clinch River watershed for sustainable-and-locally-supported tourism. Research Assistant Professor, Lee R. Skabelund, and Associate Professor, Wendy Jacobson, are seeking funding from private, community and corporate foundations, public agencies, local businesses, and individuals for an initial two-year planning and design effort. Professors, staff, and students from Agricultural Economics, Fisheries & Wildlife Resources, Urban Affairs & Planning, and other university departments and centers will also be involved in the project.

If you would like to help fund the two-year proposal, or if you wish to learn more about this project, please contact Lee R. Skabelund at 540-231-6863 (lskab@vt.edu) or Ken or Anna MacBean at kmacbean@vt.edu.
Making Lucy Happy...

Lucy and her family of six live in a small, dilapidated house in Hale County, Alabama with inadequate lighting and ventilation. A group of innovative students are doing something to help her through Auburn University's Rural Studio Outreach directed by the late Professor Samuel Mockbee. Fourth year architecture student Keith Zawistowski has been on site designing and building Lucy a new house with the outreach group during this academic year. He was one of only seven students accepted nationwide to participate in this first studio, at the recommendation of Architecture Associate Professor Shelley Martin. The other six participating schools include the Art Institute of Seattle, Arizona State University, Delft University, Penn State University, Paris Malaquais, and Texas A&M.

Martin, along with Associate Professor Hunter Pittman, took a group of eight architecture students to join Zawistowski in February and help construct the unique ‘carpet wall’ system. The students were invited to accompany Martin and Pittman (at their own expense) who had originally planned a trip to see the progress of the house before it was completed.

Martin heavily promotes this type of experience for her students both for the hands-on construction, and for pedagogical methodologies. “It encourages innovative techniques in building, exposes the student to collaborative working environments, and more importantly, prepares the architecture student to be a citizen directly responsible to the public realm,” she says.

More information about the Rural Studio Outreach can be found at www.auburn.edu/~tatejm1/main.htm

Architecture Through Aquaculture

Aquaculture is the farming of fish and shellfish, and is the fastest growing segment of agriculture in the United States. During a 3-day trip to Virginia’s eastern shore, a dozen 3rd year students looked at the small community of Oyster, VA to decide how to best design, and where best to place, an aquaculture research facility there. Since fishing is a main source of income for Oyster residents, research done to improve the industry would eventually have a positive economic impact on this small community.

Architecture student Jessica Tipton admits she had really never heard about aquaculture before taking this class, but found the experience to be very unique in helping her see how important architecture can be and how many different facets of society and industry it can affect. “It made me think about how I could build on a place that The Nature Conservancy is trying to protect.”

Since the town of Oyster is part of The Nature Conservancy’s Virginia Coastal Reserve, the students met with Terry Thompson from the Conservancy who spoke about the valuable resources of the reserve. The conservancy’s agenda with this coastal area is to not only conserve natural resources, but to help develop communities and businesses in productive balance with the environment.

The students were also charged with integrating a housing component (5 apartments) which would house researchers at the aquaculture facility. They were also challenged to look at the bigger picture, and try to incorporate a tourist component in the site. Students presented their reports to the class in May. Professor Woofter says that the class project is just that -- a class project-- but hopes it has planted seeds for future, more implementable, design projects.
Kirsten Sparenborg, a student and Community Design Assistance Center employee was featured on WDBJ-7 (Roanoke) in April for her project on Lost Communities of Virginia. She is trekking the backroads of Virginia looking for once-thriving communities that are now all but ghost towns. With the support of CDAC, she plans to publish a book on her findings.

Ashwini Wakchaure, urban affairs and planning graduate student, was recently awarded outstanding student planning project by the American Planning Association (Virginia chapter). Her paper, “An ArcView Tool for Simulation Land Subdivision for Build Out Analysis,” will be sent on to compete nationally.

Six architecture students have been awarded USM Travel Scholarships, including Matt Henry, Francie Keenan, Julian Looney, James Daniel McNamee, Deidre Regan, and Karen Swenson. USM is a Swiss-based upscale modular furniture company that has supported the College and its students for nearly a decade, and continues to increase their generous in-kind and financial support each year.
A Life of Law & Order

Some of Tom Moss’ best memories at Virginia Tech are of his days in the German Club, and whether he meant to or not, the rest of his life followed the club’s founding principles. The club’s official “ritual” was written in 1935, and takes each letter of the word GERMAN and matches it to appropriate attributes that the men must follow – Gentleman, Earnest, Reputation and Responsibility, Manhood, Aim, and Name. This gentleman’s aim was to earnestly uphold his name and reputation, as well as others around him, through service, defending what was right, and setting and obtaining high goals.

In his early years, the ROTC cadet found himself a year behind in school upon switching majors from Architectural Engineering to Light Building Construction, which pushed back his graduation date to 1951. By September of that year, he was called to serve in the U.S. Army to fight in the Korean War. His original orders had him going directly to Korea to serve in a dangerous position as forward observer, but good fortune came in a large envelope and his reassignment to Germany had him now looking forward to a trip to Europe, and, as he told his mother, the opportunity for her son “to live a little longer.”

While stationed in Germany, he wasn’t using his building construction degree, but he was developing a knack for building a defense for court marshaled soldiers. Assigned by the battalion commander, it was Moss’ job to defend those charged with breaches of military regulations. “I started winning a lot of cases and the commander called me in one day and said ‘I didn’t give you your job to get these boys off.’ I said, well, you assigned me as defense counsel and I’m trying to do the best I can.”

After leaving the service he decided to follow in his brother’s footsteps and attend law school. In an accelerated program at the T.C. Williams Law School at the University of Richmond, he finished in two years, passed the bar, and went on to work for the Commonwealth Attorney. Gaining a reputation as a ‘winning’ prosecutor, it wasn’t long before a better job offer came along. “One of the best lawyers around here, Frederick T. Stant, said ‘Boy, I’m tired of you kickin’ my butt. How much are you makin’ where you are?’ I told him $8,000, and he offered me $12,000. I thought I’d died and gone to heaven.” He stayed on to become partner, but eventually left to practice law with his brother.

His political life was fueled early on by seeing the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of an elected position through his job with the Commonwealth Attorney. He has served in the General Assembly since 1966, working his way up to the powerful position of Speaker of the House. Moss says John F. Kennedy was the reason he got into politics. Forming the young democratic club of Norfolk, VA with two others, the three of them served as Kennedy’s campaign managers for the 2nd congressional district. “We stayed up all night long waiting for the returns to come in, and as it turned out the statistics showed that he won the presidency by one vote in every precinct in the country. It was that close.” Moss remembers attending the inaugural and visiting the president shortly after the election. “We were in the Oval office talking to him with several others who were involved in the Virginia campaign. I looked at the beautiful parquet flooring where he was standing, and it had all these tiny pinholes in it. I said “Mr. President, what are these holes?” He said ‘that’s Eisenhower’s golf shoes.’ He had a putting green right outside the office, and would come in and pick up the phone and that kind of stuff.” Moss adds he’s been back since then, and the floor has been fixed.

Not seeking re-election for the first time since his political career, Moss still wanted to keep a hand in politics. Elected this year to a four-year term as City of Norfolk Treasurer, he says the job enables him to keep politically active, and gives him a reason to get out of bed in the morning. On the side, he enjoys cruising on the Chesapeake Bay with his two loves — his boat and his wife. He says there’s nothing better than being on his boat in the early morning, cruising on the bay watching the rising sun. The only thing troubling this 100% Hokie is the boat’s model, which he says is named after UVA – “It’s called a Wahoo.”

In the German Club ritual, “N” stands for ‘Name’ and the importance of upholding it. Moss has received numerous honors which reinforce his good name— both the Moss Research Building at Virginia Tech, and the Thomas A. Moss Jr. Campus of Norfolk Community College are named after him.
Last fall I was hired as Assistant Director for Alumni Relations shared jointly with CAUS and the Pamplin College of Business. My primary roles in this position are to assist with alumni programs—establish plans to involve alumni with the colleges, coordinate alumni events that build loyalty and cultivate interest in the individual college programs. In addition, my personal goal is to interact with the students and student associations in order to involve as many of them as possible.

One project I’ve been working on is the updating and expansion of our alumni email database so that the college is able to effectively communicate timely news and events. In addition, an alumni survey is underway in order to obtain your feedback to assist me in understanding your needs and concerns and to determine how best the college might be able to respond. Plans include expanding the database of alumni who are willing to serve as mentors to the CAUS students in their specific geographical and academic area. It is crucial for the students to be able to talk to the alumni and/or visit their respective firms so they are able to gain a better perspective on ‘life after CAUS’.

I also want to take this opportunity to inform you of an exciting alumni event planned this fall— the CAUS Homecoming and Brunch (see next page). We invite all of you to return to campus, socialize with other alumni, faculty, administration, and students, and allow us to share with you the academic progress the departments and the college have made since your graduation. Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 26 as we embark on the first college homecoming!

I welcome your comments, suggestions, and support and look forward to the opportunity to meet each of you in the future. Please keep me abreast of your address, employment, projects, etc. My ultimate goal in my new role is to keep the college connected to the alumni and to keep our alumni connected to the college. By working together our possibilities are endless!

Best regards! ~ ~ ~ Robin H. Jackson

### 60s

Dr. Wolfgang F.E. Preiser (MArch ’69) has recently co-written a book entitled *Universal Design Handbook* published by McGraw-Hill. He is professor of architecture at the University of Cincinnati, and a consultant in building performance evaluation. He is published widely, with 12 books on topics ranging from post-occupancy evolution to facility programming and design research in general. He has won numerous awards and honors, including the Fulbright Fellowship, Progressive Architecture Annual Award for Applied Research, the EDRA Career Achievement Award, to name a few. Preiser Consultants, 4043 Clifton Ridge Dr., Cincinnati, OH, 45220 wolfgang.preiser@uc.edu.

### 70s

Mike Mense AIA, (BArch ‘73) has recently had several opinion pieces published in newspapers in Anchorage, Alaska. Most recently published was “Let’s make smart, polite homes” which appeared in the Anchorage Daily News. The story can be viewed in full at www.adn.com/opinion/story/757512p-808168c.html. mmenseArchitects, mike@mmense.com

Steven House (BArch ’75) was featured on Home & Garden Television’s (HGTV) Building and Remodeling Show for his unique remodel of a California ranch-style home. The show, hosted by Pat Simpson, featured the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of the home and the dramatic interior and exterior changes. Details of the show can be found at www.hgtv.com/HGTV/project/0,1158,BDRE_proj ect_24645,FF.html, which states that the new kitchen and living room are spectacular. 1499 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94109 (415) 474-2112, ext. 12 house@ix.netcom.com

### 80s

Stanley Mathews, AIA, (BArch ’86) is professor of Architectural History at Hobart & William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. In addition to teaching architectural history, theory and criticism, he is advisor to architecture majors planning to obtain their masters, and serves on the committees for environmental and urban studies at HWS. He is in the final stages of completing a Ph.D. in the History and Theory of Architecture at Columbia University. Art Department, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY 14456 mathews@hws.edu

Mark Swecker, AIA (BArch ’87) recently joined the engineering and architecture firm of Thompson + Litton as project architect at the firm’s headquarters in Wise, VA. Mark is registered in VA, TN, and WVA, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Wise County Habitat for Humanity and is chair of its construction committee. He and his wife Sarah reside in Coeburn, VA along with their two children. Thompson + Litton, 103 E. Main St., P.O. Box 1307, Wise, VA 24293 (276) 328-2161 www.T-L.com

Safei-Eldin Hamed, ASLA (EDP Ph.D. ‘88) has written a new book entitled “Landscape Planning for the Arid Middle East: An Approach to Setting Environmental Objectives.” The book is available through Edwin Mellen Press of Lewiston, New York. Hamed currently serves as assistant professor at Texas Tech University and has taught at various universities in North America and the Middle East and served as consultant for several national and international organizations. From 1994 to 1997, he worked as an Environmental Specialist for the World Bank in Washington. D.C. shamed@ttacs.ttu.edu (806) 742-2672 continued > > >
Alex Rhode (BArch '92) was awarded the “Home of the Year” for his Seattle, WA home design. This house was featured in New American Traditions & Renovations. Alex is currently remodeling his own house in Seattle. He is employed at Ben Trogdon Architects.

Alex is currently remodeling his own house New American Traditions & Renovations “Home of the Year” for his Seattle, WA

Alex Rhode (BArch '92) was awarded the 90s April/May 2002 issue of VSAIA newsletter. began in 1993. He was featured in the state of Virginia. He has held this position in the VSAIA since 1996, while maintaining the architectural practice he began in 1993. He was featured in the April/May 2002 issue of VSAIA newsletter.

Rob Bristow (MArch '95) and Pilar Proffitt (MArch '97) a husband and wife team, have recently had their furniture designs featured on The Martha Stewart Show. The company is based out of Norfolk, Connecticut.

Their Brooklyn loft design was also featured in the March issue of TimeOutNY which featured other pieces of their furniture as well. poesis, 649 Litchfield Road, Norfolk, CT 06058 studio (860) 542-0175, workshop (860)542-5152, www.poesisdesign.com, info@poesisdesign.com or rob@poesisdesign.com.

The family of Matthew Krahe (BArch '95) recently celebrated Matthew’s life on the 5th anniversary of his passing on December 26, 2001. Since his death, the family has organized a scholarship fund for Virginia Tech architecture students in Matthew’s name. You can make donations to this fund by making checks payable to the Matthew J.M. Krahe Scholarship Fund and send them to The Krahe Family, 123 South 9 Street, Olean, NY 14760-3407, or make checks payable to Matthew J.M. Krahe Architecture Scholarship Fund/Virginia Tech Foundation Tax ID #54-0721690 and mail them to: Lindsay Raymond, College of Architecture & Urban Studies at Virginia Tech, 202 Cowgill Hall (0205) Blacksburg, VA 24061.

The family has also collected some of Matthew’s favorite recipes and printed them in “A Celebration – A Book of Matthew & Brenda’s Favorite Recipes” book. Copies are $25 plus $3 shipping and handling.

Sixty percent of the proceeds will go toward the scholarship fund. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, contact Irene or Dave Krahe at (716) 372-3956 or dkrahe@netsync.net.

College Homecoming 2002

You’re invited to return to campus for the 1st CAUS Homecoming and Brunch on Saturday morning, October 26, prior to the football game against Temple.

So many exciting departmental and college projects are taking place throughout CAUS! Let us share with you the academic progress the departments and college have made, as well as some of the physical changes that have taken place since your graduation. You will have an opportunity to visit and socialize with alumni, faculty, friends, and students, explore projects by both students and alumni, and familiarize yourself with the current happenings at CAUS. And, come share your experiences since graduation with us!

For those alumni who plan to attend, there are a limited number of hotel accommodations and football tickets available. You can get all the details by calling Robin Jackson, Assistant Director of Alumni Relations at (540)231-1486 or email rhjackson@vt.edu. Or, you can register for the event on-line at http://filebox.vt.edu/alumni/alum/reunions.html, then click on “Reunion Schedule” and “College of Architecture & Urban Studies” (under the sub-heading “College and Constituency Homecomings”) then select “Register here today!”

00s

Patrick Young (BArch '00) has taken a slightly different path and has decided to pursue a career as an artist instead of architect. He has drawn over 50 works in the past year which were featured in a one-man-show in Arlington, VA. His work can be seen at www.FineArtDesigner.com info@fineartdesigner.com.

Davidson Lewis (BArch '01) is Vice President and Head of Development at Daybreak Designs, L.L.C.ID. Lewis and his colleagues have developed the “VegiSock” and “FruitSock.”—two products getting a lot of attention these days. The special sock works by placing the produce in it while rubbing gently under water, reducing dirt, wax, pesticides, bacteria, and contaminates. The product was introduced at the International Housewares Trade Show in Chicago where thousands of units were sold. Retailers all over the world, including Ace Hardware, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, Comings and Revere Outlet Stores have purchased them in bulk and you will be seeing them on store shelves soon. The product was also featured in the Virginia Pilot Newspaper. For more information on the socks see www.VegiSock.com, or contact Lewis at design@vegisock.com, Daybreak Designs, L.L.C., P.O. Box 4626, Virginia Beach, VA 23454 (757) 427-9392.
A Career Path Where Passion Laid the Groundwork

1- Arrange stones on the ground in a maze-like pattern. Call it a labyrinth. 2- Quit corporate job. Go back to school and get masters degree in landscape architecture. Call it a new career path.

Both sound straightforward and fairly simple, but Amber Vellenga (MLA ’01) knows each takes passion, persistence, and being in the right place.

In her one-woman landscape architecture firm, Artemis Designs, Vellenga works primarily with residential landscapes, but is fast becoming known for her labyrinth design, which is an extension of her thesis work while pursuing a masters degree for the past three years. Vellenga says labyrinths take on a certain relationship with their surroundings. “You just don’t want to build it. Anybody can build one – all you have to do is line it out and connect the lines to make a path. I felt like in order to make it thesis-worthy, and to explore what I thought was so interesting about it and why I wanted it to be the focus of my masters, I needed to take that time.”

She loosely defines a labyrinth as a ‘meditative walk,’ although many people still think of it as a mythological maze where it’s difficult to find your way out. She most recently designed a labyrinth for Sanctuaries Garden Center in Richmond, Virginia, (pictured below) where she says people are visiting regularly for a unique meditative experience. “I think the rebirth of the labyrinth, in terms of its growing popularity in landscape architecture, is really not about being lost, it’s about finding yourself.” And Vellenga admits she’s found “it.”

“That’s why I’m able to say I’m doing exactly what I’m supposed to be doing in life. It’s not just like I woke up one day and said ‘let me give this a shot.’ I was much more passionate about landscape architecture than most, and I knew from day one I was going to take three years off, get a masters, and learn as much as I could. I had to, because any business I opened up would be much more successful having taken that time and made that sacrifice. I could probably be doing a very similar thing to what I’m doing right now, but I wouldn’t have the kind of knowledge and the deeper understanding of space and design that I have now that I learned at Virginia Tech.”

As mentioned, Vellenga always knew she’d one day have her own business, but along the way she admits getting off track. “In some ways that brought a deeper understanding to the whole idea of the labyrinth because I took it very personal. I made that project a way for me to get back on my path.”

While Vellenga is busy with her blossoming business, she’s not too busy to help her neighborhood grow. Serving as Beautification Chair for her neighborhood’s civic association, she works with its members to improve the medians and help turn abandoned lots into playgrounds. Most recently she coordinated a neighborhood garden tour, but not your typical ‘garden style’ tour. The difference— it was a walking tour of alleys. “I wanted it to be a relaxed laid back event where we met in one place, got a glass of lemonade, and promoted dialogue and discussion over everybody’s back fence.”

If you would like to drop a note to Amber, you can do so by emailing her at artemesia59@yahoo.com.
As a boy in the mid-70s, Jim Loudon (BLA ’88, MURP ’94) could see the Twin Towers being built from his home in Cedar Grove, NJ, just 15 minutes outside New York City. His own son, now 2 1/2 years old, used to point to those same towers from his home in downtown Manhattan just last summer, and would say “Daddy’s building” when asked by his father where daddy worked. “That was one of the neatest things about my job at the Port Authority—the fact that the World Trade Center was our headquarters,” he says.

As a landscape architect, Jim continues to work for the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey which operates not just the ports in the area, but all of the tunnels and bridges that cross the Hudson River, all the airports in the area, bus terminals, industrial parks, and some piers. He enjoys working on teams with civil and structural engineers, doing mostly transportation-related redevelopment work, and has recently completed a monorail link at the Newark airport. But a lot of what he liked about his job—the location and the people—was taken away after last September. “If the people I worked with weren’t physically taken away, they were scattered all over the place,” says Jim. His division is currently based in offices located in Jersey City, NJ, but Jim remembers well the day things changed. Located on the 73rd floor of the north tower, he recounts his experience…

“I don’t think any of us really knew what had happened. Some of my colleagues said they had heard the acceleration of a jet engine, but I think probably one of the saving graces was that we all weren’t sure what had happened and we assumed that it wasn’t deliberate and that it was just an accident. We quickly proceeded down. I don’t think we waited for any announcements. We walked to the stairwell. I actually ran over to the east side of the building just to see if anybody over there was aware of what was going on, but everybody was. Everybody had felt it. The building shook like it had never shaken before. After it shook it swayed and it swayed for a long time. I remember walking down in the stairwell and talking to one of my co-workers to say ‘do you feel that in your legs? It hasn’t stopped, it’s oscillating.’ The building really was vibrating violently…

It was stop and go. Like a traffic jam, but very orderly and surprisingly calm. There were some people that were hyperventilating a little bit and scared, but I’d say for the most part the majority of us were just moving along. There wasn’t much in the way of decision making that we had to do. We just moved ahead. I think we assumed that whatever had happened, there would be a recovery effort and we’d be able to get back into our offices to get personal belongings or some work that would sustain us until we were able to move back permanently. Pretty strange that it never occurred to any of us that the building would fall. It took us about an hour to get down. They emptied us out of the stairwell onto the mezzanine level, which looked onto the plaza. It was completely covered with debris, bodies, a lot of broken glass. Things were still floating around in the air, patches of fire all over. I think at that point I realized that this was a lot worse, more severe than I thought…

As you moved away from the complex to get a glimpse of the towers, you realized that both were on fire, and had no idea why. I thought maybe whatever had happened had spread over to the other tower. A lot of people were watching, just sitting on the curb looking up. I don’t think I was moving very fast. I was turned around, maybe backing up the street watching, and I saw the south tower starting to fall. I think I was in disbelief. It fell within five minutes of me having gotten out…

As the tower collapsed, I just ran. I ran as quickly as I could. I was heading up toward the Brooklyn Bridge. I got about half way between the World Trade Center and the bridge when the cloud
Jim told his wife Lisa (Comm/Psyc ’93) who was also working in the city, that he was alive and proceeded to make plans to meet her in a park nearby, then cross the river to pick up their son from his daycare facility. “We did a lot of walking that day. We always felt like we were about one step ahead of everything.”

Jim says he showed up at the Jersey City office a couple of times in the following weeks to recover some of his work, but says it was 2-3 weeks before they were all showing up to work on a regular basis. He thinks everyone on his floor made it out safely but says there are still people who haven’t returned to work. “I used to be sort of optimistic, and I think I still am, but for the first few months after the event, we were just waiting for the next thing to happen and wondered what the future was going to be like.” Jim admits that the first three months were really bad, but his son was a good outlet. “I’d get in his world and forget about everything else for a little while, and that was good.”

Jim and his wife have a reason to be optimistic these days as they are expecting a baby, oddly enough, in September. Since the tragedy, he has thought about putting his experience down on paper. “No one really thought about people like landscape architects and the reason why they’d be in New York City, especially in the World Trade Center. Everyone figures there are only high-powered bond brokers and traders there. But we were there.”

If you would like to drop Jim a note, you can do so by emailing him at jloudon@panynj.gov

When Shannon Bennett (BArch ’00) graduated with her degree, she moved to the Big Apple where she thought she’d be designing big budget museums and upscale lofts. Instead, she found herself talking to partners at Oaklander, Coogan, and Vitto Architects, a firm that works with non-profit community outreach organizations to design housing, community centers, and educational institutes in neglected areas of the city.

“Once I saw what a beautiful impact these guys were making on the people and neighborhoods in which they designed, I could not get them out of my head.” With much patience and persistence, a spot opened up in the firm. “I really enjoy what I do here because I think it takes a pretty creative mind to design a nice space on a limited budget. Also, it is a great feeling to know that your work is truly helping better someone’s life. Many of these people who live in SROs and housing projects take great pride in their homes and families, and I help give them a little something to be proud of.”

Excited about this type of architecture, Shannon has decided to leave NYC to attend graduate school at SCI-Arc in Los Angeles. She wants to learn more about metropolitan research and design. “I’ve learned to understand more of what I feel architecture is: we as architects, are here to give our neighbors a home, a city, which they are pleased to call their own. I want to continue designing for those around me in a way that I feel contributes positively to our cities, and I hope that my architecture can bring a voice to those that the politicians and developers try to sweep under the rug.”

Jane Cady Wright, AIA (BArch ’80) has been named President and CEO of Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company. As co-leader of the firm’s campus planning and design studio, she has specialized in providing design expertise on over 60 college and university campuses. She has been with the firm since 1984 and is currently the lead on many projects on the Virginia Tech campus.

120 Atlantic Street, Norfolk, VA 23510  (757) 321-9600  www.hewv.com

If you would like to drop Jim a note, you can do so by emailing him at jloudon@panynj.gov
They were young Chinese students in the 60s. Mao Zedong called them the ‘educated youth.’ He claimed what they learned in school was useless so he sent them to the countryside, hundreds of miles away from home, to learn from the peasants...

A “Model” Architect

Sam Yue wanted to learn. He enjoyed school and wanted to continue with his studies to become an architect, or something close to it. But at age 16, the government said that he must go to the countryside to work in the rice fields. Yue farmed the countryside alongside other bright young Chinese students. What he learned was endurance.

Seeing family once a year required a 3-hour trip by foot out of the mountains, a 3-hour bus ride, and a 13-hour train ride. Finally able to return home to stay after 8 1/2 years in the countryside, he says he was lucky to be able to re-enter school. After passing the 3-day college entrance exam, the government decided that he would attend medical school. “If you qualified, the government sent you to a school of their choice,” says Yue. But his family knew of his passion to study something else, to be free to pursue his own dreams. “I was lucky to have a family that supported me. They sent me to America because it was the land of freedom.”

At age 26, Yue enrolled in Georgetown’s language school for a year and a half. He then went on to UNC Charlotte’s engineering program at his family’s suggestion because, they said, ‘architects don’t make money.’ After a year of engineering, Yue decided life was too short and transferred into architecture.

During his junior and senior years, he worked for a professor in his professional practice located in downtown Charlotte, enabling him to obtain a green card to stay and work in the U.S. His professor soon realized his talent for building architectural models and eventually put him in charge of running that part of the business. He also encouraged Yue to continue his architecture studies. Accepted into the masters program at Virginia Tech, Yue found himself commuting between Charlotte and Blacksburg, working in the Charlotte practice on the weekends, and working as a teaching assistant during the week under Professor Joe Wang. When the recession of the late 80s came, the small firm wasn’t able to pay Yue any longer, so he was forced to find other jobs to pay the bills.

He was hired by Dave Wagner (BArch ’74) of Wagner Murray Architects to do models on the side when he says his big break came. “Dave was the interior designer for the National Football League Panther Stadium at that time. There were about three or four model shops looking for that project to be advertised, but since Dave was the designer on the project, the job automatically became mine. Dave said, ‘here it is, start your own business.’ I probably wouldn’t be here right now without his help.”

Today Yue’s office of five architects and an office manager spend their days designing models of all scales and prices, and say they are the ‘model shop of the Carolinas.’ Most recently, they completed one of their largest yet — a 7 ft. by 13ft. model for the Home Depot Headquarters. Yue estimates that since his business started over 10 years ago, his shop has built nearly 800 models. “The best part is when you show the models to the client and all you hear is ‘wow.’”

When Yue is not working, he enjoys playing tennis, boating in the summer, spending time with his 13-year-old son, and taking his wife out to dinner or dancing a couple of times a week.

You can see some of the firm’s work below, or at www.syshopinc.com
As the new Director of Development for the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, I will work with all of the college departments and centers to build partnerships with companies and alumni. These partnerships will support CAUS goals including increased faculty resources for research and instruction.

My first priority is to finish the Building Construction Campaign. We have raised over $3.5 million for this exciting project which will provide cutting-edge research labs and high-tech classrooms. With only $1.5 million left to raise, the new Bishop-Favrao Building Construction Center will enhance our reputation across the country.

My second priority is to seek financial support for three new funds recently created in the college: The Dean’s Fund for Excellence, The Dean’s Brick and Mortar Fund for Technology Research, and the Dean’s Enrichment Fund. These new funds will provide the college and departments with needed resources that can be used to maintain the margin of excellence we strive to expand on in our curriculum, quality of faculty and in our programs. The funds for excellence and enrichment are especially important as these allow the Dean to help departments recruit and retain high quality faculty members. Our Technology Fund will help to renovate and upgrade classrooms so that our faculty can continue to integrate technology and traditional methods of instruction.

My third priority will be to support programs like our Solar Decathlon Project. This challenging competition will encourage strong industry and alumni cooperation. You may have already read about this project on page 15 of this issue. It will be an amazing opportunity for our students and a point of Hokie pride.

I’m proud to announce that your support has been crucial in raising the levels of scholarships we are able to provide well deserving students. At this year’s awards ceremony we gave over $190,000 in scholarship aid to over 200 talented future leaders. On behalf of the college, faculty, students and staff, thank you for your generous assistance.

My door is always open to visits or calls. If you are on campus or would like me to visit you during my travels, please call or stop by. If you have any questions or ideas, you can contact me at 540-231-3929 or at lindsayr@vt.edu. I’m looking forward to working with our alumni and friends. It will be a privilege to help grow CAUS programs around the world!

Lindsay Raymond
CAUS Director of Development
Architecture students pose in front of the Villa Rotunda designed by Palladio. The students were part of the annual travel group that toured Italy this past fall.