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Berry is uncommonly beautiful – a place of pastoral and expansive beauty that long has captured the imagination of those who have visited or lived here.

More akin to a park than a manicured garden, the Berry campus is breathtaking in part because it appears so natural with its open fields and wooded slopes, vast pine forests and pristine mountain reservoir. Yet much of Berry's apparent naturalness was, in fact, carefully designed. It is from the interplay of the natural with the cultivated and the constructed that the full beauty of the campus emerges.

Berry's structures are an integral part of its uncommon beauty, and they stand as a record of the college's evolution. The white frame buildings of the original boys' campus and the cluster of log cabins built a half mile away for the girls defined from the outset the expansiveness of Berry's residential campus. The collegiate brick campus, the magnificent gothic Ford Buildings and the rustic stone of

the Mountain Campus ensured that Berry's distinctive mix would be enduring. Alongside these educational structures, the barns and long runs of wood-rail fences attest to Berry's continuing agriculture heritage.

Because Berry's campus is central to its identity, one of the seven themes of the college's current strategic plan is to "make the most of Berry's campus as an incomparable asset." A specific and ongoing goal is to "enhance the beauty and heritage of Berry's campus to ensure that it remains a place of wonder and delight." In this day of economic turmoil and chronic belt-tightening, it is appropriate to ask whether the college should emphasize the beauty of Berry as a strategic goal in light of so many pressing needs. Certainly, it seems right to affirm that the beauty of the campus for its



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own sake should not take precedence over the need to assist students financially as they struggle to afford the quality of educational experience that Berry offers.

A part of education

From time to time, after an evening event, I find myself in the midst of the splendid WinShape Retreat on the Mountain Campus. As I walk the central path through those picturesque structures, I often wonder, “What on earth was Martha Berry thinking when she conceived these buildings?” We know that she modeled them after barns she saw on a trip to Normandy, France, inspired no doubt by their beauty. Still, why build such striking structures on a remote section of the campus in a remote area of Northwest Georgia? How did she justify this expense in the middle of the Great Depression of the 1930s?

The answer, I believe, derives from Martha’s conviction that “beauty is part of education.” She wanted the Berry campus to be

inspirational, believing that beauty had the power to stir the imagination and to cultivate civility and hope. The campus’ expansive vistas and surprising spires were meant to catch the eye and lift the heart because Martha wanted students in the midst of mundane chores to sense the wonder of creation and the worth of work done well before God.

In other words, Martha Berry believed that the beauty of campus was a vital element of the educational experience. The beauty nurtured and instructed hearts as surely as the academic lessons molded minds and the work experience trained hands. The beauty of Berry was not for its own sake, but rather for the edification of the students. Martha’s aim for her students was the act of devotion she claimed for

herself: “I pray that I may leave this world more beautiful than when I found it.” This aim lives on in our current strategic plan.

Functional, affordable, beautiful

This summer may have been Berry’s busiest ever in the area of campus construction. The new Audrey B. Morgan and Deerfield residence halls were opened, the first phase of the renovation of Dana Hall was completed, and the Krannert Center’s dining hall and Spruill Ballroom were expanded. In addition, we added a number of new parking lots and



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beautiful



sidewalks to improve the pedestrian flow of campus and re-roofed 17 buildings on the Main and Mountain campuses. We also constructed a new softball facility and a new soccer/lacrosse practice field to support our expanded athletic offerings.

While some of this work was part of the scheduled maintenance of our campus facilities, many of the projects were designed to improve the quality and capacity of Berry as a residential learning community. As part of the planning process, we specifically worked to enhance the beauty of the campus even as we sought to make improvements that were both functional and cost-effective over the lifetime of a building.

Let me use the new residence halls as an example. As we projected the need for additional residence hall beds in order to attain our goal of having 85 percent of students residing on campus, we studied possible site locations in terms of several principles. We sought to create a residential district close to the center of campus but



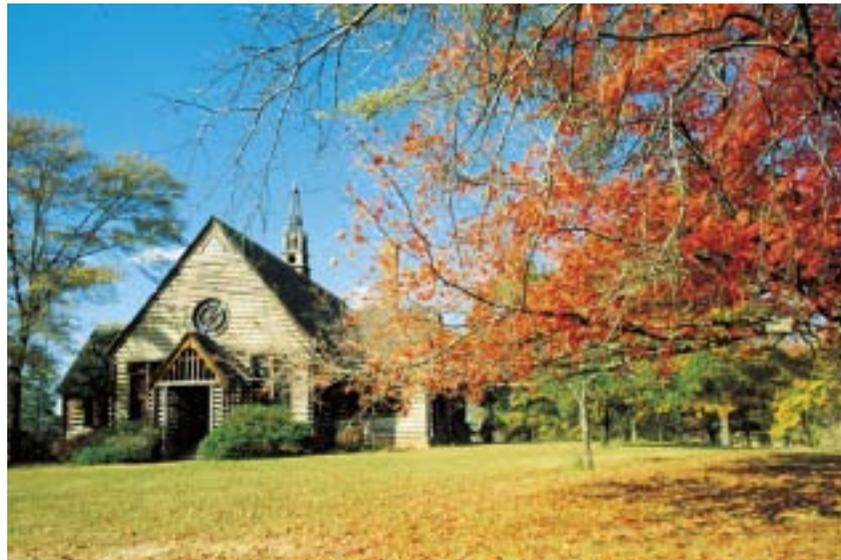
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distinct from the academic core that would foster a sense of warmth and community. We were attracted to the Emery barn location because it adds some east-west depth to a campus that extends along a north-south axis and because the barn complex offers a way of celebrating Berry’s history and the importance of sustainability.

The barns were previously hidden down a dirt road, behind a cottage in disrepair and an overgrown clump of bushes. The residence halls were designed to frame the barns and bring them into clear view. The halls borrowed design elements from the barns, including spires, silo-like study areas and multi-level roof elements. They also



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incorporated sustainable design features to achieve a LEEDs (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver certification. A key design decision was whether to use brick, wood or stone for the structures. The academic buildings nearby were brick, but the stone of the Ford residential district was appealing. In the end, we chose a combination of rock, brick and wood, seeking to give the complex its own comfortable but classic character.

We also deliberately sought to foster a sense of delight in these buildings as we connected the constructed with the natural. The wood-and-glass “jewel box” lobby of Morgan Hall provides such an element, with its soaring windows looking north towards the meadows and Lavender Mountain, as does Deerfield’s outdoor living room with its two-sided fireplace and path through the pines. Adirondack chairs on the bluestone porches invite students to enjoy one another in the warmth and comfort of a lodge retreat. It is our hope and intention that this new

residential district will open the eyes and hearts of students as the Ford “castle” has done for so many years.

In a similar way, we have strived to reinvigorate Dana Hall through a life-cycle renovation including new HVAC systems and, more visibly, a greatly enhanced central lounge and a central game room, as well as new elevators, lounges and kitchens at the corners of the two wings. We will also add a deck and patio area to bring life to Dana’s backyard.

Increasing the residential capacity of the campus necessitated that we look again at our dining facilities. Krannert dining hall has been operating at capacity for some time, even before our large entering class arrived. In addition, given its basement location, it has always suffered from feeling dark and confined. This fall, we welcomed students back to an expanded facility that is wonderfully opened with a lower level of seating and a bay of windows across the back that will look out onto an outdoor seating area by early next year.

We have made amazing strides this summer, and there’s still more to come. Most notably, by early spring we will have completed Kilpatrick Commons, the area that stretches between Krannert and the Cage Center up to Opportunity Drive. Kilpatrick Commons will serve as the central pedestrian point of campus, equidistant from Dana and Ford and on the footpath from the Cage Center to the Emery Barns. Kilpatrick Commons will be a garden spot with a fountain that flows into a creek and ends in a rock waterfall facing the windows of Krannert dining hall. A walkway will connect the parallel sidewalks of Opportunity Drive and

the Cage Center, across a stone and wood bridge that also will face the dining hall’s windows.

A double row of elms

There are many other projects we have in mind for Berry into the future. We yearn to restore the Emery Barns as an appealing evening gathering spot for students in a manner similar to the restoration that transformed the Normandy barns into the stunning WinShape Retreat. The Emery Barns, now more than 90 years old, retain a grandeur that is worth celebrating and adapting for use today.

We know we still have work to do to improve studio spaces for our art students and faculty, and we need to refresh our performing arts spaces generally. As our animal science program continues to thrive and grow, we need additional classroom space and could benefit greatly from facilities that would support agri-educational enterprises. And, we remain committed to maintaining the integrity of our many historic and beautifully uncommon structures, such as the Old Mill, Barnwell and Frost chapels, Possum Trot and the House o’ Dreams.

We are working hard to improve Berry, but there is still much to be done. Years ago, Martha Berry envisioned the future of the campus in her mind’s eye and worked diligently toward the realization of that vision. A decade before building a recitation hall, she planted a double row of elms leading to a promising knoll to ensure that, one day, the building would have a fine approach. It is now our responsibility and privilege to extend this legacy of beauty with comparable foresight and determination. **B**