Sacred Heart University plots new course

By LINDA PINTO
Post-Telegram Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — New buildings, 500 more students, more courses offered off-campus and a student body with stronger academic credentials are all goals in Sacred Heart University's new five-year plan, released last week by SHU President Anthony J. Cernera.

Cernera wants to change the school's image from that of a local commuter college to a school that also attracts students from southern New England and the Tri-State region.

"I want people to think about SHU as a viable option... at the beginning of the recruiting process and not at the end of the recruiting process," Cernera, 39, added.

Entering his second year as president of the 26-year-old school, Cernera said the plan was one of the major undertakings of his first year on campus.

Regional college image sought

Developed by a committee of 23 faculty, students and staff people headed by Cernera, the plan sets the course for the university. However, specific details and financing remain to be worked out before many of the proposals can become reality, Cernera cautioned.

The Most Rev. Edward M. Egan, bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who is chairman of the SHU Board of Trustees, said he was "most enthusiastic and delighted" with the plan. "The plan is hope. It's going to serve the students very well in the years to come," Egan said, adding that meeting the goals will depend upon such factors as money and school enrollment.

He praised Cernera, whose inaugural anniversary was Thursday, as "an outstanding administrator and an educator of incredible stature."

The plan calls for dormitories for students to live on campus, a recreation center, a new classroom building and a chapel. The school's library would be modernized and computerized.

The construction would be financed through fund-raising and "prudent borrowing."

The university is laying the groundwork for a major campaign drive, Cernera said.

How many buildings can be constructed depends upon how much money can be raised and how soon.

Additional students to fill the buildings will be attracted through more aggressive recruiting, which the university has already begun, Cernera said.

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School leader beefs up finances

FAIRFIELD — Bringing Sacred Heart University's finances into good working order was a major goal for Anthony J. Cernera, beginning his second year as president of the college.

SHU had a balanced budget when he arrived, Cernera said. However, by the end of his first fiscal year on June 30, the school had a $1.2 million surplus.

That is in addition to $700,000 the school was able to bank in a reserve fund. The surplus will go toward enhancing the university, Cernera said — a building drive, other capital improvements and a salary increase for faculty and other school staff.

Cernera said he was not prepared to say how much of a wage hike there will be.

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Plohn Gallery: A generous gift for art's sake

The late Charles Plohn took a personal interest in the artists whose works he collected.

"He discovered many artists, and he gave many artists their big break," Charles Plohn II said of his father at the opening of the Charles Plohn Art Gallery on Sunday, Oct. 1. The gallery, located in Sacred Heart University's Academic Center, is named in honor of the man who contributed to the betterment of SHU and its art program.

Highlighting the opening was a ribbon-cutting ceremony, in which the Plohn grandchildren, Chandler Fay Plohn, 12, and Charles Raymond Plohn, 10, participated, and a one-day art sale. Early Works from the Plohn Collection, by noted artist Daniel E. Greene, are being exhibited in the gallery through Nov. 22. Significantly, Mr. Plohn's purchase of 32 Greene paintings some 25 years ago enabled the then emerging artist to purchase a studio in New York City.

Today, Greene is recognized as one of America's foremost portrait painters and pastel artists. His early works were donated to SHU by Mrs. Charles (Fay) Plohn of Westport, who has continued her late husband's generosity to the University.

"Mrs. Plohn has made a major gift to the University in the creation of this gallery space and has also created an endowed scholarship which has helped to support the work of at least three or four students here as art majors," said SHU's President, Dr. Anthony J. Cernera.

The Plohn Gallery's regular viewing hours are from noon to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Woodstock exhibit next

A photographic tribute to Woodstock and other music festivals, "Premiere Exhibition: Photography by Joseph Sia... Woodstock & Summer of '69," will be the Charles Plohn Art Gallery's next exhibit Dec. 3 - Jan. 25, 1990.

Sia, a 1970 graduate of Sacred Heart University, has captured for posterity many of rock music's legends... the late Jimi Hendrix, Joe Cocker, Jefferson Airplane, The Who and others. For information, call 365-7650.

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Vice President, Institutional Advancement

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"Man of La Mancha," the award-winning musical, was the Sacred Heart University Theatre's opening production in October. Co-stars Edward Bryce (Don Quixote) and Maureen Hamill (Aldonza) headed the professional members of the SHU Theatre company, which is comprised of professionals and SHU students. Fred Sailer is the theatre's executive producer.
McGovern reflects during SHU visit

A
s the Democratic Party became identified with civil rights and the anti-war movement, the South switched its loyalty — at least for national elections — to the Republicans, George McGovern told an audience of Sacred Heart University students and faculty.

The 1972 presidential candidate appeared at SHU as a Center for Policy Issues’ Visiting Scholar on Sept. 28.

Reflecting on his unsuccessful bid, McGovern commented on the lack of success of recent Democratic nominees, Jimmy Carter excluded. The former senator from South Dakota said he was proud to be in a party associated with anti-war and civil rights leadership. However, with the South’s — and, to some degree, the West’s — shift in party loyalty, he was not optimistic about the likelihood for success of future Democratic nominees.

CPI programs mark decade of excellence

T
he vision of a former Sacred Heart University president coupled with the tenacity of the current vice president of public affairs has led to a decade of successful Center for Policy Issues (CPI) programs.

“Dr. (Thomas) Melady came up with the idea, and I was given the assignment to keep it moving — and I’ve been at it ever since,” said William B. Kennedy, SHU’s vice president of public affairs.

Dr. Melady, now the U.S. Ambassador to The Vatican, conceived the CPI format in 1980 as a setting for the public and legislative issues facing southwestern Connecticut as it approached the 21st century... issues such as the economic, educational, environmental, transportation, and demographic changes that are altering the region’s character.

Under Kennedy’s direction, CPI has sponsored some 90 events since its inception — forums, conferences, the popular speaker series, and awards programs. One of the anniversary year’s highlights, the presentation of the annual Award for Leadership to Gov. William A. O'Neill, took place in the Schine Auditorium on Oct. 26.

By attending the Center's programs, SHU students, faculty and the wider community become informed on vital issues affecting them and learn how they can become involved to influence decision-makers.

Federal, state and local civic leaders, as well as business people, have provided considerable assistance as members of the Center’s Advisory Council. Without their voluntary involvement, noted Kennedy, “we wouldn’t have an annual program.”

Among the more prominent contributors are U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, Julia H. Tashjian, Secretary of the State of Connecticut; Robert Jaekle, Connecticut House Minority Leader, and Henry E. Parker, former State Treasurer.

Financial support for CPI is provided by local firms and voluntary contributions. CPI’s Tenth Anniversary dinner will be held May 24, 1990 at the Stratford Inn.
‘Project: Leonardo’ brings science to youngsters

Michael DeMichele, a 10-year-old from Monroe Elementary School, is tapping the keys on a personal computer in a classroom at Sacred Heart University. A name familiar to New York-area baseball fans, Gregg Jefferies, appears on his screen.

“I’m working on my database of baseball cards,” Michael explains. “This is Gregg Jefferies of the Mets. His card is worth $2.25.”

DeMichele was among 127 participants in “Project: Leonardo,” a new two-week science and computer instructional program for academic achievers in grades 4-9, which was held on the SHU campus this past July. Ercole Spinelli of Bridgeport, the 1973 Sacred Heart University graduate and Ridgefield High School teacher who developed the innovative program, was pleased with its success.

“What sets it apart from any program I know is the students we attracted. They’re not only highly motivated, but they have a higher academic ability, too,” he said.

The youngsters were drawn from within a 30-minute driving radius of the SHU campus this past July. Ercole Spinelli of Bridgeport, the 1973 Sacred Heart University graduate and Ridgefield High School teacher who developed the innovative program, was pleased with its success.

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“Learning by doing in a non-competitive atmosphere” was the focus for each course. Students examined a variety of animal and plant specimens, experimented with chemical principles, studied light, motion, electricity and magnetism, explored the mysteries of land, sky and sea, and developed their computer proficiency.

“To bring hands-on experience to elementary (and middle) school kids is extremely worthwhile,” Spinelli said. “Just being a gifted kid doesn’t mean he or she should be overlooked. If their needs aren’t met, they could regress.”

SHU campus hums with outside activities

Conference honors Balkans heritage

Ethnic pride was glowing when several hundred attendees to the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Congress gathered on the Sacred Heart University campus Sept. 1-4.

The Congress, which has selected SHU as the site of its annual meeting in three of the past four years, provides a forum for scholarly studies and an appreciation of the Macedo-Romanian language and cultural heritage.

The attendees represent an international community whose roots are deep in the age-old culture of the Balkan Mountains, a united region under Ottoman rule prior to the formation of the modern Balkan states.

Simona Culet of Bridgeport, a junior, is one of the growing number of students of foreign origin at SHU whose ethnic roots add a richness to the student body. She emigrated from Romania with her mother, brother and grandparents in 1984 to join her father, who had arrived two years earlier. “We still speak Macedonian at home,” Simona said.
Educators learn to become best

Three hundred forty-eight educators from New England, New York and other parts of the country participated in the week-long "Beyond Assertive Discipline" course held at Sacred Heart University Aug. 14-18.

The course, presented by Lee Canter & Associates, is designed to provide educators with the skills to prevent behavior problems in their classrooms.

"It helps optimize student participation, maximize student success in the classroom and enables a teacher to become the best he or she can be," said Canter, a nationally known author, motivational speaker and authority on child behavior management.

The enrollment — which included teachers, coordinators, supervisors and administrators — surpassed all previous educational sessions at SHU and was the second largest of the 50 Canter institutes conducted throughout the country this summer.

Major grants awarded to SHU; exceed $575,000

Sacred Heart University was the recipient of three noteworthy grants in the past several months, with a total dollar amount exceeding $575,000, it was reported by Dr. Virginia Harris, director of grants. Their uses are as varied as the sources from which the funds were obtained.

The largest of the three, obtained in April of the 1988-89 fiscal year, was a $323,910 grant from the Connecticut State Institutional Conservation Program (ICP).

According to Dr. Paul K. Madonna, vice president for finance and administration, it is being used to cover conservation expenditures — improved heating, cooling and lighting for the campus center, academic center, library and the administration building, and the acquisition of an energy-management computer program.

SHU received 38 percent of ICP's total fund, by far the largest allocation of any of the eight state recipients.

The other grants, both of which were approved in July, and their purposes are:

• Upward Bound, $140,000, federal. These funds will be used to help 50 selected students from Bridgeport's high schools prepare for post-secondary education.

The young people, working under the supervision of Caryl Anne Rice-Ehalt, the University's Upward Bound director, will receive tutoring in academic skills and the motivation they need to succeed at the college level. Their after-school and Saturday schedule will be capped by an intensive six-week program next summer on the SHU campus.

• Drug prevention, $113,649, from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE). These funds will be allocated over a two-year period to expand the University's existing drug prevention program into a comprehensive, institution-wide program. Included is the hiring of a new drug prevention coordinator.

Dr. Harris reported grants totaling $723,871 for the 1988-89 fiscal year.
SHU brings college classes to Naugatuck Valley

For years, students from the lower Naugatuck Valley have made the Route 8-Merritt Parkway trek to attend classes at Sacred Heart University.

This fall, SHU has brought classes to the valley — at Emmett O'Brien Regional Vocational Technical School in Ansonia.

Under the direction of Dr. Barbara Zuffa, coordinator of the Valley Learning Center, SHU is offering undergraduate and graduate courses and certificate programs at O'Brien Tech on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The response from enrollees has been extremely positive.

"I might not have been inclined to go back to school if the course hadn't been offered nearby," explained Elaine Patrick, a Beacon Falls resident who is attending college for the first time.

"I was in retail management for many years and was in the process of making a career change when I saw an ad in The Sentinel announcing the opening of a SHU satellite. The timing was just right," she said.

Romolo D. Tedeschi, president of the Valley Chamber of Commerce, believes the opening of SHU's Valley Extension Center will "help the quality of the Valley business community if employers choose to enroll their employees.

"We are hoping that the accessibility of the classes will inspire more valley people to enroll in college."

Students ranging in age from 17 into the 50s are enrolled in undergraduate courses in accounting, management and communications. Many new courses will be offered in the Spring, 1990 semester.

For more information, contact Dr. Richard E. Farmer, dean of graduate studies and continuing education, or Dr. Zuffa at 1-800-288-2498 or 371-7830.

School leader beefs up finances

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The Most Rev. Edward M. Egan, bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, said he was delighted with the surplus.

Cernera said the university is committed to putting at least 3 percent of its operating budget into the reserve each year. The annual budget both this year and for the coming year is about $18 million, he said.

According to Cernera, major factors in achieving the surplus were "good financial management" and "the hard work of everyone on the campus to live within their budgets."

In addition, fund-raising efforts were very good, he said.

"It was the first time we went out and asked people for support and what the gifts said to me was that when we asked for support there was a lot of enthusiasm," Cernera said.

Previous fund-raising efforts were not as organized, he said. The gifts that poured in were mostly small, in the $25 to $100 range, from alumni, parents, faculty, staff, businesses and friends.

Collections for the annual fund — unrestricted gifts to the university — rose from $158,000 to $342,000 in the past year.

Total giving, including contributions, grants and scholarships, increased from $966,000 to $1.8 million.

—LINDA PINTO
Reprinted from The Sunday Post-Telegram

WSHU provides help to Staples station

The link between Staples High School of Westport and Sacred Heart University is invisible to the eye, but one can hear it.

It's called WWPT (90.3 FM), the student radio station at Staples.

Since September, the Sacred Heart-operated WSHU (91.1 FM) has been providing technical, programming and staffing assistance to the high school station. "The future holds an awful lot of promise for both stations," said George Lombardi '73, WSHU general manager.

The advantages of the working agreement are multiple, and benefit both parties, according to Lombardi. "College students like to become involved in broadcasting; it's a glamour field. Here, the 10 to 15 students we have involved are usually in the background. This outlet gives them the opportunity to learn by doing," he explained.

Much of the "doing" is that of rock disk jockey.

The addition of Sacred Heart personnel has enabled WWPT to switch to a 24-hour-a-day format.
Strong work ethic brought Giaquinto to two Super Bowls

By DON HARRISON

The new Coordinator of Athletic Programs at Sacred Heart University wasn't in his office adjacent to the gym.

"He's probably up at the field," says Dave Bike, the large bear of a man who wears the dual mantle of athletic director and basketball coach.

"Up" is appropriate. The SHU baseball field is situated on a hill at the rear of the campus. It is an appropriate bucolic setting for a game which had its origin in a cow pasture.

Nick Giaquinto was there, as Bike had suggested. The new Coordinator of Athletic Programs was in the process of installing a fence to rim the Pioneer Park outfield. The man who played in back-to-back Super Bowls with the Washington Redskins was wielding a shovel.

"The fence used to be 350 feet to the power alleys. Too short. We're moving it back about 30 feet," he explains.

Installing outfield fences isn't part of Nick Giaquinto's job description, but then he never was one to adhere to the letter of the law. As a running back in the National Football League (1980-83) and earlier at the universities of Connecticut (1975-76) and Bridgeport (1973-74), he displayed a remarkable proficiency for catching passes and adapting to the rigors of special teams work.

SHU has decided to make maximum use of Giaquinto's talents and admirable work ethic. They've hired him full time. He will continue to coach the Pioneer baseball team — they assembled a 16-17 won-lost record in his first season — and direct the intramural program, two assignments he handled on a part-time basis last year.

Now, Nick will also coordinate the scheduling of events and practices in the SHU gymnasium, assist Bike with the intercollegiate scheduling and, when there is a lull, construct outfield fences.

"Sacred Heart is upgrading its athletic and recreation departments. It's a microcosm of what they're doing with the whole school," Giaquinto says. "I'm excited about the new challenge."

At 34, Nicholas Albert Giaquinto is still young enough to be playing in the NFL. But to the utter amazement of management and teammates, he walked away from the Redskins five years ago, deciding it was wise to leave the game before incurring any lasting injuries.

"I left because I wanted to go out in one piece," he says. "It wasn't easy. I loved every minute of it... well, not the minutes in the training room, but everything else. It was just a matter of time before the bumps and bruises took their toll or a major injury occurred."

In a four-year NFL career, it was Giaquinto's good fortune to have half his seasons culminate in a Super Bowl. In 1983, the Redskins prevailed over the Miami Dolphins, 27-17, in Super XVII; the following January, they were dispatched by the Oakland Raiders, 38-9, in Super XVIII — Nick's final game.

In many instances, coach Joe Gibbs employed him as a replacement for John Riggins in third-down passing situations, often when short yardage was needed. "Gibbs is a great coach and a great person," Nick says. "He treated his players with respect."

It is ironic that the Bridgeport-born, Stratford-raised back left the Redskins following his most productive NFL season. He was the club's fourth leading receiver in 1983 with 372 yards on 27 receptions. In the playoffs, he caught four additional passes worth 38 yards and set up a touchdown with a 48-yard punt return against the Los Angeles Rams.

Nick chuckled at the memory. "I was coming off my most productive year and I would have had some job security," he recalls. "For me, it was sort of what (ex-Giant) Phil McConkey went through every year."

That Giaquinto reached the NFL at all was a tribute to his resilience and determination. Consider: He failed to survive free-agent tryouts with the Giants (1977), Jets ('78) and Ottawa Rough Riders of the Canadian Football League ('79). It wasn't until the fall of 1980 that he was able to secure a spot with the Redskins.

Giaquinto's collegiate career was a contrast between team successes at Bridgeport, capped by the Purple Knights' appearance in the Knute Rockne Bowl, and personal triumphs at Connecticut. UB's decision to disband its football program following the 1974 season resulted in Nick transferring to UConn.

But that was then. This is now. And now means a fall baseball season, "creating enthusiasm" among SHU students for a burgeoning intramural program, and maintaining a smooth flow of activities in the SHU Box.

"A goal of mine," he says, "is giving some of the Bridgeport kids an opportunity to get an education and play baseball."

Sounds worthwhile.

Condensed from The Bridgeport Light
Sacred Heart University plots new course
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For example, mailings about the university went out last spring to graduating high school seniors — a first for the school, according to Cernera.

In addition, he said, Sacred Heart will be represented at high school college fairs in new areas — for example, Hartford, Norwich, Waterbury and Danbury. "Wherever there's a college fair we can get into, we'll be there," he said.

Admission recruiters also will be visiting high schools in Massachusetts, northern New Jersey and New York State. "We don't expect to see any immediate results," he said. "We're planting the seeds. We want people to see us as a viable option."

If out-of-state students are attracted to the school before dorms are built, Cernera said, SHU's housing office will help them to find quarters.

Although the majority of the school's estimated 4,500 students are commuters, 7 percent of the undergraduate students are already from out of state and live in apartments off-campus, he said.

What does Sacred Heart have to offer students from out of state?

"A quality liberal arts education at a Catholic University at an affordable price in an excellent geographic location — namely Fairfield County," Cernera said.

Cernera said that the school's new recruiting efforts have already started to pay off. A total of 122 more students enrolled for this fall than were expected.

"I feel good about that," he said.

The school also plans to offer SHU courses at new sites and to develop new majors and new programs that might be offered both at the Fairfield campus and in other communities. Cernera said he was not yet ready to say what the new majors might be.

SHU currently offers selected courses at sites in Stamford, Lisbon and Ansonia, as well as a graduate nursing degree program at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northport, L.I.

An expansion might include more programs in those communities or at new locations such as Greenwich, Darien or Danbury.

Sacred Heart also hopes to attract more students by providing additional scholarships for graduating high school seniors with high class rankings and college board scores and at the same time provide better services for those students who are "well motivated" but "underprepared" for college.

A proposed "school of general studies" would help underprepared students upgrade their skills so they can enter a regular college program.

Cernera said the plan sets the course for the school. Now it will be up to the university community to come up with "long-range" plans with specifics on how the course will be followed.

Condensed from The Sunday Post-Telegram