Wofford College creates an environment in which all aspects of college life — academics, athletics, residence life and cocurricular programming — work in concert to prepare students for life after Wofford. It’s a community characterized by positive interpersonal relationships, support and encouragement, and there’s no question that people are central to creating the community ethos that remains a hallmark of the Wofford experience. Place, however, plays a vital role in making these interactions possible, and Wofford College intentionally maximizes the impact of the physical campus to do just that.

An exposition of the importance of maintaining, evaluating and constantly developing Wofford’s 170-acre campus, as well as the Goodall Environmental Studies Center in the Glendale community, is particularly appropriate now with the naming and dedication this past fall of the Stewart H. Johnson Greek Village, the spring completion of the Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts and the summer opening of the Jerry Richardson Indoor Stadium. These three projects were no accident. In fact, all were the result of the college’s strategic visioning process.

The vision statement says: “Wofford College will be a premier, innovative and distinctive national liberal arts college defined by excellence, engagement and transformation in its commitment to prepare superior students for meaningful lives as citizens, leaders and scholars.” The vision document goes on to explain, “Extraordinary citizens and lifelong learners emerge organically — and a great college provides the right conditions for that organic process to occur. Students must have room to create and explore in creative physical, intellectual and virtual spaces.” In those spaces they will engage with faculty, debate each other and challenge ideas. Through structured and unstructured interactions — held...
in front of chalk boards, on the steps of Main Building, while cleaning up after an event in the Greek Village, in a library study room, over a cup of coffee in the Acorn Cafe, relaxing in Martha's Garden or sitting cross-legged on the floor of a residence hall room — Wofford students make connections across disciplines. They talk about their futures, share stories of community-based learning and decide where they want to spend their semester abroad or what offer to accept for a summer internship.

Jerry Richardson, Wofford Class of 1959 and owner and founder of the NFL's Carolina Panthers, understands clearly the impact of place and the importance of physical spaces. For four years the Panthers have been working on renovations to Bank of America Stadium, and they have invested resources each year into upgrading spaces and improving the fan experience during their summer training camps at Wofford as well. As a member of the college’s Board of Trustees, Mr. Richardson participated in the strategic visioning process and approved the final document. He understood Wofford’s needs and timed the announcement of the new Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts to coincide with the announcement of the Strategic Vision, turning the vision into a reality with one transformative gift.

College planners and architects built student success into each of the three new buildings on campus. These new facilities meet the specific needs for which they were designed while offering flexible indoor and outdoor gathering spaces that allow students to discover and settle into the various areas in ways that meet their needs. For example, the Stewart H. Johnson Greek Village offers houses for the college’s Greek-letter organizations all centered around a common green space and pavilion that have been used since the September 2016 opening for an array of student-sponsored activities, including weekend concerts, philanthropy events and even a fun day for Special Olympians. The Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts offers classroom, meeting, office, production, rehearsal and performance space for students and faculty in art history, studio art and theatre, but it also includes cozy nooks for studying, reading and quiet conversations in areas surrounded by beauty and inspiration. The Jerry Richardson Indoor Stadium will not only serve as the home of basketball and volleyball, it also will double as a campus-wide assembly and concert venue. After it opens, a rainy Commencement will no longer be a cause for dread. Imagine the great graduation photos that families will take in the new facility.

Centuries before Wofford was founded and the first American colleges adopted the Oxford-Cambridge model, European educators realized the educational value of students living and learning together in the same community. Wofford's Main Building was designed with this in mind to include student and professor dormitories, a library, classrooms, study rooms, a museum and natural science laboratory, society rooms and a chapel. In the early 1800s, Thomas Jefferson envisioned his ideal university. A college or university, he said, should be “a plain small house for the school … arranged around an open square of grass” with trees to create “an academical village.” He believed, as has been proven true by researchers since, that the “academical village” model increased student health, safety and scholastic success. With the advent of public, land-grant universities, Frederick Law Olmsted expanded on the idea, creating park-like campuses around academic buildings. Even today, studies show that colleges and universities that put resources into their campus physical environments “tend to have stronger student retention and graduation rates.”

Years later, educators and researchers such as Ernest Boyer, who served as chancellor of the State University of New York, president of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and United States Commissioner of Education, took research into the importance of the physical campus and expanded it to consider its impact on prospective students. According to Boyer, “The appearance of the campus, is, by far, the most influential characteristic during campus visits, and we gained the distinct impression that when it comes to recruiting students, the director of buildings and grounds may be more important than the academic dean.”

Prema and I have discovered anecdotal evidence of this truth during our monthly pizza dinners with Wofford students. Each month we invite a randomly selected group to the President’s Home for pizza and conversation. While we’re sitting around the dinner table we often ask students why they chose Wofford. We frequently hear responses

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### Recommendation Five in the Strategic Vision

**ENHANCE THE COLLEGE: THE VISION OF THE SUSTAINABLE PHYSICAL CAMPUS**

Support Wofford’s vision with flexible, thoughtful and sustainable facilities and spaces that reflect the ongoing and future needs of the college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a center for the arts and creativity.</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide academic space for the expansion of the sciences, including our environmental studies program.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an arena for intercollegiate athletics.</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address the condition of Marsh Hall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore and develop a Greek Village and interest housing.</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Feature an academic commons within the library.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop the Wofford Exchange.</td>
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*E: Envisioning / O: Ongoing / C: Complete*
such as: “because it felt like home” or “from the moment I stepped on campus, I knew I belonged” or “it was so beautiful, I could just see myself here.”

First impressions matter, which is why decades ago trustee Roger Milliken introduced Wofford to renowned horticulturalists Dr. Michael Dirr and Dr. Allan Armitage. The result was a new, welcoming and attractive entrance to the campus as well as a visionary land and building management plan. The college has continued to enhance the campus landscape and now has added photos and messaging on vibrant new campus-wide banners and signs. We have devoted resources to the renovation of Shipp, DuPre, Greene and Marsh residence halls. We have improved the look, feel and functionality of the Sandor Teszler Library and consolidated high-impact programs — The Space in the Mungo Center, the Office of International Programs and the Center for Community-based Learning — within the Michael S. Brown Village Center. Focusing time, energy and resources in these areas shows students that we realize the importance of the programs and their impact on the residential, liberal arts experience. It shows students that we intentionally work to improve Wofford College, building on a 163-year tradition of excellence.

As always has been the case, the vast majority of Wofford students live on campus all four years — 94 percent during the most recent academic year. We believe this is vitally important because learning happens around the clock. At Wofford students progress from first year through fourth in a community that builds personal responsibility and independence. The residence-life experience begins in close-knit communities where students live on halls and take many of the same classes together. They form friendships around orientation activities nurtured by supportive student success teams, which include a faculty academic advisor, staff guide, personal librarian and student orientation leader. Within the community over the next few years, students form their own networks of support. The Wofford residential experience culminates in The Village, beautiful Charlestonian-style apartments designed to help students transition from college student to successful graduate. This residential plan includes maintaining and staffing six dining locations and eight residence halls as well as campus safety, a post office, a wellness center, creative spaces, workout facilities, laundry rooms, indoor and outdoor recreational areas and a variety of other student services. When nationally ranked, broad-based residential institutions provide these services along with a top-tier faculty and curriculum, the cost may seem high. These net prices, however, pale in comparison to the costs of not keeping up with the changing needs of the student population and the ensuing demands on the physical campus.

Wellness has emerged as another important by-product of a well maintained and aesthetically pleasing physical campus. Dr. Aaron Hipp, a 2000 Wofford graduate and an associate professor of community health and sustainability at North Carolina State University, studies how our environment impacts health. In a 2016 article in the journal Environment and Behavior, Hipp and his co-authors share their research on “the relationship between perceived greenness and perceived restorativeness of university campuses and student-reported quality of life.” According to Hipp in an interview with Wofford Today when he was in the early stages of a research grant funded through the National Institutes of Health, “College students are under a lot of stress — the academic environment, being away from home and family. Having natural places to take a walk can restore their psychological frame of mind and improve their attention. ... Studies have shown that natural environments promote physical activity and stress relief. On college campuses, they offer areas for students to decompress. What’s nice about Wofford is that students can have these experiences by accident.”

For students to have these experiences “by accident,” however, we must be intentional in the design of campus buildings and grounds. Safety and functionality are paramount, but we cannot discount the importance of designing spaces that are pleasing to be in or drive through — places that inspire creativity and lend themselves to deep thinking, places that are interesting or peaceful or energizing.

The city of Spartanburg has adopted the tagline “Love where you live.” In keeping with that idea, the staff of the 2016 Bohemian, Wofford's student yearbook, went with the theme: “Love where you learn.” Generations of students have done just that because Wofford College is a special place made up of special people; the two go hand in hand.

In preparation for their 50th reunion during Commencement weekend, the Wofford College Class of 1967 completed questionnaires about their lives since Wofford. They also were given the opportunity to share their fondest memories from their student days. Many described the beautiful campus, time spent with their brothers on fraternity row, playing intramurals or dining and dancing in Spartanburg. The memories of people and place still have the ability to move them, even after 50 years. Several wrote about Dr. John Harrington and how he showed them how to examine the natural world and see it as it was before and how it could be in the future. Now, the Class of 1967 can do the same thing when they’re on campus for Commencement weekend.

Next time you’re in Spartanburg, stop by for a visit and spend some time reconnecting as well. Note the almost-complete construction projects and new landscaping. Relax and find some serenity in the shade of Main Building and the noble trees that surround it. Stroll down memory lane. See this place as it was, as it is now and how it can be with your support.

Nayef Samhat, President of Wofford College

Nayef H. Samhat, the 11th president of Wofford College, is a native of Detroit, Michigan. He holds a B.A. in international affairs from George Washington University’s School of International and Public Affairs, a master’s degree in international affairs from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in political science from Northwestern University.

Samhat came to Wofford in July 2013, after having served as provost and professor of political science and international studies at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Prior to his time at Kenyon, he was the Frank B. and Virginia B. Hower Associate Professor of Government and International Studies and an associate dean of Centre College in Danville, Kentucky.

His academic interests include international relations theory, international political economy and the politics of the Middle East, especially international relations in the Middle East. He has contributed articles, papers, reviews and essays on these and other topics to a variety of journals.

He is also a staunch advocate of the liberal arts educational experience, and he and his wife, Prema, love living on Wofford's beautiful campus.