University Kicks Off New Advertising Campaign

In mid-August a 15-foot billboard on Albany Avenue in Hartford donned a new image as the university kicked off a nine-month advertising campaign. A gray-haired woman wearing an orange spacesuit reminds Hartford-bound commuters that the university is building the Integrated Science, Engineering, and Technology (ISET) complex, a project they are asked to be part of through their contributions.

The billboard, not far from the future home of the University of Hartford Performing Arts Center, bears the first of three images that will rotate at the site through the beginning of May 2006. The image above will be followed in October with one that raises awareness and builds support for the new baseball and softball fields and multipurpose track planned for the Home Field Advantage campaign. A third billboard, featuring the Performing Arts Center, will appear in November.

“The ’Be Part of It’ concept is designed to show our friends and neighbors that they, too, can be part of the excitement at the university and that their support is vital to our future,” says President Walter Harrison in announcing the new campaign.

Print ads featuring the same images and concept will appear in programs for select shows at the Hartford Stage, Connecticut Opera, and The Bushnell’s Broadway series.
Citigroup Foundation Helps Support Hartford Scholars

Citigroup Foundation has donated $24,000 to the University of Hartford to help support the Hartford Scholars program, a university scholarship fund that pays half the tuition for any qualified high school graduate from the city of Hartford who attends the university.

This year, the university welcomes 60 Hartford Scholars. More than 400 Hartford city students have received the half-tuition scholarship from the university since the program was founded in 1990.

Graduates of the program have gone on to careers in financial services, insurance, engineering, communications, social work, and other industries in the Greater Hartford business community.
Near the end of the Great Depression, and on the eve of the deadly 1938 hurricane, the newly appointed president of the Hillyer Institute, Alan S. Wilson, arrived in Hartford, Conn. He traveled there from his native Ohio with his wife, Mary, who was 8 months pregnant, and their daughter, Kate. In a 1989 interview, Mary, who died in 1999, remembered those early days: “I was young, so I was willing to take that chance—with him. And we were never sorry…. I think perhaps in the back of Alan’s mind he had the idea of a university for Hartford. I really think he did.”

Through Alan Wilson’s persistence and his family’s forbearance, enrollment grew. But World War II brought new challenges, forcing Wilson to innovate to keep the college afloat. Because many young men had gone off to serve in the military, women took on what had been considered nontraditional roles in the workforce and filled the seats in night-school classrooms vacated by the men. Wilson saw this shift as an opportunity for his dream of a university for Hartford. Among other curriculum adaptations, he added the teaching of auto mechanics to women.

In his eulogy for Wilson in 1977, the second president of the university, Archibald M. Woodruff, said, “Alan Wilson’s philosophy was that educational institutions existed to educate, and there was no inelegance attached to teaching useful material to people who could use it.”

The GI Bill created the next opportunity for Wilson’s dream. By 1950 enrollment at Hillyer had reached nearly 3,500 students. Wilson was, as Woodruff phrased it, “as resourceful in prosperity as he had been in adversity” and saved money for that day when a campus for a university for Hartford might become a reality. From those savings came the funds used in late 1955 to purchase the Gabriel property, the last large, undeveloped tract of land in the Hartford area, for the present-day campus.

Around the same time, the Hartt School of Music and the Hartford Art School shared a similar need for space. Mary recalled, “I think it was Alan’s board, or maybe all three of the boards, decided they couldn’t get anywhere separately. That they had to be an entire something to appeal to Hartford—to become a university…. It’s thrilling to have been a part of it…. The university was planned on our dining room table. Night after night, he’d have all these plans, architects’ plans and so forth, all laid

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out on the dining room table…. Alan had a dream. Step by step, he advanced it. Many good people, men and women, helped.” The University of Hartford became a reality in 1957.

The Wilsons had done planning of their own. Each had an identical will listing a number of charitable organizations. These lists included the young University of Hartford, of which Wilson had been named vice chancellor. After his death, Mary and the children chose to accelerate her provision for the university by setting up a charitable gift that paid her an annuity for the rest of her life and guaranteed a remainder interest for the university. With the help and support of her children, John Wilson and Kate Wilson Snyder, she established the Mary and Alan Wilson Scholarship Fund in 1993. It was fully endowed upon Mary’s death shortly after her 90th birthday. Kate then set up a similar gift annuity for the Wilson Scholarship Fund. She continues to benefit from that special connection to the university today, and the endowed scholarship fund is assured of future support in memory of her parents, who were so instrumental in the university’s founding.

“My parents devoted much of their lives to making education accessible to everyone, first at Hillyer College and then at the University of Hartford,” says Kate. “I wanted to provide student financial assistance in their memory and chose a gift plan that pays me a solid return, allowing me to build on their wonderful legacy.”

Peter H. Congleton joined the University of Hartford as its new director of planned giving in June. He comes to the university from Groton School in Groton, Mass., where he was the director of planned giving since 1994. For more information on planning your future as well as the university’s, contact him at 860.768.5201.

Kent McCray Television Studio Dedicated

The university television studio was officially named for Hollywood producer and Hartt alumnus Kent McCray ’51 at a dedication ceremony on Sept. 15 at the facility, located in the east wing of the Gray Center. Those who attended received red baseball caps imprinted with the words “Kent McCray Television Studio, September 2005.”

McCray, a television industry pioneer and producer of such popular shows as Bonanza and Little House on the Prairie, has donated and pledged a total of $100,000 to the television studio. The money will be used to purchase state-of-the-art field equipment and to begin converting the studio to high-definition standards.

On hand for the Sept. 15 ceremony were regents, including McCray’s wife and partner, Susan; university officials; and some of the students who will benefit from McCray’s generosity. Susan McCray and Walt Harrison read congratulatory letters from actors Melissa Gilbert, Ernest Borgnine, and Merlin Olsen, as well as from the McCray children, the late Michael Landon’s daughter, and Dennis Korn, CFO of Michael Landon Productions, who attended the dedication with his wife, Ligia.

Hartford to Participate in National Substance Abuse Intervention Program

Binge drinking among college students on campuses across America has many school administrators, health professionals, and parents worried.

In July the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced the awarding of 12 grants totaling $15.5 million over three years to combat underage drinking and drug abuse. The work involves innovative screening, brief interventions, and referral for treatment to college and university students with a high risk of substance use disorders. The University of Hartford and its intervention services collaborator, Connecticut Renaissance, Inc., will receive a total of $1.09 million as participants in this groundbreaking program. The grant will be used to fund Project OASIS (Outreach and Action for Student Improvement Services), which will provide substance abuse intervention to University of Hartford students, with an emphasis on alcohol. About 900 student-clients are expected to be helped during the three years of the project, says Rosalyn Dischiavo, director of the university’s Connections Wellness Center. Dischiavo is serving as project director, and Elizabeth-Leigh Bradley, Connecticut Renaissance’s director of adolescent services, is project coordinator.

The project’s goal is to improve the future health and lives of students by intervening in student substance abuse, with an emphasis on alcohol. Another goal is that the program will lead to less overall substance use, misuse, and abuse on and near campus, says Dischiavo. Most students will be referred to the program by the university’s Judicial Office, although they can decide to take part on their own.

The university is the applicant and lead agency for the grant, while Connecticut Renaissance will provide the actual services. Connecticut Renaissance is a mental health and substance abuse treatment agency that provides outpatient, residential, and halfway-house services to individuals, groups, and families throughout the state of Connecticut.