New Barney Dean Turns Management Theory into Practice

James W. Fairfield-Sonn, interim dean of the Barney School of Business for the past year, and a Barney faculty member since 1982, has been named permanent dean by President Walter Harrison and Provost Donna Randall.

In announcing the appointment, Harrison said, “Jim Fairfield-Sonn has had a terrific year as interim dean, and I look forward to working with him. Jim is a noted scholar of management. It will be fun to watch him turn theory into practice.”

Randall emphasized Fairfield-Sonn’s accomplishments in student recruitment, ongoing preparation for the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International reaccreditation, and fundraising. One highlight of his fundraising efforts was a gift of $200,000 from the Starr Foundation for scholarships to help recruit and retain students interested in pursuing careers in insurance or finance.

During Fairfield-Sonn’s term as interim dean, the Barney School launched a new Institute for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development. Barney also received regional and national recognition for its Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team, which provides support for Connecticut community-based businesses, and was named an Exemplary Chapter by Beta Gamma Sigma, the business honorary society.

Fairfield-Sonn earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts, his master’s degree from Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and his doctorate from Yale University.

He was chair of the Barney School Management Department from 1987 to 1990, director of the Executive MBA program from 1993 to 1995, and chair of Barney’s promotion and tenure committee from 2002 to 2004. In 1999 Fairfield-Sonn won the school’s first Outstanding Teacher of the Year award. He is listed in Who’s Who in American Education and Who’s Who in America.

Community Day Brings 1,800 to Campus

The university’s third annual Community Day on April 16 drew an estimated 1,800 visitors to campus from as far away as Stamford, Conn., and Florence, Mass.

The spectacular spring weather was a perfect backdrop for the dozens of activities that took place all over campus, including games and rides for children, music, dance, story hours, TV studio tours, and the second annual rubber duck race down the Hog River.

“It was wonderful to see so many people here on campus, enjoying the beautiful spring weather, interacting with students, and learning about the university,” said President Walter Harrison. “We are a private university with a public purpose. This is a terrific way for our neighbors to get to know us, and for the university to showcase some of the resources that we offer Greater Hartford.”

James W. Fairfield-Sonn

During the past 20 years, Fairfield-Sonn has done consulting work for major corporations and organizations, including IBM, BASF, United Technologies, The Hartford Insurance Group, and Yale University. He is the author of Corporate Culture and the Quality Organization.
Life of the Mind Displayed

Standing before graduate students and guests gathered in The 1877 Club one evening in May, University of Hartford President Walter Harrison seemed almost wistful.

“I am irrationally in love with the thought of what it was to be a grad student,” he remarked with a laugh. “My life was organized around the life of the mind, and I miss that.”

Even those who don’t remember graduate school with equal affection would have been awed at the range of intellectual interests on display that evening as part of the university’s first Graduate Research/Creativity Symposium.

Nearly 50 students presented 26 research projects, representing every college on campus that has a graduate program. These students are “emerging experts in all fields,” notes Katherine Black, assistant professor of psychology, who spearheaded the symposium. Among the projects were:

- A study of risky behavior in adolescent employees by a graduate of the Barney School of Business MSOB program;
- A photographic examination of class and social structures by a Burmese student in the Hartford Art School;
- A study of asymmetric rollers’ dynamic effect with vibration by a mechanical engineering student in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture;
- An in-depth look at how mental illness is portrayed in children’s television programs by a team of clinical psychology doctoral students from the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions;
- A photographic self-portrait by a Hartford Art School student with multiple sclerosis.

“In 1957, the University of Hartford had four graduate programs,” Black told those assembled. “Today we have close to 40, and four—soon to be five—doctoral programs, with more than 1,600 students enrolled in them. We’ve invested in [graduate programs] from the beginning… and we’ve continued to build on that investment.”

Provost Donna Randall hinted at future growth. “We’re taking steps to put grad programs at even higher levels of learning,” said Randall, who smiled slyly as she offered the crowd a teaser. “Stay tuned—you will be very pleased.”

“These are all manifestations of a lot of thinking,” said President Harrison, referring to the work displayed, “and that is what makes a university a center of learning. I’m incredibly impressed.”

Record Proceeds from Hartt Celebrates 2005

More than 130 guests attended Hartt Celebrates 2005 at The Bushnell in Hartford this past April. The annual event, which recognizes the accomplishments of Hartt students and faculty, this year raised more than $33,000, a record thus far.

Proceeds will go towards funding the educational programs of The Hartt School.

“This year we have much to celebrate,” said Dean Malcolm Morrison. “From sold-out performances of the musicals Hair and Pirates of Penzance, to the Community Division fundraiser featuring young violin prodigy Sirena Huang at The Bushnell’s Belding Theater, Hartt student performances continue to prove why the performing arts and arts education are so very important.”

Guests bid on silent auction packages, and then moved into the Autorino Great Hall for dinner and performances by Hartt faculty and students. Highlights of the evening included performances by the Hartt Choir and Children’s Chorus; Community Division and college student violinists; Hartt piano faculty member Margreet Francis and her student, Heather Bissell; a performance of the short play Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread by David Ives; Hartt faculty member and soprano Cherie Caluda and her student, Amanda Kohl; and performances by Hartt music theatre students and the Community Division’s “Company,” the music and theatre program for school-aged children.

Sponsors for the event were People’s Bank, Wolf ColorPrint, Shipman & Goodwin, Eastern Rehabilitation Network, Thomas Cadillac Jaguar, Smith Edwards Architects, Downes Construction Company, Tyler Cooper & Alcorn, Alta Environmental Corporation, and Becker’s Diamonds and Fine Jewelry.

Sukman Foyer Unveiled

Nearly 500 people celebrated the dedication of the Harry Sukman Foyer on Sunday, April 17, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and concert honoring the Oscar-winning composer, conductor, and pianist.

The foyer, located outside The Hartt School’s Millard Auditorium, was made possible by a generous gift from Sukman’s daughter, Susan Sukman McCray, who also donated a collection of memorabilia from her late father’s career, including his beloved ebony Steinway grand piano. The collection will be on permanent display in the new foyer.
Readying Entrepreneurs for Opportunity’s Knock

When it comes to learning how to start a business, reading case studies can take you only so far.

That’s why Associate Professor Susan Coleman of the Barney School of Business brings successful business people into her Entrepreneurial Finance course to tell their stories. This spring, students heard from Gualberto Ruaño, a physician and geneticist who has started two successful businesses and is working on a third.

“Real-life entrepreneurs provide a perspective that doesn’t show up in written case studies,” Coleman says. “They can talk about the stress and frustration as well as the excitement and vitality of the entrepreneurial process. Dr. Ruaño showed the class the kind of commitment and vision that are necessary to become a successful entrepreneur.”

Ruaño told the students about the industry he is building in partnership with Hartford Hospital. Ruaño envisions his company, Genomas, as the leader in the new field of personalized health care, through which physicians will deliver customized treatment based on a patient’s genetic makeup.

Ruaño earned M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale and started two successful businesses in New Haven before launching Genomas. In Coleman’s class, Ruaño discussed the importance of identifying a market, finding partners, and getting financial backing. He emphasized the need to help shape public policy, and to encourage the state to be more supportive of entrepreneurs by providing seed money for new ventures.

The presentation hit close to home for Scott Sanicki, an MBA student who is launching an Internet retail business while holding down a full-time job as an acoustical engineer at Pratt & Whitney. Sanicki says, “If I had taken the class first, I would have known more about the process (of starting a business) and avoided some problems.” Of Ruaño, Sanicki says, “He knows what needs to be done in starting a business and he provided a lot of useful information.”

Coleman, the Ansley Chair of Finance, has taught the class for 15 years. Previously, she was an investment banker and venture capitalist in New York, making decisions on investments in entrepreneurial firms.

“There are few courses in entrepreneurial finance taught by full-time faculty at American universities,” she says. “This course attests to the university’s commitment to entrepreneurship and to the creation and development of small businesses.”

As Coleman tells her students, “When you start your career, you may think you’re going to work for United Technologies for the rest of your life. But you never know when an entrepreneurial opportunity may come along.”

Coleman’s students now know what it takes to become an entrepreneur and are prepared to make the transition if and when opportunity knocks.

University Helps Host Special Olympics Connecticut

About 1,200 Special Olympics athletes enjoyed a terrific day at the University of Hartford, Weaver High School, and the Watkinson School on Saturday, May 21, competing in aquatics, soccer, track and field, tennis, wheelchair, and adaptive sports, as part of the Special Olympics Connecticut 2005 Eastern Regional games. Also taking in the games were approximately 400 volunteers and hundreds of the athletes’ family members, friends, and coaches.

The games are the largest of the Special Olympics regional competitions held across Connecticut, as evidenced by the parade of athletes through the Sports Center for the opening ceremonies. Teams from Hartford, Tolland, Windham, Middlesex, and New London counties were accompanied in the procession by a Hartford Police Honor Guard. East Hartford Mayor Tim Larson accompanied his town’s team.

The Bloomfield High School Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Bloomfield Brass performed at the ceremonies under the direction of university alumnus Joseph Olzacki ’90, ’94, ’01.

John Lobon, Special Olympics board member, thanked President Walter Harrison and the University of Hartford for opening its doors to the Special Olympics athletes.

Harrison thanked volunteers from all the institutions for their efforts. “I would like to thank the volunteers throughout the community who worked so hard to make the Games successful,” he said. “And special thanks to Fred Jenoure [university ombudsman and special assistant to the president] who headed up these efforts.”
When the lights came up after a showing of the thought-provoking short music video Eclipse by Dan Dabek ‘07, there was a moment of silence. Then the comments and queries started flying.

“You let us see something we see all the time in a different way,” one audience member told Dabek. “It’s great, but it’s opinionated,” said another. Through it all, the Hartt sophomore held his own. “If it came across as dark, I’m glad it did,” Dabek said of Eclipse, in which he drew an uneasy parallel between wars past and present.

 Granted, not all of the 26 projects presented as part of the University of Hartford 2005 Undergraduate Research and Creativity Colloquium this April were as provocative as Eclipse. But all of the projects—created by 65 students representing the gamut of the university’s schools and colleges—served to stimulate thinking and tempt the imagination.

Here are a few samples of the entries: a documentary film chronicling the congressional campaign of John Halstead, a candidate for Connecticut’s first congressional district, who proposed building a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border; an automated Frisbee-throwing machine; an exploration of the behavior of machines toward humans, also known as machine ethics; an examination of the link between birth order and academic achievement.

The annual spring colloquium is presented at the University of Hartford Magnet School, and is sponsored by the university’s Honors program in collaboration with the campus chapters of Alpha Chi and Alpha Lambda Delta national honor societies, and with the continued support of university President Walter Harrison and his wife, Dianne. It is intended as a forum for students to present outstanding scholarly and creative work to their peers, faculty, administrators, and guests.

Faculty sponsor Assistant Professor of Rhetoric, Language, and Culture Charlsye Smith Diaz summed up the passionate discussion that followed the presentation of Eclipse, saying, “This colloquium is creating what academics love—a space to have academic debate.”

Ten-year-old Violinist Raises $12,500 for Scholarship Program

On March 12 in The Bushnell’s Belding Theater, a diminutive, 10-year-old violinist stepped onto the stage to perform a concert to a full house. Sirena Huang’s performance helped raise $12,500 for the Hartt Community Division’s Fund for Access, a program that provides scholarships to students who demonstrate financial need. The Fund for Access enables 75 students from 20 different towns to study in the Hartt Community Division. Nearly half of the recipients are from Hartford. The fund allows the Community Division to award $40,000 in financial aid annually. Huang is a former student of the Hartt Community Division and currently studies in Juilliard’s Pre-College Division.

Huang started her violin lessons at Hartt at the age of four with Linda Fiore, a registered teacher-trainer in the Suzuki method. Stephen Clapp, dean of The Juilliard School and a violin professor, states, “As a player, she is perhaps more advanced than some of my college students… [H]aving talent at such a young age is not an oddity… but she possesses a gift that I don’t see in every student.”

Huang has competed successfully in international competitions for young violinists in Germany and Romania and was also selected as one of 10 “Exceptional Young Artists” worldwide at a Juilliard symposium in June 2003. She was the youngest musician ever to participate in this event.

In October 2004 Huang made her professional orchestra solo debut with the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra. Three weeks later, she played with the internationally renowned Staatskapelle Weimar in Germany. Huang also frequently appears in the “Great Music for a Great City” series in New York City.
For Tony Melo, the road to a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering has been long and circuitous.

Eleven years ago, when he was 18, Melo could not afford to go to school full time, so he got a job and started taking classes at Central Connecticut State University. Over the years, he moved forward in his career as a structural designer, got married, and became a father, all the while continuing to work toward his bachelor’s degree. With each new job and each relocation, he transferred to a different institution, often losing credits in the process.

Melo has been a part-time student at the University of Hartford for the past three and a half years—and now, at the age of 29, his goal is within reach. He expects to graduate in December 2005 or May 2006.

“There have been times I wanted to quit, and something inside me just keeps on pushing. It’s just a drive that you have,” Melo said. “This is something that no one can ever take away from you.”

Melo’s story is typical of many adult part-time students, who account for a growing segment of the student population at the University of Hartford and at colleges and universities around the country.

This past spring, the university recognized its most outstanding adult students with induction into Alpha Sigma Lambda, a national honor society that recognizes the achievements of nontraditional students who excel academically while managing competing family, work, and community responsibilities.

The University of Hartford formed a chapter of Alpha Sigma Lambda last year in recognition of its growing focus on adult part-time students. Twenty-seven students, including Melo, became members at the second annual induction ceremony in April.

“You’ve done it the hard way, year after year, semester after semester,” Guy C. Colarulli, associate provost and dean of undergraduate studies, told the newly inducted students.

The campus chapter of the honor society is open to adult part-time students with grade point averages of 3.5 or higher, who have earned a minimum of 100 credits toward their bachelor’s degrees.

Vivienne Friday, who also was inducted into Alpha Sigma Lambda, earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing in May. She is married with three children, ages 15 to 20, and she works full time as a registered nurse.

“It’s been grueling,” she said of her efforts to juggle school, work, and family. “I have had nights when I just didn’t sleep.” Despite her rigorous schedule, Friday is not content to stop with a bachelor’s degree—she has already started working toward her master’s.

Dennis O’Connor, another newly inducted member of Alpha Sigma Lambda, began pursuing a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering 10 years ago, at the age of 36. He expects to graduate in May 2006.

O’Connor, who likens his quest for a bachelor’s degree to “the pursuit of the holy grail,” has a definite sense of humor when discussing the long and challenging journey of the adult part-time student. “I always say that my degree is going to make a nice lining for my coffin by the time I get it.”

But O’Connor, an HVAC field controls manager for Carrier Corp., is quick to add that the struggle has been well worth it. “It’s a humbling experience,” he said. “The sense of accomplishment is really overwhelming.”

Alpha Sigma Lambda inductee George Loyola Jr. is part of the first generation in his family to go to college. His parents emigrated from Puerto Rico to Hartford with elementary school educations. Now, Loyola’s one-year-old son keeps him motivated to continue his education. “I’m saving all my grades, so I can show him that anything is possible if you work hard.”

Loyola, a client services representative for Bank of America, began working toward his degree in 1996 at Manchester Community College. He has been taking classes at the University of Hartford since 2001, and he expects to earn a bachelor of science in business administration next May.

“I want to get an education because I want to make a difference—to my community, my colleagues, my race. I want to make a difference wherever I can,” Loyola said. “If I had a message to give, it would be ‘never give up, strive to achieve, and believe me, you will succeed.’ ”