

Big Bang

A \$3 million gift from the Werth Family Foundation — and a planned state-of-the-art science building — promise to bring the study of the sciences at Southern to a whole new level.



SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING, SOUTHERN STUDENTS CAN TELL YOU A THING OR TWO ABOUT CONNECTICUT'S COASTLINE. They've measured mercury contamination in state harbors, explored ways to combat beach erosion after hurricanes, studied methods of evaluating the age of lobsters, and can wax poetic on techniques to stop invasive monk parakeets from wrecking havoc with electric lines.

In recent years, some 60 Southern students have worked alongside faculty on cutting-edge environmental research through the Center for Coastal and Marine Studies thanks to the leadership-level support of the Werth Family Foundation — and the best is yet to come.

A \$3 million pledge from the Werth Family Foundation — the largest gift ever received by Southern — will greatly forward the

Attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Academic and Laboratory Science Building are: [STANDING FROM LEFT] Suzanne Werth, '89, Debbie Bachard, Peter Werth, Pam Werth, Jackie Moore and [Seated] Peter Werth IV and Carolyn Werth (children of Suzanne and Peter Werth III and Peter's grandchildren).

ongoing development of the center, which will be named in honor of the family. The contribution, to be paid over 10 years, includes \$1,500,000 to endow the Werth Center for Coastal and Marine

Studies as well as \$750,000 for its annual support. The remaining funds have been earmarked for two new initiatives that combine science education and real-world experience — through seminars, internships, and research opportunities — with stipends provided to participating Southern students and area science teachers.

"Above all, we are trying to make a difference," says Peter Werth, who established the family foundation with his wife, Pam, in

2000. They've supported the Center for Coastal and Marine Studies since 2006, contributing nearly \$380,000 in addition to the recent \$3 million pledge. "We've had the opportunity to look at the research done at the center and its importance to the community. We're believers," says Peter, who, along with two older siblings, was the first in his family to earn a college degree.

The entrepreneurial couple founded ChemWerth, an international generic drug development and supply company, in 1982. "It was not a typical startup. We began with no product and no customers," says Peter. However, the Werths did have an idea, drive, and experience. Prior to starting ChemWerth, Peter had spent 10 years in research and development with Upjohn Pharmaceuticals (now Pfizer). Most recently, he served as vice president of sales and marketing with Ganes Chemicals, a U.S. subsidiary of a Swiss-owned company.

Initially setting up shop in a room in their home, the determined pair swiftly found success. ChemWerth, now based in Woodbridge, Conn., has successfully introduced more than 100 generic active pharmaceutical ingredients — and today their family foundation reflects the pioneering spirit that guided their company's growth.

foundation's members. The tie-in with Southern was natural: approximately 93 percent of the students enrolled at the university hail from Connecticut, and more than 80 percent of its alumni remain in the state to live and work.

"We also look at tuition costs, and who can afford to attend Southern," says Pam, who was raised in Bridgeport, Conn., and has a firm belief in the importance of supporting urban education. "Southern is accessible and offers students the opportunity to receive a great education. I know this is a school that makes a difference in peoples' lives."

The Werth Center for Coastal and Marine Studies will be located on the second floor of Southern's new Academic and Laboratory Science Building. Construction of the 103,608-square-foot, four-story building has begun and is slated to be completed in spring 2015. (See page 14.)

The Werth Center promises to be among the highpoints of the stunning facility. In addition to state-of-the-art classrooms, it will include two new laboratories. An analytical laboratory will house instrumentation used to study contaminants, such as mercury, while a coastal processes laboratory, will be used by faculty and

PHOTO: Alisha Marriindale, '10



Pam Werth [LEFT] and her husband Peter (not pictured) have been impressed by the research undertaken by students through the newly named Werth Center for Coastal and Marine Studies.

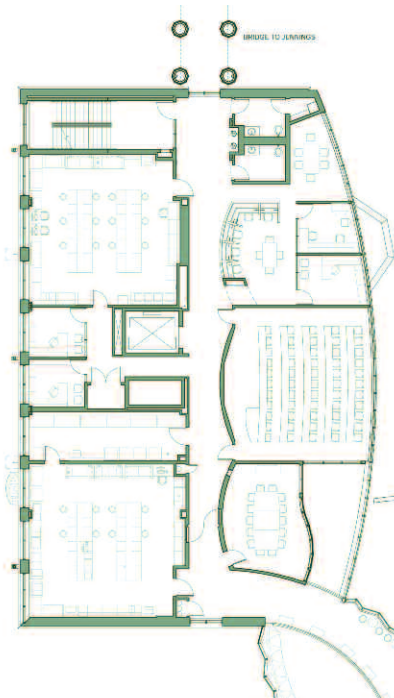


"We've been called entrepreneurial philanthropists," says Pam. "We support many organizations. But when it comes to major funding, we don't generally look at the 'big vanilla' — but what we view as pilot programs with tremendous potential."

Education is one of the foundation's main focuses, as is a strong connection to the state of Connecticut — home to all of the

students to conduct research related to the beaches and sediment found along Long Island Sound. The first floor of the science building also will include two large aquaria, "wet" laboratory space, and a touch tank that will be used for community outreach.

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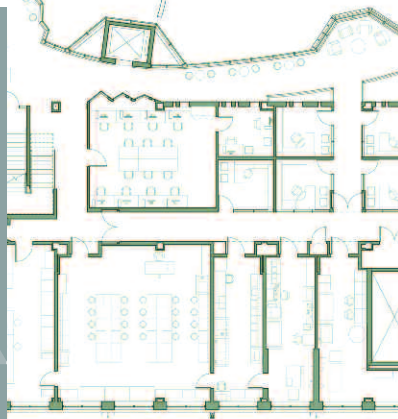


“This is truly a transformational gift,” says Vincent Breslin, professor of science education and environmental studies, and co-coordinator of the Werth Center, along with James Tait, professor of science education and environmental studies, and Sean Grace, associate professor of biology. “It makes the center sustainable. . . . It allows us to plan future programs of research and lets students know that support for their work will be there over the long-term.” The foundation funds research stipends for students, the acquisition and maintenance of equipment and supplies, and travel funds to allow faculty and students to present their findings.

“In this highly competitive job market, it’s not what you know but what you can do with what you know that matters,” says Breslin. “This gift enables us to provide hands-on experience to students, who will be out in the field and in the lab conducting research with state-of-the-art instrumentation. As a result, our students are much more competitive in the job market. The support of the Werth Family Foundation makes this possible.”

“State funds are increasingly being used to keep Southern and other state universities operational,” says Peter. “To create a climate of excellence as is fostered by the Werth Center for Coastal and Marine Studies you need private individuals to invest in people and institutions like Vince Breslin and Southern. We hope others follow to make similar investments in the future of Connecticut.”

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Slated to be completed in spring 2015, the Academic and Laboratory Science Building will greatly enhance the ongoing expansion of Southern’s science programs and further the university’s ability to educate more students in the STEM disciplines – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The university is offering numerous naming opportunities within the state-of-the-art facility, including the following:

An architectural model shows an overview of the front entrance of the building.





In line with student and workforce needs, the Werth Family Foundation also is funding two pilot programs that combine real-world experience and science education — providing stipends for participants in both programs.

Slated to begin next summer, the **Industry Academic Fellowship Program** centers on the creation of “fellowship teams” — to include undergraduate and graduate students from Southern and science teachers from middle schools and high schools who will work with university faculty and industry mentors. Designed to foster professional development, the teams will conduct interdisciplinary research using state-of-the-art facilities located at Southern and Yale University through the Center for Research on Interface Structures and Phenomena [CRISP], a National Science Foundation-funded Materials Research Science and Engineering Center. The grant will provide fellowships to the students and the teachers, as well as supplies.

“The timing of this grant is wonderful,” says Christine Broadbridge, professor of physics and education director of CRISP, pointing to plans for Southern’s new Center for Nanotechnology, which will be based on the lower level of the science building currently under construction. “The new building will

be set up to beautifully accommodate interdisciplinary research, which is the focus of the fellowship program.”

Broadbridge notes that the recent launch of Southern’s Master of Science degree in applied physics, a collaboration between the School of Business and the departments of Physics, Chemistry and Computer Science, further illustrates the university’s emphasis on interdisciplinary education in support of today’s workforce needs. With the same goal, the Werth-supported **Southern Summer Science Business Institute** will provide an opportunity for students majoring in the STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) to learn about the business of science. Participants will receive \$5,000 stipends enabling them to focus on their education rather than seeking summer employment. The program will include seminars — with topics ranging from market planning to the scientific approach to product development — as well as internships with science-based businesses in the area. Expertise will be provided by SCSU faculty in the School of Business and the School of Arts and Sciences, in addition to leaders from the scientific business community.

“We’re obviously a science-oriented business, so education is important from our own business standpoint,” says Pam. “It’s not enough to have highly intelligent scientists. We need highly intelligent scientists with leadership and business skills.” ■

By Villia Struyk



• **The Supercomputing Laboratory**

This cutting-edge laboratory will be used by students and faculty for data analysis and research in theoretical science, bioinformatics, and computer science.



• **The Touch Tank**

Housed in the saltwater aquaria room, the dramatic touch tank will be the centerpiece for outreach to area schools and the community.



• **A Rooftop Observatory**

Furthering exploration of the night skies, six telescopes will be strategically placed to eliminate interference from city lights.



• **The Rock Garden**

Showcasing specimens that are indigenous to the state of Connecticut, the picturesque area will also serve as an earth science laboratory.



• **Numerous Science Wings and Laboratories**

The building will be home to teaching and research labs for physics, earth science, environmental science, molecular biology, and chemistry.

Other naming opportunities associated with the Academic and Laboratory Science Building may be viewed at SouthernCT.edu/go/giftnaming. For more information, please contact:

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(203) 392-6515 or PettitC1@SouthernCT.edu.**