



Dr. Stephen R. Briggs

Berry is uncommonly beautiful – a place of pastoral and expansive beauty that long has captured the imagination of those who have visited or lived here.

More akin to a park than a manicured garden, the Berry campus is breathtaking in part because it appears so natural with its open fields and wooded slopes, vast pine forests and pristine mountain reservoir. Yet much of Berry's apparent naturalness was, in fact, carefully designed. It is from the interplay of the natural with the cultivated and the constructed that the full beauty of the campus emerges.

Berry's structures are an integral part of its uncommon beauty, and they stand as a record of the college's evolution. The white frame buildings of the original boys' campus and the cluster of log cabins built a half mile away for the girls defined from the outset the expansiveness of Berry's residential campus. The collegiate brick campus, the magnificent gothic Ford Buildings and the rustic stone of

the Mountain Campus ensured that Berry's distinctive mix would be enduring. Alongside these educational structures, the barns and long runs of wood-rail fences attest to Berry's continuing agriculture heritage.

Because Berry's campus is central to its identity, one of the seven themes of the college's current strategic plan is to "make the most of Berry's campus as an incomparable asset." A specific and ongoing goal is to "enhance the beauty and heritage of Berry's campus to ensure that it remains a place of wonder and delight." In this day of economic turmoil and chronic belt-tightening, it is appropriate to ask whether the college should emphasize the beauty of Berry as a strategic goal in light of so many pressing needs. Certainly, it seems right to affirm that the beauty of the campus for its



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own sake should not take precedence over the need to assist students financially as they struggle to afford the quality of educational experience that Berry offers.

### **A part of education**

From time to time, after an evening event, I find myself in the midst of the splendid WinShape Retreat on the Mountain Campus. As I walk the central path through those picturesque structures, I often wonder, “What on earth was Martha Berry thinking when she conceived these buildings?” We know that she modeled them after barns she saw on a trip to Normandy, France, inspired no doubt by their beauty. Still, why build such striking structures on a remote section of the campus in a remote area of Northwest Georgia? How did she justify this expense in the middle of the Great Depression of the 1930s?

The answer, I believe, derives from Martha’s conviction that “beauty is part of education.” She wanted the Berry campus to be

inspirational, believing that beauty had the power to stir the imagination and to cultivate civility and hope. The campus’ expansive vistas and surprising spires were meant to catch the eye and lift the heart because Martha wanted students in the midst of mundane chores to sense the wonder of creation and the worth of work done well before God.

In other words, Martha Berry believed that the beauty of campus was a vital element of the educational experience. The beauty nurtured and instructed hearts as surely as the academic lessons molded minds and the work experience trained hands. The beauty of Berry was not for its own sake, but rather for the edification of the students. Martha’s aim for her students was the act of devotion she claimed for

herself: “I pray that I may leave this world more beautiful than when I found it.” This aim lives on in our current strategic plan.

### **Functional, affordable, beautiful**

This summer may have been Berry’s busiest ever in the area of campus construction. The new Audrey B. Morgan and Deerfield residence halls were opened, the first phase of the renovation of Dana Hall was completed, and the Krannert Center’s dining hall and Spruill Ballroom were expanded. In addition, we added a number of new parking lots and



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