

An Aura of Success

Redefined goals have brought excitement to the College for Human Development.

by Carol North Schmuckler

On certain Thursdays, it quickly becomes apparent something special is happening on campus. Television news vans are double-parked on College Place. Crowds of students converge on Slocum Hall, along with women in mink coats and men in three-piece suits.

Inside, in the handsome new Sue Ann Genet Auditorium, the seats fill quickly. The Chancellor's wife is there, and so is the president of a major local corporation. Soon the rows overflow, and students begin settling in aisles and on the floor in front of the platform stage. The fire marshal would not be pleased.

The occasion is the monthly Genet Lecture, sponsored by the College for Human Development. Over the past three years, the lecture series has brought an astonishing number of fashion and retailing giants to Syracuse to lecture and meet informally with students.

Designers Henry Grethel, Willi Smith, Pauline Trigère, Michael Geller, and Josie Natori have filled the house, as expected. And so did senior executives from Spiegel, Allied Stores, Kroger, Macy's, Lender's Bagels, and U.S. Shoe Corporation.

What visiting speakers found at SU was an audience of bright, informed students asking sharp questions about their businesses. What they left with was a new awareness of the College for Human Development at Syracuse as a place where things were happening.

The electricity sparked by the Genet Lecture Series is just one illustration of the success of recent major changes in the College for Human Development, changes inspired by the University's recognition that the school had to shift direction to respond to the needs of today's students.

When the school was founded as the College for Home Economics in 1918, it concentrated on three basic areas: food, clothing, and shelter. It educated young people, mostly women, for the careers that

were open to them at that time: as home economics teachers, county extension agents, dietitians, employees of public utilities and manufacturers, and housewives and mothers.

But over the years new professional opportunities for women have evolved, and the very words "home economics," have become a liability, conjuring up images of high school cooking and sewing classes. It was time for the school to change.

The name change to "College for Human Development" in 1971 signaled a broader interpretation of the school's historical concern with the individual and the family. But it was also clear that the school's programs had to change to bring them into line with new career opportunities.

What was needed to accomplish that was a strong leader, one with a clear vision of a new role for the college, and the ability to bring that vision to life. Syracuse found such a leader in 1980, when they brought Jane M. Lillestol to campus from North Dakota State University to become dean of the college.

According to Geshon Vincow, vice chancellor for academic affairs, Lillestol has revitalized the college in the last five years. "She's restructured its programs, established a solid relationship with the faculty, focused attention on the school both on and off the campus, and brought the college's new role to the notice of alumni and donors," Vincow says.

Today the College for Human Development has a new direction, new vigor, and the unmistakable aura of success.

Child and family studies in one department, family and community studies in another. A program to train home economics teachers at a time when high school home economics departments were being phased out. A potentially hot retailing program without the proper



resources to meet its potential.

That's what Lillestol found when she took over as dean. She quickly seized the opportunity to change the school's focus without losing its basic strengths.

"Everything we teach today derives from the original three areas the school emphasized—food, clothing, and shelter," she explains. "But now we prepare women, and an increasing number of men, for the careers of the modern world."

Under her direction, the school has eliminated some programs and added others. Today it offers study in retailing, fashion design, textile design, environmental design (interiors), consumer studies, four different aspects of human nutrition, early childhood education, family and community services, and child and family studies.

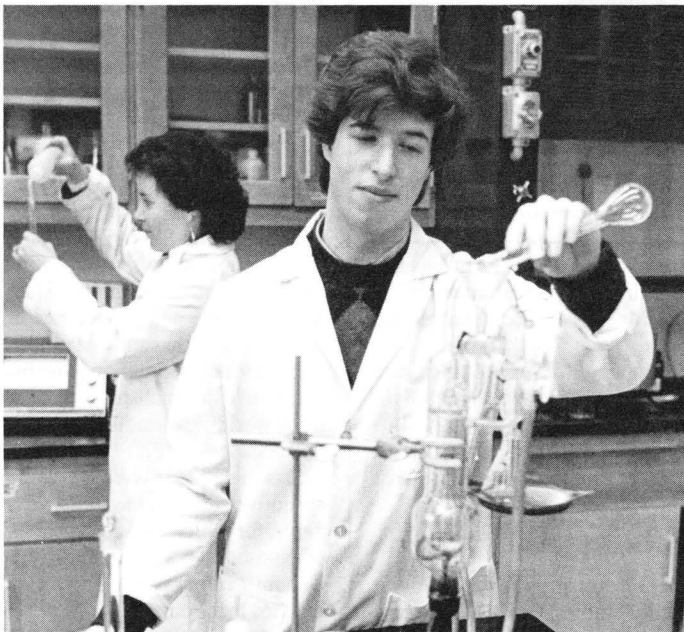
She's also restructured the school's departments, reducing their number and linking together programs that share common orientations. For instance, child and

family studies is now in the same department with family and community studies and early childhood education. Their shared interests have paid off in a new vigor and an increased interaction among students as well as faculty.

The program in home economics education is gone, as is clothing studies. But when the College of Visual and Performing Arts decided it could no longer support a program in fashion design, Lillestol snapped it up, realizing how well it complemented human development's other design programs. Today it's thriving, with a freshman class of 30 enrolled for the fall.

In September the school unveils another new program: food systems management. Lillestol calls this one of the fastest growing career fields in the country.

"There's a real need to educate men and women for food management positions in restaurants, hotels, and other institutions. Our program will focus on the skills needed for effective, large-scale



Dean Jane Lillestol (above) has given "home ec" a new direction at SU. Programs such as nutrition (left) and fashion design (opposite) are geared toward professional application.

food preparation, nutrition, staffing, and serving," Lillestol says.

Finding a new direction for the college also meant finding new roles for some of the faculty. In less sensitive hands, that might have presented a problem.

"I knew they could handle anything," Lillestol says. "The professionalism of the faculty was one of the main reasons I came to Syracuse in the first place."

Her faith has been justified. According to Lillestol, faculty members have responded to every innovation with enthusiasm. When necessary, they've shifted emphasis, and in one case, developed strengths in a whole new area.

Lillestol has also reinforced the

faculty through judicious hiring.

"You must focus on what direction the program is taking, not on individual credentials. No matter how tempting it is to hire a specialist in 17- to 19-year-olds, you can't allow yourself to do that when you have a hole in gerontology," she explains.

For their part, faculty members recognize Lillestol's commitment to them, according to Karen Bakke, chair of the department of environmental arts, consumer studies, and retailing.

"Everything Jane's done has strengthened the school," Bakke points out, "and she gives as well as she gets. Right now we know her priority is obtaining salary equity

for us with the top land-grant institutions, as well as giving us more time for research." Bakke smiles. "How can you not want to work for someone who's knocking herself out for you?"

A college thrives on the support its alumni and others give it, and Lillestol has found several ways to establish connections with important groups both inside and outside the University.

Almost as soon as she arrived on campus, she met with all the key people: those in SU's other colleges, the central administration, and in offices directly affecting her school.

"I told them my vision for the college and asked how we could interface," she explains. "After all, we're all in this together, whether we're teaching or recruiting or raising funds or providing housing. Together we're trying to maximize a student's quality of life."

Her efforts paid off handsomely. The other academic deans shared their knowledge with her in every area, from annual reports to alumni relations. Once it understood human development's programs, the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid was able to recruit students for the school more effectively. The Development Office

learned she wanted to focus attention on the college's American Costume Collection by establishing a gallery, and put her in touch with a benefactor whose interests coincided with hers. The Publications Office helped her develop *Lifelines*, a tabloid about the college that reaches 8,750 people twice a year.

Off campus, she established a Visiting Committee, a group of alumni and friends who act as an advisory board. She also travels to alumni meetings in various parts of the country, and at her instigation, the school sponsors alumni activities in New York City.

Lillestol has also begun building the college's financial base. Leon Genet, whose initial gift and continued fund-raising efforts established the Genet Gallery, now heads a drive for an endowment to provide permanent support for the gallery. In addition, the college will soon begin a capital campaign with a goal of \$500,000.

"That will give us the ability to do those vital extra things," Lillestol explains. "It will fund faculty development, provide seed money for research, and support all the other activities that will put us out there on the cutting edge of scholarship. It's essential to our growth."

Today the future of the College for Human Development looks exceedingly bright. Since 1980, there's been a 25 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment and a 20 percent increase in graduate enrollment. Lillestol expects undergraduate enrollment to hit 1,000 students within two years.

What's more important, career opportunities for graduates are excellent, according to Mary Jones, director of SU's Placement Services.

"Programs in the school are really geared to today's marketplace," Jones points out. "Graduates are doing very well in a competitive market."

None of that surprises Lillestol. "We deal with the basics in people's lives—what they eat, what they buy, how they dress, the spaces in which they live, and their relationships with their families and others. We show young people how to make real contributions to solving the problems of modern society. That's the real secret of the strength of the College for Human Development."

And another strength is solid leadership.