Lectures, exams, papers, grades—these are the traditional mechanisms of a college education. In reality, though, learning only begins in the classroom. The interests and activities students pursue on their own possess an equal power to educate.

Outside the Classroom

by Carol North Schmuckler

By 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, film major Greg Alpert was running on excitement and sheer determination—certainly not on the three hours sleep he’d had in the past 32 hours. Nevertheless, as he pulled up to the Syracuse airport, Alpert felt terrific.

On Tuesday, he had attended his classes, written a paper, and held a final preproduction meeting for his junior thesis film. After that he had gathered a film crew, actors, and a mountain of equipment, and had worked with them until four in the morning.

Already Wednesday had brought more classes and work at his part-time job in the film equipment room, then a quick change into the student filmmakers’ equivalent of “dress for success” clothes (blazer and tie with jeans) and the drive to the airport.

As cofounder of the Film Forum Student Society, the peripatetic Alpert was at Hancock Field to pick up the first in a series of speakers he’d arranged to bring to campus: Douglas Hart, one of the top ten first assistant cinematographers in the country. During that evening and two workshops the next day, Hart would speak to more than 150 film, video, and broadcast students about the world of commercial filmmaking, offering practical advice about breaking into the field, unions, lighting, special effects, and the kind of insider’s gossip that students thrive on.

Albert and his friends organized Film Forum for essentially the same reason that any student organization is created at SU. They were interested in a topic that no other campus group was addressing, so they got together and did something about it.
"One organization brought experimental films and videos and their creators to campus, and another brought other kinds of films here. But no one was inviting people from the production and business side of commercial filmmaking," Alpert explains. "We wanted to hear what those people had to say, so we created a group that could arrange it."

For Alpert, the hours spent organizing and running Film Forum bring neither academic credit nor extra income. But when you suggest he could find a better use for his time, the energetic young filmmaker objects vehemently. "Are you kidding?" he says. "I can't believe how much I've learned: how to deal with people on a professional level, how business transactions are made, how to fight my way through a lot of red tape. And the contacts I've made in the industry will be invaluable when I graduate."

Alpert was articulating something most Syracuse students learn very quickly: although their college education may begin in the classroom, it certainly doesn't end there. The things students do outside class are more than mere time fillers: they are another form of learning.

Eleven thousand undergraduates attend classes at Syracuse University. But equally important, they also live here for eight and a half months every year. In fact, even before the adjustment of freshman year is over, students begin to think of the campus as home, and more than one parent has been startled to find a daughter or son chafing to be "going home to Syracuse" only part-way through a vacation.

That student attitude is understandable. After all, it's during their college years that students have some of their most important learning experiences as they begin building independent lives for themselves. Every action teaches them new lessons: about living with others, about making choices, about assuming responsibility. It is their dress rehearsal for the "real" world.

Although most students are only vaguely aware of it—if at all—the University administration recognizes the importance of learning outside the classroom and supports it. The aim is to make students' lives as rich outside the classroom as they are inside. An astonishing abundance of extracurricular activities and living/dining options are made available. A wealth of quiet guidance is offered by the University in all these areas.

Most of that support comes through SU's Office of Student Services. According to Jim Morgan, senior vice president in charge of the office, "Students spend about 80 percent of their time outside the classroom." Morgan says. "Everything they do during those hours is our job. We offer services to satisfy just about any need they might have from the time they get here until they graduate."

Those services include running all the residence and dining operations, organizing and supporting the 250-plus activities, providing counseling and placement services, and even conducting leadership training workshops for
officers of student clubs. What they add up to, according to Morgan, is a concern for the quality of student life and an affirmation that everything a Syracuse student does is part of the educational process.

When Dina Juhasz saw the job description for resident advisor (R.A.), she thought someone was playing a joke. "It described me exactly, as well as all the things I like to do: helping others, taking responsibility, having fun. I couldn't believe there was a job like that," she says.

As an R.A., Juhasz organizes residence hall programs that range from the social to the educational. Perhaps because she's a nursing major, her favorites are those that fill a special need, like the time students living on her dorm floor colored Easter eggs with the children in the pediatric wing of a local hospital.

Juhasz radiates warmth and quiet sympathy, and that's important for another crucial part of her job: one-on-one advising, counseling, and, sometimes, just being there.

"One boy used to come to my room regularly and ask me to iron his shirt. At first I was annoyed, but then I realized the shirt was just an excuse to come talk to me because he was too proud to ask for help directly. We got to be really good friends and eventually worked through some of the things that were bothering him. And," she adds, "I certainly learned how to iron a shirt!"

That kind of peer counseling is built into the residence hall system, according to Paul Eickmann, vice president for student affairs. "It's not enough simply to supply a bed," he points out. "The residence halls have an educational mission in themselves that supports the central purpose of the University. We see the support services we provide in the residence halls as absolutely essential to the total development of students on campus."

But Juhasz herself would be the last person to let you think the benefits went only in one direction.

"I value what I learned as an R.A.: how to talk to people, how to budget my time, how to look beyond the surface," she concludes. "I'll use every one of those things professionally. I couldn't have asked for a better experience."

Ellen Frank has two majors, one in magazine journalism in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the other in history in the College of Arts Sciences. Since she intends to become the editor of a magazine someday, a career-oriented extracurricular involvement makes good sense.

"If you're a communications major, you must have more than just the classroom," says the senior. "You must have real experience."

To give herself that experience, Frank began writing for the Daily Orange in her sophomore year and also joined the staff of Equal Time, a magazine reporting on social issues from a feminist perspective. Through the years, her skills have sharpened, and she now writes a weekly column for the D.O. and is managing editor of Equal Time.

"Our staff at Equal Time is quite small and we really love each other. Also, the people come from all kinds of different majors, all over campus," she says. "I learn so much from working with them."

According to Eickmann, Frank has hit on an important point. "Extracurricular involvement in professional activities is important to two groups of people," he says. "For those who intend practicing the trade, the hands-on experience can't be obtained any other way. Studying broadcasting in the classroom is not the same as working at either of SU's two radio stations. It's the perfect way for students to augment their educations."

"But professional groups also allow students from one major to cross into new areas and pick up additional skills. Marketing majors who join the advertising club and also the French Club find they've increased their potential enormously: they can work in either marketing or advertising. And what's more, they can do it in Paris."

Ellen Frank obviously agrees, because she hasn't limited herself to
WHAT'S AVAILABLE

If students can't find something to do at SU, they're just not looking. There are more than 250 extracurricular groups registered with the University, and more are forming every week.

Many are the kinds of organizations you'd expect to find on a college campus: student government, marching band, daily newspaper, cheerleading, chapel choir, fraternities and sororities, religious organizations, and 49 groups directly related to academic programs. But others are so diverse and specialized that even categorizing them is difficult. Here's just a sampler:

Communications Activities

Even if there were not a nationally known school of public communications at Syracuse, there probably would still be a large assortment of newspapers, magazines, and broadcast vehicles. Interest in them is strong all across campus, and each serves a particular interest or need.

The Daily Orange is the students' daily newspaper. There are also Panache Magazine, which contains interviews; Report Magazine, a humor magazine; and Syracuse University Poetry Review. Broadcast options include University Union Television, which is student-operated cable television; WAER-FM, carrying jazz music and National Public Radio programming; and WJPZ-FM, a student-owned and operated radio station. There are at least five other student media outlets.

Arts Activities

Music, photography, drama, studio arts—there are at least 14 student groups dedicated to these activities. Included among them are the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble, Community Darkrooms, Equilibrium Theatre, the Sour Sitrus Society (the basketball pep band), Syracuse University Musical Stage, and the Thornden Morris Dance Club.

Special Interest Groups

There are well over 60 organizations meeting some particular interest of Syracuse students. They serve all hobbies, cultural backgrounds, political interests, and, quite often, they serve the campus, as well.

A partial list includes a campus branch of Amnesty International, the Association of College Entrepreneurs, the Creative Club, the Debate Union, the International Students Association, the Investment Club, the Organization of Disabled Students, the Outing Club, People for Peace and Justice, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Club, the Shaped Clay Society, Stop Procrastinating Now, Student Legal Services, Syracuse University Ambulance, the SU Amateur Radio, SU Chess Club, the Traditions Commission, University Union, and the Women's Center.

Intramural and Club Sports

SU offers 36 intramural sports for men and 8 for women, as well as coeducational teams and mixed doubles. Sports range from softball, basketball, and touch football to water polo, rifle, and horseshoes.

There are 30 club sports, and men and women can choose from ultimate Frisbee, squash, cricket, rugby, and ice hockey, among others.

Minority Special Interest Groups

There are at least five special student groups serving minority populations within the student body. They are Students in America, the Black Panhellenic Council, La Casa Latinoamericana, a campus chapter of the NAACP, the Native American Student Organization, and the Student Afro-American Society.

There are also organizations for minority students in most of Syracuse's schools and colleges. —C.N.S.

journalism. She's on the Schine Student Center Advisory Board and ever since her freshman year has been deeply involved in committee work in her residence hall, gradually accepting more and more responsibility.

"Working in extracurricular activities teaches you more than just technical skills," Frank points out. "For instance, you learn how to compete, how to go after the things you want. Perhaps most important, you learn how to present yourself, and that's going to be valuable no matter what you do."

All those involvements have required good time-management skills. "The only way I can handle it is to be super-organized. I bought one of those little red Syracuse University assignment calendars and every day I write in my appointments. I also make lists all the time. You can't have idle moments—you really have to schedule your time. But," she grins, "it's all worth it when you see what you can accomplish."

Charles Wynder Jr. has a résumé that reads like a textbook example of the successful college student's career. And in his case, it's all true.

A senior majoring in political science, Wynder has been involved in demanding and highly visible activities throughout his Syracuse career. He's served on the board of directors for six different campus organizations, was elected comptroller of the Student Government Association, has been an R.A. in his residence hall, is active in his fraternity, and is an ROTC scholarship student. Currently he is president of the Student Afro-American Society. He is, by anyone's definition, a dynamo, although his personal style is deceptively soft-spoken and unassuming.

"As a minority student," Wynder explains, "I think it's essential to be active in both my own community and the at-large community. So I pursued interests in both arenas. I basically developed a list of priorities of the kinds of experiences I wanted to have. There are certain things on campus I saw as important."

One of those was the Student Afro-American Society. "Both in college
ing all that was not an easy thing to do.”

Wynder, who plans to go on to law school, feels he’s changed a great deal since his freshman year. “I’ve broadened my horizons and have opened up to other people’s backgrounds and experiences,” he says. “This campus is very diverse, and if you just open your eyes and ears, you can learn a lot.”

Carole Allen can hardly wait for winter. She is an avid cross-country skier and a member of SU’s Nordic ski racing club.

“The late fall is the hardest, because you’re so close,” she says. “We meet every day for dry-land training, but you’re really just getting kind of itchy waiting for the snow to come. But once you get on the snow and can see yourself improving, it’s great!”

Allen, who has dual majors in policy studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and magazine journalism in the Newhouse School, finds her physical activity directly affects her state of mind.

“Before I got involved in racing,” she remembers, “there were days when I wouldn’t even get outside and everything would just seem to close in on me. That doesn’t happen to me anymore. But the funniest thing is that I budget my time so much better when I’m skiing. When I’m home in the afternoons off season, often I find I’m just sitting around wasting time. But when I have to make time to practice, I get a lot more done.”

Peter Baigent, assistant vice president for student programs, is not surprised by Allen’s reactions. “Research shows that one of the elements students rate highest on a campus is the opportunity to involve themselves in physical activities. At Syracuse, our campus recreation program is one of the largest in the country. Last year there were 10,514 students in the program, which shows we’re doing something right,” he says.

He’ll certainly get no argument from Phil Nevins. Now a senior, Nevins started his SU sports career on the varsity track team, but gave it up after two years.

“It took a great deal of time, which is worth it if you think you can get to

and later, you must have a strong identity and sense of self,” Wynder says. “That lets you recognize those issues that affect you most intimately. If you’re a woman, you should be aware of what are called women’s issues, and the same thing is true of minorities.”

As comptroller of the Student Government Association, on the other hand, Wynder found himself directly involved with the entire college community. He was responsible for administering all funds collected through the student fee—a considerable amount of money. He also headed a committee that recommended allocations of money to student organizations. Both roles required not only financial acumen but considerable sensitivity. He found the experience drew upon capabilities he hadn’t even known he possessed.

“I had to be able to assess the needs of a diverse and complex group of people, and that involved appreciating other people’s viewpoints and cultural backgrounds,” he explains. “But I also had to be pragmatic, and combin-

Work and play are the extracurricular interests of senior Charles Wynder (top), former president of the Student Afro-American Society, and sophomore Carole Allen, active in the ski club.

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MAKING IT WORK

When things are going well, no one even notices its existence, but the Office of Student Services affects every student on campus.

“We provide students with exactly the same kinds of services they’d need if they were living in a small city,” explains Jim Morgan, senior vice president for student services. “We provide living and dining accommodations, health care, mental health care, counseling, discipline, recreation, a judicial system, and even a place to shop.”

What’s more, Morgan says, Syracuse University has accomplished something no other school of its size has: it’s combined all these student services in one administrative operation, while many other institutions still separate them into “revenue-producing” services such as dining centers and bookstores, and “people-oriented” activities like counseling and student programs.

What that organization encompasses is mind-boggling. Reporting directly to Morgan are Residence Services, Dining Services (including concessions), University Bookstores, Health Services, and even WAER, the student-staffed National Public Radio station.

As well, grouped under Vice President for Student Affairs Paul Eickmann are the International Student Office, Student Life, Student Programs, Student Support and Development, and the Placement Center.

In addition, the division includes such support systems as counseling services, student employment, the new Schine Student Center, and academic services, in addition to public relations, sanitation and safety, business services, and others.

While all that looks impressive on an organization chart, the acid test is whether it actually works for the students. According to Morgan, it’s working very well, thank you.

“By bringing all these services under one roof administratively, we’ve accomplished several things,” Morgan says proudly.

“we’ve eliminated duplicated services. We can more easily follow up on our services to students, which is an important part of our job. But most important, we’ve cut a lot of red tape for students. They’re no longer shuffled around to a lot of different areas—all the contacts they need are right here.”

Morgan is well aware that other universities all over the country are keeping a close watch on Syracuse.

“We’re definitely a trendsetter in this area; everyone is waiting to see how well our new organization works.” He grins. “I can’t wait to show them.”

—C.N.S.

Some students at SU devote themselves to an activity because they are committed to certain principles. Angelo Rivero, who came to SU from Venezuela to study finance and managerial statistics in the School of Management, is such a person.

“When you come from another country, you want to show the best about that country that you can,” he explains. “In my case, I wanted to show Americans about all of Latin America.”

To do that, Rivero began taking an active role in La Casa Latinoamericana and is now its president. “La Casa is a social, cultural, ethnic, and political outlet on the SU campus focusing on Latin American issues,” he says. “Our activities are interesting to all sectors of the campus.”

Rivero has helped organize an astonishing variety of programs for the group. There was Latin Awareness Week, featuring everything from movies and an art exhibition to a conference led by the director of scientific and technological cooperation between Spain and South America.

In addition, there have been lectures by SU faculty members on the redeocratization of Latin America and regular Friday meetings that often feature a tertulia, an open debate for anyone who wishes to participate.

La Casa took this broadened direction under Rivero’s leadership. “I wanted the organization to represent what Latin America was all about,” he explains. “Americans don’t realize
Different interests are accommodated by a wide range of organizations and activities. Senior Phil Nevin (top), a former track-team member, now competes in no fewer than 10 intramural sports, including inner-tube water polo. Angelo Rivero, a senior from Venezuela, concentrates on Latin American issues as a leader of La Casa Latinoamericana.

that although in Latin America we have much in common, we also have many differences. Now, for the first time in recent history, La Casa's directors represent five different countries: Colombia, Puerto Rico, Spain, Venezuela, and the United States."

Rivero himself feels he's benefited a great deal from his involvement. "I've had a lot of successes, a lot of disappointments, a lot of happiness, a lot of sadness. Most of all," he says, "I've learned to deal with many different kinds of people."

He recognizes the job is nowhere near complete. "It's like building a house. You must set the base and then go floor by floor. I am a senior now, and I've built what I can. When I leave," he says, "I only hope the spirit will stay. I would like to come back to Syracuse in five years and see La Casa stronger than ever."

Despite all those hours spent in committee meetings and on the phone, all the mistakes and frustrations, all the times they're convinced they're the only ones who really care, Syracuse students are obviously getting something from their commitments. In fact, even in the worst moments, they seem to recognize that they're learning something.

Some of that learning is personal and some is professional; for someone like Greg Alpert, it's both. Like other film students in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, his major demands an enormous commitment of extra hours. If he's not in class or studying, he's shooting his own film, crewing for someone else, editing, scouting locations, or mixing down soundtracks.

Nevertheless, Alpert made time to help create Film Forum at Syracuse because he felt it filled a crucial gap. In the process, he learned to deal with by-laws, budgets, other student groups, University administrators, faculty advisors, committees, and funding sources. That required organizational skills, financial sophistication, the ability to communicate, political sensitivity, and sheer doggedness.

Just ask him if he thinks the experience has added to his education. He'll be glad to tell you.