**Business School Made Whole by New M.B.A.**

**WHEN I WAS CONSIDERING BECOMING**
a candidate for the presidency of the College of Charleston, I did some serious due diligence. Besides the usual financial and organizational analysis, I looked hard at the College's potential and its untapped opportunities for growth and improvement. At the time, I was still dean of the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia, so I quickly focused in on the College's School of Business. What I saw was a school growing in size and reputation and boasting a strong, distinguished faculty. But surprisingly, it lacked a full-time M.B.A. program. Much more surprisingly, no university in Charleston offered a full-time M.B.A. program. Thus, long before even being offered the presidency, I knew one key goal I would pursue if hired.

Shortly after I became president in February 2007, the College initiated the search for a new dean of the School of Business. A driving force behind the search was our desire to hire a dean with the vision and persistence to create and gain state approval for a full-time M.B.A. program. The search ended with the hiring of Alan Shao from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he served as associate dean of professional and global programs. Within 14 months of his arrival on campus, Dean Shao and his faculty built a curriculum and full-scale proposal for Charleston's first full-time M.B.A. program. And on May 6, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education approved the new program.

This program was literally 20 years in the making. Former School of Business deans who paved the way for today's M.B.A. program include Howard Rudd, Clarence Condon, Bob Pitts and Interim Dean Rhonda Mack. Their previous attempts to launch an M.B.A. ran into opposition within the state. This time around, with significant assistance from our Board of Trustees and the business school's Board of Governors, approval was achieved. The missing program is now in place, and our business school is whole.

For the past 30 years, our country's M.B.A. programs have begun admitting students directly from undergraduate programs. Such programs enable their graduates to focus on their careers and not have to interrupt them to return to graduate school in their late 20s. This is the direction our business school faculty chose for our new M.B.A. program. It will be a full-time, accelerated program taking only 13 months to complete and will not require work experience. Initially, we expect most of our applicants to be College of Charleston undergraduates. Eventually, as the strength and reputation of the program grow, students will be attracted to Charleston from around the globe.

The value of an M.B.A. program to the College is immeasurable. It presents endless opportunities to strengthen academic and economic connections between the College and the world around us.

Over time, our M.B.A. graduates will begin to rise up through the ranks of local, national and international companies. As business leaders, these graduates will become valuable resources for the program, the College, the city of Charleston and future generations of M.B.A. graduates looking to start their careers.

The program will also enable greater collaboration between the College of Charleston and nearby universities such as The Citadel, Clemson and the University of South Carolina.

On a global scale, the program will help the College build on the momentum of initiatives such as the School of Business’ Center of Vietnamese Enterprise, which was established to enhance economic and cultural links between the United States and Vietnam. Further, with an M.B.A. program in place, the College can begin offering revenue-generating M.B.A. programs abroad.

My thanks to everyone who helped launch the new M.B.A. Their hard work and persistence paid off.

– President P. George Benson