

“We were put on earth to walk, not to wave out of car windows.”

- Dr. William M. Chace

The Emory Experience

In 1915, American architect Henry Hornbostel was selected to design an Atlanta campus for the University, which had been established by the Methodist Church in 1836 in nearby Oxford. The verdant landscape and clear streams reminded Hornbostel of the hillsides around Rome, so he chose the Italian Renaissance villa as his model. In 1920, the red tile roofs and marble facades were described by *The American Architect* as “a remarkable group of buildings which are the commencement of a great university.”

Over six decades, Emory attained a secure place among preeminent southern schools. In 1979, brothers Robert and George Woodruff established a \$105 million endowment in memory of their father. As the largest single grant in the University's history, the gift was also the beginning of Emory's emergence into the larger academic arena.

Dr. William M. Chace became Emory's 18th president in 1994. As he approaches retirement this year, Dr. Chace discusses the impact of the extensive planning process that transformed Emory's campus.

Pedestrian walks have replaced streets and parking lots.



Emory Campus Master Plan: Black depicts existing buildings, red depicts proposed buildings



The center of campus has been returned to pedestrians with limited vehicular and shuttle bus access. New infill sites allow for growth in the sciences.



“Emory now has documents to guide development and

Q: You arrived at Emory after serving as president of Wesleyan University and after 20 years as a literature scholar at Stanford. What was your initial impression of the campus's physical presence?

I am aware that I don't have an artistic eye, but I knew something was wrong. I sensed a distressed physical environment. There seemed to be visual and aesthetic confusion and no adherence to the original design principles. Auto traffic made the campus into a large parking lot. I was convinced that if, in 500 years, someone discovered a photograph of the campus they would conclude, “This was a people who had an obsessive relationship with large metallic objects.”

Q: What diverted the campus from its Italian Renaissance model?

The Woodruff endowment changed the institution. It went from being a respectable regional university to emerge as a national and international presence. But the ensuing expansion was like the Wild West. Furtive attempts were made to adhere to some semblance of a plan, but the campus eventually suffered from a series of isolated initiatives that threw up buildings whenever funding was available. Everyone got ahead of the plan. For example, between the traditional marble and tile of the anatomy and physiology buildings is a drab, disharmonious connecting structure that one of our deans describes as “an ugly desecration.”

Q: What was your reaction?

I began in a most amateur way to think what the campus could be like with a new master plan. We needed a set of principles encompassing the original design, details, and thoroughfares. In my mind we needed the influences of Paris - wide sidewalks, open green spaces, places to stop. The President's Cabinet discussed the prospects and initiated a process somewhat like a

beauty pageant to find the right planning consultants. By 1996, we were joined by Ayers/Saint/Gross, with Adam Gross as our principal partner.

Q: How did the master planning process evolve?

We started by focusing on the basic humanity we all share and how it relates to Emory's mission. Two years later, we had conducted 120 meetings with 1,800 people.

It began in July 1996 with a nine-month first step, which was an observation process to gain consensus on how to make Emory more beautiful. We met with all segments of the campus community, alumni, county planners, neighborhoods, and civic groups.

By April 1997, we were ready for a conceptual plan to set a broad framework for campus development. We realized that over time, the social center of campus had shifted from the main quadrangle to the many health sciences buildings. To create a new campus “spine,” we transformed the area from a car-dominated circle into a people-dominated piazza with formal and informal walks and civil spaces for interaction. We took into consideration the circulation of shuttle vehicles, emergency and VIP vehicles, and the needs of disabled people.

We also used this phase to identify potential sites for unknown needs up to 50 years from now. We assessed the responsible land capacity and treated Emory's natural features as ultimate amenities of the final design. Each building was located with an understanding of functional relationships and the network of open spaces. We also developed a series of interconnecting quadrangles.

We then tackled parking and traffic, which became the biggest challenge. Fully resolving these issues requires comprehensive

construction for the next half-century.” - Dr. William M. Chace

planning with regional transportation authorities, but the overriding concept is to remove most surface parking and non-essential vehicles from the campus core. This step will be taken incrementally by dividing the projected parking needs into a series of new structured facilities.

During the third step we divided the campus into precincts that could test primary themes on a larger scale and in finer detail. The themes included storm water, road width, serviceability, etc. Testing concepts at this level ensured that the plan is workable and economically viable.

We then brought together the precinct plans into one concise product that became a basic reference document. It is a standard against which future thoughts on campus development will be tested.

The fourth step was development of design guidelines, which are tools to measure the aesthetic character of campus development. They are linked to technical standards and guidelines that were developed concurrently by our facilities management team.

Finally, in 1998 we went to the phased implementation portion, which will be managed through the costing of various components as funds become available.

Q: Can you share examples of programs that have been implemented since the master planning process concluded?

Emory has committed more than \$1 million annually to an aggressive alternative transportation program to alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality. In January 2002, the University entered a partnership with Georgia Power to be a pilot site for a fleet of Ford Think electric cars. By spring, employees could “check out” the cars during the work day to

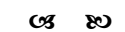
get to meetings and medical appointments or to run errands. We also are building a fleet of alternative-fueled shuttles and buses to provide transportation for the campus community and visitors. With the help of federal funding, we will purchase five electric shuttles to complement our compressed natural gas buses and electric tram.

Our facilities management department has replaced 44 of its gas-powered vehicles with electric carts that are recharged at stations around the central campus.

What I find particularly rewarding is the enthusiastic buy-in from the campus community. I don't recall a single complaint from an employee who has switched to our subsidized alternative transportation program or who now walks around campus instead of driving.

Q: How would you summarize the outcome of the rigorous master planning process?

Emory now has a design legacy based solidly on its mission. Ayers/Saint/Gross produced a book on standards for our grounds and new buildings that established overall design direction down to details like door handles and trash cans. It is a document that will last at least half a century.



The Emory University campus master plan received the Established Campus Merit Award at the August 2002 annual meeting of the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) and American Institute of Architects. In fall 2002, the plan was recognized by the Maryland and Baltimore chapters of the American Institute of Architects during their design awards programs. Visit the Emory master plan at www.emory.edu/FMD/PLAN.