

MONEY & MANAGEMENT

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An Uncommon Cottage

A showcase home at Furman U. teaches about sustainability—and generates good PR

BY SCOTT CARLSON

GREENVILLE, S.C.

THE FIRST THOUGHT that comes to mind upon seeing the Cliffs Cottage at Furman University: *This thing looks a bit out of place.*

The building is not a lab or a series of classrooms—not at the moment, at least—but an upscale, environmentally friendly model home. It is the kind of place that makes visitors dream of themselves at the professional-style kitchen range, making sorbet from organic local produce, or stretched out on furniture made with recycled and organic upholstery. (Since it's a luxurious house, those fantasies might also have to include a better-paying job or a considerable inheritance.)

Custom-built for the shelter-magazine dreams of *Southern Living*, a sponsor of the home, the house seems better suited for a tony subdivision. What's it doing here?

The Cliffs Cottage actually appears to be an ingenious stroke of marketing savvy for Furman. As *Southern Living's* fourth "showcase home," both it and Furman will be featured in the magazine, which has 16 million readers, over the next year. From now until next summer, about 30,000 *Southern Living* readers will flock to Greenville to tour the house and learn about green building—and see Furman's campus in the process.

In June 2009, when the magazine moves on to its next showcase home and the tourists stop visiting, the 3,400-square-foot house—

with its many solar panels and other cutting-edge green technologies, discounted or donated by more than 110 companies eager to get their names into the magazine—will become Furman's sustainability center.

Then students and professors will study how the green materials perform over time and report some of that information to companies that contributed to the project. Duke Energy, for example, gave \$1.5-million for the house's solar panels and is interested in how the technologies perform so it can make solar energy part of its energy mix in the fu-

hotter than sustainability. When the project is finished, the nonprofit organization retains ownership of the home and is able to use it however the group pleases. The Wren House at Clemson University's South Carolina Botanical Garden was the first showcase home, opening in 1998. After its stint as a showcase property, it was transformed into a visitors' center.

David E. Shi, president of Furman, heard about *Southern Living's* concept in 1999 and contacted the magazine.

Furman was about to strike a deal with

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ture. (For now, most of the energy Duke produces is based on coal.) As a bonus, the panels will produce 35 kilowatts of energy per hour—far more than the house will use. The surplus will supplement power on the campus.

LEADERS IN SUSTAINABILITY

The home is meant to educate anyone who visits it, says Derick Belden, executive editor of *Southern Living*. The magazine forms partnerships with nonprofit organizations to either build or renovate its showcase homes, which exemplify a hot trend in home design—and at the moment nothing could be

Southern Living when the attacks of September 11, 2001, occurred. The university and the magazine decided to put the project on hold. Over the next several years, Furman worked at establishing a reputation as an institution committed to sustainability, with Mr. Shi taking a leading role in efforts like the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment.

So when talks about the showcase home started up again two years ago, it was certain that the house would be a green home.

That goal is more complicated than it might sound, especially when dealing with companies that try to exaggerate their green

credentials to be part of the project. "We had some pretty fierce debates" with companies, says Edward C. Marshall, Furman's director of special projects.

For example, manufacturers of prefabricated wall and floor systems called structural insulated panels, or SIP's, sent half a dozen emissaries along with representatives from their trade association to push their way into the project. Mr. Marshall and the project's architect, Scott Johnston, had determined that SIP's were too dependent on petroleum in their manufacture.

"They were aghast, inflammatory, and really hard-nosed about why we didn't go with a SIP's structure," Mr. Marshall says. They backed off when he told them that Weyerhaeuser, a billion-dollar lumber company, had offered to donate \$100,000 worth of specially treated, mold-inhibiting studs, joists, and trusses made from Southern yellow pine, a fast-growing tree native to the South. The SIP's manufacturers could not match that offer.

In other cases—such as choosing a roofing material—the challenge was picking the lesser of evils. Mr. Marshall and Mr. Johnston rejected a steel roof because it used a nonrenewable material. Shingles made from recycled rubber were shot down because they would produce a "heat-island effect," or heat up the environment around the house, and because they were ugly.

The project's coordinators finally went with shingles made from Southern yellow pine treated with copper azole, a wood preservative. In years to come, students and fac-

MONEY & MANAGEMENT NOTES

Apollo Group President Resigns to Join Competitor

After he served just two and a half years as president of the company that owns the University of Phoenix, Brian Mueller announced last week that he was resigning to take a similar post at Grand Canyon University, a smaller institution with big growth aspirations.

Mr. Mueller's abrupt departure from the Apollo Group Inc. is seen as a sign that Grand Canyon will seek to become an even-more-visible player in the on-line-education market, although it is less clear what that means for Apollo. Mr. Mueller, who had worked at Apollo since 1987, formerly ran the University of Phoenix's online operation. Grand Canyon, which recently announced plans to go public, has made no secret of its interest in growing via distance education.

The University of Phoenix enrolls about 330,000 students, of which about 200,000 attend online. Grand Canyon reported enrolling about 14,700 students as of June 2007. Officials say its figures for 2008, which are not yet available, are higher.

—GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK

Donations of Noncash Gifts and Stock Are Rising Fast

Americans are giving away tens of billions of dollars worth of stock, art, real estate, and other noncash gifts every year, according to the IRS.

In a new report—the second of its kind—the IRS found that taxpayers reported at least \$41.1-billion worth of noncash gifts in 2005, the latest year for which data are available. The number of Americans who wrote off such gifts was about the same as in 2004, but the amount of those contributions increased by 10 percent.

Contributions included stocks and other investments, real estate, art and collectibles, food, clothing, electronics, household goods, cars and other vehicles, and other items such as airline tickets. Stock gifts accounted for the largest share of noncash contributions, totaling \$19.8-billion at their fair-market value. Real-estate gifts, valued at \$12.7-billion, made up the next largest share.

—HOLLY HALL

Mississippi Jury Awards \$1.2-Million to Coaches

A state jury awarded almost \$1.2-million to three former soccer coaches at the University of Southern Mississippi, all men, who said they had been subjected to sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, and lack of due process when the university fired them, according to the *Hattiesburg American*.

The lawsuit accused the university and several of its officials of seeking the coaches' dismissal because they "preferred to have a woman coaching the women's soccer team." One coach said a university official had made "sexual advances" toward him and sought to fire him. Another coach said a university official had tried to undermine his position.

University officials denied all of the accusations, and a Southern Miss lawyer said he was "absolutely shocked at the verdict." If it is upheld on appeal, the university would cover the jury award, the newspaper reported.

—ANDREW MYTELKA



2 Furman U.'s Cliffs Cottage incorporates local, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products. The interior features (1) custom woodwork from local and sustainable sources, and furniture with recycled and organic upholstery. The frame and roof (2 and 3) are made from Southern yellow pine, an abundant, fast-growing tree species, which has been treated to resist rot and insects. In the garden (4), heirloom vegetables will be grown organically, then sold to students, staff and faculty members. A mold-inhibiting, formaldehyde-free fiberglass insulation (5) was one of two types used, and various kinds of solar panels installed on and around the house (6) will generate far more energy than it will require.



ulty members studying sustainability at Furman will measure the environmental impact of copper in the water that runs off the roof and into cisterns, which will be used to irrigate the grounds, including a quarter-acre vegetable garden.

AN INHERENT TENSION

Mr. Shi says the house represents the inherent tension in sustainability; that it is fraught with "trade-offs, compromises, and unintended consequences." As green as the designers and university tried to be, "there were very few purely beneficial products" used in the house, he says. "They all involved some sort of trade-off." There were even some compromises made for *Southern Living*, such as the fireplace. Fireplaces can be leaky and can foul the indoor air, but the magazine insisted on a fireplace—some-

where to hang stockings for the Christmas issue.

As a fantasy version of a green home, the Cliffs Cottage itself represents a central paradox. A 3,400-square-foot home on a big lot with a three-car garage is hardly sustainable if everyone builds one, no matter how many natural, local, and recycled materials are involved.

The size of the house was a point of "hot and heavy" debate, says Frank M. Powell, a professor of health and exercise science who is a leading sustainability advocate on the campus. The house started at 4,000 square feet, and some involved in the design pushed for an 1,800-square-foot home, he says.

The ultimate size of the house was dictated not by its role as a green model home but by the fact that it was never intended to be a home at all. Furman needed the space for of-

fices, meeting areas, and seminar rooms for the sustainability center, and the Cliffs Cottage and its surrounding gardens will also serve as a place for banquets, wedding receptions, and other events.

Within a year, the kitchen cabinets will be disassembled, the furniture packed up, and the kitchen range moved out, and all will be sold to new owners. The three-car garage will become a barn for the organic garden.

For now the Cliffs Cottage—with its espresso-colored bamboo floors, plush bedrooms, and taupe walls—is a dreamscape. Some 700 people toured the house the first week it was open, in June. Mr. Belden, from *Southern Living*, said he heard that an 80-year-old woman on a cane was among them, slowly walking through the house, taking it all in. When she left, she said: "I didn't know sustainability could be so pretty."