A first-year update on the innovative
new business curriculum

“Designed to better prepare students for real business, Walton College’s new curriculum has also kept Associate Dean Bill Curington and Curriculum Director Molly Rapert on their toes. Traveling to four different AACSB International conferences, they have shared the nuts and bolts of how the Walton College launched its innovative curriculum in the fall of 2003.

“The new curriculum allows students to focus on areas of special interest, but the core classes connect their majors to all areas of business,” Rapert said. “By integrating accounting, economics, finance, information systems, management, and marketing and logistics, students see all dimensions of business, not just one area. The objective to help students understand ‘the big picture’ and how the intertwined connections of ideas ultimately lays the groundwork for success after graduation.”

Other business schools have expressed interest in how the college has dealt with culture change among the students and faculty. Walton College Dean Doyle Z. Williams discussed these issues at the AACSB International Conference last November. Rapert has also stayed on top of changes affecting faculty by updating them through “Teaching Talks” every semester. In addition, she has hosted roundtable luncheons with all faculty involved in course development.

To develop the courses, Walton College faculty committed to serve on course development teams, which took them out of their specialties and enhanced their capabilities to teach interdisciplinary courses. In addition, the college business advisory boards were consulted in the development of the program.

“This was truly a team effort, and we are especially proud of our faculty who stretched themselves beyond their disciplines to develop these core courses, which are taught by individual faculty, not teaching teams,” Curington said.

“In the past, students didn’t begin taking business courses until their sophomore year,” he said. “It has been a challenge for us to teach new freshmen, but has given us insights into how to enhance the student culture within the college.”

In addition to the four AACSB International presentations, Curington talked to the faculty of the College of Business at Ball State University in November 2002 and addressed the business faculty of Miami University of Ohio this past August.

The new curriculum has been four years in the making. In 2002, the Walton College received a $230,000 grant to support its new courses from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE), administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The new curriculum was also a major factor in a $100,000 U.S. Department of State grant to provide assistance in undergraduate business education to the Université du Centre in Tunisia.

For more information on the Walton College’s new curriculum, go to the Web at: waltoncollege.uark.edu/newcore