

# Bringing International Education to SUNY Orange

By Mike Albright

*D*uring his first tour of the sparkling new Gilman Center for International Education that bears his name, former Congressman Ben Gilman was moved to tears, overwhelmed by the beauty of a facility that SUNY Orange officials expect will usher in a new chapter in the College's quest to globalize its curriculum.

Carved predominately from the College's current Middletown Library and enhanced by a glistening circular glass and aluminum entryway off the Library's north exterior, the new Gilman Center commands your attention as you enter campus from East Conklin Avenue.

The Gilman Center will help SUNY Orange prepare students to take advantage of exciting opportunities provided by changes in the local, regional and global workplace. It will serve as a teaching and learning hub for courses in Global Studies, continue to attract prominent speakers to campus and showcase Gilman's outstanding accomplishments both at home and abroad. The Center will also provide educational resources to students, scholars and community members seeking to learn more about the global environment and the international role of the United States.



**First day of digging – Aug. 14**



**Pouring cement for flagpoles – Sept. 14**



**Exterior walkways complete – Oct. 9**

"The College is tremendously lucky to have access to papers, documents, treaties and other items from Mr. Gilman's distinguished Congressional service," explains Bryan Gersbeck, a first-year political science student. "I'm sure they will be invaluable to me, my classmates and future students as we work and study on our way to a career in government."

The completion of the Gilman Center is just the latest in a series of initiatives undertaken by the College to broaden its curriculum to reflect the changing social, political, economic and cultural landscapes around the world. During the summer of 2007 SUNY Orange created a new Global Studies Department and this spring, the College is concluding its debut "Global Initiative: Latin America," a year-long focus on the culture, art, history, politics, music and culture of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

Revisions to the International Studies degree program curriculum include the addition of a variety of courses (International Literature, International Art, Comparative Politics and International Relations) designed to "beef up" the foreign and international content of the curriculum within Global Studies, explains **Paul Basinski**, interim chair of Global Studies. The new courses, available for the Fall 2008 semester, will provide students with greater access and insight into global affairs.

Within the past year newcomers **Dr. Corey Harris**, **Michael McCoy** and **Heidi Weber** have joined Basinski, **Edgar Gutierrez** and **Dr. Jean Carlos Cowan** to comprise the new Global Studies Department faculty roster. **Dr. Michael Strmiska** will soon join the team as well.

This summer, Gutierrez and five SUNY Orange students will visit Urbino, Italy, for what is believed to be the College's first-ever study abroad experience for college credit. The students, who will study the Italian language, will be immersed in the culture, history and art of Italy throughout their one month in the country.

"Over the course of the College's 57-plus years of existence, we have gradually seen Orange County grow from rural farmland to a vibrant and bustling suburban community," says **Joan Wolfe**, chair of the College's Board of Trustees. "But, in truth, our community knows no boundaries today. We've become a global society, and it is imperative that SUNY Orange expand its own horizons to meet the changing demands of our students and our community."

"The Gilman Center for International Education will allow us to do that. It will be a place where students, faculty and scholars unite in the pursuit of academic excellence and intellectual inquiry. It will bring the world to our students, and our students to the world."

Within the first month of its completion, the Center served as the perfect backdrop for a collaborative meeting between College administrators and a 10-person delegation of Chinese educators and civic leaders who visited SUNY Orange in late February to investigate the College's workforce training and academic programs.

Throughout the Gilman Center's interior, suitable spaces will be allocated to showcase research papers, artwork, memorabilia and other items from Gilman's more than 30 years in Washington, as well as his travels abroad. International studies and global understanding were cornerstones of Gilman's career in government, and they also create the foundation for the mission of the Gilman Center.

Much credit goes to Library director **Susan Parry**, archivist **Mary Ann Van Benschoten** and Basinski who organized a portion of the Congressman's collection and developed suitable photo and memorabilia displays to accompany the facility's March ribbon cutting ceremony.

Ben Gilman's legacy was secure long before work began on the Gilman Center for International Education. But with the building's completion, Gilman's career will continue to serve as an inspiration to generations of SUNY Orange students, positively impacting the College curriculum and local community for years to come. ■



**Interior work continues –**  
Oct. 30



**Entryway construction –**  
Oct. 31



**Façade and entryway work**  
**continues – Nov. 13**



**Conference room complete –**  
Feb. 19