

THE GENERAL COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

Access

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

General College

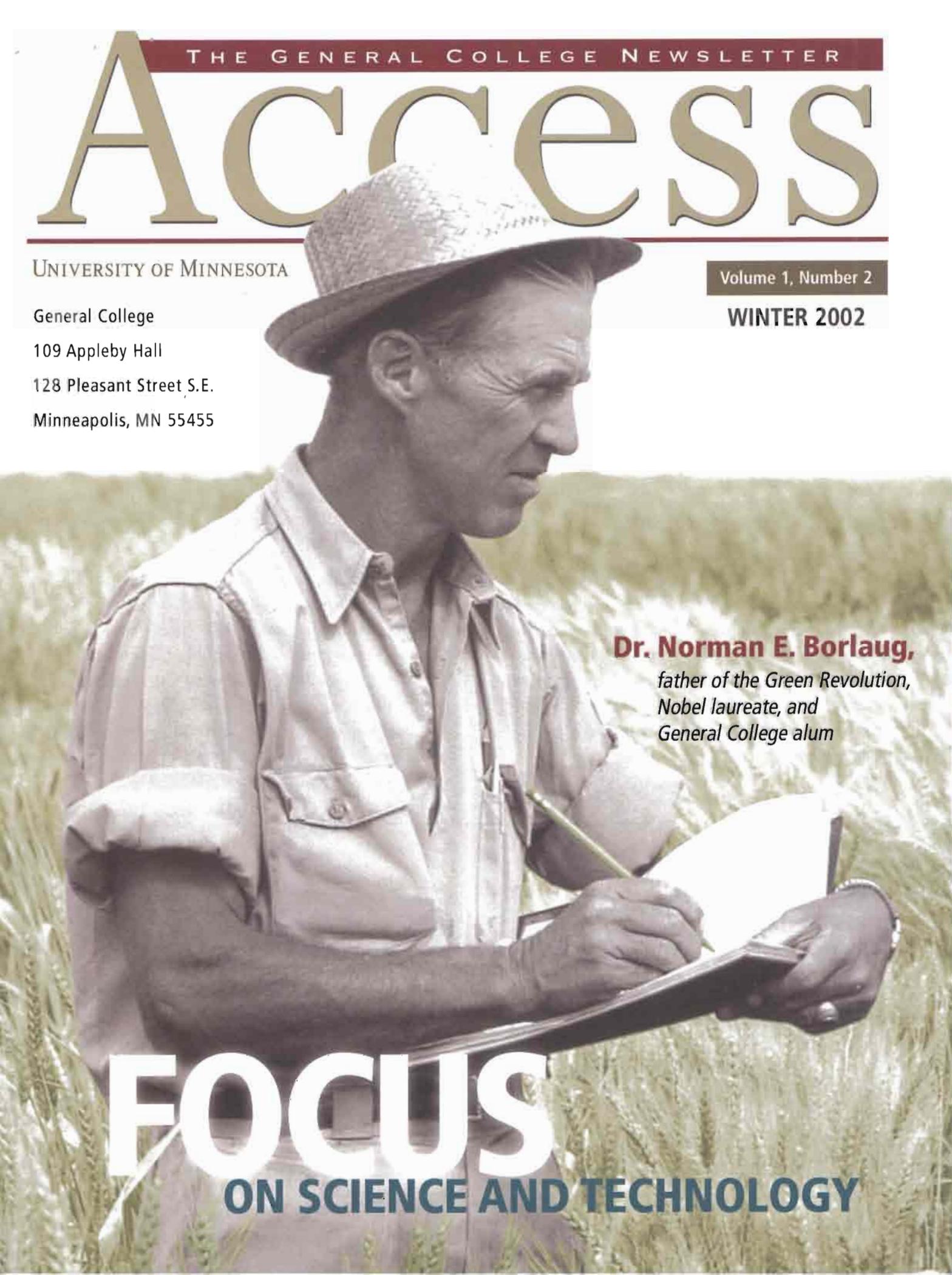
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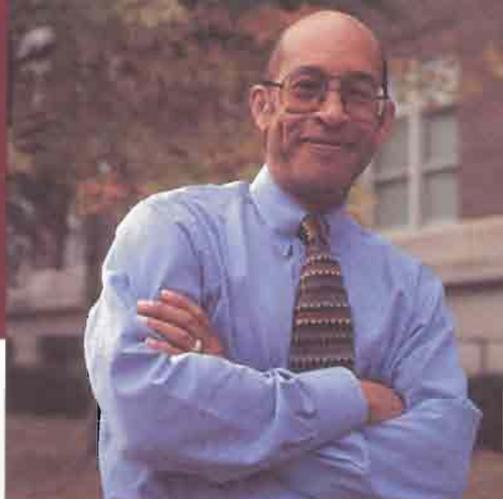
WINTER 2002



Dr. Norman E. Borlaug,
*father of the Green Revolution,
Nobel laureate, and
General College alum*

FOCUS

ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Focus on science and technology

From the Dean

Dean David V. Taylor

This past October I was invited by the president of the World Food Prize (the equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize), Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, and Dr. Norman Borlaug (Nobel Peace Prize laureate, 1970) to attend the 2001 World Food Prize Ceremony in Des Moines, Iowa.

Once a year, the leading international scientists in agriculture and policy makers concerned with food security gather not only to bestow honors on one of their own but to actually engage in discussion concerning sustainable agriculture and the preservation of global water resources. The conference and the World Food Prize laureate ceremony attract little media attention outside of Iowa. However, the men and women who gather annually have a profound impact upon the quality of life that world populations will enjoy.

Dr. Norman Borlaug has been credited with saving more lives than any other person in history. His experimentation with wheat led to the development of a strain that permitted Mexico and India to become self-sufficient agriculturally. His research has made it possible for other scientists to increase crop yield in developing nations, thus avoiding the specter of mass famine. Dr. Borlaug began his remarkable career as a student in General College (see page 4).

Along with Dr. Borlaug there are other students who began their education in General College and are contributing to the advancement of science. In this issue of *Access* we have highlighted a few of our alumni and professors who are at work changing the world that we know through science. In General College we routinely encourage students to explore possibilities in the natural sciences and health sciences in hopes of nurturing another possible Nobel Peace laureate.

Access

contents



4
ALUMNI FEATURE

General College's Nobel Prize winner
Dr. Norman E. Borlaug

6, 7
ALUMNI FEATURES

GC alumni make their mark in technology fields
Tuyen Dang and Hang Trinh; John Mahoney

8
GC SCIENCE FACULTY

Biology faculty focus on evolution
Randy Moore, Murray Jensen, and Jay Hatch

9-11
GC SCIENCE FACULTY

Physical scientists teach "in context"
Allen Johnson, Rick Uthe, and Leon Hsu

12-15
STAFF FEATURES

Marge Cowmeadow: Once a coach always a coach
More staff features—Ezra Hyland and Jill Trites

Department News

16 Archives

16 Staff Kudos

17 News from the Research Center

18 Donor Honor Roll

20 Campaign Report

Photos of Dr. Borlaug on the cover and this page courtesy of CIMMYT, Mexico City.

General College “a force to be reckoned with”

GC faculty and staff made a big impact at the Third National Conference on Research in Developmental Education

Dean David V. Taylor was the keynote speaker at the National Center for Developmental Education's (NCDE) Third National Conference on Research in Developmental Education, held in Charlotte, NC, October 24-27. Taylor drew on his 13 years as dean in his address, “Supporting the Research Mission: Developmental Education and the Role of Administration.”

Further attesting to GC's leadership in the field of developmental education, 21 of the 300 attendees were GC faculty and staff, most of whom spoke or made presentations. Dana Britt Lundell, director of GC's Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL), and Professor Jeanne Higbee, CRDEUL's faculty chair, presented invited sessions on, respectively, “Theoretical Perspectives for Research in Developmental Education” and “Future Directions for Research in Developmental Education.”

The six sessions (two each day) that GC faculty and staff presented at were very well received and all the GC handouts were snatched up. Dean Taylor's keynote address was so well received that a representative of the Noel-Levitz consult-

ing firm invited Taylor to speak at an upcoming conference. “It is clear from this experience that GC is on the ‘cutting edge’ of developmental education, asking the right questions, and a force to be reckoned with,” Taylor said.

Developmental education is the field of practice and research within higher education with a theoretical foundation in developmental psychology and learning theory. It promotes the cognitive and affective growth of post-secondary learners at all levels of the learning continuum.

Since 1991 the mission of General College has been to admit and prepare academically underprepared students for successful transfer to other degree-granting colleges at the University and to engage in developmental education research.

NCDE is based at Appalachian State University, a member institution of the University of North Carolina. Under the direction of Dr. Hunter R. Boylan, NCDE is a major source of information, training, and service in the field of postsecondary developmental education and learning assistance.—L.W.

“Years ago as a burgeoning historian, I was hired by the Minnesota Historical Society to curate the Hubert H. Humphrey Collection.... One of the volumes arrested my attention. Titled ‘All That I Know About Politics,’ in gold letters on a maroon inset on an impressive navy blue cover, it was authored by Humphrey. I opened the book and found all 350 pages to be blank. At first I thought this was a mistake.... I later realized Humphrey was brilliant. It was not a printing error but a bold statement about the intuitive nature of being a good politician. It is an acquired knowledge that is difficult to impart. It is an intuitive understanding of what you do....”

From Dean Taylor's presentation, “Supporting the Research Mission: Developmental Education and the Role of Administration,” October 2001.

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The big message communicated at a recent day-long conference for campus “Web people” was the role Web portals will soon play at the University.

Briefly, portals are a way to harness the myriad capacities of the Web to deliver information and conduct transactions so that each user gets a unique, personal perspective of the University. Without stretching the metaphor too far, General College too has, for decades, served as a portal to the University for people from all walks of life, including the science and technology graduates featured in this issue.

I welcome your suggestions or comments; send them to me at the address below or at l-webe@umn.edu. The next issue of *Access* will be out in the spring.

—Laura Weber, editor

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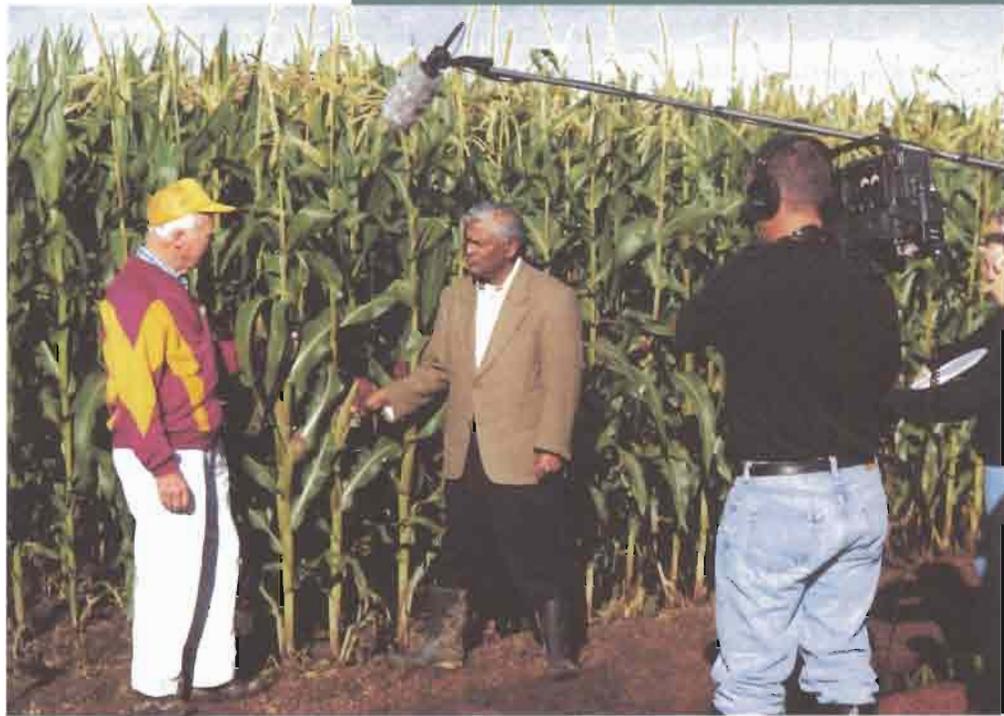
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Nobel prizes have been awarded to 13 individuals with University ties. General College is proud to claim one of them, Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. Dr. Borlaug received the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for his work preventing mass starvation in developing nations.



Below—University video crew filming Dr. Borlaug in Mexico, summer 2000, for General College's "Access & Excellence" video.

Right—Dean Taylor and Dr. Borlaug at the 15th Annual World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa, October 2001.

NORMAN BORLAUG

Each year, a world-class symposium focusing on the entire food production and distribution chain is held in Des Moines, Iowa, in conjunction with the World Food Prize award ceremony. In October, a delegation of University of Minnesota representatives, including General College Dean David V. Taylor and Development Director Kirsten Johnson, were special guests at this year's World Food Prize conference, "Risks to the World Food Supply in the 21st Century."

"We went to Iowa partly because Minnesota is one of the breadbasket states, and because Dr. Borlaug is a U of M alum," GC's Johnson said. In addition to Taylor and Johnson, University representatives included College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences Dean Charles Muscoplat and Development Director Sue Shepard; Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs Dean John Brandl; and G. Edward Schuh, director of the Freeman Center for International Economic Policy, who was a conference speaker.

The day before the official festivities began, University representatives were invited to a meeting with Dr. Borlaug to discuss the University's involvement

in food issues and access. The University is looking into establishing an institute or center that would bring scholars and students to examine food security issues, conduct research that would lead to the development of new strains of food and crops, and discuss the politics of food distribution.

The World Food Prize, brainchild of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, is 15 years old in 2001. This year is also the centennial of the Nobel Peace Prize. The annual World Food Prize originated with a vision Borlaug had after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, awarded for his lifetime of work to feed a hungry world. There is no Nobel Prize for agriculture; it was Borlaug's conviction, however, that stabilizing food supplies globally ensures peace among countries and such work deserved to be recognized on a Nobel-level scale. Thus the World Food Prize is the foremost international award recognizing achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food for the world.

Borlaug was honored at this year's World Food Prize 15th Anniversary Celebration by the world premieres of four creative works inspired by his life and work: "Symphony on the Prairie Farm," composed by Steve Heitzeg and performed by the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra; a suite of poems by Michael Carey, "On the Relationship Between Food and



Peace”; a documentary film broadcast on Iowa Public Television, “Out of Iowa: Borlaug and the Green Revolution”; and a painting by Douglas Eckheart, “The Borlaug Family Farm.”

Borlaug, 87, spent only his first semester in General College, but it was his entrée into academia. He was rejected by Iowa State Teachers’ College in his native state, and by the University’s agriculture and liberal arts colleges. (Borlaug had attended a one-room rural schoolhouse whose curriculum didn’t prepare him for their standards.) “Thanks to the General College I was given a chance, and what you’ve seen to date and what you’ve read about in the Green Revolution, as far as I’m concerned, couldn’t have happened had I not been given that chance,” Borlaug says in the video, “Access and Excellence,” which tells General College’s story (see below). Borlaug went on to earn a B.S. degree in forestry in 1937 and a Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics in 1942 from the University.

VIDEO GETS CABLE EXPOSURE

General College featured on “St. Anthony Falls Journal” through next May

General College is featured in a segment of John Derus’ “St. Anthony Falls Journal,” airing in the Twin Cities area on Metro Cable Network (Channel 6) every Tuesday at 9:30 p.m. through May 20, 2002. The half-hour segment, taped in mid-November, features Derus, a General College alum, president of the St. Anthony Falls Group (a government consulting firm), and former Hennepin County commissioner and Minneapolis City Council member, interviewing General College Dean David V. Taylor.

The show also includes an airing of “Access & Excellence: General College,” the 16-minute video produced for Campaign Minnesota by the college. Narrated by Penumbra Theatre artistic director Lou Bellamy, the video features GC’s faculty, staff, and students; University President Mark Yudof; and successful alumni including Dr. Norman Borlaug, 1970 Nobel Peace Prize winner; Stanley S. Hubbard, CEO of Hubbard

After earning his doctorate, Borlaug joined the Rockefeller Foundation’s pioneering technical assistance program in Mexico, where he was research scientist in charge of wheat improvement. For the next sixteen years, he worked to solve a series of wheat production problems that were limiting wheat cultivation in Mexico and to help train a generation of young Mexican scientists. Out of this work emerged the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT, its acronym based on its name in Spanish), headquartered near Mexico City. It was on the research stations and farmers’ fields of Mexico that Borlaug developed successive generations of wheat varieties with broad and stable disease resistance, broad adaptation to growing conditions across many degrees of latitude, and exceedingly high yield potential. These strains of wheat and improved crop management practices transformed agricultural production in Mexico during the 1940s and 1950s, and later in Asia and Latin America, sparking what today is known as the “Green Revolution.” This work may have prevented a billion starvation deaths worldwide.

Borlaug has lived in Mexico for most of the past six decades, traveling to other continents to teach and promote his techniques. Freelance writer Mary Kay Shanley interviewed Borlaug for an article that was reprinted in the 2001 World Food Prize program. She found him to be “still compellingly serious” about his life’s work. “We cannot stop what we are doing because we will be overwhelmed by population growth,” Borlaug said. “There are 6.2 billion people and we are adding 75-80 million more every year....If you want peace and promise, it will not be built on empty stomachs.”—L.W.

Broadcasting; and Shirlee Stone, special projects manager, American Indian Business Development Corporation.

In addition to the regularly scheduled rotation, the show will be inserted at various times in the station’s broadcast day, depending on their schedule. Already, dozens of viewers have let Taylor and Derus know they have enjoyed seeing the program.

Copies of “Access & Excellence” are available by calling the General College Development Office at 612-625-1564.—L.W.

Dean Taylor, former Governor and Regent Wendell Anderson, and John Derus, at a recent college reception at St. Paul’s Midland Hills Country Club.



Hang Trinh (left) and Tuyen Dang at their Institute of Technology commencement ceremony in 1998. Trinh was selected, through a highly competitive process, to deliver the commencement speech. The pair work as software engineers at Guidant Corporation.



Commanding English was a launching pad to technology careers for **Tuyen Dang and Hang Trinh**

It was his first year in a strange country. Tuyen Dang knew he wanted to study computer science. “I knew where I wanted to go, but learning English was the first essential skill I needed,” he said.

Hang Trinh was also a newcomer to America and Minnesota. Her older brother, a University graduate, took a week’s vacation from his job in the U.S. Patent Office in Virginia to come to Minnesota to orient her and three other newly arrived siblings to their new life. One of their stops was the University admissions office.

Both immigrants from Vietnam were admitted for fall 1993 to Commanding English (CE), the General College program designed for entering freshmen who are non-native English speakers. CE students build academic English skills while taking a year-long sequence of credit-bearing GC classes. Both transferred to the Institute of Technology (IT) in their sophomore year, where they earned degrees in computer science in 1998. Both now work as software engineers at Guidant Corporation, which makes medical devices. And, earlier this year, Dang and Trinh were married.

Dang and Trinh found Commanding English to be both academically challenging and socially nurturing. “My first quarter was tough,” Trinh recalled. “I remember having 45 or 50 minutes to review 70 pages and write a five-page report.” The support system helped, said Dang. “I knew people who were already in CE. I could ask them how things worked, how to find things, who to talk to.” He also appreciated the fact that everything he needed his first year was in the same building and that CE’s small class sizes—15 to 17 students—made for a learning environment that allowed him to get closer to fellow students and the instructor.

Besides academic support, what Trinh most appreciated about CE was that “when I was in a strange place someone was patient enough to listen to my broken English,” she said. “It built up my confidence so that I knew I should be able to get through the University. After the first year I

doubt I could get through.” The fact that everyone in CE was in the same boat and “needed each other” led to a cooperative, close-knit feeling that Trinh appreciated, especially after she moved on to IT.

Dang and Trinh were part of a group of young adults who came to the United States in the early 1990s, after the fathers in the family had finally been released from “re-education camps” in Vietnam, explained Commanding English director Robin Murie. “We are now seeing the results of this group’s energy, with our students going on to graduate from IT, the Carlson School of Management, the College of Human Ecology, and other colleges at the University,” she said.

Dang took to English well. Barbara Hodne, a CE instructor, noticed that the other students flocked around him asking for advice and suggested that he be hired as an undergraduate teaching assistant (UGTA) in the GC writing lab, Murie said. Dang was the first CE student hired in that capacity, a tradition that has continued to this day. Dang worked in the writing lab for a year and a half after he transferred to IT. “It was a unique opportunity to help,” he said. Trinh continued to use the services of the GC Writing Lab after she transferred to IT.

Trinh was selected to be the 1998 IT commencement speaker after a rigorous application process that included transcript review, letters of recommendation, a written statement, and a committee of 10 interviewing her. She admits that the prospect of winning the prize, which turned out to be an engraved clock, motivated her desire to win as much as the honor itself! The main theme of her speech, Trinh said, was how appreciative she was of the opportunities she received at the University, opportunities that many take for granted.

They enjoy their current employment at Guidant, where they both work in the Research and Development Division. Dang’s duties include software development and verification, while Trinh’s administrative skills have led to her doing some planning and technical administration. Down the road, Dang is possibly looking at graduate education in computer science, while Trinh is considering either more technology education or possibly studying for an MBA. Regardless of what they choose in the future, Commanding English helped their American journey.—L.W.