The Wesleyan Art Department takes a new direction with programs tailored to its students' interest and career orientation. The faculty includes (l to r) Margo Davis, Beverly Rhoads, Dan Keegan, and Anona Berry.
Arts

tailored to meet the interests and needs of individual students. We are still teaching the classes traditionally associated with an art program, but we also are responding to individual students' needs, particularly in career orientation."

Not all art graduates aim at becoming the next master painter, and most do not want to find themselves in the starving-artist syndrome. Today's career opportunities include commercial art, graphic design, computer illustration, education and art management. "For the student who works hard, learns technique, and is willing to take creative risks, the rewards are plenty," Keegan says. "Every career field is competitive; preparation and persistence are the keys."

Keegan, a ceramic sculptor with six years of art directing experience in graphic design, has 10 years of experience in computer graphics. Rhoads is a painter from Philadelphia who also works in traditional drawing media. Keegan says her closeness to the New York art scene and desire to develop serious studio artists blends perfectly with the program goal of career preparation.

Potential students seem to agree. "Students who visit the Wesleyan campus respond favorably to the career emphasis and the energy they perceive within the department," Keegan says.

Previously, Wesleyan had no graphic design or computer graphics program and Keegan sees that addition as yet another attraction for talented art students. To entice those students further, Wesleyan also established talent-based art scholarships of up to $5,000 a year.

"The Wesleyan administration saw the potential of art in the academic environment," says Keegan. "No promises of a new facility were made two years ago, but it seemed clear that if we made measurable progress in creating a solid program, the administration would respond accordingly."

Construction on the new facility started July 1, and most of the work will be completed by the beginning of the spring semester. The new Sleeth Gallery has already shown impressive exhibits by a variety of artists from Charleston, W.Va., to New York. Wesleyan has invested about $250,000 in the new department and gallery. The Sleeth Gallery Fund, established by Ron and Natalie Sleeth, has an endowment of $130,000, the resources from which are used to support exhibitions by nationally known artists.

Rhoads, gallery director, says the artists are on "the cutting edge of contemporary American art." Keegan agrees: "This new gallery provides us with the opportunity to bring in top-notch exhibitions and visiting artists."

Art instructor Margo Davis is gallery assistant director. The remaining member of the faculty is Anona Berry, an assistant professor of art who has been a member of the art faculty for nearly 10 years.

Keegan credits Berry, who was West Virginia's Higher Education Art Educator of the Year in 1993 and West Virginia's Art Educator of the Year in 1994, for helping to set the stage for the department's expansion and relocation.

"The first floor of McCuskey had been a dining hall at one time and not much use was made of it after it was closed, until Anona moved in a few years ago and started her January-term art Exploratory," says Keegan. That course had Wesleyan students working with Upshur County elementary students.

"Our goal now is to complete the redesigning of the curriculum, which includes the addition of an art management and art therapy concentration this fall," says Keegan.

"We can't help being excited about this facility. We can't wait for it to be finished," he adds. "It is going to be a top-notch facility, encouraging students to be their creative best, with expanded External Education offerings, new equipment and a great gallery exhibition and visiting artist schedule that will benefit the community and the region."