Saffron-Colored Spectacles

In celebration of Christo and Jean-Claude’s “The Gates,” a colossal installation of 7,500 saffron-colored structures in Central Park, the Columbia University Arts Initiative has been bussing students to the park to tour the exhibition. Accompanying the students are members of the Columbia and New York arts community, including Jean Magnano Bollinger, Gregory Mosher, director of the Columbia University Arts Initiative; Stephen Schiff, screenwriter, film critic for National Public Radio’s Fresh Air, and staff writer for The New Yorker; Award-winningiammarid Andy Borowitz, and New York Observer Theater Critic John Helfern. The critically acclaimed exhibit, which features 960-foot-tall gates with flowing orange nylon fabric, covers 23 miles of the footpaths in Central Park.

Columbia’s Executive Education Program

By Liz Zale

Jerry Workman is a believer. From “Marketing Management” in 1990 to the “Columbia Senior Executive Program” last year, the director of research and technology at high-tech instrumentation company Thermal Electron Corp. has completed more courses at Columbia Business School’s Executive Education division (CEE) than anyone in its history. As Workman gained new assignments and expanded responsibilities, he acquired a conviction that—for beyond advancing his career and improving his livelihood—Executive Education was helping to transform his life.

Workman is not alone. Since its founding in 1951, CEE has educated more than 48,000 executives from around the world. By providing the tools essential for developing leadership qualities through personal and professional growth, the courses enable executives to develop business insights from across a broad portfolio of learning opportunities. Its open enrollment programs address individual development needs in leadership and strategy, marketing, and finance. In its custom programs, Columbia partners with clients such as Deutsche Telekom, Ericsson and Lend Lease Americas on organizational initiatives that enable top-level executives to address challenges and meet their organization’s strategic goals. And through its Institute for Not-for-Profit Management courses, CEE strengthens nonprofit leaders’ and social entrepreneurs’ ability to fulfill their goals with impact.

“Columbia Executive Education reflects the school’s mission of generating ideas and connecting them to practice,” says R. Glenn Husbands, dean of the Business School. “Participants are exposed to cutting-edge research that provides practical and innovative approaches to current business issues.”

The success of CEE is based on three core attributes:

• Integrating theory and practice, courses are taught by Business School faculty with academic and industry backgrounds, who emphasize hands-on methodologies and real-world examples.

• Achieving measurable results with applicable learning that drives individual and organizational success through personal case development, faculty coaching and peer group collaboration;

• Exploring diverse perspectives through coursework that expands the relevance of global issues for local as well as multinational businesses.

While executive education would seem to be “executive training,” says Ethan Hanbury, CEE’s associate dean, “what distinguishes Columbia Executive Education is our holistic approach—participants see their careers, their environment and even their lives in a new way.”

Several CEE courses have been incorporated into the University’s executive development plan for senior administrators and officers (visit www.hs.columbia.edu/hr/courses/exec-development/course-cat.html).

Margo Amgott, assistant vice president of Student Services, for instance, took “High Impact Leadership” at the recommendation of her boss. “While it was hard to be away for a week, the course eclipsed anything like this I’d ever done before. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be out of my element and learn in a way that enriches everything I do. The faculty was incredible in terms of their commitment, energy and the multidimensional way they teach.”

While shorter programs are held on campus, many of the six-day leadership and strategy programs require participants and faculty to remain in residence at Columbia’s conference facilities. This unprecedented “learning community” accommodates ongoing exchange between participants and faculty and creates time for individual coaching and consultation.

“By taking these courses, I can speak the language to senior management, in terms of financials and how they want to direct the company, and emphasize the business itself and not just the technology.”

—Jerry Workman

So far Workman has completed five CEE courses. A biochemist, he learned early in his career about the limitations of a specialized education. “When you first get out of school with technical training, you’re right up to date. After about five years, you’re starting to become obsolete. After 10 years, if you haven’t done a lot of learning, you really are obsolete.” Confronting that reality, he set an early goal to “expand out of the tech arena and into a management role.” In Workman’s case, using his technical expertise to add value to management decisions, while at the same time learning management philosophy and language, meant being able to bridge what he calls the geektochef chasm. “By taking these courses, I can speak the language to senior management, in terms of financials and how they want to direct the company, and emphasize the business itself and not just the technology.”

As Workman’s career progressed, CEE continued to satisfy his advancement requirements. “They have spent a good deal of effort trying to accommodate executives at different stages of their careers and go out of their way to make it an enjoyable, pleasurable experience as well as a good learning experience.”

Accompanying business acumen and physical wellbeing, CEE has taught Jerry one of life’s insightful lessons. “The classes help you become a team player and think about how you help the organization. In doing that, you also help yourself.” It is a universal truth, Workman says. For more information, go to www.gsb.columbia.edu/execed.