

A REAL-WORLD TRADING ROOM OPENS ON CAMPUS

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Rivier College's recently-opened McLean Center for Finance and Economics provides access to real-time financial data from a variety of sources including the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ.



Photo by Jodie Andruskevich

Research from the national Jumpstart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy indicates that many high school graduates are unable to balance a checkbook and many don't understand basic principles of earning, spending, saving, and investing. To counter this trend, New Hampshire high schools, prompted by recent *No Child Left Behind* legislation, will soon be required to offer a financial component to their curriculum. Teens will learn a variety of personal finance concepts and practices, including establishing credit, balancing checking accounts, and creating budgets. As the need for financial literacy among today's teens is gaining attention, many colleges and universities are also stepping up to do their part to develop financially savvy young adults. Rivier's McLean Center for Finance and Economics, located within the College's Academic Computer Center in Sylvia Trottier Hall, opened its doors in January.

In addition to the Center's existing computers, a variety of business resources designed to incorporate financial learning into the business curriculum were added, all made possible through a generous grant from the McLean Contributionship, the parent company of *The Telegraph*.

"Finance drives our entire economy, and having a basic understanding of how the world's economies work is critical," says Maria Matarazzo, chair of Rivier's Division of Business Administration and a staunch advocate of financial literacy for individuals of all ages.

The Center's resources include a 40-inch LCD monitor broadcasting live world headline news and financial market data; an eight-foot ticker with scrolling real-time financial data from a variety of sources, including the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ, as well as domestic indices such as the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) and S&P 500; and a six-foot tracker displaying market statistics, foreign exchange rates, commodity prices, top news headlines, and more.

The College partnered with RISE Softtools™, a provider of complete digital display solutions for education, business, and retail sectors, to select the appropriate hardware and software to meet the needs of the College's business programs.

The new financial resources offer more than just bright lights and flashing data. According to Matarazzo, the Center's resources will have a profound impact on the delivery of business education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. "The Center will provide students with new skill sets in the areas of finance, economics, and investment; and will teach the skills necessary to efficiently analyze and respond to financial data."



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— Maria Matarazzo, Chair, Division of Business Administration

Matarazzo says the resources will add an additional hands-on component to Rivier's business programs, a critical element of business education since many students are visual learners. "The ability to analyze real-time financial data to support theories discussed in the classroom creates an ideal learning environment," says Matarazzo.

Assistant Professor of Business Administration Kevin Wayne is anticipating using the financial resources to enhance his undergraduate entrepreneurship course.

The McLean Center provides a dynamic environment for the study of finance and economics.

The course covers financial markets as a means of financing new and expanding ventures, as well as offering a means for exit strategies for small growth companies. "Concepts such as 24-hour real-time markets, trends, economic climates, investor psychology, and sentiment will be much easier to understand with such a visual and dynamic resource right here on campus," says Dr. Wayne.

The need for financial literacy doesn't begin and end with today's teens, points out Dr. Karen Spohn, assistant professor of business administration. Adults, too, are in need of financial training, both for professional and personal success.

In her graduate investment management course this semester, students are managing and tracking a portfolio with an initial worth of \$500,000. According to Spohn, the Financial Center's data streams are preprogrammed to coordinate with specific lectures, covering topics such as stocks, bonds, futures, and options. Students interpret related data as they make decisions about their own portfolios. "I continually look for new ways to incorporate technology into all my courses," says Spohn. "Computer games, homework management systems, and portfolio simulation packages are just some of the avenues for students to apply what they've learned."

The opening of the Financial Center is another indication that the College is keeping up with advances in technology, according to Executive Director of Information Technology Bill Schleifer. "When it comes to technology, Rivier stands shoulder to shoulder with many of the best liberal arts

colleges in the region,” he contends. To reinforce this, Schleifer points out that every student is provided with high-speed internet access, computers in all academic areas are frequently upgraded and feature the latest software, and a large number of electronic classrooms offer multimedia capabilities. Other recent advances include wireless internet access in several campus locations and technical support offered 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

David Boisvert, assistant to the President for Enrollment Management and director of undergraduate admissions, feels the Center’s presence on campus will enhance the employability of Rivier graduates. “Our world is changing rapidly and having the means for instant communication is paramount,” says Boisvert. “To engage today’s technologically savvy students, you need the tools and systems in place to appeal to them in ways that textbooks simply can’t.”

In addition to serving the needs of Rivier’s traditional and non-traditional student populations, the Center is expected to serve as a resource for financial training in the Nashua area. According to Matarazzo, local teachers will be invited to utilize the Center for personal training as well as for field trips and special visits.

Terrence Williams, publisher of *The Telegraph* whose parent company the McLean Contributionship funded the Center, says he was immediately intrigued by the concept of opening a trading room on the Rivier campus, after seeing similar centers on the campuses of larger schools he toured with his daughter during her college search. “When I was approached with the concept, I could immediately envision what the Center could offer the College and the community of Nashua,” says Williams, who approached The McLean Contributionship, the charitable division of Independent Publications Inc. and the owner of *The Telegraph*, with a request for a grant. The Contributionship previously funded several of Rivier’s multimedia classrooms, and made this most recent gift in conjunction with *The Telegraph*.

For Matarazzo, the presence of the Financial Center on the Rivier campus is a natural fit. “Our curriculum needs to mirror the demands of the marketplace. Because the teaching of our business courses is linked to current marketplace activity, we need to continually offer our students the latest hardware and software available,” says Matarazzo. “There can be no separation between education and technology in today’s global economy.” ■

* As Rivier’s Director of the Marketing & Communication Office, **KAREN COOPER** oversees the College’s marketing and advertising, public relations, publications, communications, and the website. She earned her Master’s of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing from Rivier in 2003, and this fall she will be teaching graphic design in the College’s Professional Communications program. Some of her accomplishments at Rivier include the design of the current College logo; the development of the College magazine, *Rivier Today*, of which she is the editor; and the launch of the new College website in 2005. She also serves as Associate Editor of the Online Academic Journal.