It’s The Year of Career at Stevenson. President Kevin J. Manning, Ph.D., explains why this is a particularly relevant theme for the new academic year and how the University supports its career-focused mission.

**VENTURES (V):** The 2012-2013 academic theme is The Year of Career. Can you explain why the University’s focus on career is so important for its students?

**PRESIDENT KEVIN J. MANNING, PH.D. (KJM):** For a long time, we have had the vision of being a national leader in career education. This is even more important today given the nation’s significant unemployment rate. Part of a Stevenson education is giving students experience in theory, practice, and mentoring. This is different from other institutions because there is a belief in higher education that putting theory into practice and learning from mentors happens mostly during post-graduate work. We started to apply these concepts at the undergraduate level, which is why we feel that we offer a unique undergraduate experience. This is the most effective way to not only educate students but also prepare them for a successful career once they graduate.

**V:** When you came to Stevenson, you introduced the concept of Career Architecture™. Has that concept changed or evolved since then?

**KJM:** Initially, we were trying to build off of the Villa Julie strengths—the College was always career-oriented, and we had not deviated from that mission. During my second or third year here, Career Architecture really evolved as defining the steps students needed to take to find a job. Since then, it has become a more complex process. One turning point was hiring IDEO, a design firm from California that helps organizations innovate and grow. We asked them to redefine and expand the process. Today, as it is explained in the feature article, “The Year of Career: A Mission in Action” (see page 8), it is a process that helps students learn who they are within the framework of theory, practice, and mentoring. IDEO worked for three months and came up with the more elaborate model and system we employ today. That system is explicit about our liberal arts values, which are really life values, and the career values that our faculty reinforce in the classroom.

**V:** How would you best describe the concept of Career Architecture?

**KJM:** What we hope to accomplish in each student’s four years at Stevenson is to make them savvy and to help them design their career, not just to find a job. Again, because of today’s job market, career reinvention skills are more important than ever before, and we teach students those skills. That is why we can truthfully tell parents and students that we are sensitive to the crisis of unemployment and the means of handling it. We will continue this process, especially in terms of working with students to clarify their values, which will help the students define their skills and align them with their careers.

**V:** What are some events that take place throughout the academic year that illustrate Stevenson’s career focus?

**KJM:** The Office of Career Services hosts numerous career activities throughout the year with employers, from etiquette dinners to networking events and job fairs. One of the more interesting events is the annual LEGO® Challenge because it’s a way for students to symbolize what we’re trying to teach them about careers. The freshman class comes in and they use LEGOs to create an image of Career Architecture by thinking through the process and what it means to them. We’ve been doing this for several years, so this year, we decided to elevate and add a symbol to the experience. We retained a globally known LEGO artist, Nathan Sawaya, who is based in New York City, and we have commissioned him to design his interpretation of Career Architecture through LEGOs. In conjunction, we are filming a documentary that focuses on the Stevenson LEGO Challenge, including Sawaya’s trip to campus to judge this year’s challenge and then reveal his own creation. It should be exciting.