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Winthrop University

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Common Book Author Bill Strickland Challenges Students to Get Involved

Quick Facts

- Strickland's multi-disciplined arts and learning center fosters a sense of belonging, interconnections and hope within the urban community where he grew up.
- His goal is to build 100 schools in the U.S., including one in Charlotte, N.C., and 100 overseas.



Bill Strickland

ROCK HILL, S.C. – People are born as assets, not as liabilities, according to **Bill Strickland**, author of Winthrop's common book, "**Make the Impossible Possible.**"

"It is about how you treat people," said Strickland during a visit to Winthrop Oct. 7. Due to his success as president-CEO of Manchester Bidwell Corporation and its subsidiaries, he has been invited to share his experiences with the Harvard Business School and served as a member of the Board of the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more than 30 years **Manchester Craftsmen's Guild** has been a haven for poor people in Pittsburgh's North Shore, **Strickland** said. The multi-disciplined arts and learning center fosters a sense of belonging, interconnections and hope within the urban community where Strickland grew up.

Strickland told Winthrop students that he set out to build a center using architect Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas. The **Manchester Craftsmen's Guild** is a state-of-the-art facility housing visual arts, design, ceramics and photography classrooms, a dining hall, auditorium/concert hall, and gallery all designed to showcase the roles of creativity and craftsmanship in learning. Handmade objects, furniture, photographs and paintings create a model environment for education, exhibitions, performances and gatherings.

"Art is a bridge to walk across to life," he said. "If you unlock the imagination, you unlock learning."

The building provides a catalyst for poor people, who always have a lousy day, **Strickland** said. Their children go to school in dark buildings filled with bad teachers and bad equipment. They have a cancer of the spirit.

"What happens if you treat them to the best conditions?" he asked. "This is what a school is supposed to look like. We fill it with sunlight, hope, gourmet food and fresh flowers."

He is convinced that environment drives behavior. "We are going to lose this country in 20 years if we don't do something," **Strickland** said. "Kids are walking the streets with diplomas they can't read."

His goal is to build 100 schools in the U.S., including one in Charlotte, N.C., and 100 overseas. He asked Winthrop students for their help in getting the Charlotte center underway.

"It is the environment and values that change behavior," **Strickland** said. "When our program is working, kids pull their pants up. When they put a belt on, I know I've got `em."

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