

## **Clemson's Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics**

Clemson University recently dedicated the Harris A. Smith Building, home to the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics, where students and researchers will study not only how packaging is designed and manufactured but also how products will be perceived, marketed and consumed in the future.

The Harris A. Smith Building is the only university program in the country that will bring together packaging science, graphic communication, the materials, environmental science, manufacturing, marketing and psychology disciplines to study packaging methods, said Chip Tonkin, the institute's director.

The Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics was initially created at Clemson University to exploit the synergies that exist between the graphic communications and packaging science departments. But according to the University, packaging design incorporates much more than the structural and aesthetic elements that typically come to mind: done properly, this process should incorporate a wide range of disciplines, including material properties, structural attributes, environmental sciences, manufacturing, marketing and psychology. As this became apparent, our mission broadened into something that will have a much greater impact.

The institute initially will focus on four areas:

- \* Designing environmentally sustainable packages;
- \* Developing electronic films that can be printed on packages to create displays, track shipments or apply environmental or biological sensors;
- \* Testing the impact of package design on consumer attention, buying patterns, use and disposal in its consumer experience lab; and
- \* Integrating the multiple steps in package design and construction into a single work flow.

“We think in these four areas we can make a name for ourselves,” Tonkin said. “Nobody has really looked at packaging as a core competency.”

The 28,000-square-foot building is named for Harris A. Smith of Atlanta, former chairman, president and chief executive officer of Smith Container Corp., founded by the Smith family in 1907. He sold the company a few years ago and saw an opportunity to create a global center for packaging innovation by investing in Clemson.

Smith made gifts and pledges of \$3.7 million and Sonoco Products Co. of Hartsville \$2.5 million for the construction of the building and to launch the packaging institute.

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