

# The art of collaboration

at Bowling Green State University

**Jose A. Cardenas, SOC was shooting a documentary in Bowling Green, Ohio, about five years ago when a few film students approached him. Their conversation inspired Cardenas to organize and conduct a three-week summer film workshop at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). He was joined in that venture by his friends, W.S. Pivetta, an assistant cameraman, and Jay Woelfel, a director.**

"The students were all writing, shooting, and editing their own films in digital video format," Cardenas says. "We designed the workshop to introduce them to a film experience, and teach them the meaning of creative collaboration."

The three friends combined their resources and borrowed additional gear from Visual Products Inc., in Wellington, Ohio. The first project produced by students participating in the workshop was *Building Dreams*, a 10-minute film celebrating the BGSU centennial. It was produced with a blend of 35mm and 16mm film.

"Our goal was to create a showcase film for the college on a miniscule budget," Cardenas says. "We reviewed the project with the students, agreed on a plan and assigned everyone to specific roles in creating a short film in a collaborative environment. I wanted the students to learn by doing rather than by watching. The alumni who came to see *Building Dreams* had preconceived notions of what a student film would be like. After the presentation, they were truly impressed. It was broadcast-quality work."

The success of the workshop led to an offer for Cardenas to return to his native state of Ohio and join the Department of Telecommunications in the School of Communication at BGSU, in addition to continuing the summer workshop. He enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to help prepare the next generation of filmmakers for the future. Cardenas was determined to expand their horizons by providing practical experience shooting film in collaborative environments.

"There is an assumption that digital video is a more affordable option when you are on a tight budget," he says. "I'm teaching my students that they can be competitive while shooting film when it is the right option for a project."

Cardenas frankly tells his students that he works with video when it is appropriate, but teaches them Super 16 and 35mm film are options on the tightest budgets. Cardenas tells them how and why he shot a 35mm commercial on a Beta SP budget.

The moral of that story, he explains, is to teach his students not to make unnecessary compromises.

Currently, Cardenas and a group of about 30 advanced film students are collaborating with the music department on a Super 16mm format production called *Tikvah*. This feature-length art film is based on the book *My Three Lives*, written by Philip Markowitz, a concentration camp survivor and Talmudic scholar.

The students have been assigned to roles on two full film crews and production teams with Cardenas overseeing the project. They have a 20-day shooting schedule. First Avenue Films, Inc., Pivetta's company, is providing the equipment, including a Super 16 ARRI SR 3 camera and a set of Zeiss prime lenses and a 10:100 zoom. Images will be recorded on KODAK VISION2 7218 color negative, a 500-speed film balanced for exposure in tungsten light.

"Once they realize the responsibilities of being part of a crew, it elevates their work," Cardenas says. "It will be gratifying to see our graduates use the lessons they have learned and the experiences they had at BGSU as their careers advance."

Cardenas adds that they are hoping to time *Tikvah* in a digital intermediate environment and record out to a 35mm print for the premiere. He anticipates that most of the shooting schedule will be in the can by end of this summer, with a completion date of fall 2008.

For more on the production planning involved on *Tikvah* with Cardenas and his student crew, visit [www.kodak.com/go/motion](http://www.kodak.com/go/motion).

(Note: The SOC after Cardena's name indicates that he belongs to the Society of Operating Cameramen, an honorary organization whose members are invited to join based on the artistic and technical quality of their bodies of work.)

**1** Jose Cardenas, SOC on the set of *Tikvah* with the student crew, including Stephen Hildreth, Allison Toman, Max Eberle, Dustin Brandt, Justin Russell and John Jurko.

All photos by Brad Phalin/BGSU Office of Marketing and Communications