From The Chair

In the poem “East Coker,” the second of four works that make up his monumental Four Quartets, the twentieth-century Anglo-American poet, critic, and dramatist T. S. Eliot makes reference to the small English village from which his seventeenth-century ancestor set out for the New World: “Each venture is a new beginning.”

This sentiment might well be echoed by the members of the USCA Department of English as they contemplate their present condition. Indeed, in the past four years, eight faculty members have left or signaled their intention to leave, and we have hired six new faculty and launched national searches for two more.

This is indeed a “new beginning” for the English program at USCA, and already there are signs of change. With new faculty, for example, come new course offerings; and we anticipate the development of a number of new courses with the potential of attracting whole new audiences. Dr. Matt Miller’s course in the graphic novel has already gained a following among students of the visual arts, and Drs. Carla Coleman and Katie Kalpin are building bridges to the USCA theatre program by revamping our offerings in dramatic literature. Dr. Eric Carlson is set to teach the rhetorical grammar course, a practical option for students pursuing a degree in communications; and Dr. Doug Higbee plans to breathe new life into our course in modern British literature.

This past summer also marked the kickoff of the Aiken Writing Project. The recipient of a $30,000 grant from the National Writing Project, USCA has now joined over 200 NWP sites across the country to provide professional development programs for teachers of writing. About a dozen local teachers completed the AWP Summer Institute hosted in June by Dr. Lynne Rhodes, director of the project. Based on what they have learned about best practices in the discipline, those teachers now serve as teacher-consultants in their respective schools.

Plans are on the drawing board for a new academic building at USCA, and the latest incarnation of those blueprints calls for a separate floor dedicated to the Department of English. We look forward to having a hand in designing the new space so that we have room to accommodate our current programs and room to develop new ones.

The members of the department are poised for “new beginnings,” and we invite our readers to share our excitement. This is the sixth year that this newsletter has found its way into print, and we hope that as our graduates read about the “ventures” launched by our department, they will keep us informed of what is happening in their lives. Please visit the department website at www.usca.edu/english/ where you will find contact information for all of the English faculty. Drop us a line and let us know about what you are doing now; we would like to include information about you in our next newsletter.

Dr. Tom Mack, Professor and Chair

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The Oswald Writers’ Series: Moira Crone

With several published works, Moira Crone has dominated the creative-writing field, winning numerous awards such as the 1994 Pirates Alley Faulkner Society Short Story Prize and the William Faulkner/Wisdom Award for a Novella in 2004. In addition, the award anthology, New Stories From The South, has published her short fiction four times as among the “Year’s Best.”

Both a novelist and short story writer, Moira Crone has four books to her credit to date: What Gets Into Us, Dream State, A Period of Confinement, and The Winnebago Mysteries. Her most recent work, What Gets Into Us, is a collection of stories centered on twelve characters and their journey through six decades. Today, Moira Crone is a professor of creative writing at Louisiana State University.

During Fall 2007, the James and Mary Oswald Writers’ Series hosted a reading by Moira Crone in the Etheredge Center. A short, entertaining introduction was given by senior English major Jonathon Roberts. Then, as the stage lights began to focus their glow on the easygoing author, the hushed audience lingered on her every word. She read a section from What Gets Into Us, and it appeared that the crowd was very impressed with her moving narration. After the reading, enthusiastic fans formed a long line, eager to get their books signed by Moira Crone.

-Rachael Bond
Dr. Tom Mack

Since the last newsletter, Dr. Mack is happy to report a number of accomplishments in the categories of teaching and scholarship.

Last spring, Dr. Mack taught a section of AEGL 102 for which two students completed special honors projects and a particularly large section of AEGL 499: Senior Seminar in which eleven seniors accepted the incremental challenge of building a capstone project (from prospectus to polished contextual introduction and text proper). This fall he taught a section of AEGL 275: Introduction to Literary Criticism, which gave students the chance to apply a variety of modern critical approaches to short stories by visiting writer Moira Crone, and a section of the first half of the American literature survey, which featured Powerpoint presentations incorporating a host of new images gleaned from the instructor’s trip to the Boston area last May (he spent a few poignant moments at the grave-site of Henry James).

Dr. Mack also completed a number of scholarly and creative projects in the past year. In June, he presented a paper entitled “Henry and Alice James: Two Views of the Irish Question” at the annual conference of the Society for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Ireland, hosted by the University of Glasgow in Scotland; that paper is scheduled to be printed in the conference proceedings. He also wrote twenty-five short biographical articles for the Guide to Literary Masters and their Works, distributed online as part of the Literary Reference Center, a library database compiled by EBSCO Information Services. He also wrote a review of Kaye Gibbons’ novel The Life All Around Me by Ellen Foster for Magill’s Literary Annual 2007, which includes articles on the 200 outstanding books published in 2006.

In the category of applied scholarship, Dr. Mack’s article entitled “The Evolving Canon: Classroom Implications” was published in Notes on Teaching English (December, 2006); and he edited the ninth volume of The Oswald Review (fall, 2007). In the category of creative activity, he continued to write his popular “Arts and Humanities” column, which appears each Friday in The Aiken Standard.

Karl Fornes

Karl Fornes enjoyed teaching English 360—Composition Studies for the first time during the Fall 2007 semester. A required course for Secondary Education—English majors, Composition Studies provides an overview of rhetoric and composition theory within the context of practical applications.

Fornes joined colleagues Vicki Collins and Lynne Rhodes for the Aiken Writing Project Summer Institute in June 2007. The Aiken Writing Project is a chapter of the National Writing Project designed to foster communication and professional development for writing teachers from grade school through higher education. Combining his interest in technology and writing, Fornes looks forward to serving as the Technology Liaison for future summer institutes.

In May 2007, Fornes began writing a regular column for Southern Discourse, the publication of the Southeastern Writing Centers Association. The column discusses how writing and the teaching of writing are portrayed in popular culture.

Vicki Collins

Since the last newsletter, Collins has been very busy indeed. During the spring of 2007, she served on two English Department faculty search committees, joined Sigma Tau Delta (the international English honor society), and served as a faculty panel member for the oral defenses of senior theses. In the summer, Collins earned the National Writing Project Teacher Consultant status in the Aiken Writing Project Summer Institute and held an Academic Success class “Kids in College.”

During the fall of 2007, she became the new ESL (English as Second Language) instructor for the English Department and an elected member of the Faculty Welfare Committee. In spring of 2008, Collins will make a presentation for the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English in Kiawah. In addition, she is a member of the Augusta Poetry Group, president of the Author’s Club of Augusta, and a faculty liaison between the Writing Room and the English Department.

Dr. Lynne Rhodes

This past year, Dr. Lynne Rhodes became the Director of the Aiken Writing Project (AWP), having received a grant from the National Writing Project to establish an affiliate site at USCA. Along with her co-director, Ms. Ginger Dunker (at South Aiken High School), Dr. Rhodes held the First AWP Summer Institute for K-12 teachers this past June. She hopes that all English / Secondary Education English alumni who are currently teaching in the Consolidated Aiken Public School District will consider applying for the 2008 Summer Institute (June 2008) to be held at USCA (www.usca.edu/aikenwritingproject).

Dr. Rhodes continues to pursue her research interests in writing assessment and writing across the curriculum, and she is also a new grandmother (a great job to have). She is looking forward to attending several conferences this coming year: NCTE in New York City, CCCC in New Orleans, and SCCTE at Kiawah. She is currently teaching Advanced Composition, Literacy and Media Cultures, and Freshman Composition.

Dr. Bill Claxon

Dr. Claxon continues to teach his usual courses with the addition of Writing in the University, which he taught for the first time in Maymester 2007. For the last two Maymesters, Dr. Claxon has also taught a special topics course: The South in Film and Fiction. This course studies film adaptations of Southern fiction, such as Ernest Gaines’s A Gathering of Old Men and A Lesson Before Dying, Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird, William Faulkner’s The Old Man, and Alice Walker’s The Color Purple.

Dr. Claxon also continues his occasional appearances in the reading series at the public library. This year in the library’s “No Suitcase Needed,” he will be discussing Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, a novel of special significance to Dr. Claxon because he lived in the same city in Nigeria as Achebe. Achebe was attending the University of Ibadan and writing the novel that has become well known around the world. In fact, many scholars consider Achebe the father of African fiction.

In addition, Dr. Claxon has renewed his vows to fiction writing and is currently finishing some short stories and collaborating on a novel. While his research interests remain focused on masculinity in Southern literature, he has temporarily digressed to pursue research on South African writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1991) Nadine Gordimer. Gordimer’s papers are archived at the Lilly Library at Indiana University, where Dr. Claxon earned his Ph.D. in English; Dr. Claxon has been nosing around in Gordimer’s papers, whenever he is in Bloomington, IN.

Finally, Dr. Claxon reports he has recently enjoyed renewing ties with former English or English Education majors: Melissa Johnson Allgood, who is teaching his daughter in high school, Ron Baxley, whose recently self-published book, Extra! Extra-terrestrial, was reviewed by Dr. Claxon (check Amazon.com), and Dr. Clay Morton, now a professor at Macon State College, GA.

Dr. Jill Hampton

Over the past year, Dr. Jill Hampton has continued to work hard on her teaching and scholarship. Last spring, she resurrected the Images of Women in Fiction and Film class. The students presented a wonderful program for the campus community in recognition of the importance for all women and men to follow their dreams and passions. At the same time, they invited a dozen community organizations to present information on women’s issues and opportunities in Aiken.

Following her passion for Irish and Immigration Literature, especially that of the American West, Dr. Hampton presented a paper on “The Irish Dream” at the Southern Regional Irish Studies conference at Winthrop University. In late June, she traveled to Glasgow, Scotland for a Society for the Study of Nineteenth Century Ireland conference where she presented a paper on May Laffan’s short story “Weeds.” Dr. Hampton plans to continue reading and writing on the intersections between landscape and identity in immigrant writing.
Dr. Matt Miller

Since last year, Dr. Miller overcame the stress and worries of his children’s three surgeries. Making it through this trial, his family has moved to a new house in Graniteville. He is very thrilled that this house has a bedroom for each of his three kids and more space to spread out (and to trip over toys).

Aside from this personal accomplishment, Dr. Miller has enjoyed teaching two new courses, in addition to his regular load of non-Western literature and Composition and Literature: Writing in the University and Modern American Writers. Of the former course, he says, “A EGL 201 was challenging to design at first, but now I think I understand its purpose: to offer students a review of research, style, and grammar skills and to teach students ways to enhance writing in their discipline.” Modern American Writers was perhaps a more rewarding experience for Dr. Miller last spring: the syllabus for that course included Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Vladimir Nabokov, Toni Morrison, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Chang-rae Lee.

Over this summer, Dr. Miller taught his Global Literature and Film (non-Western film) course for a second time. He also taught an English 101 course for the First PACE program, a provisional admissions program that at-risk students have to pass in order to receive full admission to USCA.

This fall he is teaching a course on graphic novels (i.e., book-length comic books), a course on non-Western Literature, and two sections of Writing in the University.

In terms of research, Dr. Miller has delivered two conference presentations, one on J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians and one on Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita. In September, he was a discussant along with Dr. Lynne Rhodes and Professor Ilona Law on reading at the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators Annual Conference. This October he presented a conference paper on the graphic novel Palamar on the development of Latino communities. In addition to these papers, Dr. Miller has begun to re-explore the relationship between trauma and literature, the subject of his dissertation. Future presentations and publications are going to focus on that topic.

In the category of university service, Dr. Miller has taken over the American Democracy Film Series. The series in the fall focused on the first amendment freedoms. For more information, go to http://www.usca.edu/ adp/adpfilmseries/index.html or e-mail Dr. Miller.

Dr. Katie Kalpin

Since last year’s newsletter, Dr. Katie Kalpin has been teaching, researching, and traveling. Last year she taught English Composition, Literature and Composition, and Shakespeare. This year she is teaching these courses as well as Introduction to Women’s Literature and Early British Drama. She finds her new courses to be exciting additions to her teaching schedule. She is also developing a new course for the Academy for Lifelong Learning on adaptations of Shakespeare’s The Tempest.

Last year Dr. Kalpin traveled to Baltimore and New Orleans in order to present papers at conferences. This fall she went to Atlanta to present a paper on early modern representations of witches to the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. She also presented a version of this paper to the Humanities and Social Sciences Brown Bag series at USCA. In the spring she will participate in the Shakespeare Association of America conference in Dallas. In early 2008, Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 (SEL) will publish her article “Fashion Wifely Advice in Thomas Heywood’s A Curtain Lecture and Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale.”

Dr. Kalpin has also been exploring the American South with her family—visiting Charleston, Savannah, and Edisto. In addition to beginning her new research project on early modern witches, her summer accomplishment of which she is most proud is taking her daughter swimming in both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Dr. Carla Coleman

Dr. Carla Coleman participated in two national conferences last spring in which she explored one of her favorite aspects of literature: the interplay between the stage and the page. In early March, she attended the interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Association Conference, where she gave a paper investigating the incorporation of French theatre into the Victorian novel. In April, she presented on performance and narration in Charlotte Brontë’s Villette at the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century British Women Writers Conference. She is currently preparing proposals on, among others, Queen Victoria’s Leaves from a Highland Journal and Charles Kingsley’s scientific children’s novella, The Water-Babies, for inclusion in several spring 2008 conferences.

In addition to teaching English 101 and 102, Dr. Coleman was delighted to offer both Romantic and Victorian literature courses last year, her first at USCA. This fall, she did manage to sneak novels from both periods into her Literary Gothic course. In the spring, she will have the opportunity to once again explore her dramatic side with a course on Recent Western Drama. Dr. Coleman also took part in this summer’s “First Pace” program for incoming freshmen.

Outside of the department, Dr. Coleman sings second soprano in USCA’s Masterworks Chorale, which is currently rehearsing for a spring performance of Handel’s Messiah. She also tries to find time to hike and camp, play with her kitty-cat, and spoil her niece and newborn nephew in Tennessee.

Ilona Law

Prof. Ilona law was given the honor of being one of thirteen USCA faculty members nominated to serve on the advisory board of USCA’s Center for Teaching Excellence. This center sponsors workshops and seminars for all USCA faculty members and offers consultation services for any faculty member who seeks guidance and support for classroom teaching through classroom observation and feedback, evaluation of programs and curricula, recommendations for improvement and reform, and tips on responding to different learning styles, managing student grades, and other classroom challenges.

This fall Prof. Law attended a workshop with colleagues Lynne Rhodes and Matt Miller entitled “Sharing What We Know” in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina in a lovely retreat called Wildacres. Profes. Law, Rhodes, and Miller are all members of the English Dept. Assessment Committee, which presently is at work on a means for assessing reading abilities in our freshman composition sequence. The workshop was stimulating and productive.

On Oct. 23, 2007, Prof. Law presented “A Cycle of Sorrow and Song in Angela’s Ashes” and then led a discussion on Frank McCourt’s Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir Angela’s Ashes to a receptive audience of about 25 at the Aiken County Library. This is part of the series entitled “Let’s Talk About It: Without a Suitcase.”

In anticipation of the Spring 2008 semester, Prof. Law is actively preparing to teach AEGL-391: Mythology. With a strong background in the classics, Prof. Law will shape this course to present some of the most important classical authors in the study of mythol- ogy, like Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, and Ovid, as well as modern adaptations of the myths they have represented in their major works in film and the modern novel.

Other then teaching, committee work, and advisement duties on campus, Prof. Law is the proud owner of two beautiful golden retriever puppies that were born on June 2, 2007. Their mother is her six-year-old golden named Holly. These two pups bear the names of one of Prof. Law’s favorite late Victorian novels, Tess of the D’Urbervilles, or Tess for short, and Emily, in honor of Emily Bronte, author of Wuthering Heights. These two girls seem to be living up to their names; Tess is a wistful beauty, and Emily, a wild and free spirit.
Dr. Harry Hootman  
This marks the fourth year that Dr. Hootman has taught freshman English classes since he received his doctorate at USC Columbia. He has had a long-time relationship with USCA, starting as a student with night classes in 1964-72, teaching computer programming 1980-81, and algebra, calculus, and finite mathematics in 1990-93. He is an avid book collector. His major interest is nineteenth-century British and American literature, and he maintains three websites on the internet concerning British Literary Annuals and Gift Books from the period 1823-1861 available at: www.britannuals.com, www.geocities.com/britannualsinfo, and www.britannualsinfo.com. He is currently actively engaged in further research and editing.

Dr. Phebe Davidson  
Three’s a Charm: The Lake View  
From droughty November I look happily forward to 2008—my third year of retirement. The year will see the formal release at USCA of the South Carolina volume of The Southern Poetry Anthology, edited by the re-doubtable Steve Gardner and USCA grad Will Wright, an event that will occasion a visit to the USCA campus—ever a popular destination. 2008 will also see publication of my first full-length book of poems (Fat Moon Rising, Main Street Rag Press) since the New & Selected in 2003. This time (writers are so demanding!) I’m pushing for two sets of galleys and copy editing that rises above the mundane. This is, of course, grand fun. Life in the upstate continues to treat us well. The bright red convertible still turns heads in the Wal-Mart parking lot. Our bowling averages are still on the rise. On the domestic front, our homegrown cooking herbs were all harvested and safely dried before first frost, and our snug little house marches resolutely towards the next round of renovations. The best news of all is the anticipated arrival of our first grandchild next spring. By any sane measure, this is bounty indeed!

VAL-I-WHAT-ORY? or, SEE YA ON THE FLIP SIDE  

This task is not possible anyway, so I’ll begin with some history.

I studied for my M.A. at USC Columbia in a federal program that required participants to teach in a two-year school. Nobody’s fool, I chose Aiken because I would be reimbursed for mileage. Thus, in 1971, I found myself in the ballpark at Bankside teaching 101. Then someone asked if I wanted a job the next year and I replied, “Sure,” thinking that my then-wife and I would cart our horse to Aiken and hang around for about three years. I became the fifth member of the English faculty. I never anticipated that the future would have me at the same institution for roughly sixty percent of my entire life. And from another perspective: I have been associated with the USC system since I was an undergraduate at 18, for almost forty-two years. Hard, hard to imagine. Eighty-four percent of my life. Boggles the mind. Mine, anyway.

So what kept me here? Easy to see, hard to say. Short answer: I liked the place (most of the time), the people (most of them, most of the time). I was intrigued by the reality that I was in early on a special opportunity to help shape and evolve something larger than what was in place. A young institution that had no choice but to grow. A young faculty—shucks, I was 24—that held the reins towards the future. And, besides, what a good life: to read good literature, then get paid to talk about it, write about it, write it. OK, so I would have preferred fewer classes, smaller piles of papers to grade. But it has been a fine career path, taken by serendipity.

I rarely had plans. None to come here. None to stay. Certainly none to slide into administration. Yet that’s where I ended up for roughly half of my tenure here. Coordinator of English. Chair, Division of Arts and Letters. Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

No inclination to take a year off without pay to live and study at Oklahoma State—but I did, an impulse that (with a bit of clerical support from USCA) netted me the Ph.D. Oh, now and then I interviewed around, declined a few offers and opportunities; but I never left. And, honestly, I am, in fine, pleased with most of what I see in my rear-view mirror.

What I’ve accomplished that I care about: I have tried my best to teach my best within the confines of the system and within the restraints of my own limitations. I am proud of the English Department (and my colleagues therein), which became, and has remained, a model for institutions this size—degree program, assessment, course offerings, collegiality, sense of necessity for the common good (for faculty and students and the institution), all-around productivity. I smile when I think about the writers series that I began in the early 1980’s, a slate of presentations that, according to the SC Arts Commission’s Literary Arts Coordinator at that time, drew audiences by far outstripping events every-where in the state (he said that our draw was double to triple that of anywhere else). Mark Strand. Sonia Sanchez. David Wagoner. Donald Hall. Michael Chabon. Marge Piercy. Carolyn Forche. Percival Everett. The honor of being able to bring such luminaries here and to have them mingle with, talk with, dine with students. I am also proud of my decade-plus editing of the The Devil’s Millhopper magazine and TDM press, whose presence here made USCA a school well-known among writers across this country, and even beyond. (OK, I didn’t found, just inherited, the enterprise, but I can still be proud.)

What I plan to do: I plan to sleep for at least one month. Then I will use the blessing of time to devote myself to the true work, the writing that has had to take a lesser level of import in my life. I will absolutely find a way, each day, to uncover something strange to laugh about. I will travel to the places where I have visited and invested some part of my heart. I will find more of those places, and go, and invest. And I will continue to question authority and sow and nurture cynicism because, no matter how infertile the ground might seem at first, the germs of constructive insolence are pretty darned hardy, and necessary.

As I begin to reflect, as I am forced to reflect, as the walk-away moment closes in, here’s what I am thinking. The tentacles from my little space in Aiken have stretched farther than I ever could have dreamed. I glow with pride that I have former students out there now who have succeeded, not just beyond my faith in them, but who have succeeded—as writers, as teachers, as soldiers, as journalists, and too much else to mention—far beyond my own accomplishments. And, yes, in the “poetry game,” there are a bunch who have kicked (kindly, I trust) sand in my face. Oh, I love that. And I am honored to have brushed brains with all of the USCA alumni who have passed my way and left their ideas on paper (and on-screen) for me to review. It has been, as Mr. Garcia said, “a long, strange trip.” I’m glad that I caught the train and that I got off at the stop that turned out to be right for me.

Catch all y’all on the flip side.

-Dr. Stephen Gardner

In anticipation of Dr. Gardner’s retirement this Spring, please consider contributing to the Stephen Gardner Scholarship Endowment Fund. Interest earned on this account will eventually fund a scholarship for a deserving English major. You can make out the check to the Aiken Partnership (please indicate the “Gardner Scholarship Fund” on your check) and mail it to the Office of Advancement, USCA, 471 University Parkway, Aiken, SC 29803.
Dr. Eric Carlson

The past few months have been extremely busy for Dr. Carlson. Since mid-August he moved to Aiken from the Detroit area, began teaching, went back to Michigan to get married, and helped his new wife Ali move to Aiken as well.

In the fall of 2007, he taught three sections of AEGL 101 in addition to a Development of the English language class, and found this to be a demanding yet rewarding schedule. Professor Carlson also worked on a paper on the Beowulf poet’s choice of words, claiming that certain seemingly innocuous words are knowingly used as cultural markers that will reinforce the martial values of Anglo-Saxon society.

When he’s not busy with his teaching schedule or pouring over dictionaries and concordances of Old English, he continues to write reviews of music, books, and fanzines for Razorcake magazine. And now that football season has begun in earnest, he and his wife vehemently cheer on the Green Bay Packers every week.

Dr. Douglas Higbee

Dr. Douglas Higbee was new to the English Department in Fall 2007. He earned his Ph.D. in English literature at the University of California, Irvine, in 2006, where he studied modern British literature with an emphasis on the First World War. He also has an M.A. from San Francisco State University and a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, both in English literature.

In his dissertation Dr. Higbee explored the complex literary, cultural, and political issues concerning the return home of British First World War veterans. What happens when millions of soldiers, after four long years at war, return to their civilian lives and to a civilian population that often had little idea of what they had experienced? That this is a historically recurring problem is something that should concern scholars and citizens alike.

This year Dr. Higbee will be teaching AEGL 101 and 102. He looks forward to working with the students at Aiken in these and other English courses, including Modern British Literature, the Literature of War, and Great Books of the Western World.

In addition to presenting several papers at academic conferences in the recent past, Dr. Higbee has co-authored an essay that describes the advantages of using detective fiction to teach composition in Integrating Literature and Writing Instruction, recently published by MLA Press. Also, he has an essay on the British First World War writer Siegfried Sassoon forthcoming in the Air Force Academy journal War, Literature, and the Arts and an essay on British First World War veterans’ organizations forthcoming in a volume from Brill Press.

Dr. Higbee’s current projects include revising an essay on war comradeship and the poetry of English poet Ivor Gurney for publication in the journal The Space Between: Literature in English, 1914-1945.

Balancing School and Work: Alex Bush

"It has been very difficult to balance school and work," admits Alex Bush, a current junior who has had to deal with the juggling act of pursuing both an English degree and entrepreneurship. Two years ago, Bush started his own lawn care business under the name of “Bush Landscaping.” After many trials and errors, Bush Landscaping became pretty large.

However, Bush had other dreams in mind: "I am most interested in criminal prosecution and family law." He also says that he may go into politics one day. Preparing for law school at either USC-Columbia or Charleston School of Law, Bush began working as a courier for a local law firm in order to gain experience in the field. Also, he attended a Latin class, which could be beneficial to both his English major and future law plans.

The new additions to his schedule forced Bush to decide where his priorities should lie. He immediately began cutting back on the number of landscaping clients that he had, only working with a few during weekends. He explains that "school should be the first priority for any student." Although Bush hopes that he will be able to finance his future children’s educations, he comments, "Still, for those students such as myself who don’t have that option, I cannot help but think that having to balance it all on one’s shoulders is to one’s betterment in the end."

The Writing Room: Jacqueline Ballard

When asked what it has been like to be a consultant in the USCA Writing Room, Ballard replied that it has been a great experience. As an aspiring English teacher, she believes that her position has helped her to learn the basics of teaching writing and grammar, and discovering students’ problem areas has improved her own writing skills. She comments, “I’ve also had the opportunity to work with some phenomenal people that I probably would not have met had it not been for the position.”

First and foremost, Writing Room consultants are responsible for improving USCA students’ writing abilities. Ballard comments, “Many people have a misconstrued view of what our purpose as consultants is, so I would like to take this opportunity to clarify this misconception. As Writing Room consultants, we provide consultations or open teaching and learning environment for the collaborative discussion of writing; we are not merely proofreaders.”

When asked what her largest peeve was in the Writing Room, Ballard replied that she is most anxious about the week of the Rising Junior Writing Portfolio submission deadline in the fall, spring, and summer. She said that many students wait until the last minute to ask for help on their folders, bringing in all four of their papers to be read on the day or days preceding the submission deadline. She notes that this is unfair to both the consultant and the student since little learning is accomplished. Her advice is that students should prepare for their portfolios ahead of time.
Ben Hutto

One English graduate risks his life everyday for our country. Ben Hutto graduated from USCA in 2001 with a B.A. in English. He is currently a public affairs specialist and journalist for the U.S. Army.

Hutto joined the military on August 2, 2005, after finally getting out of the restaurant business. Now, he is part of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team in the 3rd Infantry Division. As a public affairs specialist and journalist, his duties include taking photos, writing stories and press releases, escorting media, and prepping soldiers for interviews.

Hutto feels that the USCA English Department prepared him for his job in a variety of ways. He learned how to work on a deadline, write for a variety of audiences, and use criticism to improve his writing skills. Additionally, he began to realize, during his college career, that practice makes perfect and details are very important when writing. Hutto remarks, “Those things serve me well in the pressure cooker I’m in now. All in all, any success I’m having now can directly be attributed to what I learned during my time at USCA.”

Jannette (Giles) Hypes

Jannette (Giles) Hypes graduated from USCA in 1998 with a B.A. in English. Since that time she has been lucky enough to explore her creative and diverse passions. She calls Jefferson City, Tennessee, home, and it is from there that she enjoys a serene view of the Smoky Mountains.

Pleased to be surrounded by books on a daily basis, Hypes has supervised the Education Department’s Curriculum Lab at Carson-Newman College since 2001. Beside discovering and indulging her love of children’s literature there, she has tried to make the Lab a campus-wide resource, increasing the size of the facility, doubling the number of resources, and implementing a library automation system.

In 2006, she became a mother and has been thoroughly immersed in parenting ever since. She enjoys the challenge of balancing family and work. Hypes occasionally writes articles and opinion pieces for Associated Content online, and in recent years, Hypes’ poetry has been recognized by the Knoxville Writers’ Guild and the American PEN Women, Knoxville branch. Her poetry appears in two anthologies: Breathing the Same Air: An Anthology of East Tennessee Writers and The Southern Poetry Anthology: South Carolina.

Most thankful for her rich experience at USCA, Hypes credits the English Department faculty with inspiring her to embrace her interests, academic and otherwise: “The professors at USCA were motivating and supportive. Their dedication to learning and contagious enthusiasm for English kept me engaged in and excited about my program.” Believing that USCA has much to offer the English major, Hypes also found a great deal of value in the diversity of the peers in her classes: “It was an all-around, life-enhancing experience that unquestionably shaped who I am today and the direction my life has taken.”

Ron Baxley

When he is not teaching English, Ron Baxley is traveling the stars. After graduating from USCA in 1998 with a B.A. in English, Baxley worked as a reporter for the Aiken Standard. It was not long before he took on the challenge of teaching English at a school in Barnwell and at Archibald Rutledge Academy in McClellanville, South Carolina. Baxley also tutored for several educational programs including one sponsored by a children’s literacy organization. Now, he is an English/Reading Facilitator for Piedmont Technical College, but he plans to earn his Master’s degree in English and be a professor.

Baxley has been using his degree not only to teach others but also to write science fiction. Two of his recent publications are a science fiction and fantasy collection that he co-authored, Extra! Extra-terrestrial, and a book, Cycling the Moon & The Darker Side of the Moon, both published through the BookSurge publishing company. He also likes to write articles and poems with the same other-worldly theme.

Baxley believes that his experience at USCA prepared him for achievement. He says, “I attribute my success in publishing to faith and the vast amount of literature that I read and interpreted as an undergraduate.” He also comments that “working for two years as a Writing Room consultant proved instrumental in my career. The experience I gleaned in assisting students to write essays has been carried with me through every educational program and teaching opportunity.”
Monica Budnichuk

When asked to describe the impact of her USCA English experience, Monica Budnichuk felt as if she didn't know where to begin, saying she needed the space allotted in a research paper to fully convey her thoughts.

“I used to complain about writing those ten- and twelve-page papers on literary elements. Now here I am, wanting all that space back so I can fill it with words about my professors and what they’ve taught me,” said the May 2007 graduate who earned her B.A. in English. It’s this feeling that precisely represents what she has taken away from her English courses. According to Budnichuk, every single professor helped cultivate her desire to explore and generate ideas, her need to delve into a character’s psyche when she reads, and an eagerness to scribble away on a blank page.

Her attention to detail in reading, writing, and analyzing whatever is presented to her has particularly given her the advantage in the workplace. Budnichuk asserted that her English degree came in handy during her very first day as a paid summer intern at Augusta Magazine, where she now serves as the assistant editor. “The second piece of writing I was given to copy/edit that day had a glaring comma splice and a sentence fragment,” she recalled. “I immediately thought of the grammar course I took with Dr. Rich.” Budnichuk adds that her college internships with the Aiken Standard and with Dr. Mack in desktop publishing (which required her to put together the English department newsletter) have also prepared her for working in the media.

It’s not all about syntax, though. Budnichuk has had to generate many stories of her own, a task that requires tapping into her organizational skills and creativity. In fact, Budnichuk prefers writing over editing, which is why she might be transferring within the Morris Communications Group later this fall to work as a features editor/writer for The Augusta Chronicle.

In her spare time, Budnichuk continues to work on the 100-page memoir she has been grappling with for over a year. “Sometimes, I feel like I just can’t write anything,” she said, “but I remember how persistent, confident and meticulous my professors taught me how to be and I feel a little more hopeful. They’ve given me more than English skills—they’ve given me a great way to approach life.”

Jonathan Overstreet

Jonathan Overstreet graduated from USCA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in the spring of 2007. After being a copy editor for the Aiken Standard in the fall of 2007, he has taken up the career of a freelance journalist.

While he was at USCA, Overstreet was very involved with student media on campus. Beginning his sophomore year, he joined Broken Ink, eventually becoming the Literary Editor of the student literary / visual arts magazine. During his junior year, he won the Oswald Creative Writing Award for some of his poetry. Overstreet also became involved with the student newspaper Pacer Times. By the fall of his senior year, he became the Editor-in-Chief of Pacer Times, a post he occupied until his graduation.

In addition to his involvement with student media, Overstreet also worked for two years in the USCA Writing Room, helping his fellow students become better writers. During his senior year, Overstreet also completed an internship under Dr. Mack’s supervision at the Aiken Standard. This internship gave him an inside look at what life was like at a daily newspaper. Overstreet credits the internship with furthering his interest in journalism and leading to his decision to pursue a job in the journalism field.

Overstreet enjoys writing both fiction and poetry and says that he plans on going to grad school in a few years for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing. Until then, he states that he will continue to explore and strengthen his talents as a writer.

Robin Walker

“I am truly living the dream,” admits Robin Walker, a current FBI agent who had wanted to join the agency since before college. After earning his B.A. in English here at USCA in 1992, he continued his education further at Winthrop University and eventually earned an M.A. in English literature.

After working in various fields, Walker decided to join the U.S. Army. With this military experience and the added benefit of learning Arabic, he comments that his plans “came to fruition” when he attended the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA before moving to his current home in New Orleans.

However, his journey was not yet complete. Despite a broken collarbone and living right in the middle of hurricane Katrina’s path, he survived the tempest. Today, Walker remains an FBI agent working on counterterrorism, and sometimes he finds himself surprised at how the experience is so movie-like.

When asked how his English degree at USCA helps him in his dream job, he states, “You would be shocked how much the English degree has come in handy writing in the FBI. They don’t show it in the movies, but for every day of ‘fun,’ you have four days of writing about it.”
The Magellan Scholar Program:
Kristen Acklie

The Magellan Scholar program has a webpage that boasts of having funded 152 undergraduate scholars in the USC system since March 2006. To offer the opportunity for students to explore the field of their interest, gain experience that can be added to any resume, and receive $3000 for research is a good enough excuse to brag for anyone. The program, which counts as academic credit, is available to any major and requires that the chosen students do a research project in the area of their interest with the guidance of a mentor.

As only the second USC student to receive such an honor, Kristen Acklie was busy this past fall working with her mentor Dr. Jill Hampton on the project “Jim Sheridan and Irish Film.” Dr. Hampton remarks, “As an Irish American, Kristen has long been interested in studying her grandparents’ native culture. With her interest in film and literature, she has pulled together some remarkable insights about Sheridan’s films and Irish history and culture to draw a fascinating portrait of contemporary Irish film and how commercial viability affects its historical authenticity.”

Acklie comments, “The Magellan grant has awarded me the great privilege to truly investigate and understand some of the very basics of both film and Irish culture, as well as their intricacies and complexities.” The screening of the Sheridan film, Some Mother’s Son, was hosted by Acklie in November, 2007. She also had to write a thirty-page essay on her findings for the program. Acklie’s plans for the future include a wedding with her current fiancé, Adrian Greer, in October of 2008 and eventually going into the field of editing after her graduation with a B.A. in English in December, 2007.

The Ellen Lott Smith Scholarship:
Ward Berry

The Ellen Lott Smith Endowed Scholarship has an application stating that “the humanities allows people to develop capabilities of thought, judgment, communication, appreciation, and action that are essential to living well.” Determined to show students the benefits and opportunities of a degree in the arts and humanities, a former USC English professor, Dr. Ellen Lott Smith, created this local scholarship in 2006.

In order to earn this $5000 award, applicants must explore, in an one-page essay, how study in those fields can be important and a source of personal growth. Available to English and English Education majors, students who enter the competition must have already completed a minimum of twelve hours at USC and not be a current senior at the time of entrance.

As the 2007-2008 recipient of the scholarship, Ward Berry has a unique perspective on the current world. Berry joined the National Guard after completing high school because he said, “I have always wanted to go to college, but I didn’t go right out of high school because I knew I wasn’t ready.” Instead, he visited war zones like Iraq, becoming shocked at the conditions of many Iraqis. He added, “Many times, I saw children playing in large pools of water that were filled with garbage. The ground was infested with a lethal form of hepatitis. Those people grew up there; it’s all they know, and they seem reconciled to those conditions.” Although he mentioned that he loves this country and its ideas about freedom and equality, Berry also remarked, “I think many of us are spoiled.”

He finally began to attend college here at USC, and he won the Ellen Lott Smith Endowed Scholarship by using his previous experience to explain his future aspirations. He commented, “In my essay, I tried to explain that the humanities help us understand the world around us and allow us to share what we have learned with other people… that many people will not have the opportunity to see first hand what life is like in third world countries, but that through the humanities, we might see and be truly moved to do something to make a difference – that the humanities teach us and inspire us to be better people.”

From the Editor

What an eventful semester! Being given the opportunity to intern under Dr. Mack has certainly provided me an excellent vantage point from which to see this campus. Really, the best part was working with all the people who make up the USCA community: the faculty who possess substantial enthusiasm for enlightenment and the realization of dreams, the current students whose determination and talent have earned them scholarships and opportunities, and the alumni who have benefited from the USC English program and achieved their aspirations. After obtaining new insight into the real character of our campus from putting together the 2008 edition of Words, Words, Words, I am truly going to miss this place all the more when I graduate. Finally, here are my thanks to Dr. Mack for patiently guiding me with the compilation of this newsletter.

-Rachael Bond