From The Chair

When he wrote his poem “Excelsior” in 1841, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was inspired, it is said, by the motto on the shield of the State of New York. On a white ribbon unfurled below an image of the sun rising over the Hudson highlands is the word “excelsior” or “higher.” This single term, expressed as an imperative, might just as easily serve as the unspoken goal of the USCA Department of English.

Indeed, it can be argued that by all the standard measurements of both faculty and student productivity, our department has taken an “upward” path in the past year. Our 14 full-time faculty, as a group, presented 22 peer-reviewed papers last year at professional conferences and published 25 scholarly and/or creative works (see the individual faculty profiles for more detail). We had healthy enrollments in all of our classes, serving 1,791 students in lower-division classes and 308 in upper-division classes in 2008-2009; and we registered this past year the highest number of majors, both English and English Education, that we’ve had in the last decade—a total of 72. In the spring, the Epsilon Upsilon chapter of Sigma Tau Delta welcomed 12 students, all with GPA’s of at least 3.0, to membership in the International English Honor Society. Of the nine students that graduated with English degrees this past year, over half pursued further study—two were accepted by law schools and three are now doing graduate work in English.

In addition to a host of faculty and student accomplishments, the department can lay claim to a vital array of co-curricular initiatives. In 2009, the Oswald Distinguished Writers Series hosted novelist Jill McCorkle in the spring and memoirist Marianne Gingher in the fall; both writers visited multiple classes and spoke to large audiences at public events in the Etheredge Center. This fall, the eleventh volume of The Oswald Review, this country’s first intercollegiate journal devoted exclusively to undergraduate research in the discipline of English, featured essays by students at five universities, four in the United States and one in Scotland.

The department also continued to contribute to the improvement of K-12 instruction in our service area. In the spring, English faculty took control of the annual Aiken County Language Arts Festival. Now directed by Dr. Carla Coleman, the festival last February attracted 120 participants from 6 high schools and 8 middle schools; 45 volunteers from the community, including 10 of our own alumni, served as judges and offered other support. In the summer, the Aiken Writing Project, under the management of Dr. Lynne Rhodes, offered its annual institute for local teachers. In addition to the 15 teachers that participated in this summer program, the AWP hosted a retreat/reunion for 50 teachers in October and workshops for over 120 teachers in elementary and middle schools throughout the county in the fall and early winter. On March 15, Dr. Rhodes plans to host a daylong in-service event for more than 100 Aiken County teachers.

“Excelsior!” is indeed the order of the day.

-Tom Mack

Dr. Mack shares some administrative tips with another top executive.

This issue of the department newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Stephen Gardner.

Steve was my friend, colleague, and next door neighbor for almost thirty years. When we moved into the H&SS Building in 1977, he and I were assigned offices next to one another, and over the years, hardly a day went by when we weren’t invading one another’s space, sharing news and offering advice. In the latter regard, I’ll always be grateful for Steve’s counsel after I became English department chair. Given his experience as a dean, I would often use him as a sounding board, and Steve was a big help in letting me know that one could indeed successfully navigate the often stormy seas of academic administration.

Steve’s door was always open, especially to his students; and it is particularly appropriate that his wife JoAnn and the rest of his family have rededicated themselves to making the Steve Gardner English Scholarship a reality. When he retired a year and a half ago, Steve established an endowment fund to create a scholarship in his name, and I can think of no more fitting tribute to his memory. In addition to his devotion to poetic composition, Steve dedicated himself to the classroom, inspiring generations of students to find their individual voices as creative writers. It is a comfort to think of the scholarship as a way of extending his already significant legacy.

- Tom Mack
Dr. Mack had a great year in 2009. In the spring, he was awarded the USCA Community Service Award in recognition of his ongoing contributions as a cultural columnist for The Aiken Standard, his work with the public schools, and his public profile on the state level. In the latter regard, he was recently elected to a two-year term as chairman of the Board of Governors of the South Carolina Academy of Authors, the group responsible for administering the state’s literary hall of fame. This is the fourth time that Dr. Mack has won the community service award; this is surely a campus record!

Dr. Mack had a particularly enjoyable early summer, thanks, in part, to his being asked to play two small parts in the upcoming docudrama Edgewood: Stage of Southern History. He got a chance to exercise his acting talents as both a Russian doctor ministering to the ailing Francis Pickens at the czarist court in St. Petersburg and an anonymous planter in three scenes, a dinner party, a brandy-and-cigar confab, and a funeral. Rumors of an Academy Award nomination are rife!

This year Dr. Mack’s scholarship took center stage. In addition to publishing a review essay on Charles Baxter’s novel The Soul Thief (Magill’s Annual, 2009) and a reference article on author Thomas Keneally (Magill’s Survey of World Literature), Dr. Mack focused significant time and energy on the completion of a new book. Now available in most bookstores, Circling the Savannah: Cultural Landmarks of the Central Savannah River Area (Charleston, SC: The History Press) contains 36 chapters, each one devoted to a specific place of interest in our region, particularly literary and historical sites in Aiken, Augusta, and Edgefield. This handsome volume also includes 50 photos.

This is Dr. Carlson’s third year at USCA. In the academic realm he presented papers on related topics at the Conference on Christianity and Literature in Bridgeport, Virginia, in October 2008 and at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan, this past May. He is currently in the drafting stage of an article based on these papers. In addition, Dr. Carlson’s abstract has been accepted for the 2010 congress in Kalamazoo for a paper which discusses the use of humor as a source of irony and tension release in Egils saga Skalagrimsonar. He also added two more classes to his teaching repertoire: English Grammar (AEGL 450) and Introduction to Human Language (AEGL 301).

In his spare time Dr. Carlson watches football and reads the twenty-three years of back issues of National Geographic that he recently inherited from his father-in-law. And on the heroic front, Dr. Carlson’s superhero alter-ego is considering a change in costume colors from green and black to red and black. Commentary is welcome.

Dr. Hampton’s year started off on a positive note when she received promotion and tenure to associate professor. She presented a paper at an international Irish Studies conference in Galway, Ireland and received a second Formby Fellowship to study literature of place in the Sowell Special Collections Library at Texas Tech this past July.

Dr. Hampton has also come across some extra time that she did not have in past semesters. She not only has more time to devote to her teaching but also is planning a book proposal and is the newsletter editor for the American Conference for Irish Studies.

On a personal note, Dr. Hampton has taken up the hobby of rattlesnake hunting and has welcomed her new granddaughter, Madeline Juliet, into the world; however, her new hobby is not a result of her granddaughter’s birth. She also continues to enjoy her husband’s music and her daughter Devon’s singing and performances.
Mr. Karl Fornes had a busy year juggling new teaching responsibilities, research and creative pursuits, and personal goals. After teaching English 467 (Argumentation) for the first time in the Fall 2008, he taught Rhetorical Grammar and Composition Studies in the Spring and Fall 2009 semesters respectively. In addition, his commitment to teaching with technology has evolved into a section of English 101 taught entirely online.

As part of his responsibility with the Aiken Writing Project, he attended the combined National Council of Teachers of English and National Writing Project annual conferences in San Antonio, Texas where he delivered a paper with Dr. Lynne Rhodes and Dr. Doug Higbee. In February 2009, he was humbled and honored to receive an award for his regular column in the quarterly publication *Southern Discourse*, and he read some of his work with department colleagues at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference in Atlanta in November.

Professor Fornes is currently completing his sixth and final year on the Board of Trustees of the Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art and his final year as the Technology Liaison for the Aiken Writing Project.

Over the past year Roy Seeger has been working on his second full-length collection of poems as well as a chapbook, and various stories and essays. In March of 2009 he was announced the co-winner of the Society for the Study of Southwestern Literature’s Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry prize for his sestina entitled “Diminishing Returns.” The poem will be published in the 2009 volume of *MidAmerica*. The Society for the Study of Southwestern Literature has also published his critical essay, “Tell Me Over and Over Again: The Gendering of the Vietnam War and the Cycles of Trauma in Tim O’Brien’s *In the Lake of the Woods*,” in their 2008 volume. Seeger was also invited to give a reading May 16th at the Kalamazoo Book Art Center in Kalamazoo, Michigan. To commemorate the event, John Ashbear created a limited edition broadside of Seeger’s poem “The Season of Birds.” This summer he spent a week in Louisville, Kentucky grading AP Literature exams, and the week after he spent painting his parents’ bathroom. It was a full summer all around.

Dr. David Bruzina joins the USCA faculty after two years of teaching literature and composition at UNC-Greensboro. In 2006, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Ohio University having completed his PhD in American literature and Creative Writing there the previous year. He also holds an MA in Philosophy from Virginia Tech and an MFA in Poetry from UNC-Greensboro. From 2001-2004, he directed the Gathering Place Writing Project, which involved clients of Athens County (Ohio) Mental Health Services in the local literary community. In the summers, he continues to teach in, and direct, the “Area II” Critical Thinking and Intellectual History division of the North Carolina Governor’s School.

Although his official specialty is contemporary American Poetry, Dr. Bruzina is a dedicated generalist with interests ranging from Southern fiction to literary theory and contemporary analytic philosophy. In his teaching and writing, he likes to explore the relationship between literary or theoretical texts and first person extracurricular experiences. Dr. Bruzina’s poems have appeared in a number of journals, including *StorySouth, Cultural Logic, From the Fishhouse* and the *Greensboro Review*. He has recently finished his first book manuscript and hopes it will appear in print soon. His short review (of USCA faculty member) Roy Seeger’s first book *The Boy Whose Hands Were Birds* is forthcoming from the *International Poetry Review*.

When he’s not teaching or writing, Dr. Bruzina enjoys fishing, cooking, eating, and hanging out with dogs. This summer before moving to Aiken, he spent two weeks hiking on the Appalachian Trail.
Mrs. Vicki Collins is enjoying her twenty-first year at USCA. As the department’s ESL educator, she assists international students as they hone reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in AEGL 111. During the fall semester, she linked an AEGL 101 class with an AFYS 101 class. Teaching a memoir class for Continuing Ed. was a particularly rewarding experience during the spring semester. As the liaison between the Department of English and the Writing Room, she trains and mentors five excellent consultants. Committee work includes Faculty Welfare, New Faculty Orientation, and First-Year Experience.

Programs in the local middle schools have been Mrs. Collins’ focus in the past year. She presented CHANGES workshops for students at both Leavelle McCampbell and Schofield. In addition, she presented CE-MIST workshops for teachers at Corbett, JET, and Leavelle McCampbell. During the Aiken Writing Project’s Summer Institute, Mrs. Collins directed the Young Writers Camp for middle schoolers. An annual event she enjoys is being a guest poet for the Creative Writing class at South Aiken High.

Conference participation in 2009 included SCCTE on Kiawah Island where Professor Collins presented “Ekphrasis: Poetry Inspired by Art” and Student Success in First-Year Composition at Georgia Southern where she presented “Colorful Memoir Writing.” She also wrote a prose poem called “Becoming a Palmetto Girl” for a presentation at the SAMLAA Conference in Atlanta this past November.

Mrs. Collins stays active in both the Augusta Poetry Group and the Authors Club of Augusta, which participates in the Westobou Festival and is currently working towards publishing an anthology of the work of its members.

On a personal note, she and her husband welcomed a son-in-law and an eight-year-old grandson to the family in May. One of her tennis teams won the Georgia State Championship at its level and made quite a “racquet” to win third place in the Southeast at the Southern Sectionals held in Birmingham.

Mrs. Ilona Law continues to be very busy with English composition and literature “affairs” on and off campus. In the fall she taught a new course, one that used to be taught by Dr. Don Blount, Professor Emeritus: Great Books of the Western World I. The class members were bright and enthusiastic and seemed to agree with the instructor that these works like Aeschylus’s Orestia, Virgil’s Aeneid, the Confessions of St. Augustine, Dante’s Inferno, Cervantes’ Don Quixote, and, finally, Shakespeare’s King Lear are significant for all students of literature to know or, in fact, anyone seeking a liberal arts degree. They are so marvelous that they are even meaningful to post-modern students!

Otherwise, Prof. Law continues to mentor Mrs. Jennifer Kimbrell and the forty homeschoolers that she teaches in her three composition classes. She has also formed an editorial partnership with a prolific short story and screenplay writer, a recent transplant to Aiken from Boca Raton, Florida. A regular at the Aiken County Library “Let’s Talk About It” series, she recently presented a talk on Daphne du Maurier’s classic gothic romance, Rebecca.

Dr. Katie Kalpin enjoyed teaching her new class on modern filmic adaptations of Shakespeare and youth culture for the honors symposium last spring. This term, as she teaches AEGL 288, Introduction to British literature, she is participating in a project from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in partnership with the SC Department of Public Education. The initiative, called the South Carolina Course Alignment Project, is attempting to “align” high school and college courses in order to prepare students to be successful in college. Dr. Kalpin is piloting and responding to pilot materials in her course and is discussing the project and course with her partner teacher at Aiken High: Francesca Pataro, a USCA alumna.

Dr. Kalpin is continuing her editing project on Shakespeare’s All’s Well That Ends Well for the New Kittredge Shakespeare. Her summer included a number of interesting critical cruxes as she worked through the line-by-line glossing of the text. She intends to share some of these critical textual debates with her Shakespeare class this spring. Also this spring she will travel to Chicago for a conference of the Shakespeare Association of America.
Dr. Matt Miller has had a very busy year teaching Modern American Writers, The Graphic Novel, a specialized course on Globalization, Introduction to non-Western Literature, non-Western Films, and Writing in the University as well as being involved in three community events for the Aiken Public Library and the Aiken Council for the Arts.

Dr. Miller completed his term as chair of the Campus Life Committee, became a new chair of the Academic Assessment Committee, continued as chair of the American Democracy Project Film Series, and served on the Department Assessment Committee. He also published five graphic novel book reviews for an academic journal and trade publication, attended two conferences for both American literature and Postcolonial literature, and published a research article on Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life* on the recuperation of identity as a transnational immigrant.

Dr. Carla Coleman
Assistant Professor

Over the last year, Dr. Carla Coleman has found herself busier than she had initially expected herself to be. On the teaching front, in addition to AEG 102 and the second half of the British literature survey course, she was able to return to her beloved Victorian class, where she lovingly walked her students through the triumphs of Dickens’ poor orphaned Oliver, the tragedy of Hardy’s Tess, and the salaciousness of Rossetti’s “fleshy school of poetry.” In the fall semester, in addition to her regular sections of AEG 101, she was given the opportunity to revive the department’s Eighteenth Century literature course, whose development she greatly enjoyed, as it provided her with the long overdue opportunity to renew her acquaintance with old friends like Fanny Burney and the esteemed Dr. Johnson.

In the realms of scholarship and service, Dr. Coleman spent much of her summer break expanding a conference paper that she had delivered the previous year on Queen Victoria’s *Highland Journals* into a full length journal article which she hopes will be published in the coming months. She also further pursued her interest in the intersection of the page and the Victorian stage with a presentation at the Fall 2009 Victorians Institute Conference on the debate between natural talent and trained professionalism as presented in Mary Augusta Ward’s early novel *Miss Bretherton*. Additionally, she has continued her involvement with the Aiken County Language Arts Festival, which will be celebrating its fifth birthday on February 6, 2010.

Outside of work, Dr. Coleman continues to try to find time to hike, camp and travel. This summer, though, her vacationing was restricted to a quick visit to see her parents in East Tennessee and another to see her grandmother in Oregon, due to a decision to enter the exciting world of Aiken home ownership. If she has forgotten to include anything significant in this update, it is probably because the relevant information is still in one of the boxes that she has yet to unpack!

Dr. Amanda Warren
Lecturer

Dr. Amanda Warren arrived only last year from the frozen north of Kalamazoo, Michigan, following her husband, Instructor Roy Seeger. In the time following the 900-mile move to Aiken, she has fallen in love with her new home (especially the weather), and has spent her first fabulous year at USCA teaching a mix of Composition and Composition and Literature courses; she will continue that tradition into her second year, and looks forward to getting to know a new batch of incoming students.

This summer Dr. Warren applied for and received a Wood Institute Travel Grant from the F.C. Wood Institute for the History of Medicine at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. She is the first creative writer to be offered access to study the specimen and manuscript collections at the Mütter Museum, Historical Library and Wood Institute for the History of Medicine. The Mütter Museum, the largest teaching collection of medical abnormalities and oddities in the United States, has in its collections some unique exhibits: a plaster cast of Siamese twins Cheng and Eng, a 6-foot-long colon, the skeleton of one of the world’s tallest men, a collection of artifacts removed from the stomach and airways of patients, various mummies, and a collection of models of bizarre injuries and diseases. Lest you wonder why anyone would want to spend a week looking at something so creepy and disturbing, Dr. Warren would like to assure you that she has perfectly normal interests in the collection. The primary purpose of her research is to work towards a second poetry manuscript, and her secondary purposes are concerned with scholarly inquiries into the role of research in creative writing; in this area she hopes to complete a conference paper concerning the role of research in poetry, a personal-scholarly essay on her experiences as a research-based poet, and a creative non-fiction, feminist essay concerning one of the Mütter Museum’s more famous exhibits, “The Soap Lady.” Dr. Warren will be using her free time over Winter Break to look closely at the collections and begin these exciting new projects.
Dr. Andrew Geyer has finished up his first year at the University of South Carolina Aiken, and is enjoying the beginning of his second. It’s been exhausting, but fun, teaching new courses; digging into service projects; and getting to know the faculty, staff, and students here at USCA. Besides settling into his new job, Dr. Geyer has spent a great deal of time and effort landscaping the 117-year-old house that he and his wife Emily bought in Graniteville. Some progress has been made—cutting down trees, digging out stumps, hauling dirt, laying sod, and building a set of flagstone steps—but a lot of heavy labor is left to be done.

For the Fall 2009 Semester, Dr. Geyer added Film and Society to the Introduction to Creative Writing and Composition courses he taught last fall. He’s happy to be teaching film again, and is quietly implementing his nefarious plan to convert his mostly-Southern students into avid fans of the Western.

As for creative work, Dr. Geyer signed a contract for his third book of fiction, *Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin*, his second story cycle. His first collection of interconnected stories was *Whispers in Dust and Bone* (TTUP 2003), which received two national awards and was a finalist for a third. *Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin* is a collection of twenty-two first person narratives that interconnect through setting, recurring characters, common themes, shared imagery, and intertwined plots. The book was published by Ink Brush Press, a small commercial press based in Austin. In addition to the publication of his new book, Dr. Geyer was selected as the 2010 Featured Fiction Writer for the Batchelor Emerging Writers Series at Barton College, NC. He also read fiction at the Langdon Weekend Festival of the Arts in Granbury, Texas, and did poetry readings at the Morris Museum in Augusta and at the Westobou Festival.

As busy as he has been with landscaping the house, settling into the new job, and bringing out the new book, Dr. Geyer has found some time to get writing done. He is almost finished editing a novel manuscript, entitled *Dixie Fish*, that he rewrote and revised last year. He is making slow progress on two more booklength projects: a novel entitled *So Close Yet So Far Out* and a short story cycle entitled *Lesser Mountains*. And he is putting together a poetry chapbook, entitled *Renovation*, that centers around fixing up a 117-year-old house—but he can’t decide whether art is imitating life, or vice-versa.

An avid canoeist and distance-runner, Dr. Geyer also made some time to get outdoors. This summer, he and a friend spent four days canoeing a sixty-mile section of the Wateree River in South Carolina. Last year, Dr. Geyer did a forty-five-mile stretch of the Brazos in Texas.

In his third year at USC Aiken, Dr. Higbee continues to work both in and out of the classroom on the relations between war and literature. Last fall he taught a course on the literature of the First World War that was linked to a History Department class on the war, and in spring he conducted a course on the Soldier and Society for the Academy of Lifelong Learning. He is also teaching courses in modern and contemporary British literature, non-Western literature, the British literature survey, and composition.

Along with his teaching, Dr. Higbee tries to keep busy with various scholarly projects. This fall he gave papers at two conferences—the first focuses on how to teach First World War literature, while the second relates J. D. Salinger’s short story “For Esme” to his experiences in the Second World War. He has also been working with the Aiken-Augusta Veterans History Project, which conducts interviews with veterans of the Second World War for the Library of Congress. This spring he will be going to the Air Force Academy to give a talk on British First World War poetry.

In his spare time he tends to watch *Seinfeld* reruns, read *The Nation*, run after his baby girl, and have lengthy conversations with one John Barleycorn.

Dr. Stanley Rich, who currently lives in Birmingham, Alabama, taught a short course at Samford University on “Southern Short Fiction Writers” and a short seminar on T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (from "The Four Quartets"). In May 2009, he travelled to Northern England and the Western Highlands of Scotland on a "Scottish Spiritual Pilgrimage," visiting Lindisfarne, Durham, the Border Country, Glasgow, Oban, and Iona. He continues to enjoy singing in the Magic City Men’s Chorus and the smaller ensemble, Magic City Men's Chorale (composed of 14 of the 70 members of the larger group). He continues to enjoy regular lap swimming. In addition, he has been very active in Integrity/Alabama, PFLAG Birmingham, and Equality Alabama. Recent reading includes authors Stieg Larsson, Steven Saylor, Ian Rankin, J. A. Jance, Alexander McCall Smith, Michael Malone, Alain Claude Sulzer, Tom Dolby, Jamie O'Neill, Kathleen Norris, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, among many others.
On October 12, 2009, Marianne Gingher visited the University of South Carolina Aiken as a featured author in the Oswald Writers’ Series. After being introduced by Jessica Boyette, a senior majoring in Secondary education - English, Gingher started her presentation by explaining that she loves Aiken but has not been here in twenty years. The selections she read from Adventures in Penland: One Writer’s Journey from Inklings to Ink revisited memories of her life from the age of six, when she schemed to acquire her very own copy of a Ding Dong School Book, to the age of thirty-three, when she wrote her first novel, Bobby Rex’s Greatest Hit. In essence, she asserted, a memoir is actually “memory under oath.” She explained that while her recollection of events from thirty years ago may not be entirely accurate, when writing her memoir, she had to realize that she needed to be as true to the facts as possible since her memories include so many other people.

The next day, Gingher visited Professor Collins’ English 101 class for a question and answer period. During this session, she admitted that she writes to discover something new about herself. Gingher explained that she was not always a good writer and gave an example from her freshman year in college when she got a “D” on a paper and the professor passed out copies of it as an example of how not to write a paper. She explained that she has learned more from her failures than her successes. She ended by saying that one of the most important aspects of writing is the “art of leaving out.” What a writer does not include is just as important, if not more important, as what he or she puts in.

Marianne Gingher is the author of five books, one of which, Bobby Rex’s Greatest Hit, won North Carolina’s Sir Walter Raleigh Prize. She was also awarded “Book of the Year” by Foreword magazine for her book A Girl’s Life in 2001. She is currently an Associate Professor of English in the Creative Writing Program at UNC-Chapel Hill.
The fifth annual Aiken County Language Arts Festival is scheduled to take place on February 6th on the USCA campus. Under the guidance of Dr. Carla Coleman and Dr. Andrew Geyer, the festival provides an opportunity for students enrolled in grades 6-12 in Aiken and Edgefield County to demonstrate their skills in various categories including public speaking, original poetry, dramatic monologue, interpretation of published poetry, and storytelling.

Once sorted by category, participants are divided into divisions based on their grade level (6-8, 9-10, and 11-12). Each participant is limited to presentations ranging from two minutes up to eight minutes. Judging criteria is different for each category, but such qualities as organization, language usage, and creativity are stressed. The top three competitors in each category and division win medals, but regardless of the festival outcome, all participants gain by improving their language arts skills.

The festival also engages members of the local community. Staff of The Aiken Standard and The Augusta Chronicle as well as USCA alumni, members of Toastmasters International, and members of the Aiken Community Playhouse volunteer as judges, tabulation room workers, and other event officials, while student members of the Epsilon Upsilon chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society, assist with the event by registering participants, helping set up competition spaces, and being prepared to step in as back up judges.

The Aiken County Language Arts Festival originally focused on students in grades 6-12 in Aiken County only; however, several schools from Edgefield County have participated in recent years. The Aiken County Language Arts Festival is an exciting opportunity for young people to show-off their talents and have a good time.

George Lock

Under the direction of Dr. Lynne Rhodes, the Aiken Writing Project has been very active at USCA since 2006. This year, in particular, the Aiken Writing Project launched a number of new initiatives. “I’m thrilled that we have these additional projects going,” said Dr. Rhodes.

On October 16th 2009, USC Aiken sponsored a retreat and reunion at the Ruth Patrick Science and Math Education Center. The retreat was an opportunity for teachers and consultants from past AWP Summer Institutes to get together and share ideas in celebration of the National Day on Writing. The event lasted from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM and included a light lunch. Teachers from numerous local schools were in attendance, and the event was a great success.

To support the National Day on Writing, a celebration of the role of writing in the lives of everyone across the country, Dr. Rhodes sent out flyers to participating schools with suggestions for assignments for students. The assignments included storytelling, writing for the local newspaper, historical fiction, and narratives about people students could interview. Participating students were encouraged to complete the assignments on October 20th as “ungraded celebrations of writing.”

The South Carolina Council of Teachers of English held a conference in January at Kiawah Island. Dr. Rhodes gave a presentation entitled “The Reading/Writing Connection” about the Aiken Writing Project’s efforts to support reading and writing at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The presentation was geared towards teachers who are interested in gaining further information on this topic after participating in a Summer Institute.

Dr. Rhodes has also been hosting workshops for local area teachers at the Ruth Patrick Science Center on mandatory school district furlough days. The workshops, which focus on professional development, have helped teachers improve their instruction.

The Aiken Writing Project has become an invaluable asset for both USC Aiken and the local school district.

George Lock

Participants in the Aiken Writing Project’s Summer Institute pose with Dr. Rhodes.
Of the many USCA students who graduate with degrees in English Education, some choose to remain in the area and give back to the wonderful community of Aiken. Three of USCA’s recent graduates have done just that. They are Jacqueline Ballard, Stephanie Francis, and Leslie Walters.

Jacqueline Ballard graduated from USCA in 2008 and immediately started teaching at Strom Thurmond High School. A year later Jacqueline obtained a position at her alma mater, Midland Valley High School, teaching English II, College Prep 1 and 2, and Advanced Composition. Jacqueline is grateful for many of the courses she took at USCA, including Advanced Composition, African and African American Literature, English Grammar, and Non-Western Literature but wishes she would have been able to take the Shakespeare course. When asked what she considers the most important influence in her teaching career, Jacqueline responded, “I owe all of the success I’ve had with teaching thus far to USC Aiken.”

Since graduating in May of 2005, Stephanie Francis has been teaching freshman, junior and senior level English at South Aiken High School and has participated in the Aiken Writing Project’s Summer Institute. While the American and British Literature surveys she took at USCA taught her invaluable information, Stephanie says, “I think I found my passion in History and Development of the English Language and Shakespeare.” She feels that her own excitement, when teaching Shakespeare, helps to motivate her students in what they commonly consider a very difficult and detested subject. She also feels that some creative writing course would have been very helpful for inspiring her, while Classical Mythology and Science Fiction are the courses she most wishes she would have taken.

Leslie Walters graduated in 2009 and spent her first year after graduation teaching two levels of English 3 (American Literature) and two Reading Assistance classes at Midland Valley High School. Three classes Leslie took at USCA that she feels help her most in her teaching career are Composition Studies, Literary Criticism, and Technical Writing. The Composition Studies gave Leslie “real-world, practical solutions for approaching student writing,” while Literary Criticism has been amazingly beneficial in her Modern American Fiction class. Leslie’s biggest surprise came when she began to apply the content from Technical Writing to her Reading Assistance class.

Teachers are the foundation of all education. All of us can name a teacher who inspired us to follow our chosen path. USCA continues to make a difference by giving more teachers to the world.

-George Lock
Since my graduation from USC Aiken in 1995 with a degree in English, my professional career has ranged far afield. Graphic design, photography, writing, editing, marketing, web development, video and music production – I've done all these things since graduation, and in my current position as Internet content editor of the Aiken Standard, I may do any one or more on any given day.

Now, while none of these endeavors requires an English degree – and, frankly, there are any number of programs that would better prepare you for a position in any one of those fields – no single degree program could have better prepared me for making a living in all of them. Studying English leads to a mastery of language and encourages both creative and critical thinking, three skills necessary in life irrespective of career choice. Add to that the osmotic knowledge gained by close reading of a broad field of subjects, and an English degree holder possesses the most prized commodity of 21st-century life: flexibility.

So, to the current pack of English majors at USC Aiken I say, “Good on you! You've come to college to get an education, not just a job. In doing so, you'll find your life, and the lives of those around you, much improved.”

-John Lowery

When I graduated from USC-Aiken in 1988 with a BA in English (history minor), my father asked, “So, what are you going to do with an English degree?” Though I didn’t say it at the time, I soon realized the answer to my father’s question was, “Anything I want!”

Everyone in my family took the ‘business-path’ when it came to their education: my dad, sister and brother all have accounting degrees, but that route never appealed to me. I preferred using my ‘right-brain’; the critical thinking and creativity I developed as part of my liberal arts education at USC-Aiken prepared me well for a successful marketing career.

After graduating in the spring of 1988, I was hired by Milliken & Company, one of the largest privately-held global textile and chemical manufacturers. At first, it was intimidating; I was surrounded by engineers – chemical, electrical, industrial, mechanical; I was the only ‘non-technical’ person in the entire manufacturing location! But I knew that it was my communication skills – both written and verbal – that would determine whether I excelled in this – or any career.

Within one year, I was promoted to a marketing manager position and moved to the company’s headquarters in Spartanburg, South Carolina. After 8 years with Milliken, I took a position with another textile company in New York City, eventually moving to Greenwich, Connecticut and San Francisco, California, where I worked in pharmaceutical marketing. Being a Southerner at heart, I soon worked my way back to Greensboro, North Carolina, where I was the Global Marketing Director for Unifi, Inc.

As it turned out, my career path did lead me to the business world – but on my terms. I could never crunch numbers all day; that’s just not me. But ‘big business’ needs creative communicators, too, so I was able to find my niche. While at Unifi, I began working on my MA in the evening at UNC-Greensboro. I found, after so many years, that I really missed reading and analyzing ‘good’ literary works. Although my business acumen had increased substantially since I left USC-Aiken, I felt as if my ‘world view’ had become quite skewed, which eventually led me to the Liberal Studies program at UNCG.

Today, I am a marketing consultant for Stone Temple Consulting, where I do SEO (search-engine oriented) marketing and “ghost-blogging” for multiple national companies across a variety of industries. I share my home with my husband, Jim, and our beloved 8-year old Chesapeake Bay retriever, Chester.

My time at USC-Aiken was invaluable, as is my English degree.

-Kimberly Lewis
English Student Speaks at CRLA National Conference

Senior English major Kiri Dunlap went above and beyond her required duties when she did a presentation at the national conference for the College Reading and Learning Association in Richmond, Virginia. In March of 2008 she was given the opportunity to submit a presentation proposal to the CRLA Review Board by CRLA member Anne Vermont, who is also the Coordinator for Tutoring at USCA.

After her proposal was accepted, Dunlap, with the guidance of Vermont and English Instructor Vicki Collins, put together a presentation entitled “Tutoring ESL Students: Everything You Need To Know.” When asked why she chose to focus on tutoring students for whom English is a second language, Dunlap replied, “It is extremely important for tutors to realize that there are different ways to approach tutoring ESL students.”

As a Writing Room Consultant at USCA, Dunlap knows exactly what is necessary when tutoring on a culturally diverse campus. “Tutoring consists of more than sharing knowledge with students; it is an active process that is maximized when the tutor utilizes strategies specifically designed to acknowledge cultural differences, build students’ confidence and facilitate learning,” said Dunlap.

While in Richmond, Dunlap also visited the Edgar Allan Poe Museum. Getting the chance to see the literary landmark was a great dividend, but according to Dunlap, it was having the opportunity to meet so many great professionals in the field of higher education and to share her work with them that remained the greatest experience of her trip. As she looks forward, Dunlap hopes to join the other CRLA members in Salt Lake City, Utah, next year for the 43rd annual conference.

Dunlap’s presentation and handouts are available on the USCA Writing Room Website at www.usca.edu/writingroom.

-Kiri Dunlap

From the Editor

The year 2009 has been amazing. When Dr. Mack asked me if I wanted to produce this year’s newsletter, I was a little hesitant at first because of a fear of course overload. While this task was challenging, it was also very exciting and academically satisfying. The opportunity to work with some many wonderful people is what inspired me to major in English to begin with.

This was a difficult assignment, as so many in the study of English are. Prior to undertaking this endeavor, I had never done this type of writing. Of course, the first article I wrote came back with more red ink than printed words on it; however, Dr. Mack included a wealth of information and instructions to go with the corrections on that first article. I just needed to learn how to incorporate all that information.

Eventually, I began to understand how to write articles for this newsletter, and I even began to enjoy all of the assignments regardless of course overload. I could not have written any of this newsletter without the cooperation of the USCA English Department faculty. Being a transfer student, I have not had an opportunity to meet many of the wonderful members of the department until this semester, and I can only regret that I will not get the chance to enjoy many of the amazing classes that these outstanding instructors have to offer.

Ultimately, I must thank Kiri Dunlap for helping me master the software. I must also thank Dr. Mack for not only helping me edit and produce this year’s edition of “Words, Words, Words,” but also for believing in me and giving me the chance to place my mark on departmental history.
The Central Savannah River Area is famous for the sand hills that frame both sides of the great river dividing South Carolina and Georgia. Professor and journalist Dr. Tom Mack presents his favorite places in this storied region, from the grand architectural remnants of Aiken’s winter colony to Woodrow Wilson’s boyhood home in Augusta. Explore Edgefield, where the cemeteries are storytellers; Columbia, where Robert Mills—America’s first homegrown architect—once plied his trade; and Abbeville, where the last meeting of the Confederate cabinet was held. Visit plantations, museums, monuments and much more in this delightful collection of columns that first appeared in the Aiken Standard.

Taking the Switchback is a collection of poems that stretches across North America, from the Rockies to the beaches of South Carolina, touching many places in between. It is a book that peers into the hearts of individuals, into the pulse of neighborhoods, and, most poignantly, into the relationships between men and women and between the human spirit and the sublime or, perhaps, the divine. It is a book that embraces and, at once, celebrates life and joy and isolation and the struggle that we live. These poems want to know what it means to be alive in our time and how to persevere with that meaning.

Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin does new and vibrant things with narrative and voice. The twenty-two first person pieces are interwoven through setting, recurring characters, common themes, shared imagery, and intertwined plots to form a larger whole that tells the story of a group of people living in Austin, Texas. Aqua Vitae Café, in turn of the millennium Austin, is the central connection—although the settings range from Austin to New Mexico to Guatemala and Honduras.

If we listen closely to a place, what will it tell us? What songs of grief and fear rush like water over stone, elemental as wind, straw, earth? Phebe Davidson’s Seven Mile chronicles that careful listening to what an old place tells us, and what it asks of us still. Deft persona poems in the voices of Seven Mile’s ghosts, generations deep, join with careful narrative sketches in subtle form or startling short prose. We are brought to a place where sorrow, loss, and love—a mother for her son, a son for his love, a man for his boy—are borne out in the changing leaves, the promise of bloom, the fall of night and the rise of storm.

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New Books By Members of the USCA English Faculty

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