BOUNTIFUL OPPORTUNITIES

Now entering my eighth year as chancellor, I’m more optimistic and excited about USC Aiken than I have ever been. We continue to create bountiful opportunities as one of the top Southern Public Regional Colleges, according to US News & World Report. We have been ranked #2 for 2020; we have had the distinction of being ranked #1 fourteen times, and we have been ranked one of the top three in this category for 22 consecutive years. Another point of pride is our high ranking for innovation – this is a huge accomplishment for our faculty, as we continue to introduce new academic programs, student internships, and research opportunities for the university.

Our Fall Freshman Convocation opened the semester with one of our newest traditions, the symbolic passage of new students into our academic community by traversing the Pacer Bridge. Leading the ceremony were the two new freshmen with the highest academic accomplishments: Adam Kinsey and Kayla Hutto.

We are pleased to announce updates to both both our USC System and USC Aiken leadership teams.

First, General Robert Caslen has taken the reigns as the 29th President of the University of South Carolina and the USC System. President Caslen's leadership experience includes his service as the 59th superintendent of West Point from 2013 until 2018. He retired from the service with the rank of General after a distinguished and highly-decorated career in the United States Army. Former USC president, Dr. Harris Pastides, retired this past summer after eleven years in the position.

On the USC Aiken campus, Dr. Daren Timmons has accepted the position of provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs. Dr. Timmons leads the university's academic endeavor, including academic programs and academic support services, including enrollment management, admissions and financial aid. Before assuming the interim position, Timmons was the dean of the university's College of Sciences and Engineering.

Mr. Ahmed Samaha is a 25-year veteran of USC Aiken and has been promoted to executive vice chancellor of student affairs. In his new role, he administers USCA Housing, Counseling, Health Center, Disabilities Services, Recreation and Wellness Programs, Student Life, Diversity Initiatives and International Programs.

Additionally, for the first time, we have twin sisters leading our Student Government Association (SGA). They are Ms. Q'Ladrin (President) and Ms. Q'May Qourters (Vice President), both biology majors, and both ready to take on the world.

You will meet other outstanding leaders highlighted in this edition of the USC Aiken magazine, and I encourage you to read their stories. Along with new leaders, we have launched a new Pacer Brand! For the last three years, the university has worked to refine a new brand message, new visual identity with logos, university colors, and a new website launch, (usca.edu). I hope you like the new look, which is evident with our new main entrance to the university.

Our Forward Together (2012-2017) strategic plan has retired, and we have entered the Leading Forward (2018-2023) era. This new strategic plan for USC Aiken is a comprehensive blueprint for our future, and was designed by faculty, staff, students and community members alike. This new plan will need the help of many to accomplish these impending goals, and I hope you will be engaged with our bountiful opportunities to come!

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Jordan, PhD
Chancellor
On the cover: SPIN Scooters are now on campus! University students, staff and faculty (and yes, even Chancellor Jordan!) may download the app to their phones and create an account. When you’re ready to scoot, you simply open the app to find the nearest vehicle, scan the QR code to unlock and you’re ready to go. Users pay a nominal fee per minute.
EDITOR’S DESK

The University of South Carolina Aiken celebrated its birthday on September 10.

The institution first offered classes on that date 58 years ago in the former Winter Colony mansion downtown, known as Banksia, which is now the Aiken County Historical Museum. Even in its infancy, USC Aiken had a student-first approach.

In this issue we highlight some of the important ways that USC Aiken retains that quality.

Contributor Meredith Hawcroft caught up with Ahmed Samaha and his leadership team to discuss the dynamic programming of Student Affairs (page 36). While not formally part of that division, we’ve also highlighted the Office of Parent and Family Relations (page 42).

We invite you to get to know our new provost, Daren Timmons. Contributor Chris Quirk pitches the questions (page 30).

And just in time for our birthday, we’ve undergone a makeover. University personnel have worked all summer to begin implementing a new visual identity in print, digital and the three-dimensional world across campus. This new logo is a much welcome addition to our branding toolkit; however, real branding is about the experience that students, families, friends and donors can expect from us (page 44).

As always we’ve included a number of news stories we hope you’ll enjoy.


Scholarships like these are made possible by the generosity of university donors.
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The athletic director reviews the accomplishments of the summer.
National Program Taps Jordan to Mentor Peers
The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) recruited Chancellor Sandra Jordan to join the faculty of a prestigious national program. The New Presidents Academy, sponsored by the AASCU, provides a unique opportunity for incoming presidents of academic institutions to garner advice grounded in leadership research. The curriculum is complemented by the cumulative knowledge and practical experience offered by current and former AASCU presidents, who serve as academy faculty.

Timmons Takes Reins as Provost
Daren Timmons assumed his new post as provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs on July 1, 2019. His promotion follows his term as interim provost, during which he managed all academic programs and support services, including enrollment management, admissions, and financial aid. He served previously as dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering at USC Aiken.
See related story p. 30.

Samaha Leads Student Affairs Division
Ahmed Samaha began his term as vice chancellor for student affairs on July 1 after serving as interim vice chancellor since June 2018. In that capacity, he oversaw 26 full-time staff employed under student life, University Housing, the Counseling Center, the Student Health Center, Disability Services, Campus Recreation and Wellness, Diversity Initiatives, and International Programs.
During his 25 years at USC Aiken, Samaha has worked as assistant vice chancellor for student life and services (2011–2018), director of student life (2007–2011), and both director and assistant director of student activities (1994–2002).
See related story on p. 36.
Lintner Wins Distinguished Service Award
Timothy Lintner, assistant vice chancellor of academic affairs and School of Education professor, received a 2019 Distinguished Research Service Award from the Office of Research at USC Columbia. Recipients of this award have demonstrated “exceptional commitment to USC’s research community through consistent service as reviewers and committee members for our internal funding and awards programs.”

Gary Senn Honored for Teaching Excellence
The South Carolina Association of Middle Level Education (SCAMLE) presented the Jennifer L. Wilson Teaching Excellence Award to professor Gary Senn. The award recognizes “contributions of a classroom teacher, literacy leader, or teacher educator who has had a significant long-term impact on the advancement of middle level teaching excellence” in the state’s schools.

A faculty member in USC Aiken’s middle level education program since its inception, Senn also heads the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. In 2008 he created the Center of Excellence in Middle Level, Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching. Through that nationally known center, he developed professional learning sessions for in-service educators and traveling interdisciplinary trunks, which are available to teachers in partnering middle schools across the state.

Senn was recently elected president of the National Professors of Middle Level Education. He presents frequently at professional conferences and publishes widely in prestigious professional journals.

Georgian Elected to Historical Association
The South Carolina Historical Association (SCHA) recently elected Elizabeth Georgian as its vice president after three years of service on the organization’s board. She assumed the title at the organization’s annual conference on campus, which she also organized. The SCHA was formed in 1931 to encourage collaboration and the professional development of historians across South Carolina. A faculty member at USC Aiken since 2012, Georgian is currently an associate professor of history and holds the June Rainsford Henderson Chair in history.

Among other projects, with the support of a USC Aiken High Impact Learning Grant, she is currently working on a project about the relocation of Ellenton, SC in the early 1950s to make room for the construction of the Savannah River Site.
PEO Scholarship
Suzan Gray, Becky Scoggin, and Dr. Elizabeth Benton of Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO), Chapter B, and Dean Thayer McGahee present a $3,000 scholarship check to nursing student Julia Hammond.

For more than 75 years, the SC chapter of PEO has helped women pursue their educational goals by providing financial support and sisterly motivation through various activities and programs.

Women’s Group Gifts Scholarships
Town and Country, a women’s social and philanthropic organization in the Central Savannah River Area, gifted two scholarships to the university to support students in need of financial assistance. The organization’s president, Rachel Pirkle, presented a check to Mary Driscoll, vice chancellor for advancement and external affairs.

Legacy Society Welcomes New Donors
At the annual Legacy Society brunch, USC Aiken celebrated faculty, staff, families, and friends who support our students’ academic success through their estate planning. Liz Stewart (right) gave the keynote address. Chancellor Sandra Jordan welcomed new donors Charles Reeve, Jane and Bill Tuten, and Jason and Kim Woodward.

SRSCRO Invests in Future STEM Workers
The Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO) awards numerous scholarships to USC Aiken students. On average these amount to approximately $3,000 per student. All under the umbrella of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the scholarships are administered by SRSCRO’s Workforce Opportunities in Regional Careers (WORC) program.

SRSCRO anticipates that 50 percent of the Savannah River Site workforce will retire in the next few years. To obviate a shortage of workers in the future, the organization is investing now to prepare the next generation of STEM career professionals. The program is open to full-time biology students—sophomores, juniors, and seniors—with a concentration in environmental remediation and restoration, industrial process engineering, chemistry, mathematics, or computer science.

Win-Win for SRS and Pacer Seniors
A collaboration between the Savannah River Site (SRS) and the university involving data analysis has proven successful. Computer science students Elizabeth Rustad, Jacob Barr, Yasser Alzahrani, and Daniel Orillac-Medica
participated in the new senior year project, during which they learned the rigors of the software life cycle and developed a method for analyzing big data.

Savannah River Remediation (SRR), the liquid waste contractor at SRS, launched the project to give students hands-on experience with software that monitors equipment for preventive maintenance in the Defense Waste Processing Facility. The software will help manage salt batch preparations for the Salt Waste Processing Facility.

This SRR education outreach continues a relationship with USC Aiken that introduces SRS operations to students; they develop new skills and SRS expands its pool of potential employees.

Top-100 National Ranking for Nursing Program

U.S. News and World Report puts USC Aiken’s online nursing program at number 76 among the more than 1,200 accredited schools surveyed. Health care professionals throughout the Central Savannah River Area have recognized the university’s School of Nursing for its rigorous curriculum.

Biomedical Research Funding

The South Carolina IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (SC INBRE) awarded research grants to Nathan Hancock and April DeLaurier, for the 2019–2020 academic year. Both teach in the Department of Biology and Geology.

Hancock received up to $10,000 for one year for his study “Analysis of an RNA Silencing Mutant.” Funding comes from SC INBRE’s Bioinformatics Pilot Project Program, which supports research and teaching in genomics and bioinformatics methods.

DeLaurier received $50,000 for one year, with the option to apply for additional funding, for her project “Genetic mechanisms underlying craniofacial skeletal development in zebrafish.” Her study falls under the SC INBRE Developmental Research Program (DRP), which funds proposals related to biomedical science, with focus areas on regenerative medicine, cell and molecular biology, neuroscience, and bioinformatics.

Faculty Awarded Signature Grant

Eight USC Aiken faculty members received ASPIRE project grants from the USC Office of the Vice President for Research in Columbia. Recipients of ASPIRE I grants were Douglas White (Chemistry and Physics), Nicholas Marshall (Chemistry and Physics), Jessica Sullivan (Biology and Geology), and Douglas Higbee (English). An ASPIRE II grant was awarded to Virginia Shervette, April DeLaurier, Michelle Vieyra, and Mary Mills (Biology and Geology).

These grants help to fund study across disciplines, strengthen USC faculty’s competitiveness for external grants, and boost scholarly activity throughout the system.

Partnerships Built on Good Chemistry

Chemistry professor Nicholas Marshall stuck with a crazy idea he conceived in grad school. This spring he saw his research published in Inorganic Chemistry, a flagship publication of the American Chemical Society.

His project marries two modern supermaterials—metal-organic frameworks and conducting polymers—to create something entirely new. The former are highly porous crystalline materials often used for storage of gases, such as hydrogen. The latter are plastics
that conduct electricity and used in a particular solar cell and state-of-the-art flat screen displays.

Marshall teamed up with students Will James and then Jeremy Fulmer. His research team has grown to include USC Aiken chemist Gerard Rowe and scientists from the Savannah River National Lab and USC Columbia. The team has received funding to continue developing the technique, and they are seeking collaborators who can build the materials into pixels or solar cells.

**Ed Majors School Lawmakers**

USC Aiken students and faculty went to Washington in June to meet with South Carolina legislators and learn about trends in education policy—all part of the annual Washington Week field trip sponsored by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

The group of education majors met with Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), congressional staffers, and the two state senators. They had the opportunity to advocate for bills that aid teacher preparation, continued funding of the Teach Grant, and reevaluation of data related to the teaching profession.

**Aiken and Sumter Partnership**

The university and USC Sumter have partnered to offer two education degrees beginning this fall. Sumter students can now earn a BA in early childhood education or elementary education through the USC Aiken program—without leaving their campus.

The new programs train future teachers with an emphasis on student-centered instruction, authentic assessment, and reflective teaching practices. In addition, they prepare education students for the High Praxis II certification exam, which is required for a teaching license in South Carolina.

**Global Partnerships**

The university and Ajeenkya DY Patil University (ADYPU) have teamed up to offer undergraduates in India access to an innovative liberal arts program, with the goal of earning a degree from USC Aiken.

Through this partnership, ADYPU students can study the USC Aiken curriculum while they are in India. And ADYPU students who wish to study abroad can transfer all of their credits to USC Aiken. Subjects include history, literature, politics, media, law, business, and cultural studies.

**A Passage to India**

In mid-May, exchange students from India arrived on campus. For two intensive weeks, they immersed themselves in American campus life, government and history, civics, and culture. The annual exchange is facilitated through the Global Leadership Program, a partnership between USC Aiken and Ajeenko D. Y. Patil University in Dune, India. Each spring Indian students travel to Aiken, and Pacers go to India during winter break.

Student leaders on each campus typically pack an ambitious schedule for their visitors. This year Indian students toured the statehouse in Columbia, attended the Memorial Day parade in Aiken, and explored the meaning of the First Amendment at the CNN studio in Atlanta and offices of the Aiken Standard. At the Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta, Bridgestone in Aiken, and ADP in Augusta, they got a taste of American commerce.

**Pacer Times Recognized by SC Press Association**

The university’s student newspaper, *Pacer Times*, earned five awards from the South Carolina Press Association: Amber Perry, BA communication ’18, won first place for her feature on Jason Munsell’s public advocacy class. She also placed third in arts and entertainment for her piece on Augusta’s live music scene.

News editor Angelika Davis, BA education ’19, won third place in the news category for her article about security cameras on campus.

Pacer Times editor-in-chief Cecilia Maddox,
BA fine arts ’21 placed second in news writing for her article about parking on campus. She also won second place in column writing for her op ed on modern sexism.

Psychology Undergrad Wins Top Award
Hope Adams received the 2019 Southeastern Psychological Association’s research award at the 65th annual meeting in Jacksonville, Florida. She presented her study, entitled “Math Anxiety May Be Reduced with Awareness and a Positive Interpretation,” at the Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology, Undergraduate Research Poster Session. Panel judges selected Adams’s study from among the more than 100 posters.

Vox Femina Tours Italy
The university’s vocal ensemble, Vox Femina—meaning “feminine voice” in Latin—launched their summer break with an enviable performance and travel tour of Italy made possible thanks to funding by the Joseph T. and Mary H. Usher Music Program Endowment.

The group performed at Sant’Andrea, a 12th-century church in Orvieto, and at the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. They explored the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. They also visited St. Peter’s Basilica and the Vatican Museums in Rome, along with the city’s ancient Roman and other historic sites.

Business Scholarship
Alumna Kimberly Kanagy, BS business administration ’10, presents a check to Mick Fekula, dean of the School of Business Administration. The money will be awarded to a current business student under the Kimberly Kanagy Scholarship for Business. A longtime supporter of her alma mater, Kanagy is a financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial.

Young Entrepreneurs
The Entrepreneurship Center in the School of Business Administration is now the official gathering place for members of Enactus, which describes itself as “a global nonprofit and community of student, academic, and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives.”

The center was the vision of business faculty Mary Coule and Rebecca Barnwell, who identified the need for a creative space to foster students’ entrepreneurial endeavors. Their goal is to build partnerships within the community so as to offer workshops and resources, encourage creativity and collaboration, and jumpstart new businesses.

PBC All-Academic Team
The Pacers baseball team placed six student-athletes on the Peach Belt Conference (PBC) All-Academic Team:
Cary Holloway achieved a 3.33 GPA in exercise and sport science, Sean McQuillan 3.96 in business administration, Blake Seigler 3.67 in
business administration, Mitch Spence a 3.78 in business administration, Daniel Wiggins a 3.59 in business administration, and Jon Yarbrough a 3.59 in chemistry.

The All-Academic Team is part of a season-long program that recognizes outstanding performances by PBC student-athletes in the classroom, as well as on the field.

Pacer Baseball Legend
The South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame inducted former Pacer pitcher Roberto Hernandez during its 59th annual ceremony and banquet in May. Jim Herlihy, the university’s current athletic director, and his predecessor, Randy Warrick, were among those present for the induction.

While playing for USC Aiken, Hernandez hit 19 home runs and led the Pacers to a place in the NAIA College World Series. He was named an NAIA All-American, All-World Series Team member and the NAIA Area 7 Player of the Year in 1986. He subsequently spent 17 years playing for various teams in the major leagues.

Hernandez’s Pacer jersey was retired in 2001. The university opened the Roberto Hernandez Baseball Stadium in 2003 and inducted him into the USC Aiken Hall of Fame in 2007.

Pacer Tennis Bounced
The university made the difficult decision to transition the men’s and women’s tennis programs to club sports, effective at the close of the 2019 spring season. The decision was based on a thorough all-sports review and an analysis of demand for each sport, scholarship needs, and operational costs. The transition will allow for the expansion of higher demand Division II athletics.

The transition will impact 15 men and women student-athletes. “They remain our priority,” said athletics director Jim Herlihy. “We will honor all athletic scholarships for the students should they decide to remain at USC Aiken to complete their degrees, which we hope they will do.

This decision does not impact the university’s affiliation with the Peach Belt Conference or NCAA Division II.

Basketball Team Reunites
As part of the 2019 homecoming festivities, a coach and several members of the 1968–1969 men’s basketball team gathered on campus for their 50th reunion.

During half-time at a homecoming game at the Convocation Center, the former team members got the spotlight mid-court. University representatives recognized the former players, who they said had paved the way for the current, nationally ranked men’s team. The VIP visitors included Leon Stallings from South Carolina, Roger Ridenour and Gary Pressnell from North Carolina, Larry Servidio from New York, James Padgett from Pennsylvania, and Steve Price and Preston Maroney, the team’s coach, from Aiken.

“The athletic department, the alumni association, the chancellor, and all the current students and fans were so appreciative of what we did 50 years ago,” said Stallings, “to have some small part in the great success that USC Aiken is having today.”

Going Pro
Former All-America volleyball standout Ashley Diedrich, ’15, signed a professional contract with Volsungur Volleyball Club in Husavik, Iceland.

Diedrich, a native of Orlando, Florida, earned third-team All-America accolades as a senior in 2015, after picking up honorable mention honors as a junior. She was a two-time NCAA Division II Southeast Region Player of the Year, and as a senior a first-team all-region honoree. Diedrich guided the Pacers to a 27-6 overall record, including a 14-4 mark in the Peach Belt Conference. She helped lead the team to the program’s first PBC regular-season title since 2007; to the PBC Championship match for the second time in three seasons, en route to the all-tournament team; and to its first-ever top ranking in the NCAA Southeast Region. Named PBC Freshman of the Year, she garnered PBC Player of the Year honors during her last two seasons.
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Help your community and patients achieve the goal of optimal health.

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The School of Business Administration (SOBA) hosted its inaugural Aiken Business Leadership Symposium during homecoming week. The theme of the one-day event was “Educating through Engagement: Our Aiken Alumni.” It was an occasion to assemble prominent USC Aiken graduates who are current business owners, policy makers, and civic leaders.

Through panel and one-on-one discussions, students learned about the latest business ideas by engaging with alumni and business leaders.

Local alumni invited to participate as panelists were Aiken mayor Rick Osbon ’93, Angie Osbon ’92, Corey Burns ’96, Dr. John Tiffany ’91, Chris Matthews ’96, James Gregory ’95, Andrea Gregory ’03; Chad Matthews ’96, and Matt Osteen ’04.

“We are so very proud of all of our graduates,” said event organizer Sanela Porca, professor of economics and international business at the university. “However, this year we focused on these amazing individuals who continue to support the university mission by working hard, serving to enrich the lives of others, and continuously engage in lifelong learning.”

Matt Osteen ’04, was the spring 2019 Rahe executive-in-residence. He addressed students and community business leaders. Osteen is the chief operating officer of Green Energy Biofuel where he coordinates all the business and logistical details of two upcycling facilities and biodiesel refineries. He shared his insights and lessons learned while at the university and in the professional world.

“We created the [Executive-in-Residence] Program to give business students a taste of what the real business world is, as seen through the eyes of people who have been successful,” said founders Pres and Jerry Ann Rahe.

“The executives are encouraged to talk about their mistakes and how they recognized and addressed them; their successes and how they created them by working with others; how they treat, motivate, and inspire their employees; and the ethical standards that are expected in the business world,” said E. Preston Rahe Jr., a retired president of Westinghouse Government Environmental Services LLC and a longstanding member of the SOBA Business Advisory Council.

Participant Chad Matthews, BS business administration alumni, cofounder and COO of Concept H.R., chats with current students.
The Enterprise Holdings Foundation donated $3,500 to the university in June. This generous donation will support the Office of Career Services and enable the hiring of another career mentor.

The foundation is the philanthropic arm of Enterprise Holdings, which, through its integrated global network of independent regional subsidiaries and franchises, operates Enterprise Rent-A-Car, National Car Rental, and Alamo Rent A Car.

“USC Aiken has been kind enough to share with me the many ways they have invested in their students and their futures. I feel as though our organizations have a lot in common, in terms of our culture and understanding that our investments in our people will have the greatest returns,” said Colin Beauchamp, talent acquisition specialist for Enterprise Holdings in South Carolina.

Career development resources have expanded of late, thanks to gifts from Enterprise and other organizations. “We are extremely grateful for the continued support the Enterprise Holdings Foundation has shown as we work to prepare students for the transition to the world of work. For the last few years, we have begun moving toward the vision of a career studio led by peer mentors, where students can come and work on all aspects of career readiness,” said Corey Feraldi, director of Career Services.

This career studio model has made services more accessible to students. “Our career mentors are always ready to assist students with individual career preparation,” said Kathryn McGlynn, assistant director of Career Services. “By hiring another career mentor, we will have better coverage of the career studio and be better able to serve our students.”

Deborah Jackson mentors students in resume writing, job searching, and interview preparation. She believes the foundation’s gift will help provide an invaluable resource. “Having an open and ready space where students can drop in without an appointment relieves much of their anxiety. They can pop in with questions and do career-oriented work with the support of trained mentors,” she said.

“Through the career studio, we are able to guide students through the process of preparing for their career field and also give them the tools to do much of the preparation on their own. This way students learn how to best present themselves to prospective employers.”

Enterprise has a history of supporting USC Aiken. In 2018, for example, a gift from employees enabled the university to create a career-clothing closet, from which students can borrow professional clothes to wear to job interviews, career fairs, or other work-related events. Another previous donation helped establish a computer work area where students meet with career mentors to identify professional goals.

“It brings me great pleasure and pride to work for a company that is fortunate enough to give back in many ways to those in the communities where we live and work. This feeling is magnified when I get to see firsthand what this donation is doing for students at the USC Aiken,” said Beauchamp.
A unique project has been designed on 60 acres of the university’s campus, which is our Field of Dreams! The USC Aiken’s Men’s Golf Team has partnered with The First Tee of Aiken on the More Than a Game Campaign. Its purpose is to create a permanent home for the University of South Carolina Aiken’s nationally recognized Men’s Golf Team, and to expand The First Tee of Aiken’s outreach to children in the CSRA.

USC Aiken and The First Tee of Aiken are raising funds together to build a practice facility on campus that will serve as the home for both the Pacer Golf team and The First Tee of Aiken. Both the university’s Aiken Partnership Board and The First Tee of Aiken’s board has raised about $1.2 million in cash, pledges, and in-kind gifts. The privately funded project will be constructed in phases, with green space installation as the top priority. A temporary building to provide classroom space for The First Tee of Aiken on campus will serve the program until fundraising for Phase II is completed.

A few of the benefits include:
• a new practice facility for USC Aiken Men’s Golf Team
• mentoring opportunities for USC Aiken faculty and students (especially education and exercise science majors)
• incorporation of STEM learning into The First Tee of Aiken curriculum
• leadership opportunities for both organizations
• safe after-school engagement
• needed practice space for the future USC Aiken Women’s Golf Team
• cost sharing to accomplish minimize fees and maximize time
• character building for The First Tee of Aiken children (5-18)

A Field of Dreams

USC Aiken and The First Tee of Aiken still need your help to succeed. Please contact Mary Driscoll at (803) 641-3448 or Maryd@usca.edu or Heidi Hoffman at (803) 226-0053 or heidi@thefirstteeaiken.org to help make this dream a reality.
The Gregg-Graniteville Foundation continued a longstanding commitment to education by presenting the university with a $35,000 gift in memory of a former Graniteville Company president and chief executive officer.

Ira ‘Bud” Coward, chairman of the Gregg-Graniteville Foundation, presented the check to Chancellor Jordan in honor of Robert P. and Maxine Timmerman.

Warrenville native, Robert Timmerman, known as Phinizy, joined the Graniteville Company in 1945, after serving in World War II. He became vice president in 1958 and president and CEO in 1968. Timmerman retired in 1984.

“We are extremely grateful for this very generous gift, which recruits and retains distinguished faculty leaders for our accredited school of business,” Jordan said.

More than 25 years ago, the Timmermans established the Mr. & Mrs. Robert P. Timmerman Endowed Chair in Enterprise Development at the university. The most recent gift ensures the longevity of the Timmerman endowment.

“The Timmerman endowment promotes positive partnerships between businesses and education and in particular, encourages ways of fostering private enterprises with the university,” said Mary Driscoll, vice chancellor for advancement and external relations.

“Faculty considered for this appointment must possess an expert quality of teaching, be known for their scholarly and creative works, and enhance the School of Business Administration regionally, nationally, and internationally.”

The foundation wanted to honor the couple—both of whom recently passed away—in a unique way. The board of directors engaged the Timmermans’ two daughters in this process.

“Gregg-Graniteville is taking a more strategic look at our philanthropic mission and giving. It was important for us to include Susan and Deborah in our decision, and the foundation agreed with the idea of enhancing the current Timmerman Endowed Chair,” Coward said.

“From the very beginning of the Graniteville Company, William Gregg was a strong advocate for education.”

When Gregg built his textile manufacturing mill in 1845 in Graniteville, he established a community which included homes for his employees, stores, churches and a school. Because he insisted on that his employees’ children attend the Graniteville Academy, Gregg is credited with instituting the first compulsory education system in the South.

Members of the Gregg-Graniteville Board of Directors and daughters of Robert P. and Maxine Timmerman posed in front of the Robert P. Timmerman portrait in the Gregg-Graniteville Memorial Room. From left: Rodney Lippard, director of the Gregg-Graniteville Library; Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor; Dr. Marvin Burdette, son-in-law of the Robert P. and Maxine Timmerman; Deborah Timmerman Burdette and Susan Timmerman, daughters of the Timmermans; Bud Coward, Joan Phibbs, Patricia Knight, George Mitchell, and John McMichael, members of the Gregg-Graniteville Foundation Board of Directors; and Dr. Mick Fekula, dean of the School of Business Administration.
Chief Zike Pledges ‘Students First’

He’s worked all over the state, and now, the new chief of police at the University of South Carolina Aiken brings a world of experience to campus.

Jason Zike accepted the position near the beginning of the semester and has pledged to continue making safety and security his focus.

“We are a students-first university police team, which means exactly what it says. Putting students’ needs as a priority to ensure they’re successful during their time here,” he said.

“My fellow officers and I will give everything we’ve got to keep our community safe and will strive for professional and courteous engagements when dealing with every student, faculty or staff member, and guest.”

A graduate of Western Carolina University and several professional development training programs offered by the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the SC Criminal Justice Academy, Zike brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to USC Aiken.

He comes to Aiken from the Columbia College Police Department, where he was a captain. He also served on the Rock Hill Police Department and currently serves as a command sergeant major in the N.C. Army National Guard. A recognized leader in his field, Zike also taught at the Georgia Military College.

“Having worked in higher education law enforcement, the transition to Aiken has been fairly easy,” the new chief of police said.

“My experiences in both law enforcement and the military have given me the ability to adapt very well to ever-changing situations.”

Zike believes one of strengths is his ability to solve problems.

“It brings me great satisfaction in assisting someone with a problem that results in a positive outcome,” he said.

“This was the main reason why I decided to go into law enforcement, particularly on college campuses—to have an impact on people’s lives.”

Zike hit the deck running after joining the Pacer community. He’s already started serving on several key committees and has met with Student Government Association leaders. He is developing a proactive community engagement program, which he will launch with “Coffee with a Cop.” This initiative gives USC Aiken a chance to get to know Zike and other members of the university police department personally.

“The goal is to enhance our relationship with every member of the campus community and to reinforce the fact that we are here to work closely with them as we support and protect them,” Zike said.

“My vision for the USC Aiken Police Department is to foster a campus climate and atmosphere which enables the campus community to focus on their personal and institutional goals, while we work to provide a safe learning and working environment for them.”

USC Aiken conducted a national search for the chief of police position. Zike was selected from a competitive pool of highly qualified candidates.

“We are grateful to Lt. Elijah Price who has served as part of the USC Aiken Police Department for many years and who stepped up to lead the department in the interim until a new chief could be named,” said Cam Reagin, vice chancellor for finance and administration.

“He and fellow officers of the USC Aiken Police Department—and now Chief Zike—work tirelessly, providing 24/7 coverage of the campus, ensuring the safety of our entire campus community.”

Each member of the university’s police force is a certified law enforcement officer. Like all law enforcement officers in the state, each officer in the USC Aiken Police Department is trained and certified by the S.C. Criminal Justice Academy.

“Jason is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for every member of our campus, which is critical to our mission,” said Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor.

“The University of South Carolina Aiken is a public comprehensive university, and the mission reflects our priorities, which include providing students with a high quality baccalaureate and graduate education, serving our region, and advancing the boundaries of knowledge through research and scholarship.”
The Etheredge Center for Fine and Performing Arts has presented over 180 unique and inspiring performances since 1986 when it presented the first annual Cultural Series to the public. Since then, we have been honored to present such notable acts as Dizzy Gillespie, Alexander Markov, St. Petersburg Ballet, The Women of Ireland, The Russian National Ballet, Stephen Lang, Hal Linden and many more. Join us this year for more legendary performers!

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**Cultural Series**

**Fall of 2019**

The Etheredge Center for Fine and Performing Arts has presented over 180 unique and inspiring performances since 1986 when it presented the first annual Cultural Series to the public. Since then, we have been honored to present such notable acts as Dizzy Gillespie, Alexander Markov, St. Petersburg Ballet, The Women of Ireland, The Russian National Ballet, Stephen Lang, Hal Linden and many more. Join us this year for more legendary performers!

For tickets visit usca.edu/etheredge-center or Call 803.641.3305

**The Four Tops**

October 22nd 7:30pm

Their first Motown hit, “Baby I Need Your Loving” in 1964, made them stars and their sixties track record on the label is indispensable to any retrospective of the decade. Since then, they have been touring incessantly, a towering testament to the enduring legacy of the Motown Sound they helped shape and define.

**Shoshana Bean**

November 19th 7:30pm

Shoshana Bean is a sensational singer with a voice that will blow you away. She is known for her part in the Broadway productions Wicked and the Waitress, and signing alongside the legendary performers such as Michael Jackson and Ariana Grande.

**The Princely Players**

December 12th 7:30pm

This performance will show power of the human spirit told from the perspective of the Civil Rights movement using Gospel Classics such as “Amazing Grace” and “Wade in the Water”.

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**David Stinson**

Fine Homes / Aiken
Kepler Williams, Aiken Partners
803 / 640 / 0123

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**National Endowment for the Arts**

**South Arts**
Tori Shekastehband, an intern at Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, was recognized as a 2019 Future Leader by the American Welding Society [AWS]. The organization, whose members number more than 70,000 worldwide, selects two early-career candidates annually to join its Future Leaders Program for a year of service. The program, in its inaugural year, is dedicated to preparing the next generation of leaders.

Shekastehband was introduced to welding through a high school elective. It became her favorite class. “A speaker from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions visited my welding class and talked about the high demand for qualified welders at the Savannah River Site,” Shekastehband recalled. “Hearing about the important role welders play led me to consider taking welding beyond high school. I knew there could be the opportunity to pursue a lucrative career, and I could stay local.”

In 2015, she started an AWS chapter at South Aiken High School. She earned an associate degree in welding from Aiken Technical College [ATC] in August 2018. Two months later she began an internship in supply chain management at SRNS. Now a sophomore business major at USC Aiken, Shekastehband is serving her third year as president of the AWS chapter at ATC. Last summer, she was one of five early-career professionals selected to attend the AWS leadership symposium in Miami, Florida.

Through the AWS Future Leaders Program, early-career professionals from the welding community get to interact with industry leaders, gain leadership skills, and participate in intraorganizational policy discussions. “AWS has provided me with so many opportunities to meet other welders. Through the organization, I’ve connected with other students and professionals who share similar interests . . . and most recently I’ve been assigned a mentor through their mentoring program,” Shekastehband said.

She adds that she also has learned how to communicate with people of different ages, an advantage in a multigenerational workforce. “Within our AWS chapter at Aiken Tech, I interact frequently with recent high school graduates and nontraditional students, such as veterans preparing to enter the workforce.”

During her year of service, Shekastehband will attend two AWS board meetings, as well as FABTECH, the largest expo in North America for metal forming, fabricating, welding, and finishing.

The nonprofit American Welding Society was founded in 1919. Its mission is to advance the science, technology, and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes. AWS predicts that, in the next few years, 400,000 welders will be needed to meet the market demand.

“My welding instructors and fellow AWS members have not only taught me a craft,” Shekastehband said, “they have instilled highly valuable leadership skills that I can carry with me while I’m pursuing my degree at USC Aiken and in my future career.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 97 percent of welders are male, and three percent female. With young women like Tori Shekastehband on the front line, those statistics may soon shift.
AI Chat Eases College Transition

Prospective and new students can now tap an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to get personalized, on-demand support through the admissions and enrollment process. The university launched the new chat robot, or chatbot, in partnership with AdmitHub, a national network that helps students navigate the transition to college. Simply put, the chatbot is a computer program that uses AI to simulate human communication.

“Today’s college students communicate differently. When we saw email responsiveness begin to decline, we knew we needed a solution that could meet students where they are,” said Daniel Robb, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management. “This technology has enabled us to communicate directly with students in real time via text message, helping ensure a smooth start to the college experience and giving more students across the United States the chance to pursue a college education.”

USC Aiken hopes that the chatbot will help address persistent gaps in college access. Across the country, one in five accepted students never arrives on campus. This is often due to the challenges of navigating daunting admissions and financial aid processes. Recent research indicates that chatbots can reduce this “summer melt” by more than 20 percent. Indeed, since the launch of USC Aiken’s chatbot, 28 percent more students have committed to enrolling—and 58 percent more have signed up for first-year orientation in fall 2019, compared with fall 2018.

Pacer Entrepreneur Buzzing

Junior Brooke Thomas, BS ’20, started her own jewelry business, Ginger Bee, two years ago at the urging of her friends. “I first started making [jewelry] for myself, but then all my friends were asking me to make them pieces, so I decided to start an Instagram and sell off there,” said the entrepreneurial junior and business management major. She also offers her work on Facebook.

Thomas, a Pacer cheerleader, has a knack for fashion and accessorizing, and she incorporates her distinctive style in each item. Her business plan is to create unique pieces in different styles that appeal to all ages—and sell them at reasonable cost.

Many of the materials she uses come from markets in Atlanta, but her fans don’t have to travel far to buy that special something. Thomas sells her jewelry at Aiken’s new Indie Market, held the third Saturday of every month from March through November, and at other local markets around the Central Savannah River Area. She hopes to add clothing and other accessories to her Ginger Bee line.

Recently, Thomas’s community profile got a bump when Aiken Blend named her Entrepreneur of the Week.

The university encourages students like Thomas to go for it. To that end, it opened the USC Aiken Entrepreneurship Center in 2018. The center was created “to bring forth creative ideas, encourage collaboration, and jumpstart businesses,” said Rebecca Barnwell, student services program coordinator in the School of Business Administration and, with colleague Mary Coule, a cofounder of the center. The goal is to build partnerships around the community and make available workshops and resources to foster the spirit of future entrepreneurs.
The university was recognized as an All-Steinway School during the 10th annual Winter Nocturne concert.

“What our most coveted trademark tells the world is that this school is committed to excellence, just as we have been for more than 165 years,” said Sally Coveleskie, national director of higher education for Steinway and Sons.

“Steinway and Sons is very pleased to formally welcome the University of South Carolina Aiken to our global roster of All-Steinway Schools.”

USC Aiken is the only South Carolina public institution recognized as All-Steinway. The state’s other three designees are private universities, the closest of which is almost 100 miles from Aiken.

“We are thrilled to be among the elite institutions with this distinction—and the first public university in the entire state,” said Sandra Jordan, chancellor of the university. “We are committed to creating the best experience possible for our students and faculty. This impressive accomplishment will certainly elevate the reputation of USC Aiken, which is already being noticed within our state and region.”

Coveleskie says that some of America’s most revered conservatories began using Steinway and Sons pianos exclusively from their earliest beginnings. The Oberlin Conservatory of Music first partnered with the company in 1877, the Yale School of Music in 1897, the Cleveland Institute in 1920, and the Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School since 1924.

The mark of All-Steinway is a globally recognized honor, and it is expected to have a significant impact on the university’s music program.

“Providing pianos designed by Steinway and Sons means that the University of South Carolina Aiken is committed to creating the best experience possible for [its] students and faculty,” said Coveleskie. “Students will choose to invest their talents in USC Aiken because USC Aiken has invested in them. It is clear that this is an institution that cares about...
Coveleski believes that the All-Steinway distinction will strengthen all disciplines of study. “As well as becoming more well-rounded in the arts, students become stronger cognitive thinkers and develop problem solving skills when they study music. It helps them become better scientists, medical professionals, mathematicians, executives, etcetera.”

Steinway, an American company, is the premier manufacturer of quality pianos. Patrons of the visual and performing arts throughout the region will also benefit from USC Aiken’s commitment to excellence.

“Pianos by Steinway and Sons will enrich the cultural experiences for the community at large by attracting more people to concerts, bringing more and diverse artists to campus, and generally enhancing the overall experience of the university as a cultural center of influence,” Coveleski said. “Being a vibrant center for the arts also can attract more business and industry to a community.”

The journey to become an All-Steinway School started two years ago. The first major milestone in the campaign was the arrival of the university’s new nine-foot concert grand in December 2017. The piano was christened during the 2018 Winter Nocturne concert. Jordan lauded the passion and commitment of Ben Cox and Beth Newburn, co-chairs of the All-Steinway Campaign, and Judith Goodwin, advancement officer at the university.

“Theyir tireless efforts, coupled with the tremendous generosity of our donors, made this achievement possible.”
Engineering Program Earns Coveted Accreditation

The university’s industrial process engineering program earned the stamp of approval by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology Engineering Accreditation Commission.

ABET, an agency that accredits academic programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology, provides a global standard for education.

“Receiving this accreditation means our students will graduate from USC Aiken ready for engineering careers regionally, nationally, and internationally,” said Dr. Bethany Fralick, USC Aiken engineering professor and the architect behind the degree program.

“Many industries, companies, and alone, the entire institution was evaluated based on best practices and continuous improvement,” said Fralick.

“Without the support of the university and the community as a whole, this milestone would not have been possible.”

The engineering program is just three years old, but its approach to building the curriculum and program has been on the fast track since day one. Fralick and other colleagues worked closely with industry leaders when developing the degree program. This collaboration not only led to the ABET accreditation but also helped meet workforce demands and expectations.

“The program has come a very long way and reached its pinnacle with ABET accreditation,” that is safer, more efficient, more comfortable and more sustainable.”

At USC Aiken, the recently installed—and now accredited—industrial process engineering degree is one of the more popular programs. The number of students seeking this degree may now increase.

“We look forward to increased enrollments and the opportunity to provide intellectual growth, continuous improvement, and quality degrees to future engineers,” Fralick said.

Currently, fewer than 800 institutions in more than 30 countries have received ABET accreditation.

“This is a monumental hurdle for any engineering program and something to

ABET accreditation is proof that a collegiate program has met standards essential to produce graduates ready to enter the critical fields of STEM education. Graduates from an ABET-accredited program have a solid educational foundation and are capable of leading the way in innovation, emerging technologies, and in anticipating the welfare and safety needs of the public.

Fralick said. “The team worked diligently for three years to meet and even exceed ABET requirements”

“With ABET accreditation, students, employers and the society we serve can be confident that a program meets the quality standards that produce graduates prepared to enter a global workforce,” according to the organization’s website.

“At ABET, our purpose is to assure confidence in university programs in STEM disciplines. Our approach, the standards we set and the quality we guarantee, inspires confidence in those who aim to build a better world – one really be proud of,” said Dr. Chad Leverette, interim dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering.

“For our students, this is huge and adds a national recognition to the degree they receive from us. Not only are all of our students receiving this as part of their degrees going forward, but our previous two graduating classes were also included in this important designation.”

graduated programs require students to have undergraduate degrees from an ABET accredited institution. Our graduates will now have more employment opportunities and increased potential for advancement in their professions through licensure and certification.”

Not only is the coveted accreditation important to employers, it’s vital to the viability of institutions’ degree programs. The university’s industrial process engineering degree program is now internationally recognized for quality in curriculum, faculty, institutional support, and community support.

“This accreditation was not based on classes
During its annual meeting and campaign awards celebration, the United Way of Aiken County recognized Sanela Porca, who teaches economics and international business in the School of Business Administration, with the Philanthropist of the Year award.

“She is a woman with a very big heart and a great desire to make our community a better place,” said Sharon Rodgers, United Way president. “She has a heart for education and, as you will see, this is not only true in her career but it also carries over into her personal and volunteer time, too.”

In addition to teaching, Porca serves as the Endowed Global Business chair. Additionally, she is the study abroad program director for the university’s School of Business Administration. While she devotes her life to sharing knowledge, Porca said she’s had many mentors in the community, many of whom inspired her to serve the community that she’s embraced as her own.

Porca said the award is the manifestation of her longstanding and ongoing commitment to serve the community. “There is so much work that needs to be done. . . . By living united and by working together, we all continue this work of improving lives in Aiken daily,” Porca said. “This award gives me enthusiasm and desire to work harder and to inspire others to do the same.

The United Way also recognized three university students who interned with the organization. Seniors Kyah Owusu, Elizabeth Abshire, and Kiera Johnson worked closely with Rodgers and her team. The president called them “exceptional students who truly go above and beyond for our organization.”
The Aiken Rotary Club and Aiken Junior Women’s Club partnered with USC Aiken to provide and stock a “blessing box” on campus. The box contains nonperishable food items and toiletries for students in need.

“This blessing box is a culmination of efforts that started with a suggestion, made by a USC Aiken student, to the Aiken Rotary Club,” said member Jane Page Thompson. Rotary initiated the effort immediately after members learned that a student was going without food. The group provided construction funds for the box and approached the Aiken Public School District Career Center to recruit students to build it. Full Circle Fence installed the blessing box, and Aiken Junior Women’s Club and Aiken Scholars Academy have made a commitment to maintain and stock it.

“When you’re on a budget, like many of us are, it’s often tough to decide how best to spend your money. Sometimes you have to make tough decisions, which might include whether you spend your money on food or groceries. The priorities of the day, sometimes the minute, can override the need for food,” said Q’Ladrin Qourters, a member of the Student Government Association who spoke during the dedication ceremony. “This is a tremendous gift to so many people in our campus community—some we may know personally. We may never know they have such a need.”

Melanie Inabinent envisioned and founded the Aiken Blessing Box initiative, partnering with Yolanda Archuleta, executive director of Habitat for Humanity. “This truly is a unique community partnership that benefits some of our neighbors in need all over Aiken County,” Thompson said.

Chancellor Sandra Jordan spoke for the campus community: “I am grateful to all those who made this blessing box available on our campus to ensure food is available not only for our own students but members of the community who may be in need.”

For the young man who came forth, she had a few special words: “I am very proud of the brave student who shared his story and experience of prolonged periods of hunger with Aiken Rotary. Because of his courage and humility, other Pacers and neighbors of the university will have food available.”

Representatives from USC Aiken, Aiken Junior Women’s Club, Aiken Scholars Academy, and the Aiken Public School District Career Center attended the dedication of the blessing box on the USC Aiken campus.
In August, the university produced a commercial intended to promote STEM related studies featuring Andrew Pridgen, a 2018 graduate of the newly accredited Industrial Process Engineering program. Pridgen is now an engineer with Bridgestone Americas.

The commercial was shot and aired by WFXG, Fox 54 in Augusta under the direction of the station’s account executive, Haley Culp, who is also a USC Aiken alum. She received her B.S. in Business Administration – Marketing in 2009.

Logistics for the shoot, which occurred at the Bridgestone plant in Aiken County, was coordinated by Monica Key, president of the Aiken Partnership Board.

Funding was provided through the Workforce Opportunities in Regional Careers (WORC) grant which aims to help address long-term workforce needs at the Savannah River Site and other STEM related industries. The commercial will air through February 2020.

"Thanks to USC Aiken's industry partners, I worked on an industry sponsored research project gaining real world experience as a student. After graduation, I was hired as a Process Engineer at Bridgestone America, and I am living my dream. Thanks, USC Aiken!"

- Andrew Pridgen
DEA Head Warns of Growing Drug Issues

The nation’s top leader for the Drug Enforcement Administration spoke to students, faculty, staff, and community members during the chancellor’s annual Signature Speaker Series.

Uttam Dhillon, the acting administrator for the agency tasked with enforcing the controlled substance laws and regulations, talked about the opioid epidemic, illegal drug trafficking, and what the DEA is doing to combat the associated challenges. “It’s shocking that today more Americans die from unintentional drug overdoses than from firearms, motor vehicle crashes, or homicides,” Dhillon said. “We’re on a college campus, so it’s particularly relevant that for Americans under 50 today, you’re more likely to die from drugs than from any other cause.”

He addressed several aspects of the multifaceted issue, including the use of opioids for medical purposes, which can sometimes inadvertently lead to addiction. His organization provides oversight for controlled prescription drugs.

Dhillon said these can be a “major gateway” for dependence.

While he maintained that victims of addiction should be shown compassion, Dhillon said “traffickers should expect to be arrested and charged with the most serious and readily provable offenses they are responsible for.”

On the subject of drug trafficking, including mention of an operation based in Aiken, he said it was as much an international problem as a domestic threat. “We disrupt, dismantle, and destroy drug trafficking organizations.”

To that end, said Dhillon, last year the DEA seized more than a half-million pounds of methamphetamine, 55,000 pounds of heroin, 1.7 million pounds of cocaine, and a ton of fentanyl. He advised that this is “more than enough to kill every man, woman, and child in the United States.”

The DEA enforces the nation’s federal drug laws set by Congress and collaborates with other government agencies to tackle this problem. “We work closely with, and ultimately share the same goals as, our allies and partners in the prevention and recovery communities. We believe that part of stopping drug abuse before it starts requires reducing the supply of those drugs.”

He said the key to that includes interdiction and enforcement.

“To me, it’s common sense: the more we reduce access to drugs, the fewer drugs there are to be abused—and fewer people who will use them,” Dhillon said. “Doing this isn’t just wise policy: it’s compassionate. It’s measurable, and it’s an effective, efficient investment of resources, one in keeping with our American values. It is also common sense that the prevention, enforcement, and recovery communities complement and support one another: we will all rise or fall together.”
Geyer Publishes Two New Books

English professor Andrew Geyer has added two new books to his body of published works.

In the fall of 2018, he published *Dancing on Barbed Wire* (Angelina River Press), a collection of short stories cowritten with Terry Dalrymple and Jerry Craven and edited by English professor emeritus Tom Mack. Set in Texas, the 16 interconnected stories move through time and space, from the Civil War to the present, from the sun-scorched brush country to the lush and sometimes lethal Piney Woods.

In spring 2019, his latest collection of short stories, *Lesser Mountains* (Lamar University Press), was released. Also Texas based, here in 19 linked stories used to novelistic effect, the author explores the raw and real lives of everyday people in and around the rural southwestern town of Jordan. Individual stories in the collection received the 2015 Spur Award for Best Short Fiction from the Western Writers of America and the 2011 Gary Wilson Award sponsored by the journal *descant*.

In subject matter and setting, Geyer’s oeuvre reflect the author’s two worlds: southwest Texas, where he grew up on a cattle ranch in the Hill Country—and South Carolina, where he has lived for the last 20 years.

He was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters in 2012. Also that year, the University of South Carolina named him a Breakthrough Rising Star. In April of 2020, he will be inducted into the South Carolina Academy of Authors.

Alumnus Named Principal of Aiken H.S.

Aiken High School named Jason Holt ’05 as its new principal. The appointment was approved by the Aiken County Board of Education. Holt, who began his new duties in July, served two years as principal of Paul Knox Middle School in North Augusta. He replaces Garen Cofer, who stepped down to serve as the new director of the Aiken County Adult Education Center.

Holt also served previously as principal at Jackson Middle STEM Magnet School, and as a social studies teacher and then assistant principal at South Aiken High School. Among his numerous awards and accolades, he was named to the 2019–20 Principal of the Year Honor Court.

Under Holt’s leadership, Paul Knox advanced its academic performance and received its first-ever “Good” rating on a state report card. During his term as principal at Jackson, he received the Robert E. Alexander STEM Principal of the Year Award from USC Aiken, the Augusta University JAG 20 Excellent Young Alumni Award, and the Inez Tenenbaum Award from the South Carolina State Department of Education.

Holt completed his doctoral studies in educational innovation at Augusta University after earning an educational specialist degree in educational leadership at Georgia Regents University. He also earned a Masters of Arts in educational administration from the University of South Carolina and a Bachelor of Arts in secondary education from USC Aiken.
Q&A with DAREN TIMMONS

Sharing his thoughts about higher education and his goals as USC Aiken's new provost.
Dr. Daren Timmons took over as provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs in July. Timmons had been in the post as an interim appointment since last summer. “Daren has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the university,” said Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor.

Timmons is responsible for managing all academic programs and academic support services, including enrollment management, admissions, and financial aid. Prior to assuming the interim position, Timmons was dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering at USC Aiken.

Before coming to USC Aiken in 2016, Timmons was the John C. Allen ’62 Institute Professor of Chemistry and head of the chemistry department at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va., where he developed new liquid crystal materials and metal-organic frameworks. He received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Duke University, and his doctorate in chemistry from Texas A&M University.

We chatted with Timmons, a native South Carolinian, in August about his career, his teaching, and his experience and aspirations at USC Aiken.

Q: You have studied and worked in quite a few different places across the country, but I understand that you are from South Carolina originally?
TIMMONS: That’s right. I grew up in Kershaw. It’s in Lancaster County, in the north central part of the state, about two hours away. I read a lot of books growing up. I was interested in chemistry and had a chemistry set that was a lot of fun. I cooked up some reactions, but there were no unauthorized explosions. I also played a lot of soccer.

Q: How did you get interested in soccer?
TIMMONS: Well, my dad, who is a retired physician, thought that football would be a little hard on the body of a six-year-old, but that soccer would be a great outlet. So he learned to coach. My love of the game came out of that. I remember spending lots and lots of free time kicking the ball against the wall, and just really enjoying the competition that comes from a team sport.

Q: Did you have a favorite position?
TIMMONS: I played center-midfield.

Q: Right where all the action is.
TIMMONS: Always and forever. I enjoyed the camaraderie of the sport and competing at the levels I played at.

Q: Do you see any connection between the teamwork and camaraderie of sports that you mentioned and your work as an academic?
TIMMONS: On an individual level, I would say the dedication you need to have, and also the recognition that you have things yet to learn. That is really critical in sports and it’s also very important in the classroom. The value of getting feedback from someone else, whether it be a peer, a coach, or a teacher or professor. That feedback is what drives you, and it can have a real impact on the improvement of the individual.

Q: Your college studies and professional career have been devoted to chemistry, which you were drawn to early. What kept you interested?
TIMMONS: Inorganic chemistry is my favorite. These are rocks and minerals and a lot of colored compounds, and the color is fascinating to me. That was always an attractive feature of the molecules I would study and build, regardless of what else they could do. It’s a lot of fun to look at the external properties of chemicals, the macroscopic qualities, and try to connect them to the atomic structure or the molecular organization to see what’s going on inside. That’s been a connection to all the different research that I’ve done.

Q: In graduate school you studied with one of the preeminent chemists in the nation, F. Albert Cotton. Could you tell me about your work in his lab?
TIMMONS: Cotton was at Texas A&M University. He was internationally famous. He won almost all the big awards, everything but the Nobel Prize.

The molecules we worked on were four-fold paddlewheel type molecules. Imagine a steamboat paddle, but with just four paddles,
set every 90 degrees. They’re very symmetrical molecules. I’ve always been attracted to the elements of symmetry, and I think you see a lot of beauty in that. I spent the four years or so in the lab making molecules and growing crystals.

**Q: Can you share any memorable experiences working with Cotton?**

**TIMMONS:** One day early on, he came in to check on my progress. He’d always ask: What’s new? And he never meant: What’s going on with you? He always meant: What’s the latest advancement in the lab that you’ve made? I told him what I was doing and he commented that he thought I should be making more progress. I said, “All right, I’m going to work smarter, not harder.” And he just turned around and said, “How about you work both smarter and harder?” He wasn’t the nicest guy in general, but if he thought you were worth his time, then he would give everything to support you. He’s deceased now, but he did become a mentor and a friend.

**Q: You use aesthetic terms when you talk about your work in science: the appreciation and importance of color, beauty, symmetry.**

**TIMMONS:** I do see beauty in the things around me, and I would say in God’s creation. I’ve seen beauty all over the place. I love looking at the details and then also at the big picture.

**Q: Do you see connections between creativity and science?**

**TIMMONS:** Some people will say that science isn’t supposed to be creative, that you have to have discipline and a kind of system. And I think, man, there is a great connection between creativity and discipline. You’ve got to have both of those to be able to make progress, whether it’s in science, or on the stage in the theater, or the study of politics.

**Q: You spent a big portion of your career at the Virginia Military Institute. What drew you there?**

**TIMMONS:** VMI has about 1,500 students—completely undergraduate—and they had a long history of doing undergraduate research in the chemistry department. The professors worked on their own projects while bringing along students in their work. And I really wanted to make an investment in students, undergraduate students, at a time when they were trying to figure out who they were going to be, what they were going to do, what they were going to study, and what their life was going to be like. So I purposely made the decision to go to VMI, as opposed to going to a big research university where the focus was more on productivity. I wanted to be focused on people, and not give up the fun of doing chemistry, doing science.

**Q: You have a rather holistic view of education. Did it come from your experience as a student, or has it evolved in your work as an educator?**

**TIMMONS:** That’s a good question. My parents were always very focused on the people around them, welcoming them and making sure that they were cared for, whether it was on the medical side or the emotional and social side. And I’ve always enjoyed being connected to people. So that focus on people probably came from my parents. I also have a strong connection in the Christian faith. That really does impact my world view.

**Q: You sound like a natural teacher.**

**TIMMONS:** The people all around us are valuable, and if I can, I want to make a difference in a positive way. I think that life is a whole bunch
of small steps, and little by little you can make a difference in people’s lives. I’ve probably never said that out loud before, but that is definitely my focus, to help, little by little. We don’t always do things perfectly—I definitely don’t—but you give what you can in each moment.

**Q: What was VMI like in terms of teaching and the culture? It’s not your typical undergraduate experience.**

**TIMMONS:** The military flavor at VMI is ever-present. I was there for 15 years, and worked my way up through the department to become the chair, and then a campus leader in some different ways. I was in an army uniform, and I had to learn to respect and value the polished shoes and the salutes and the way that you interacted with students, fellow professors and the professional military folks that were there as instructors. You had to learn to value what the institution valued. But I came to realize that regardless of what clothes people are wearing, the students in uniform are still young people, generally 18-to-22 years old. My time at VMI was a very sweet time in my professional career. We raised our four kids in Lexington, Virginia. It’s a beautiful place and it was definitely hard to leave.

**Q: So you brought it all back home, to South Carolina and to USC Aiken, a few years ago, when you took over as dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering three years ago. What was the impetus for the move?**

**TIMMONS:** I was looking for another challenge. I had very much enjoyed the teaching side of things, and I still miss my research lab and the close relationships that you build while doing chemistry. But I also enjoyed becoming a university leader and learning how to solve other people’s problems, not just my own. I just found some fulfillment in that. It kind of goes back to my view of chemistry and teaching as well: Let’s take what seems complicated and look for something that makes sense. I wanted to do something that’s productive for those around me.

**Q: And the problem solving you’re talking about is the kind that’s required from a dean, solving administrative problems or logistical problems, for example?**

**TIMMONS:** More or less. I was looking for a different kind of a job and realized being a dean was probably the next step. But I still wanted to be able to be at a school where I could make a difference with students who were taking the next step in their lives. And it turned out that USC Aiken was the perfect place.

**Q: Why is that?**

**TIMMONS:** It was the excitement that I could see about the way the university was moving and growing, the students, the interactions with the local industry. As the dean of sciences and engineering, I focused on those areas, and the great relationships with the local industry in the area—we have a lot of valued partners. So that’s the excitement. The leadership here, the interest from the community in USC Aiken, and the ability of USC Aiken to impact the surrounding community. It seemed like just the right fit.

**Q: What were your goals as a new dean out of the gate?**

**TIMMONS:** Well, it was a new position for the university, and I had just arrived, so at first I was connecting with engineers and scientists in the area, going on tours of different plants, talking with our internship coordinator here on campus, stopping by the chemistry lab, the psychology department, getting to know the people and places here at USC Aiken.

One of the things that I knew that I could contribute with was undergraduate research, and I thought there’s ways that we can build in more resources here. We can build out some structure. We can grow this great learning environment for the students and provide some funding for the faculty as well.

**Q: Can you share an example?**

**TIMMONS:** Sure. It’s common in higher ed for faculty to do a lot of their scholarship over the summer, and one thing we did was establish our Summer Scholars Institute (SSI). What it means is that instead of having students working in restaurant jobs or whatever over the summer, they can come back to the school and we will pay them to work in the labs here, helping the faculty. We also provide some funding for the faculty, who are mentoring the students.

In the first summer of the program we had chemistry, biology, psychology, and sports science, and we had about 12 students overall working with faculty in all those areas. This summer we had 25 undergraduate students, 3 high school students and 12 faculty involved. And they were all doing funded research. I’m super, super excited to see the kind of legitimate experience that students are getting in the field during the summer, which they are absolutely going to be able to build on as they go throughout their career, whether they stay in the sciences or not.
Q: What other kinds of programs or initiatives have you been looking at or implementing?

TIMMONS: A lot of what we’re working on right now is improving the experience of our first- and second-year students, and trying to find ways to make sure they’re getting good solid starts. Some of that is through academic advising, some is through understanding the university lingo and how the processes work. We have a team of faculty and staff last semester that spent a lot of time on this, and we had maybe 10 task forces that were part of our strategic planning process, tackling different issues around the university. One of them is finding out about the challenges that our students are facing and how we can help. So that’s going to be a big job for the university.

Q: You mentioned university lingo and processes, things that can be stumbling blocks in particular for first generation college students, who may not have a family member or relative to counsel them. There are a lot of first-generation students at USC Aiken, correct?

TIMMONS: We have 40% first-generation students. It’s a significant component. And for first-generation students, it’s the kind of thing where if you don’t know something, you don’t know that you don’t know it. It’s incredibly important when you’re a new college student, on your own and trying to make sense of things, that you get the help and information you need to succeed. I’m convinced that what we’re offering students here is excellent, and will make a huge difference both in their own personal lives and in the lives of their families as they go forward. A college degree can have a generational impact, with benefits that redound to other family members and to those who come later.

Q: How?

TIMMONS: I heard a lecture recently about relationship-rich experiences, and how important they were in college, and I thought, man, that is a great way to put that. And I believe that is what we do here at USC Aiken as well. This kind of close mentoring, working one-on-one with students, working together in small groups—these kinds of things build relationships. And I really do think relationships are what keep people going when things get tough. It’s not just in the specialized programs, but if we can find ways to know and connect with our students throughout our university life, then we all benefit as a result.

Q: You were appointed interim provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs last year, which was made a permanent appointment this summer. What has it been like, getting your sea legs and starting in a new post?

TIMMONS: Someone once said that the word provost means keeper of the asylum. It does feel like that at some points. But essentially I’m providing leadership to all of our academic enterprise. I work with all of the different academic programs and departments, and with the faculty and staff in those areas, like hiring, evaluation and promotion, tenure, curricula, all those sorts of things.

You know, the best ideas are the ones that come out of the faculty, because they’re the ones who are right there, they’re the experts in the field, and they’re working with the students. And I have the privilege of seeing all those great ideas, and helping make sure that we can accomplish them, and that they fit from a university perspective.

Q: What are your thoughts, broadly, on the role of universities at present?

TIMMONS: Higher education is a very interesting place these days. There’s a lot of questioning nationally as to whether a college degree is valuable, should you wait, or should you even get one at all. And I’m unashamed that we are clearly focused on a four-year degree here. It makes a real difference in improving the lives of students, and I can show you the data. It may not be the answer for everyone, but if you talk about economic benefits, job resiliency and other factors throughout a lifetime, a college degree is really valuable.

USC Aiken is an exciting place to be right now. My goal as the provost, from a sort of philosophical perspective, is to find ways to build in both grace and hope into our conversations, our experiences, and our future. If we can do that, I think that we make a real difference in the lives of those that we work with and serve.”
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Members of the Student Affairs staff gather in the Student Activities Center.
Student affairs is an integral educational and administrative component of the university, providing a wide array of activities, programs and services designed to address the cognitive, ethical, emotional, occupational, physical and social development of students.

The Division of Student Affairs, formerly known as Student Life and Services, has had to keep pace as the university matured. Creating a rich campus life is central to its mission, and it greatly impacts the bottom line: engaged students are more likely to complete their degree at USC Aiken, while prospective students are drawn to institutions providing a “full college experience.”

The division has undergone significant changes in recent months. First, by changing the name of the division, the intention is to create clarity on our campus and among peer institutions. The division encompasses a disparate range of departments such as Campus Recreation and Wellness, the Counseling Center, and the Office of Disability Services. The name change also creates distinction between the division as a whole and the Student Life Office, which also falls under that umbrella.

Several changes in personnel have occurred as well. Most notable is the change in leadership.
A familiar face on campus, Ahmed Samaha, accepted the position of vice-chancellor of student affairs in July. Providing stability and guiding the division through its next phase, Samaha provides a wealth of experience that only comes with a lengthy tenure.

When Samaha began his career at the university 24 years ago, he oversaw intramural sports and the programming board. In time, his responsibilities broadened and evolved in response to meet the ever-changing needs of a diverse student population.

Before taking on his newest role as vice-chancellor, Samaha spent six years as the associate vice-chancellor reporting to Dr. Deb Kladivko until her retirement in 2018. He believes being the division’s second in command offered him valuable preparation.

“Every few years I’ve received a promotion or title change that allowed me more responsibilities and opportunities for growth. I’ve been able to dabble in many areas of the university. As a result, I have a breadth of knowledge on the ways that the university works. I’m excited to help provide a vision for the division and the university. I want to implement some fresh new ideas based on my experience. I want to make our campus the best learning and working environment possible,” Samaha said.

Samaha is particularly focused on the retention of students. He said, “We offer fun opportunities, but we also offer many key services that impact the educational experience and facilitate student success. For example, students can utilize the Disability Services Office if they have a learning disability, visit the Student Health Center if they have a cold, go to the Wellness Center to stay fit and relieve stress, or take part in our leadership certificate program to enhance their leadership skills.”

It takes a large, well-organized crew to fulfill the mission of these services that fall under the purview of student affairs. The division employs 27 full-time employees and more than 140 student employees.

“We have a group that truly cares about students and knows that they can’t accomplish our mission alone,” Samaha said. “I hope to continue to promote that value. We’re all in this together and must recognize the efforts of our teammates as well as the efforts of others across campus who contribute to the success of our students.”
In addition to Samaha’s promotion, other significant changes in staff include the introduction of Hoss Brown to the team. Through his work with diversity initiatives, Brown seeks to create a more inclusive and diverse campus.

“We strive to create a heightened sense of belonging for each and every one of our students regardless of their background or beliefs,” Brown said. “We celebrate our differences as contributions to the community, and we celebrate this through hosting events that are related to heritage and history months. We also provide education and training programs pertaining to the struggles and the challenges that students may face on campus related to their backgrounds.”

Brown has been encouraged by the campus’s interest in his efforts so far. Twenty-five students, faculty, and staff members marched alongside him in the Augusta Pride parade during the summer. To Brown, this indicates a passion for inclusion as well as a willingness to get involved. He hopes for further engagement as other enterprises are launched, including the formation of a bias incident report team. That team will provide a platform for the discussion of important issues so that all reported incidences of prejudice are handled with appropriate action.

Additionally, Brown is developing a diversity certificate program, similar to the university’s Leadership Certificate Program. The program will be comprised of multi-faceted components including a formal course, a community-involvement project, and a campus involvement component. Currently, Brown is investigating the possibility of incorporating an educational trip into the program with potential locations including the Stonewall Inn in New York to learn about the history of gay rights and Selma Alabama to learn about civil rights.

“Completion of the program will be something material that students can put on their resume, and it will prepare them to be successful after graduation in our increasingly diverse workplaces,” Brown said.

Through these initiatives, he ultimately hopes to create a campus that is well-informed about all elements of diversity and the role that diversity plays on campus.

Brown said, “I want everyone to know that diversity goes beyond things such as race, sexuality, and gender identity. It also includes religion, ethnicity, nationality, and ability status. Education about diversity and inclusion will help foster the community that our students need. The Division of Student Affairs is committed to providing that community. My colleagues and I strive to make our language and behavior as inclusive as possible.”

“I want everyone to know that diversity goes beyond things such as race, sexuality, and gender identity. It also includes religion, ethnicity, nationality, and ability status.”
Elizabeth Dille, who assumed her position with international programs in November 2018, is also focused on creating community. Specifically, she is focused on creating a global community that concentrates on the inclusion of the 85 international students currently enrolled at the university.

“During their time at USC Aiken, I consider myself a guardian and advocate for our international student community. Many of their families are thousands of miles away, so I act as their advocate, advisor, and resource while they’re here. I hope there are other individuals on campus with whom our international students connect with, but if nothing else, I want to be that person for them. My office strives to be their support system.”

Dille’s office also sponsors several community programs to help international students make connections with fellow students and other members of the Aiken community.

A peer-to-peer program is currently one of the most popular. It matches upperclassman students, both domestic and international, with new international students. The mentors share their own experiences and offer support for newer students. Another one of their programs matches local families with international students, so they become somewhat of a host family. The student doesn’t live with that family, but they do spend time building connections and learning from one another. Dille feels this program is especially valuable because it helps international students more closely experience American community and culture.

Dille works with domestic students as well by overseeing study abroad programs in over 20 countries each year. She helps facilitate short-term group travel programs, semester abroad, and year abroad options, which provide students a unique chance to engage with and learn from other communities around the world. Dille realizes that not all students will be able to take advantage of study abroad travel opportunities, so she is also passionate about creating easily accessible, on-campus programming that is interculturally focused. These programs are designed to make students better global citizens who are prepared to engage in our increasingly global community.

“Being able to interact with a coworker who has a diverse background or being able to empathize with someone who holds a different perspective is important. Students can take those learned skills beyond the classroom, beyond the USC Aiken campus, and into their lives following their time as Pacers.”

Similarly, the new Director of Housing and Residence Life, Kevin Kerr, is dedicated to helping prepare students for a lifetime of success. Kerr said, “Our facilities are wonderful. Our residence halls are modern and spacious. They meet the lifestyle needs of a student in the 21st century. But we don’t just boast great facilities. Housing is more than a place for a bed and dresser—this is a place where learning is enhanced.”

The director plans to coordinate with other faculty and staff on campus to create even better support for students than what previously existed.
“I’m passionate about learning and passionate about helping our students have a great experience,” Kerr said. “After all, this is their home while they’re here. Engagement here can result in lifelong enrichment. I want to work with others who are providing wrap-around services, such as the Counseling Center, Disability Services, and the Gregg-Graniteville Library. I want to make sure students are engaging with all these offices and that we’re getting them help early if they are struggling. I want to make housing a true living learning community. That’s my vision.”

Kerr, who joined the university in May, has quickly grown to appreciate the group dynamics of student affairs and how they contribute to his goals for Housing and Residence Life.

“Teamwork has been a clearly evident factor since my first interview here. I’m impressed with how closely individuals in housing work with people in intramurals and campus programming for example. The division does a great job of connecting and making sure we leverage each other’s skills and strengths for the benefit of the students.”

As Kerr notes, student success is the main goal uniting this large division of people. Although student affairs has undergone numerous staff changes, one thing remains consistent: the needs of the students will always be the first priority in order to provide the most impactful living and learning experiences possible. With this in mind, Brown, Dille, Kerr, and their colleagues look forward to providing opportunities for optimal student engagement under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Samaha.

“Housing is more than a place for a bed and dresser—this is a place where learning is enhanced.”
For many college students, having a robust support network can make all the difference when faced with new challenges and uncharted opportunities. As a result, universities are increasingly mindful of the role that family support plays in the success of their students.

USC Aiken’s efforts in this area are spearheaded by Sandy Talbott, coordinator of parent and family relations. Her office is committed to providing intentional support to families, so they are equipped to be a strong foundation for their student. Talbott said, “My mission is to engage, inform, and connect parents with the university, so they are made aware of the resources we have in place for their students. They can support their students from home while we support them here at school.”

Talbott recognizes that college, especially the first year, can be a time of transitional challenges for both students and their families. As she puts it, parents serve as the “directors” in their child’s life from kindergarten through high school and help guide their daily activities. Once a student graduates high school, a transition begins. Parents are no longer directors; they simply become supporters. Students learn to become more independent and manage the many responsibilities associated with university life. Family, however, can and should remain actively engaged in the success of their student.

According to Talbott, “Data shows that supportive parents lead to students who remain in college—students who are successful, students who graduate. Students often turn to family first when they have questions or concerns. We want to make sure that our students’ parents are as informed as possible, so they can assist their student when questions inevitably arise. Instead of a parent going in and trying to fix a problem themselves, the parent should ask questions to point the student in the right direction. A parent needs to know that there are policies and people at the university that can help students overcome any challenges they may face.”

This parental preparation begins at summer orientation. Talbott encourages parents to attend the program to learn about the university and the resources that are available to students. Orientation is the first large-scale welcome for families. This support then carries over to move-in day for residential students.

“Move-in day has the potential to be stressful, but we make it fun and include the parents in the excitement.”

A few weeks into the fall semester, Talbott’s office helps host Family Day, an opportunity for families of both commuter and residential students to check in with their students and catch a glimpse of what life on campus is like.

Talbott said, “It is my job to make parents feel welcome and feel a part of their student’s university experience through events like these. Sometimes college students aren’t as open as their families would like them to be, and sometimes they simply forget to mention things like when their breaks are or what special events are happening on campus. So, when parents and families have questions about these things, I am their point person.”

As the mother to two recent college graduates, Talbott understands that parenting a college student can come with occasional bumps in the road.

“Parenting college students isn’t for the faint of heart,” said Talbott. “But as a team we are stronger and can support our students in their effort to achieve their full potential.”

Stay informed: sign up for the Parent and Family Relations monthly email newsletter and view the calendar of important dates online at usca.edu/parents.

Sandy Talbott
Prof’s Artwork Brands
North Charleston Arts Fest

Art professor Joseph Kameen’s painting, Shadow Boxer, was selected as the official image of the 2019 North Charleston Arts Fest. That work, along with a series of Kameen’s new paintings, titled Balancing Act, were featured in an exhibit in the North Charleston City Gallery in May.

The artist received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture and painting at Boston University and his Master of Fine Arts in painting from Indiana University–Bloomington. His work has been featured in such publications as the Boston Voyager, Emboss Magazine, and the Pinch Literary Journal, and is represented in private collections around the world.

Tree Honors Collins

The university paid tribute to retiring English professor Vicki Collins with a tree planting on Earth Day.

“I love my Rising Sun redbud tree,” said Collins, a senior instructor who taught at USC Aiken for 30 years. This particular variety was chosen to honor her Appalachian heritage. Like her, it’s a native of North Carolina and East Tennessee, where she was raised.

Over the past three decades, Collins has significantly influenced her students both in the classroom and as director of the USC Aiken Writing Room. Her legacy will live on within each of her colleagues and students, said Meredith Hawcroft, BA English ’17. “We are proud to have that legacy tangibly represented by this tree planted alongside her favorite building on campus: the Humanities and Social Sciences Building,” said Hawcroft.

Collins received the 2015 University Service Award and the 2016 Excellence in Teaching Award.
In our message-drenched world, brands simplify decisions and draw people together around shared values. For educational institutions, a brand builds a reputation and engages people beyond their transactional experiences with the institution. The brand has enduring value, turning students into proud alumni and professors into advocates. Hype and spin cannot do this; the brand must be built on authentic experiences and demonstrable attributes.

Brand marketing is a subtle and long-term process. It is more than a recruitment campaign, more than a capital campaign, and more than a tagline: it is the heart of the matter. A brand is how mission gains substance. It evolves out of every experience people have in their interactions with the institution, on every level—from parking on campus to perusing the website or the alumni magazine.

The most successful brand marketing efforts integrate all audience touchpoints. Responsibility for the effort cannot lie exclusively with advancement, marketing, or admissions; it requires the participation of every individual, from frontline staff members to university leadership.

Marketing a university is far more challenging than a commercial venture, primarily because college means many things to many people. What a university represents to one person may not be true for another.

Over the past three years, the University of South Carolina Aiken has focused on its branding efforts. To be clear, we didn't intend to create a new brand for the university; rather, we sought to refine our existing brand to better reflect the character of the university.

Additionally, we created a new set of visuals that serve to distinguish USC Aiken from its competitors and inspire a sense of pride among our internal and external audiences.

Beginning in 2016 the university contracted with STAMATS, a higher education marketing agency, to develop an enhanced brand platform and messaging. The university brand validates how our internal and external audiences perceive us, and it employs language and consistent messaging for recruiting students and engaging alumni, parents, friends, and donors.

The goal of our brand campaign is to move our story from the intellectual mission of the institution into the emotional realm that defines the experience of audiences as they engage with the university. Specifically, the brand platform conveys the general promise that the university makes to its external audiences. It also reflects the key attributes, which translate to the benefits that our audiences seek in a school.

*The brand is our story—and we need to tell it consistently, everywhere.*
BRAND PROMISE

A brand promise should meet the test of four requirements: it must be important, believable, distinctive, and effective.

This four-part test is challenging. We must promise something that matters, that can be believed, that distinguishes us from other institutions doing somewhat similar work for similar reasons—and it must be simple enough to register with our external audiences.

The university brand, our promise, springs from our authentic strengths toward the authentic concerns of our external audiences. It must be more outward facing than inward. And it must create common ground.

REFINING THE MESSAGE

USC Aiken educates the next generation of professionals—nurses, engineers, educators, journalists, accountants, musicians, psychologists, and others in every field—so they have the broad understanding and critical capabilities to succeed in their careers, enjoy a full life, and contribute as citizens and neighbors, building vibrant communities for the future.

This promise is evident not only in the Aiken campus community experience but beyond in other communities enriched by our graduates. The university’s promise of benefits extends to prospective students and families, as well as to future employers, neighbors, and friends of USC Aiken alumni. It blends the sometimes ineffable benefits of a liberal arts education with the sometimes prosaic benefits of professional education, creating a hybrid that is arguably more valuable and useful. This is USC Aiken’s strongest distinction, with the widest appeal.

A NEW VISUAL IDENTITY

Subsequent to refining the brand message, the university revisited its visual identity. With approval of the board, the three comprehensive universities in the USC system—Aiken, Beaufort, and Upstate—contracted with Ologie, a top design agency specializing in higher education marketing, to create a distinctive logo for each school.

During the extensive discovery phase last fall, Ologie staff visited campus to interview and conduct focus groups with key stakeholders, including leadership, staff, and students, about the history, culture, values, and future vision of the university.

Ologie collaborated with a university-based team, composed of four faculty and staff members and three students, to develop 10 visual identity concepts for USC Aiken. Of two finalists, a winning design was selected.

USC Aiken presented its new logo on May 2. The visual identity reflects our culture and our region—and our mascot. It reinforces and advances our brand recognition and distinction, an objective articulated in the university’s strategic plan, “Leading Forward.”

Our logo uses a clean and approachable geometric, sans-serif typeface that feels both modern and timeless.
Brand Architecture

A **brand** is articulated through a promise, attributes, ethos, and expressive style.

A **brand promise** is the implied experience or benefit of a brand. Among well-established consumer brands, we recognize that Volvo promises safety, Walmart low prices, and Apple great design. These promises are carefully crafted and established as the touchstone for each brand.

A **brand idea** sums up the central attribute of the university for the brand activity. It is the pivot point between the intellectual aspect of the promise and the emotional, ethical, and experiential dimensions of the ethos and expression—the brand creative.

A **brand ethos** is the heart of the story, its emotional and ethical core. This is an evocative passage, a rally, and a seed for the fully developed expressive style.

A **brand pillar** is a supporting idea that focuses on the brand expression. For USC Aiken, that relates particularly to strengthening student recruitment. Over time through repetition and brand discipline, our pillars will be associated with the university’s strengths. That is the goal of disciplined communication of the university’s attributes.

Most brands have a signature expressive style, apparent in both editorial voice and graphic design. For example, before the logo appears, you can probably identify a Target, Subaru, or Old Navy brand by the distinctive style of the ad.

Our Brand Pillars

Our goal is to promote these pillars as top-of-mind strengths associated with USC Aiken. Disciplined repetition of these expressions is a primary tactic in achieving that goal. More important than repeating the words verbatim, however, is reinforcing the ideas presented here in our promotion efforts.
Define Your Terms

Large organizations with layered management need a comprehensive brand identity system that conveys a unified vision and provides the tools required to build the brand. It is helpful to understand the roles of and relationships among the key components—brand, identity, and logo—in this case, in the context of the university.

**Brand**, or branding, refers to the perceived image of and emotional response to the university, its services, and its relationship with the community at large. It also represents what our “customers”—that is, prospective students and their families—are saying to one another about the university and how that “conversation” gets transmitted, and how widely.

Seth Godin, bestselling author and former dot-com business executive, defined brand as “the set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another.”

**Identity** describes the visual devices used to represent the university. Identity systems consist of a visual components package paired with style guidelines for users’ reference so as to ensure the coherence and consistency of the image. Examples of visual devices include fonts, color palette, stationery, marketing collateral, signage, messaging, and digital projects.

A **logo** is the central, identifiable visual element that helps the public discover, share, and remember the brand. Typically, it takes the form of an icon (a mark or symbol), a logotype, or a combination of those two.

Logos are used to identify, not sell. Graphic designer Paul Rand, who created logos for such major commercial firms as Enron, IBM, Morningstar, the American Broadcasting Company, and Westinghouse Corporation, once said that “a logo is a flag, a signature, an escutcheon, a street sign. A logo does not sell (directly); it identifies. A logo is rarely a description of a business. A logo derives meaning from the quality of the thing it symbolizes, not the other way around. A logo is less important than the product it signifies; what it represents is more important than what it looks like." 🐢
Greetings, alumni! Thank you, and farewell!

I am bursting with Pacer Pride as I write to congratulate and thank you for the many amazing things you have accomplished and the positive impact you make daily. Not only in support of our great University, but also for the wonderful things you do that contribute to the success of your communities and families.

As the Director of Alumni Relations, I have had the honor to hear about and see some of the great things our alumni are doing in our local community, in the state of South Carolina and throughout the country. Thank you for sharing your stories, your lives and the contributions you continue to make. With over 20,000 USC Aiken alumni living, working and playing throughout the country and around the world, we (Pacer alumni) have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Let’s do it!

For the past 22 years, USC Aiken has been ranked as one of the finest institutions in the Southeast, but we as alumni don’t need rankings to tell us that. We know USC Aiken is a special place, a place where faculty, staff, students, alumni, the Aiken community, and University retirees really do care and work hard to make sure USC Aiken is the best it can be. As alumni, your support, involvement and input is needed now, more than ever. You and I can make sure that USC Aiken remains one of the best universities in the country. Let’s do it!

Forty three years ago I became a Pacer as a freshman, began my working career as a work study student, spent two years as graduate assistant and 37 as a full time employee. It has been an incredible adventure! Words cannot express what an honor it has been and how grateful I am for being able to complete this meaningful and wonderful journey with so many of you. I am so grateful for you and appreciate the impact that so many of you have had on my life during these years. While I will be retiring at the end of the semester, I will remain a loyal Pacer fan, and I hope to see many of you at events and games around the campus. Let’s do it!

Best Wishes,

Randy Duckett ’80
Director of Alumni Relations
In 1977 Archie Jordan received an ASCAP Award for “It Was Almost Like a Song.”

Eight exemplary tunesmiths have been revealed as the 2019 nominees for the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in the Songwriters category and one of them is USC Aiken (Banksia) alum, Archie Jordan.

Archie was a member of the Beach Music band, The Intruders, in the 1960’s when that genre of music was most popular, especially in South Carolina. After attending USC Aiken, Archie spent the summer touring with a well-known act, The Tams, and returned to school in the fall, but this time at the main campus in Columbia to finish his degree majoring in music. College days gave Archie the opportunity to play viola with two orchestras as well as an opportunity to study composition and arranging.

After graduating he moved on to Nashville to try his luck as a writer and two years later, Archie would have his first single (co-written with Hal David) entitled, “It Was Almost Like a Song.” This song, recorded by Ronnie Milsap, was his first hit and was later featured in the movie “The Bridges of Madison County.” Other hits followed including “What a Difference You’ve Made in My Life,” and “Let’s Take the Long Way Around the World.”

Archie returned to the USC Aiken campus in 2008 and 2011 to perform “Songwriters Come Home” on the Etherredge Center stage with other Banksia alums and fellow members of the Intruders, Stewart Harris and the late Mike Stewart.

The inductees will be announced at the 49th Anniversary Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Gala on October 14.

Kelley Cornish ’89 has been named one of Savoy Magazine’s 2019 Most Influential Women in Corporate America. This prestigious list showcases a cross section of business leaders and executives who represent a diverse range of industries with national and global focus. Kelley currently serves as Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at TD Bank. She has recently co-authored a book with Myron L. Rolle It’s World! How Will You Show Up?: 99 Tips, Turns, and Lessons Learned from a Panel of One.

Kelley, who graduated from Aiken High School and majored in marketing and management at USC Aiken said, “This journey started 30 years ago after graduating from the University of South Carolina Aiken for me. To see God’s hand guide, direct, discipline and protect continuously keeps me in awe! Thankful for His direction, family and the colleagues who make my work worthwhile! Proud to be alongside the amazing Oprah and many other fabulous women leading change around the globe!”
Classnotes

1982
Tammie Warren Covington
((Elementary Education) retired this summer after 35 years in education.

1985
Patrick Glen Murphy
(Interdisciplinary Studies) retired from the Air Force (Air National Guard) as a Tech Sergeant in 2017. Murphy plans to retire from Centera-SRS in four-and-a-half years with 38 years of service.

2013
Phillip Blacha became the athletic director at Aiken High School this summer. Blacha has been with the school since June 2017 and has coached football and wrestling with over four years of experience in athletics and coaching. In the past year Blacha served as a teacher, coach, department chair, and was a member of the school’s School Based Leadership Team. Blacha earned his Masters of Science in Kinesiology in May of 2015. He is currently in the process of completing a program in Educational Leadership through a degree program at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin.

2009
Deonna Brown (Business Administration/Management) is the Education and Activity Coordinator at Helping Hands, Inc in Aiken She celebrated a one year anniversary this past spring. She has also published a series of Christian books, The Power of True Love. Brown is a licensed Minister of the Gospel (Aug 2018) at Thankful Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Williston, SC. After graduating from USC Aiken, she went on to earn a master's in general psychology from Grand Canyon University, a diploma/certification in personal fitness and nutritional training, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Counseling Psychology.

2018
Dhaval Panchal (Fine Arts) is an Instagram blogger, model and current brand ambassador for a well-known clothing brand. The current title holder for Mr. India Global, he is also a past winner of Mr. India America East Coast 2014 and Mr. South Asia USA 2015, former Male Model of the Year by IMTA and ABC’s Next Bachelor Award winner. Dhaval enjoys working as a DJ creating a variety of remixes, including Bollywood and hop hip songs, which can be found on his soundcloud.

Student Gives Back Through Capstone Project

Senior Communication major and soccer player Amanda Giordano organized and conducted USC Aiken's first-ever Athletic Day of Giving on April 24. Designed as the Capstone Project of her internship with the Athletic Department, Amanda created social media messaging to connect with students, parents, donors and athletics alumni through Facebook, Twitter and email.

Focused on celebrating 58 years of Pacer Athletics, Amanda created messages, emails and videos (with an assist from Assistant Athletics Communication Director Cody Keisler on technical issues) that were pushed out every hour for 15 hours at the 58-minute mark. Video topics highlighted scholarships, coaches, facilities, community involvement, alumni, women athletes, championship experiences, the Student Athletic Advisory Committee, strength & conditioning needs, and individual student stories. Amanda's creativity and hard work resulted in $3,000 raised for athletics. Athletic Director Jim Herlihy plans to use Amanda's project as a template for an annual fundraising effort.

Other projects during Amanda's internship included redesigning the visitor guides for each of the University's 10 athletic teams, interviewing athletics alumni and coaches to create video for presentations during homecoming, and working as part of the team to present Pacers & Polo, the Athletics Department's major scholarship fundraiser.
Checking in with Herlihy
THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR REVIEWS THE UNIVERSITY’S SUMMER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The USC Aiken Athletics Department has been extremely busy this summer working to assure that student athletes in almost every sport saw improvements that will enhance their experience at USC Aiken. We are very grateful that many of these projects were accomplished with the help of generous donors. Here’s what we did:

• installed shade protection for the metal soccer team benches
• replaced windscreens on the soccer and softball fields
• replaced the sound system at the softball field
• refinshed the basketball floor
• purchased an extra basketball backboard to meet NCAA post-season hosting criteria
• conducted field maintenance at the baseball and softball fields
• installed new signage at the baseball stadium highlighting Pacer history and success by listing the championship teams and former Pacers drafted into the pros
• installed new chairs and carpet runners for teams in the Convocation Center
• repaired the Pacer Pit sound system
• initiated a facility branding project with new graphics in the Athletics suite and in the Convocation Center halls
• updated graphics in the Volleyball, and men’s and women’s Basketball locker rooms
• replaced televisions in locker rooms to facilitate team film review
• addressed erosion and conditions on the cross country course

• hosted an applied sports psychologist to talk to the student athletes
• engaged a NCAA professional development consultant to talk with our coaches about leadership
• completed an organizational restructure after an intensive review of athletic scholarships, operating budgets and personnel
• completed the NCAA Compliance Blueprint review
• initiated the NCAA accreditation process

In addition, we accepted bids for foul poles at the Roberto Hernandez Stadium and began the bid process for an updated scoreboard. We’re also working on the bid requests for broadcasting and video replacements in the Convocation Center.

Even with all of this, we still have a long “to do” list and an even longer Wish List. Top of the list right now is creation of a Golf Practice Facility and (the student athletes’ top request) a Strength and Conditioning Center.

If you are in a position to help, please give online at https://www.usca.edu/ (click on Give to USC Aiken at the bottom of the page and then select USC Aiken on the next page) or make your check payable to The Aiken Partnership with “Athletics Department” on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to: USC Advancement Office, 471 University Parkway, Aiken SC 29801.
At its annual dinner, the Peach Belt Conference (PBC) recognized the university with the Most Improved Award for Make-A-Wish. The foundation raises money to grant the wishes of children with life-threatening or terminal medical conditions. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) raised nearly $1,000 during the 2018–19 season by selling Make-A-Wish stars at the USC Aiken-UNC Pembroke home basketball doubleheader.

“SAAC is a wonderful organization [that] I’ve been a part of since my freshman year,” said board member Rebecca Martinez. “With the Make-A-Wish project, we raised more money than we have in the last few years. I cannot help but think it’s because everyone came together for this tremendous cause.” The PBC Make-A-Wish Awards were renamed the LeeAnn Noble Make-A-Wish Awards following the 2013–14 season to honor the University of North Georgia golfer, herself a wish recipient, who died in March 2014.
We just can’t get enough of the Pacer spirit horse! Under the direction of the Office of Student Life-Diversity Initiatives Director Hoss Brown and Coordinator Travis Hardee, painting the horse located near the Alumni House has become an event. Here, students paint the horse to celebrate Latin(x) Heritage Month in September.