USC AIKEN
ALUMNI, FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY

Answering the Call

USC AIKEN ENRICHES THE K-12 EXPERIENCE

THE LEGACY OF EXEMPLARY EDUCATORS

SUMMER 2018
During my study abroad for multimedia journalism, our first assignment was to take photos during a tour of the city. This picture was the overall favorite among the teachers and brought on the encouragement for me to focus more on photography. Without this picture of a random woman at a tourist spot, I would not have had the confidence to continue my study of photography or art in general.

See the related story on Broken Ink, page 42.
Greetings from the Chancellor

According to the 2014 “Competing through Knowledge” study conducted by The Darla Moore School of Business, South Carolina will need 114,500 more college-educated workers by 2030, and that some 550,000 jobs will require a 4-year degree. USC Aiken is well positioned to offer South Carolina employers young leaders who are articulate critical thinkers who will meet the needs of the state of South Carolina and beyond.

USC Aiken is innovating the pathways to a college education by expanding the capacity of South Carolina’s workforce. We do this by focusing on the connectivity and alignment between schooling for K-8th Grades (Ruth Patrick Science Education Center), high school (the new Scholar’s Academy), through the university’s innovative degree offerings, and the latest research and innovation (the SRNL’s Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative). All these efforts have the potential of creating an innovation synergy unseen in any other part of the country.

Ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the #1 Regional Comprehensive Public College in the South, and designated a College of Distinction in the United States in 2018, USC Aiken is a confirmed educational leader. You will find lots of exciting Pacer news in this edition of USC Aiken Magazine which underscores the heart of our mission and all we do to accomplish it, which is, simply put, to transform lives through education.

Enjoy this issue of the magazine, and GO PACERS!

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Jordan, Ph.D.
Chancellor
We know and recognize that there are many teachers in our past who have given their hearts, minds and souls to nurture in us the things that they saw as vital to our education, critical to our success and important for our future.

In keeping with that theme, this issue honors some of our local educators and acknowledges the crucial role teachers play in making sure every student receives a quality education.

Our cover story is on alumnus Devone McKie, who serves as a champion for his young students. Our Quintessentially Aiken spread captures several of our alumni — many of whom are First Year Teacher of the Year honorees — who are heroes in our local schools.

Next, we enumerate just some of the many ways USC Aiken enriches the K-12 experience in our community, the region and the state. Not just in preparing future educators, but serving as a vital resource through our Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, which turns 30 this year.

Fifty students will begin their high school experience at USC Aiken this fall. Students at Aiken County’s newest school, Aiken Scholars Academy, have selected the Phoenix as their new mascot. “The meaning of the Phoenix is fitting for our school. It’s a unique creature representing an elite new educational experience in South Carolina,” says USC Aiken alumna and principal Martha Messick.

We also say goodbye to exemplary educators who have given so much of their time and talent to the University. Al Byer. Deb Klavidko. Jeff Priest. Their legacy is the indelible mark they have left on the lives of our students and alumni, whether as mentor, advocate or administrator.

Finally, we recognize our women’s basketball team who have given freely of their time to students at Aiken High School and gotten back as much as they gave.

I’m sure that like me, you have teachers from your past who inspired you and gave freely of their time to help you along your journey. Perhaps an education champion is leading your children. Remember to make time to honor them and express your gratitude.
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MCGRATH LEARNING CENTER
Chancellor Jordan and Wayne Rickman, chairman of the board of directors for the McGrath Computer Learning Center, signed a memorandum of understanding that will extend the partnership through June 30, 2020.

For many years, McGrath Computer Learning Center has provided technical training in computers, tablets, telephones and similar devices to area citizens on the USC Aiken campus.

PADDLE BATTLE
Student Government Association presidents from USC Aiken and Augusta University created a new tradition in the spirit of friendly rivalry called the Battle for the Paddle.

At the end of the academic year, the university winning the most sporting competitions receives the trophy paddle and bragging rights. This year, USC Aiken led the competitive events and ended the paddle battle 6-4.5.

“I am incredibly proud of our Pacer student-athletes this past year,” said Brandon Eberl, the newly elected president of USC Aiken's SGA. His counterpart at AU, LeDarius Scott, presented the paddle to Eberl in Augusta University's Christenberry Fieldhouse.

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION
Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon formally recognized Dr. Jeff Priest for his significant achievements at the University and in the community during his 30-year career.

As the provost, Priest has shepherded the creation of several new degree programs, including clinical lab science, industrial process engineering, an online MBA, and the soon to launch applied math and applied computer science degrees (with concentrations in cybersecurity and applied gaming) and a Masters in Educator Leadership. He has also strengthened international programs and signed five memorandums of understanding with institutions in India.

During the last three decades, Priest has served not only in his current position but also as the dean of the School of Education and director of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center.

“Dr. Priest is most significantly known for his vision, design and launching of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center which provides support for science education for teachers in K-12 and now serves over 80,000 students and faculty on a yearly basis,” the proclamation stated.

Priest has also dedicated his time to serving the community. He has been a member and leader in approximately 40 service organizations.

The mayoral proclamation celebrated Priest’s “legacy and the many contributions that he made to USC Aiken and to the Aiken community.” Priest, who began at the university in 1988, retired June 30. (See related story on page 24)

MENDED HEARTS TRIBUTE
Aiken Mended Hearts Chapter 294 and friends of one of Aiken's late icons, Robert “Skipper” Perry, dedicated a bio-step machine in Aiken Cardiac Rehabilitation in memory of the longtime public servant.

The cardiac rehab facility is a collaboration between Aiken Regional Medical Centers and the University. The equipment was installed in Perry's memory in the University's Wellness Center where cardiac rehab takes place.

The former public servant died June 2017. During his career, Perry served as a state representative, an Aiken city councilman and Aiken mayor pro tempore. The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce named him Man of the Year in 2016.

ELLIOTT INSTALLED AS LIFETIME MEMBER
This semester, the College Media Association approved the lifetime membership of Peggy Elliott, USC Aiken communication professor.

“This is a well-deserved honor. Peggy was actively involved with the CMA, which was not only beneficial for her but for our students as well,” said Dr. Charmaine Wilson, chair of the communication department.

A freelance writer as well, Elliott is often featured in local publications.

“Putting words and images together is
exciting, no matter what medium is used, yet it requires an almost overwhelming attention to detail,” Elliott said. “These are not just communication skills; they are life skills: to be careful and imaginative at the same time.”

Elliott, who served several years as the advisor for both The Pacer Times and the International Association of Business Communicators, retired in June.

Munsell as president during their annual convention in Nashville in April.

Munsell received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Arkansas in communication and his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in speech communication with a focus on rhetoric and public address. His research interests focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning, the history of rhetoric and communication pedagogy and the rhetoric of tourism. His recent work has appeared in such journals as Communication Teacher and Carolinas Communication Annual.

Prior to his appointment at USC Aiken, Munsell spent 14 years teaching at Columbia College and was the 2010 and 2012 winner of the Columbia College Student’s Choice Award for Teaching Excellence. He was also the 2012 Columbia College winner of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Teaching Excellence Award.

USC AIKEN HONORS RETIRING ART PROFESSOR
The University held a tree-planting ceremony as part of its observance of Arbor Day to recognize one of its longstanding art professors, Al Beyer, who retired this year after almost four decades on the USC Aiken campus.

He humbly acknowledged peers, students and other friends of the university for their hard work and support. Beyer said he accepted the gift of the Natchez Crepe Myrtle tree planted in his honor “only as the representative of a larger group.”

(See the Beyer tribute on page 38.)

MUNSELL TAKES THE HELM
The Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) inducted Dr. Jason

CELEBRATION OF RESEARCH
The 2018 Scholar Showcase was the largest in its 11-year history.

More than 200 students participated in the annual celebration of research, which included oral and poster presentations. Students from across disciplines -- the humanities, sciences, nursing and business -- shared the research they have conducted under the guidance of their faculty mentors.

Dr. Bill Jackson organizes the annual event that provides a platform to celebrate the research undertaken by undergraduates. The opportunity to engage in relevant research is a longstanding priority for the University. Research allows students the chance to delve deeper into their areas of interest and offers experiential learning as early as the freshman year.

USC Aiken alumna Celeste Suggs, who graduated in 1983 with a business administration degree, sponsors the event each year.

PLAYING HOST TO THE HUMANITIES FESTIVAL
For the second time in its history, the University hosted the South Carolina Humanities Festival in April.

“we began the festival with the hope that local residents would better understand and appreciate what made their community unique in the past and how it is embracing the future,” said Dr. Randy Akers, executive director of SC Humanities.

Art exhibits, poetry and book readings
by local authors, historical tours and enlightening discussions took place on campus and throughout the city of Aiken during the three-day event.

“The soul of a community, of course, includes its businesses and workforce and economic development, but the libraries, schools, universities, churches, museums and historical societies supplement and greatly enhance the quality of life in a community,” Akers said.

Dr. Tom Mack, USC Aiken professor emeritus, chaired the committee of University, city, civic and cultural leaders in the area. The group spent more than two years planning the festival.

SC Humanities reaches more than 250,000 citizens each year through events such as these.

The University last hosted the event in 1999.

“Since 1961, the University of South Carolina Aiken has been educating the citizens of our region not only through formal campus-based academic programs but also through initiatives that have enriched the lives of all those in the greater community,” Rick Osbon stated in a proclamation presented to Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor.

“From its very inception, USC Aiken has worked to establish and maintain strong ties to the Aiken community. Both on campus and off, USCA offers programming, especially in the arts and humanities, open to the citizenry as a whole.”

RACE AND NEWSWORTHINESS

As part of her Media and Culture class, senior Brye Epley wrote a paper about the way the media covers Serena Williams.

“She argued that when dealing with ‘newsworthy’ coverage, race plays an issue in how Williams is covered or represented,” said her professor, Dr. Ben Triana. “Brye used a number of specific, high-profile examples to prove her point.”

Triana believed Epley’s paper was so well written the Southern States Communication Association might accept it. He was correct, and she presented her work as part of the association’s 28th Annual Theodore Clevenger Jr., Undergraduate Honors Conference in Nashville.

“I thought it would be a good experience for a strong student who is considering graduate school,” Triana said. He adds that Epley, a sociology major with a communication minor, “demonstrates a strong ability to move between the two fields, which can be difficult.”

Attendees got a feel for what it means to be a “Pacer in STEM.” Engaging, hands-on activities helped foster awareness of STEM programs at the university.

The next STEM Friday is scheduled for the fall semester.

STEM FRIDAY

The College of Sciences and Engineering hosted STEM Friday in March, giving high school students the chance to meet faculty and students and take part in related activities on campus.

Public and homeschooled students from Aiken and Saluda Counties took part in the event, which included exposure to biology, geology, exercise science, math, computer science, chemistry, physics, engineering and psychology classes and faculty. Most of the high school registrants indicated they were interested in math or engineering-related majors and careers.

AKA HONORS CHANCELLOR

In March, the Kappa Upsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., recognized Chancellor Jordan during its Emerald Service Awards Gala.

“She was chosen for this award for her community leadership and making USC Aiken stand out in the community,” said Velice Cummings, president of the sorority’s local chapter.

“AKA has partnered with the University for more than 40 years and looks forward to many more partnerships.”

AKA was founded at Howard University by African-American students in 1908. Mu Lambda is the student chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at USC Aiken.

“Its members are college educated women who cultivate and encourage high scholastic and ethical standards, promote unity and friendship among college women, work to alleviate problems among men and women, and provide a variety of services to all mankind,” according to a statement gala organizers included in the
program.

Kappa Upsilon Omega was chartered locally in 1976, thanks to the vision of several women in the area. Since its founding, KUO has been involved in numerous local, national and international outreach efforts.

**SCTA FOUNDERS AWARD**
The South Carolina Theatre Association presented the University with the SCTA Founders Award during its annual awards celebration at Trustus Theatre in Columbia, S.C., in May.

This award reflects USC Aiken’s contributions to theatre from July 2016 - June 2017.

“We are dedicated to bringing quality theatre to the University as well as the Aiken community. The faculty and students are thrilled for the University that we are receiving the Founders Award, South Carolina Theatre Association’s highest honor,” said Jack Benjamin, who retired this year as chair of the visual and performing arts department and executive director of the Etherredge Center.

The University hosted the 2017 SCTA Theatre Convention in November.

**SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE**
In March, the College of Sciences and Engineering together with the Office of Sponsored Research, and Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) co-hosted “Science on Tap,” allowing students to gather with some of the top scientists in their fields to discuss science and their research findings.

“The partnership between SRNL and USC Aiken offers students collaborative projects and job shadowing opportunities, career connections, and the knowledge of skills required for competitive employment,” said Haley Cave, a senior chemistry major.

A student poster session was followed by speakers from the University and SRNL, and concluded with a networking session. Ongoing collaboration such as this helps ensure that the University curriculum ultimately meets the needs of the workplace.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to see first-hand how what I am learning is relevant to the workforce I will be entering in the future,” Cave said.

**COLLEGE OF DISTINCTION**
The University has been recognized as one of the nation’s Colleges of Distinction.

“Our goal is to select schools that are 100 percent focused on the student experience, driven to produce well-rounded graduates who are prepared for a global society and economy,” Tyson Schritter, chief operating officer for Colleges of Distinction said.

The Colleges of Distinction publishes annual guidebooks each year, providing information for high school students, parents and counselors as they prepare to make college selections. The selection process requires that institutions adhere to four distinctions - engaged students, great teaching, vibrant community and successful outcomes.

**NEGOTIATING SALARIES**
Students from both the University and Aiken Technical College are now better prepared to negotiate their initial salaries, thanks to the Aiken Chapter of the American Association of University Women.

AAUW offers its Start Smart program to students nationwide. Although Start Smart is now available to all students, it was originally designed to help women bridge the wage gap they often experience when they enter the workforce.

This unique program helps students identify and articulate their personal value; develop a bank of persuasive responses and negotiation strategies; and learn how to conduct market research to identify target salaries and benefits.

“Our hope is that you leave today’s workshop with a refreshed sense of confidence, critical negotiation skills, and a new support network to cheer you on,” AAUW Chief Executive Officer Kimberly Churches wrote to the local Start Smart attendees.

“The American Association of University Women is committed to giving you the tools you need to thrive in the ever-growing and developing workforce.”

The Start Smart workshop, conducted at the University, marked the first time the program was offered by the local AAUW chapter. Its members felt it important
to include students from both of Aiken’s institutions - the comprehensive four-year university and the two-year technical college.

The Aiken chapter of the organization was able to present Start Smart to 40 students, thanks to the generosity of two anonymous donors. Attendees who are on the cusp of entering the workforce believe the program will help set them up for financial success after graduation.

**TOWN AND COUNTRY ENDOWMENT**

Ann Fornwald, committee chair for Town and Country’s USC Aiken Scholarship Fund, presented a check to Mary Driscoll, vice chancellor for advancement and external affairs at USC Aiken.

The current installment given to the university from the ladies’ civic organization will be invested in Town and Country’s longstanding endowment for student scholarships.

Town and Country has given almost $88,000 to USC Aiken. Last year, the group provided scholarships to USC Aiken totaling $3,400.

**A DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE**

Student leaders, the chancellor and Ace spent the day with lawmakers as part of Carolina Day in Columbia in February.

The annual trip to the state house allowed students a chance to meet S.C. House of Representatives Bart Blackwell (District 81), Bill Clyburn (District 82) and Ronnie Young (District 84).

With the state’s budget season underway, the chancellor and student leaders will continue engaging lawmakers, sharing with them the University’s budget requests and their importance to students’ success.

**EDUCATION MAJOR INTERNS WITH CHILDREN’S DEFENSE FUND**

Championing for young students and educators is a passion for education major Lindsey Calhoun, who interned with the Children’s Defense Fund in Washington, D.C. this spring.

Before working with the CDF, she headed to the nation’s capital to advocate for teacher education during meetings with legislators. The internship proved to be a perfect fit for her.

Founded 45 years ago, the Children’s Defense Fund helps ensure all children have access to a quality education. Currently, there are more than 200 CDF Freedom Schools across the nation.

Calhoun created training plans for CDF Freedom Schools, prepared nutritious menus for participating students, edited a monthly newsletter and produced professional development videos. Calhoun says she gained valuable insights she plans to incorporate into her classroom after graduation.

“I have been learning a lot about diversity and inclusion in the classroom, adverse childhood experiences and their effects on students, as well as positivity and empowerment,” Calhoun said.

Calhoun, who is in the Teaching Fellows program, also works three jobs and has studied abroad in Spain and India. In the fall, she will serve as the coordinator for IMPACT, the student organization that plans at least two community service projects a month.

**DEAN OF SCHOOL OF ED**

The Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) elected Dr. Judy Beck, dean of the University’s School of Education, as the second vice president until 2020 when she will take office as president of the national organization.

Beck has served on the ATE Board of Directors and was an ATE Delegate Assembly representative for South Carolina. Beck is the past-president of the South Carolina and Southeast Regional ATE and currently serves as the executive director for SCATE.
Pacer Establishes Enduring Legacy

One young professional is so grateful to the University of South Carolina Aiken for the difference it made in his life that he decided to help ensure it continues to transform students’ lives in the future.

Cody Anderson was recently inducted into USC Aiken’s Legacy Society, which honors those alumni and friends who have included the University in their estate plans. Anderson, who attended USC Aiken, is a funeral director at historic George Funeral Home in Aiken.

“Membership in this special group signals a continuing commitment to ensure the university’s endowment and more importantly, someone’s legacy, with our institution,” said Mary Driscoll, vice chancellor for advancement and external affairs.

“Planned giving opportunities not only benefit USC Aiken but also provide benefits to donors and their loved ones in the form of tax incentives, income during retirement years and a number of other advantages.”

USC Aiken accepts an array of planned gifts including bequests, life insurance, gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts, or IRA distributions. Since the inception of the Legacy Society, approximately 70 members have created student scholarships, endowed faculty chairs, underwritten academic programs and helped with building projects.

Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor, says that the generosity of USC Aiken Legacy Society members like Anderson will continue to educate and inspire future generations of students and leaders.
Nevertheless, She Persisted
Students Brew up Special Event for Women’s History Month

In April the USC Aiken Women’s History Month Steering Committee hosted a Women’s Empowerment Tea, featuring Stephanie Franklin as the keynote speaker. Franklin is the EEO and Diversity Manager at Savannah River Remediation and serves on USC Aiken’s Inclusion Advisory Council.

“We should not just celebrate during one month; we should celebrate ourselves every day because we make history every day,” Franklin said.

The tea was a first for the University and capped off a series of engaging, provocative and inspiring events held throughout March.

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“Women’s History Month is important because it allocates time and space to make women feel capable, brave and, most importantly, significant,” said Amethyst Marroquin, chair of the steering committee which planned the month-long observance. “Throughout this month, we wanted to ensure that we educated students on how to be better advocates for themselves and their peers.”

For the tea, student leaders adopted the national theme of Women’s History Month.

“Nevertheless, She Persisted’ is about every woman who had to use her tenacity and courage to accomplish whatever she set out to accomplish. It’s universal,” said Molly Murphy MacGregor.

“You think about our mothers and grandmothers - they’ve been persisting for a very long time.”

As part of her remarks during the tea, Franklin introduced strong women in her life who persisted and made an impact on her, both at a young age and as a professional at the Savannah River Site. These inspirational ladies were Irene Curtis, Sissy Brodie, her aunt, Ann Curry, and her mother, Bea Bell-Thompson.

She encouraged the attendees to support one another and shared how her mother’s words from many years ago still inspire her today: “I believe in you.”

“Those words were very powerful words and encouraged me to be who I am today,” Franklin said.

“It’s important to affirm one another,” she added.

“When you don’t have someone to affirm you, you have to have the courage to affirm yourself. Believe in yourself and what your abilities are.”

She also challenged the students, faculty and staff to protect their "brand" or reputation.

“I respect myself. I carry myself like a lady. I believe in excellence. How do you conduct yourself?

“Have discretion and don’t undermine one another. Give constructive feedback and be an advocate for one another.”

Franklin also explained that women are empowered when they have financial freedom and shared that early in their careers they may have to make sacrifices to ensure financial stability.

In addition to these empowering suggestions, Taifa Baker, assistant director of student life for diversity initiatives, quoted G.D. Anderson as a reminder of the strength women possess.

“Feminism isn’t about making women strong,” according to Anderson.

“Women are already strong.

“It’s about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”

Organizers say that’s what the tea was all about. “[It is] a culmination event that will help us help the world recognize our collective strength,” Baker said.
New Engineering Scholarship in Memory of Beloved Faculty Member

A partnership between the University, the Applied Research Center, Dr. Mary Harris, family members, and friends has established the Dr. Joette Sonnenberg Endowed Scholarship Fund in memory of the beloved faculty member.

The scholarship acknowledges individuals who advance engineering careers through higher education.

Sonnenberg served on the Aiken Partnership Board and was part of the initial engineering faculty at USC Aiken when the university launched its industrial process engineering (IPE) program in 2015.

“Joette’s influence is more than words can describe. Her dedication to the IPE program brought fruition to lifelong learning for our engineering students,” said engineering professor Dr. Bethany Fralick. “Joette introduced me to all the many avenues in the Aiken area to expose students to a love of engineering. Her friendship and genuine desire to always help is greatly missed but felt daily.”

Fralick adds that this scholarship for IPE students embodies Sonnenberg’s desire to promote, encourage, and support students.

Sonnenberg held various positions at the Savannah River Site for more 30 years. In her last appointment, she served as the Savannah River National Laboratory Associate Laboratory Director for Energy Security. After retirement, she connected with The ARC program, which provides individual advocacy, programs, services, and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Throughout her career, she led teacher enrichment programs, research internships at ARC and supported STEM programs for girls and young women, including “Introduce a Girl to Engineering.” Now in its 14th year, this program takes place at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center every spring.

After her retirement from SRNL, Sonnenberg continued to support educational initiatives. In fact, immediately upon her retirement, she became an adjunct professor at USC Aiken, teaching courses in the newly formed industrial process engineering program.

“Dr. Sonnenberg was one of the most helpful and passionate teachers I have had here at USC Aiken,” said Rachelle Aupont, the first recipient of the scholarship. Aupont, originally from Orlando, graduated in May as part of the first cohort of USC Aiken engineering majors.

“She loved helping all of her students but also wanted to see women in engineering prosper. “To be a recipient of this scholarship is a blessing and an honor. I am extremely grateful to have known Dr. Sonnenberg and am thankful for the opportunity to graduate with an engineering degree and someday become as great as an engineer as she was,” Aupont added.

Through the generosity of Sonnenberg’s family, friends and colleagues, many deserving students pursuing engineering careers will benefit in the years ahead. The scholarship is available to full-time, degree-seeking students pursuing engineering careers majoring in engineering, with a 2.75 GPA or better. Preference is given to those with documented financial need.

To give to the Dr. Joette Sonnenberg Scholarship, please contact the USC Aiken Partnership at 803-641-3334
The Chancellor’s fourth annual Signature Speakers Series featured Wes Moore, who first spoke here in August 2014. Moore is the best-selling author (The Other Wes Moore and The Work), decorated Army combat veteran, youth advocate and CEO of the Robin Hood Foundation, considered to be one of the nation’s largest foundations with a sole focus on alleviating poverty.

Moore is also founder of BridgeEDU, an organization that provides support to students as they navigate higher education. The Signature Speakers Series showcases some of the most prolific leaders to our campus and community. This series gives the community as well as the University an opportunity to experience and learn from individuals who are making a significant impact in our region, nation and world.

Moore was a big hit with students. Many of those who attended his presentation had read The Other Wes Moore as part of a required critical inquiry course for incoming freshmen.

The Class of 2018 read his book the summer before their first semester at USC Aiken. Just days before school started for them that year, Moore came to campus to address the students during their Freshman Convocation.

The Other Wes Moore tells the story of how educational opportunities, community support and other factors helped Moore transcend the fate of a man with the same name who lived just blocks away and took a tragically different path to prison.

Some students found the book empowering - one that challenged them to really understand the world around them.

“I feel as though one of the biggest missions of this book is to have everyone see every opportunity as a way to further increase their success,” said Lauren Carver, a communication major who graduated in May.

“It reminds us not to take anything for granted.”

The Rock Hill, S.C. native says that after reading the book, she asked herself a series of questions she really hadn’t thought about before: Who are you? What shapes you? What is really within your control? What brought you here? What will change you? Are you the same person all the time?

“Figuring out the answers to these questions was important in determining who I was and where I wanted to be,” Carver said.

“These big questions really made me take a step back and reevaluate what I thought I knew.”
The Power of Story Telling

BY MEREDITH GRACE HAWCROFT

As part of its Live Literature Series, the USC Aiken Library Committee hosted three events centered on the theme “speaking up and speaking out.”

Revisiting A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Poet

“100 Years of Gwendolyn Brooks,” celebrated Brooks’s career and influence in the past 100 years. Though Brooks passed away in 2000, she remains one of the most highly regarded, highly influential and widely read poets of 20th-century American poetry. The event came at the close of Women’s History Month, a fitting time considering the impact Brooks has had on generations of female writers.

Many of Brooks’s works display a political consciousness and deal with issues of racial inequality during the Civil Rights Era. She was a bold poet who wrote about these difficulties in a way audiences, especially those outside of the African-American community, had never encountered before.

“Brooks wrote about bitterness, yet she was not bitter or angry herself,” said Roy Seeger, a professor in the University’s English Department.

Because of this incredible artful mediation, Brooks won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1950, making her the first African-American to do so.

Students who attended the event were eager to learn more about Brooks’ incredible literary impact, including freshman psychology major Kayla Hamilton.

“This event is important because it educates students and spreads awareness about important issues that we don’t talk about enough,” said Hamilton.

Shawn Williams, a junior psychology major, was also among the students in attendance.

“This is important to me because the literature aspect informs the racial and social issues of Brooks’s time. Being able to hear about the experiences of such an incredible African-American woman firsthand through her poetry is highly educational,” said Williams.

“And I’m a poet myself, so I find her work and her legacy inspiring.”

Seeger spent much of the event reading Brooks’s poetry to students, including her most famous piece “We Real Cool,” and describing how her work was a radical form of self-expression and community representation at the time.

“Brooks’s poetry often revolves around topics that aren’t pretty to talk about, such as violence and poverty and racial inequality, but these issues were important to discuss, and they still are today,” he said.

Seeger and others on campus view the life and work of Brooks almost as a call to action.

“I think what poetry, especially poetry like this, does is that it forces us to remember the past. It also inspires young people to act and react.”

Library Committee Chair Dr. Alexandra Roach feels the same way, which is why the committee decided to host this event.

“Looking to the wisdom of Gwendolyn Brooks and others can help us make it through this next stage of Civil Rights issues.”

Don’t Judge Me

Detroit-based storyteller and podcast host Shannon Cason facilitated an open mic night before a packed house assembled in the Learning Commons of the Gregg-Graniteville Library.

“Storytelling with Shanon Cason” was the second event of the Live Literature series, and the library that evening more closely resembled a coffeehouse.

Cason began by briefly introducing himself and his podcast, Homemade Stories, as well as the theme for the evening: “Don’t Judge Me.”

He helped make it clear that this would be a night of acceptance and encouragement for local artists.

“This is about you guys. This is your open mic. This is a chance for you to tell your story,” Cason said as participants began writing their names on slips of paper and placing them in a hat for a chance to speak before the group.

“Today’s topic is as broad as can be, but know that this is a safe space,” Cason said.

One of the first speakers was alumnus James Paisley.

“Don’t judge me,” he began, “but I like children’s books.”
He then proceeded to read *The Wolf, the Duck, and the Mouse* by Mac Barnett, even pausing to show the illustrations to the audience.

Next to perform was alumna Jennifer Gilmore.

“Don’t judge me. I want to do something funny tonight, but that’s not my style. I prefer for my poetry to be a platform for voices of sexual assault.”

“We are all people with a history or multiple histories, but our common ground is storytelling,” Gilmore said.

The supportive audience welcomed each speaker, whether they discussed unsettling issues or something as lighthearted as haircuts, which was the topic of choice for Professor Roy Seeger during the open mic.

Before Seeger read the poem “The Wolf Man’s Barber,” he said, “I have issues with haircuts. I had a mullet as a child and into my late twenties, so don’t judge me.”

One of the most moving performances of the evening came from Robert Murphy, the director of USC Aiken’s Veteran and Military Student Success Center. The story he told originated from his military experience in Afghanistan.

“During our service, going to sleep was hard because it made us vulnerable, so I thought of memories of my childhood when I felt extremely safe. That helped put me at ease,” Murphy said.

Murphy told a story of riding in the family car as a boy with his dad behind the wheel. “I remember that secure peace I felt that I could never replicate without my dad driving. It was just like when my mom wiped my forehead when I was sick or when I walked to school alongside my older brothers. Forty years later, I have yet to feel that kind of security again.”

Murphy wanted to remember that story.

He said it was in his heart for years, but he finally put it down on paper in 2001. Then, in 2009, his story was printed in a Georgia newspaper. Murphy’s father had the story framed, an artifact Murphy proudly showed to the audience as he told his story.

This event marked an incredible beginning to April, which is National Poetry Month. More than a dozen participants of various backgrounds and artistic mediums participated in the Storytelling Open Mic.

Cason Tells it Like it Is

The final Live Literature event of the semester also featured Cason in “Brutally Honest Storytelling.”

Cason shared multiple personal stories in a style that combined humor with the insight and wisdom of a person who has lived through numerous misadventures.

Cason urged the audience to recognize the importance of their own stories, just as he has done.

“Your stories are the quickest and easiest way for us to connect with each other. Forage your life for stories. Write anything down that might be of importance later on,” Cason said.

Cason encouraged conversation between audience members during his performance.

He instructed them to think about an issue that they were passionate about and discuss it with the people around them.

“For me, it’s the issues going on with young black men in our country,” Cason said as he resumed his storytelling.

“When I was young, I was in the Boy Scouts of America. I didn’t see myself wearing the neckerchief and all that, but the meetings were in a gym, and we convinced our leaders to let us play basketball during the second half of the meetings. The only kid who wore a uniform was our troop leader’s son. We tortured him by asking if he sold Girl Scout cookies.”

Once, when Cason was on his way to one of these meetings, he was attacked by narcotics officers and accused of selling drugs. Cason described how his life changed in an instant.

“I didn’t want to accept the fact that going to the corner store on the way to a Boy Scout meeting meant that I’d be arrested and abused. I didn’t accept that as a rite of passage. So, I asked my dad for something — a Boy Scout Uniform.”

Each of Cason’s stories detailed the way that he was able to emerge from challenging situations and learn from his mistakes. His stories carry a powerful message, one that he was proud to share with the Aiken community.

“Aiken has been one of the friendliest places on earth that I’ve ever been to yet. I shared stories; I listened to stories; I ate grits, and I made new friends. My family enjoyed the visit as well. We hope to return someday,” Cason said.
Global automation supplier NovaTech LLC, recently donated its D/3 Process Control System to the University. The system will provide students in the Industrial Process Engineering (IPE) program the opportunity to experience a more hands-on approach to designing, building, and managing control systems.

“When NovaTech asked ‘How can we help?’ we jumped at the chance to incorporate the D/3 into our curriculum,” said Dr. Daren Timmons, dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering.

Dr. Titan Paul, assistant professor of engineering adds, “This control system is the key component of the Control Systems Laboratory, which is required for all Industrial Process Engineering majors at USC Aiken. Students apply their theoretical knowledge to configure, run, and monitor the industrial processes controller.”

For more than 20 years, NovaTech’s Aiken Office has supported customers throughout the region, in particular, maintaining a special relationship with the Savannah River Nuclear Facility. As part of a commitment to provide trained engineers who understand the complex process environment, NovaTech has sought to coordinate with the IPE Program at the University.

The IPE Program is designed to prepare students with the technical knowledge and skills in mathematics, science, engineering and management to analyze and solve problems in today’s team-oriented environment. The rigorous curriculum provides students multiple opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom and laboratory in real-world settings.

“NovaTech is proud to support USC Aiken’s newest engineering program and its students. Our donation will equip the next generation of engineers with valuable hands-on experience using our innovative D/3 process control technology. This will assure USC Aiken graduates a path to meaningful employment in the region,” said NovaTech’s Vice President of Marketing, Jeff Zola.

Through the IPE Capstone Projects, NovaTech mentored three seniors who were among the first to graduate from the University’s program this year. Says Timmons, “NovaTech’s investment of time into these students is just as significant as the technology provided. We are delighted to partner with a company so invested in developing the local workforce.”
Mostly Maltz: Celebration of Family

Dr. Richard Maltz has worked tirelessly for the last two years composing Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. He created this work specifically for his son, Vienna-based concert pianist Daniel Adam Maltz.

“What better way to celebrate the relationship between father and son than to collaborate as composer and performer,” Maltz said.

The world premiere of the classically influenced piece composition took place in February at the Etherredge Center. Conductor Suzanna Pavlovsky led the Aiken Concert Orchestra. The orchestra not only included several University faculty but also Daniel’s mother, Susan Cafferty, on cello.

While the concert is a celebration of a new era of classicism, Dr. Maltz says it’s so much more.

“Mostly Maltz: Classicism Revisited is a tribute to family,” the professor said.

The four-movement symphony was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra. It includes Gary’s Song, an elegy for the third movement.

The professor attended Berklee College of Music and received two degrees from the University of North Texas. He earned his doctorate from the University of South Carolina.

Maltz, who retires this year, has been a guest composer at the London Gala Concerts, the USC Conductors Institute, and the Cummington Community of the Arts. He holds the Pauline F. O’Connell Chair in Fine Arts.

Daniel Maltz is also very accomplished. At 24, he makes regular appearances throughout the United States and around the globe. In October 2016, he made his Carnegie Hall debut.

“To premiere [dad]’s piano concerto on a new Steinway is a beautiful way to honor our bond,” he said.

His son studied with internationally renowned teachers. He took private lessons with Robert Lehrbaumer in Vienna; Mozart specialist Gil Sullivan in Australia; and Beethoven authority John O’Connor in the United States.

Despite the world-class musical education and exposure, Daniel credits his dad with his accomplishments.

“I am a pianist today because dad taught me to play Beethoven’s Ode to Joy when I was 4 years old,” said the younger Maltz.

Daniel was only the second artist to perform on USC Aiken’s new 9-foot Steinway concert grand piano.

“In addition to the Etherredge Center Main Stage, the father-son duo also teamed up in USC Aiken’s music department to give a pre-concert lecture to music students at the University.
“The 412 of you have taken the path less traveled. Only 27% of South Carolinians have a college degree, yet two-thirds of future jobs require a college degree. Because of your degree, your employment opportunity will be greater; your salaries higher; your quality of life enhanced.”

- VICE ADMIRAL (RET.) CHARLES MUNNS
Keynote speaker
and Honorary Doctorate of Public Service recipient

The Class of 2018 by the Numbers:
Graduates: 412
International graduates: 9
Student-athletes: 48
Graduates from Aiken: 158
Graduates from South Carolina: 352
Veterans or military students: 28

Master of Science in Applied Clinical Psychology: 16
Master of Business Administration: 6
Bachelor of Arts: 110
Bachelor of Arts in Education: 25
Bachelor of Arts in Special Education: 6
Bachelor of Science: 115
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration: 103
Bachelor of Science in Nursing: 31
Celebrating the Class of 2018
Graduate Hooding

“May the knowledge that you’ve accomplished something rare and distinguished -- the completion of a graduate degree -- provide perspective on all that you have the power to do and give you confidence in your resolve and courage as you face future challenges,” said Dr. Sandra Jordan, chancellor.

According to the latest census data, only 30 percent of Americans hold a bachelor’s degree, and only 6 percent hold a master’s degree.

“When we present you with your master’s hood, you will be among that elite group.

“Whenever you put on your academic regalia, you will wear your hood to distinguish yourself as one who has earned a master’s degree,” Jordan added.

Academic regalia in the United States has a history going back to the colonial-colleges era, influenced by the academic dress traditions of Europe.

An Inter-Collegiate Code, established in 1895, outlines a detailed uniform scheme of academic regalia, followed by most institutions.

The hood’s coloring and size represents the type and subject of degree earned, as well as the institution from which it was awarded. It hangs 3.5 feet in back, and the interior lining is generally satin. The hood is worn so as to display the colors of the institution from which the wearer received the degree. If more than one color is used, they are usually arranged in the pattern of chevrons, which is the pattern typically associated with “coats of arms” or flags representing clans or families’ emblems.

Finally, in most American colleges and universities, the color of the velvet edge trimming is distinctive of the academic field, or, in some instances, it matches the gown.

“We hope you will proudly wear your regalia and embrace the notion of life-long learning,” Jordan said. “Once again, my heartiest and warmest congratulations to all of you as today we stop calling you our students and instead embrace you as our colleagues.”

USC Aiken offers master’s degrees in applied clinical psychology, business administration, educational technology and educator leadership.
Nursing Pinning

Nursing graduates were recognized during the annual Nursing Pinning Ceremony on May 9.

As part of this traditional ceremony, nursing graduates receive their nursing pins, which symbolize the students’ health care achievement. This tradition in the United States dates back to 1880 when the first Nightingale school, named for Florence Nightingale, was established. Nightingale is generally considered the founder of modern nursing.

In addition to receiving their nursing pins, graduates lit a candle and recited the “Nightingale Pledge” during the ceremony.

“The lighting of the candle is symbolic and reminds students that they have dedicated their hands to nursing and human caring,” said Dr. Thayer McGahee, dean of the School of Nursing.

“Our nurses pursue excellence and believe excellence is a personal code of conduct. Pursuing excellence in nursing daily means that you strive to give better care today than yesterday, and you allow each day to teach you something useful for tomorrow.”

Outstanding Senior: Jason Weeks

“I do not think I would be where I am today if it wasn’t for the opportunities that USC Aiken has given me.”

The University honored Jason Weeks as the Outstanding Senior Student during its annual Academic Honors Ceremony. Weeks graduated Summa Cum Laude.

“At every difficult obstacle I have faced, there was always a professor who was willing to help and encourage me to continue. These small class sizes and accepting faculty have made USC Aiken not only feel like an excellent university but also made it feel like a home,” Weeks said during his address to faculty, family and friends.

After graduating with a degree in chemistry, Weeks will attend University of Texas Austin, where he will pursue a doctorate degree in inorganic chemistry.

For the last four years, Weeks has been enrolled in the USC Aiken Honors Program. He is also an active researcher, working closely with his faculty mentor and scientists at the Savannah River National Lab.

“Jason is an exceptional student and young researcher,” said Dr. Chad L. Leverette, chair of the department of chemistry and physics. “In research, Jason has been a star, already enjoying co-authorship on two published manuscripts as an undergraduate student. This is exceptional and very unusual for an undergraduate student.”

To date, Weeks has received numerous awards and grants and has given several presentations at scholarly conferences. USC Aiken is not the only one to notice his research acumen.

The national lab, along with University faculty, selected Weeks for the USC Aiken Scholars Program, a unique research opportunity for exceptional science students. As a research assistant at Savannah River National Laboratory, Weeks worked on six projects concurrently; led a waste management group; gained invaluable experience with the industrial procedures and practices of a national laboratory and worked on several highly technical initiatives.

His community involvement included the National Society of Leadership and Success, the charity AXE, and Knights of Columbus. He also served as a chemistry ambassador, another “high honor,” Leverette said. Faculty in the department of chemistry and physics appointed him for this role to assist them with recruiting and retention initiatives.
Graduating Sisters Look to the Future

BY LARRY WOOD

USC Aiken’s family of alumni grew larger in May, and sisters led the way.

Sisters Kimberly and Junesha Taylor of Ridgeland and twin sisters Michelle and Gabrielle Scarborough of Augusta were among the 412 undergraduate and graduate students who received their degrees in a packed Convocation Center filled with proud families and friends.

“It’s such an awesome moment being able to graduate with my sister right along with me,” said Kimberly, who graduated with a degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting.

Junesha, a nursing major who’s a year older, came to USC Aiken first.

“She followed me,” Junesha said. “I waited a semester to start nursing school, so that put us together. I thought why not. I wouldn’t want to share it with anybody else.

“When I was having hard times in nursing school – it’s so strenuous – it was always my sister that I called on, and she was always there. We depended on each other. We pushed through, and here we are.”

Junesha is relocating to Columbia, where she has a nursing job on the med-surge floor at Palmetto Health. Michelle is looking at graduate schools.

Although they’re starting new lives and their career paths are different, they plan to stay together after graduation.

When Kimberly was asked if she was moving to Columbia, she and Junesha said, “Yes!” at the same time.

“I’m so happy I followed her because USC Aiken was a great choice,” Kimberly said.

“I’m happy I went here and am graduating from here. I suggest USC Aiken to everybody,” Junesha said. “Go Pacers!”

Twins Michelle and Gabrielle, both communications majors, took the same classes during their last two semesters and, after taking some time off, plan to attend graduate school to study speech and language pathology.

But college gave them an opportunity to define their individual personalities, too.

“It’s been an incredible journey,” Gabrielle said. “We’ve always been together, but in college, we found out what we liked that was different. We’re two different people with two different thought processes. That was cool to see, too.”

Although they celebrated their achievement Wednesday, their thoughts were with their father, too, who passed away Sunday.

“We’d like to thank our parents,” Michelle said. “It makes the moment even more special.”

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A Conversation with an Extraordinary Educator

BY CHRIS QUIRK

For 30 years, Jeff Priest has served USC Aiken and the Aiken community. An extraordinary teacher, the first full-time director of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, and USC Aiken's first provost, Priest has worked tirelessly to forward the university’s mission and expand its positive impact in the community. “Jeff leaves a tremendous legacy, and has made an indelible mark on our institution,” said Chancellor Sandra Jordan. “We are indebted to his vision and commitment and are grateful for Jeff’s unwavering support of this university.”

Q&A with Jeff Priest

Q: You have had a four-decade career in science, science education and, more recently, administration. What inspired you to pursue science in the first place?

JP: I was always interested in being outdoors, but I credit my 10th grade biology teacher, Mr. McCarthy, for my love of science. In his class, we went outside and looked at things firsthand, examined critters in jars and all sorts of fun stuff.

Q: What in particular did you admire about him as a teacher?

JP: It was the hands-on aspect of things, as I said. There weren’t a whole lot of lectures or note-taking from a blackboard. It was “Hey, let’s look at some animals and plants.” Those types of things got me going.

Q: Was there anything about his teaching style that you incorporated later into your own teaching?

JP: Not really, aside from being hands-on. I mean, you learn science by doing science. If you want somebody to learn about trees, the best way is to take them outside and show them trees instead of talking about them in the classroom or drawing a picture on the board.

Q: How did you end up focusing on field ecology as your research field?

JP: I went to the Florida Institute of Technology as an undergraduate, and my goal then was to become the next Jacques Cousteau. He had that TV show, and they’d be under water looking at the whales and fish, and it seemed like fun, so I studied marine biology. But after two years of staring through microscopes I said, “Where are the dolphins? Where are the whales?” I then started working with a biologist at the school named John Morris. He was doing studies of birds, and we went out into the woods and climbed trees, looked at nests, counted eggs, and banded birds. That was what I wanted to be doing, and that’s how I transitioned to field biology.

Q: You did an award-winning project on coyotes for your doctoral research at Southern Illinois University. How did that come about?

JP: They raised livestock at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, not far from the campus, and they were having some problems with sheep being killed by a predator—coyotes they thought. So I did a study to find out, first, are there coyotes in the area, and, if so, how are they utilizing the area? Finally, is it that the sheep are attracting the coyotes, or do the coyotes just happen to be there?

It turned out that the lay of the land was just good for coyotes, and the sheep were a bonus. For the coyotes, it was like going to McDonald’s. It was easier for them to get the sheep than to hunt for rabbits and expend a lot of energy. The thing was though, it turned out that many, if not most, of the sheep were killed not by coyotes, but by domestic dogs that were let free at night to roam.

Q: How did you track the coyotes for the study?
JP: I trapped the animals, sedated them, put radio collars on them and followed their movements using radio telemetry. We didn’t have automatic radio telemetry yet, where the signals were sent to a computer, so you actually had to take an antenna and drive to a point on the map and try to locate the strongest signal, then drive down the road another half a mile, and pick up the signal again. Where the two lines crossed, that’s where your animal was. Since the coyotes are most active at night, I spent my time from 8 o’clock at night until 8 o’clock in the morning trying to figure out how the animals were moving around.

**Q:** As a teacher, you have taken classes on field trips to Kenya and many other extraordinary locales. What were some of the more memorable experiences?

JP: Well, they were all memorable. A lot of field classes that I taught were for teachers, and my philosophy was, if you’re going to teach about the savannas of Africa, I wanted teachers to have the experience going there so it would be more personal when they talk to their students. We went to six or seven national parks in Africa. We got to see elephants up close, we saw lions up close, we watched a cheetah mother teach her young how to hunt an antelope. You remember those things for the rest of your life.

**Q:** The thing that brought you to USC Aiken in 1988 was the opportunity to run the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. What appealed to you about that?

JP: When I was a kid growing up in Connecticut, there used to be a show on local TV after school called the “Ranger Andy Show.” Every once in a while, they’d have somebody from Talcott Mountain Science Center in Avon, and they would bring in things like snakes and owls to show the kids in the audience, and I thought, “Cool, I’d love to be able to work at a science ed center someday.” Fast forward to 1987, and I saw the job posting for the Ruth Patrick Center in the back of a science magazine, applied, got the job, and came to Aiken.

**Q:** What was your vision for the Center?

JP: I wanted to get out into the schools and do hands-on programs that got kids excited about science. I also thought if we got enough interest, we could build a building on campus for it. I was fortunate enough to work for chancellors who liked the idea, if I could demonstrate interest. I went to maybe 250 schools a year doing presentations, we got some grant money, and the local communities

**Jeff Priest: Achievements and Recognitions**

- BS in Biology/Ecology, and MS Science Education/Biology, Florida Institute of Technology.
- Hired January 1, 1988 as first full-time director of what is now the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center.
- Oversaw the construction of the RPSEC, and the development of the hands-on science and math programs taught at RPSEC, which now averages more than 80,000 patron visits each year.
- Developed and taught field ecology classes that brought teachers to the Everglades, Belize, Smoky Mountains, Desert Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, and the National Parks of Kenya.
- PI or Co-PI for approximately 60 funded grants, totaling $22,765,275, including Co-PI for the South Carolina Statewide Systemic Initiative, which funded the establishment of 13 science and math hubs modeled after the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center.
- Dean of the School of Education on July 1, 2001.
- Led School of Education through two successful accreditation cycles for NCATE, and managed the development of the Masters of Education degree in Educational Technology, BA in Special Education and BA/BS in Middle Level Education
- Appointed Interim Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on July 1, 2012 and became permanent EVCAA on July 1, 2013.
- First provost of USC Aiken
- Enrollment increased to more than 3,500 students under his tenure.
- Oversaw a broad expansion of university programs, including the MBA, BS in Clinical Laboratory Science, Pacer Pathway Program and many others.
- Governor’s Award for Excellence in Science Awareness, 2001.
- National Science Education Leadership Academy, 1999.
- South Carolina Science Council/South Carolina Hall of Science and Technology Helms Citation of Excellence Award, 1996.
- South Carolina Board of Education Award for significant contributions to public schools, 1989.
To give an example of things we did where there were zero costs involved, most students who decide to leave school because they’re not doing well make the decision within the first six weeks of the semester. So we thought, let’s take attendance in the first six weeks and report it to our Center for Student Achievement. If somebody’s missing a lot of classes, let’s give them a phone call and say, “Hey, I noticed that you haven’t been in class. Can we help you in any way?”

Another thing we realized was that if students—especially freshmen and sophomores—knew their midterm grade, they could make a more informed decision about whether to continue in the course, get help in the course, or drop the course. The third thing was that academic advisement used to occur after the drop date, the point where you can withdraw from a class and still get a grade of W, which does not affect your GPA, so we pushed the drop date later in the semester.

With just those three simple things, we saw our retention rate go up, which then helps our progression, and that helps the graduation rate. We also looked at the DWF rates [the total of D and F course grades, plus withdrawals] and saw the D’s and F’s decrease. The W’s actually increased a little bit, but you want people to be able withdraw when they absolutely have to. More importantly, the number of A’s, B’s, and C’s increased.

Q: STEM education has taken on increasing importance at all levels of the curriculum. What was your approach to addressing that at the science center?

JP: The central idea was to excite teachers about science, because teachers have a multiplier effect. We can only reach so many students, but, if you have a teacher who teaches 30 to 120 students a year, and that gets multiplied year after year, you can really increase the number of students who either go into a career in science, or at least become literate in science or STEM fields.

Q: In 2001, you took over as dean of the School of Education. What were some of the challenges you faced, and what did you want to achieve?

JP: I saw the potential of tying in some of the approaches we instituted at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. But the first goal at that moment was accreditation, so we had to really buckle down and make that happen.

Q: You were also the university’s first provost, and served as Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs as well. For those who may not have a clear idea of what a provost does, what is your day like?

JP: In my position, all the academic units on campus report to me. So I’m in charge of the faculty, the unit heads who are over the faculty, and I’m also in charge of the curriculum, the Admissions Office, Financial Aid, and the Military and Student Veteran Success Center. The result is that I spend a lot of time meeting with the folks who are responsible for making things happen.

I look at my job as being the facilitator, giving the tools to the people who are trying to get things done, and making sure that they have what they need. Our bottom line is that we want our students to be successful and to graduate from college, and that’s where we focus all our efforts.

Q: As you said, retention is one of the major priorities for the university. Can you describe some of the concrete steps you have taken to improve retention at the university?

JP: One of the most important things we did was create a Retention, Progression, and Graduation Committee—RPG—to understand what roadblocks our students faced, and find things we could do to help them progress in a timely manner.

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Q: The range of academic programs at the university increased dramatically during your tenure as provost, especially in STEM areas like applied math and applied computer science. What drove that, and what drove your decisions about what fields to expand into?

JP: You have to put it all in context. From 2008 until Dr. Jordan came on board as chancellor [in 2012], we had very little growth at the university, largely because the economy tanked. We didn’t try to grow at that time because we simply didn’t have the finances to do it. But, while other universities were furloughing faculty and staff, we were not. We managed to maintain the status quo.

When Dr. Jordan arrived, we realized that if we wanted to grow, we had to grow the number of students, so we had a study done to evaluate the types of majors we could add. Dr. Jordan simultaneously started a strategic planning process, part of which involved talking with more than 600 people from the local community to figure out what they wanted from us, and what programs could we add that would help out employers. And they were loud and clear.

Since we are in a STEM region that is growing, we concentrated many of our new programs in that area. One thing the employers
pointed out was that we did not have an engineering program. They were hiring engineers from other universities who would come here and then move away. The businesses were hoping for a pipeline of local students who are engineers, people who would be more likely to stay in the area. So we worked very hard to put an engineering program together. I pulled in some scientists and engineers from about a dozen different local businesses and asked them what they would want engineers to be able to do, and they actually helped design the curriculum. Now, there are more than 200 students majoring in our industrial process engineering program.

Business-related programs were in demand as well. Employers told us that the people they hire as engineers are great engineers, but when they get to mid-level management, they don’t understand how to run a business. That got us going on the MBA program.

With the Cyber Command moving here from Virginia over the next couple of years, we will have a program focused on virtual reality—in this case meaning essentially how to train people to do things when hands-on training isn’t practical. For instance, how do you teach someone how to clean a nuclear reactor without sending them into a nuclear reactor?

Q: You’ve been very involved with public service over the course of your career. Are there any particular activities that you have enjoyed the most, or found especially meaningful?

JP: Yes, it’s part of my job. I have always enjoyed working with school systems and teachers. That’s where my heart is, and so that’s been particularly rewarding.

One of the things we’re doing now with the school district is the Aiken Scholars Academy, which will be a high school located on our campus. The top 10 percent of students in the Aiken County area can take their first two years of high school courses on our campus, but in a classroom setting like they normally would have in high school. When they get to their junior and senior years, they will take regular college classes here—like English 101 and Biology 101—so when they complete their high school career they will already have up to 60 hours of college credit, and the school district covers the cost of that credit. I think the program will really benefit people in the area, and that’s the kind of thing I enjoy working on.

Q: To take a look at education from 30,000 feet, so to speak, in your decades of teaching and working as an administrator, have you seen any fundamental changes in education?

JP: The major change is not necessarily a positive change. When I first came to USC Aiken 30 years ago, our funding from the state was maybe 60-80 percent. Our funding from the state right now is less than 15 percent. I don’t see as many folks in government, who value education as they once did. I don’t think they look at it as an investment anymore; they see it as an expenditure.

College may not be for everyone, and I am a proponent of that statement, but look at the demographics of our university: 60 percent of our students are considered low-income, and 20 percent of those are actually below the poverty level by federal standards. When those folks graduate from here and get a job, they’re not only changing their own lives, they’re changing the lives of their families. That’s what a college education can do. People can sometimes lose sight of that. I believe that what we do here at USC Aiken is change lives.

Q: Any plans for all the free time you will soon have?

JP: I imagine will probably do a little bit of traveling, and work on my golf handicap, but my plan for at least a little while is to hang around here, work around the house, and try to decompress after 30 years of higher ed.
USC Aiken Enriches K-12

The Ruth Patrick Science Education Center

The Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC), now celebrating 30 years of infusing the love of STEM, supports K-12 students and their teachers by providing hands-on, high-impact STEM programs, activities and classroom materials, maintaining science collections (even a Velociraptor egg!), and hosting STEM-focused competitions and events. The RPSEC is also home to the DuPont Planetarium and the Bechtel Telescope.

This cooperative effort by USC Aiken, local industry and public school districts in the Central Savannah River Area, establishes a permanent program for enhancing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in elementary, middle and high schools.

“Our hands-on approach to teaching is designed to help people experience the beauty, the order and the power of science and mathematics, as well as the interest and fun of discovery,” said Dr. Gary Senn, director and newly appointed president of the National Association of Professors of Middle School Level Education

“A visit to the RPSEC enables students, teachers and the public to experience science and mathematics in a challenging yet exciting way.”

Programs reach students and teachers from every county in South Carolina. The RPSEC has an excellent reputation for providing outstanding experiences and has had a significant impact on K-12 STEM education throughout the state.

The Traveling Science and Mathematics Demonstration Program (TSMDP) maintains a collection of more than 350 STEM kits that provide access for K-12 teachers and students to science equipment that is generally unavailable in most schools and connects classroom science experiences with the outside world.

TSMDP kits provide materials such as microscopes, telescopes and Geiger counters and complete units of study aligned to state curriculum standards. Funding for production of these kits came from local business and industry and external fundraising initiatives-not state funding. For example, Bridgestone sponsored an ecology kit, and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions sponsored a nuclear fusion kit.

The University greatly appreciates the generosity and commitment of our partners, such as Bechtel, Bridgestone America, Savannah River Site, AECOM, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the Silver Bluff Audubon Center, and Aiken County Public Schools.

RPSEC By the Numbers:

- Since its inception, the RPSEC has had more than 1.6 million program visits and has received more than $20 million in grants to run its programs from regional businesses and industry.
- This past year, the RPSEC offered more than 1,800 STEM-focused programs that resulted in 82,782 program visits by students, teachers, parents and the public.
- Of those program visits, 62,237 were from K-12 students from 83 schools from throughout South Carolina and Georgia.
- The top three most popular student programs include:
  a. “Magnets and Motions” (2,253 student visits);
  b. “In My Backyard” (1,374 student visits);
  c. “Push Me, Pull Me” (1,219 student visits).
- This year 8,040 K-12 students, 710 university students, and 3,110 of the public visited the planetarium.
- In addition to the K-12 students, the RPSEC impacted 428 teachers through the 11 different course and professional development offerings.
- Teachers checked out 347 Traveling Science and Mathematics Demonstration Program kits, benefitting 5,782 students.

Upgraded Planetarium

More than 20 years after it first opened, the Dupont Planetarium now boasts a state-of-the-art projection system, expanded seating, and brand new shows that will significantly enhance visitors' experiences.

Now equipped with a Digistar 6 planetarium projection system, guests will enjoy watching full-color shows that entirely envelop them in the domed facility.

Among the new shows which highlight the capabilities of the new system is The Magic Tree House based on the beloved children’s book series. The main characters -- Jack and Annie - travel in a magical treehouse to explore space. Through their adventures, they encounter an astronomer and an astronaut and learn about books that help them discover fascinating facts about space.

Longtime supporter and donor, Dr. Rose Lee Hayes, sponsored
Seven Wonders, a show that highlights the ancient wonders of the world, as they appeared thousands of years ago. Audiences will have the opportunity to explore the Great Pyramid, stand in the shadow of the towering Colossus and experience the creation of the world’s Seven Wonders.

The planetarium is a gift to the campus and community from DuPont employees who believed in education and invested in its construction.

Enriching and Engaging Day of Science Education

For more than 30 years, the University has hosted an annual S.E.E.D. event (Science Education Enrichment Day), increasing awareness of the role of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in society and conveying the joy of STEM to area youth. The University believes it must excite and engage families about STEM fields. Young learners have the opportunity to enjoy “up close and personal” interaction with real-world scientists, engineers and other technical professionals through engaging presentations, including hands-on experiments and activities. During the free event last year, more than 4,000 participants celebrated innovations in the sciences. S.E.E.D goers roam the campus, visiting the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center and other sites at USC Aiken as student groups, regional corporations, museums, government agencies, educators, and national labs join forces to present a “festival of science” for guests of all ages.

City Planners Take Note

During the Regional Future City Competition, held at USC Aiken, teams of middle school students from across South Carolina and throughout the greater CSRA have the opportunity to present table-top models that best represent the most innovative and practical city of the future.

Each year, student teams, along with an educator and volunteer mentor, research and design a solution to a unique challenge city leaders may face. “Students learn how today’s engineers and city planners deal with citywide sustainability issues like waste management, pollution, and lack of adequate mass transit systems,” said Future City Regional Co-Coordinator and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employee Kim Mitchell. “They research cutting-edge technologies and develop an imaginative and plausible solution that can exist for generations.”

SRNS Education Outreach personnel in partnership with the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center at USC Aiken have managed the local Future City Regional competition for 14 years.

Developing Core Values for Students

USC Aiken and The First Tee of Aiken share core values and the goal of preparing students to become respectful, responsible, and accountable citizens who make significant contributions to their communities.

Both organizations have created a unique partnership and have launched a fundraising campaign to build a nine-hole golf practice facility for the university’s golf program, which will also serve as a permanent home for The First Tee of Aiken. This unique collaboration will help primary, secondary and college-age students achieve their educational goals. Area golf courses have allowed USC Aiken’s nationally recognized golf team – and the First Tee of Aiken – to use their facilities, but a high performing golf team deserves a designated practice space. Additionally, the children who participate in The First Tee of Aiken programs deserve a designated and safe place for their needs.

The proposed location of the nine-hole, 60-acre the practice facility is near the Roberto Hernandez Baseball Stadium on the University campus.

University officials and former members of the golf team believe a practice facility will offer myriad benefits, will provide a convenient
resource for the team, and might lead to a women’s golf team.

The First Tee of Aiken facilitates youth development by providing educational programs that build character, teach core values, and promote healthy decisions using the game of golf as a means to make the lifestyle instruction fun.

By locating the practice facility on the University campus, The First Tee of Aiken participants will experience the university environment; interact with its students, faculty, and staff; and, perhaps for the first time, realize that a college degree is within reach.

School of Education

Area educators renewing their South Carolina teaching certificates can now earn a master’s degree online from the University of South Carolina Aiken in educator leadership.

Teachers, K-12, who must take continuing education courses as part of their recertification are perfectly suited for this flexible program, which is taught primarily by USC Aiken faculty.

“The master’s degree in educator leadership prepares educators to take on a variety of leadership roles in their buildings or districts,” said Dr. Erin Besser, program coordinator.

The program focuses on building collaborative, professional learning environments among peers as well as continuous improvement through data-driven decision-making. Educators will learn to use test data to improve curricula and students’ academic performance, learning and retention.

“The program will prepare these educational leaders to have a deeper understanding of the best practices in aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment,” said Dr. Judy Beck, dean of the School of Education.

“Area educators can further their education, attain an economic benefit, and enhance their skills. The educators will be empowered to improve their classrooms and schools thereby increasing the academic achievement of the children they serve. The entire region will benefit as the hallmark of healthy communities are quality schools brought about by excellent educators. “

The electives, or strands, offered through this master’s program include: English for speakers of other languages, project-based learning, gifted and talented education, educational technology, literacy, and ECE special education.

“All strands within the educator leadership master’s program lead to either an add-on certification or endorsement by the Department of Education,” Besser said.

“While the completion of one strand, or 12 elective credit hours, is required, students are encouraged to complete as many of the certification areas as they desire.”

The program and associated curricula were developed in partnership with local school district administrators and their faculty and staff. Some of them endorsed the program with state education officials to ensure the approval of the master’s program by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

“Developing the proposed programs and securing the final approvals were collaborative efforts,” said Dr. Jeff Priest, executive vice chancellor for academic affairs.

“In particular, I am grateful to the School of Education and the Department of Mathematical Sciences for their efforts in pulling these successful program proposals together. Many thanks to the school superintendents of Aiken, McCormick and Saluda Counties who lobbied on our behalf, meeting with members of the CHE to highlight the importance of the M.Ed. to their districts.

“Superintendents from Orangeburg, Barnwell, Bamberg, Edgefield and Lexington counties wrote letters outlining the need for the master’s program and the anticipated impact it will make in their schools.”

Priest added that five years ago, the university conducted a study to determine the workforce needs of this region. These new degree programs are a result of that effort and are part of the university’s commitment to develop a relevant, fully equipped workforce, which was a goal identified in the last strategic planning process.

The educator leadership master’s program is available to those educators certified in South Carolina and is intended to be a two-year program.

For information about the More Than A Game campaign, contact:

Anthony Allman, Board Chair, The First Tee of Aiken
(803) 522-2509 or tallman281@me.com
— or —
Mary Driscoll, Vice Chancellor for Advancement
The University of South Carolina Aiken
(803) 641-3448 or Maryd@usca.edu
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‘All students need a champion’

**Second-graders in North Augusta have found theirs in Devone McKie**

BY MEREDITH GRACE HAWCROFT

Since graduating from the University in 2017, School of Education alumnus Devone McKie has flourished as a second-grade teacher at North Augusta's Hammond Hill Elementary School. McKie's enjoyed many successes during his first year as an educator, including becoming Hammond Hill's First Year Teacher of the Year.

McKie said, “I was shocked when I won the First Year Teacher award, not because I questioned my teaching abilities but because I was overwhelmed by the amount of love and respect I received from my school.”

The faculty and staff of Hammond Hill made the award extra special by including McKie's family in the reveal. They surprised him in his classroom one day, bearing a large bouquet of flowers in addition to the good news.

“That was a great moment for me. It was a true honor to be recognized,” McKie said. “Of course, I couldn't help but tear up a little bit as I saw my family enter the room joined by so many people I care about.”

McKie refuses to accept the praise that has accompanied this notable accomplishment. In McKie's eyes, his first year of success is as much a reflection of his students’ abilities as his own. He told his students, “We won this award together; this is ours to celebrate.”

McKie’s students were delighted by his special recognition. They spent the afternoon celebrating their favorite teacher with a dance party in the classroom.

McKie said, “Without my students, none of this would have been possible. Everything I do, I do for them.”

McKie exhibits his commitment to his students by creating strong personal bonds with them. He hopes to be a mentor to them as well as a teacher. He began the school year with this specific goal in mind and intentionally made an effort to get to know each one of them.

“For the first two weeks of the year, I made a point of chatting with all my students. I wanted to find out what they like and what they don't like and what learning style best suits their needs. I even showed up to their sporting events. They always got excited when they would see me cheering them on from the stands,” McKie said.

“I wanted them to know that I cared about them greatly, even outside of academics.”

McKie creates this welcoming environment in his classroom every day by beginning with a time he calls “living leadership.”
Students greet him and each other with a hug or a high five and a few friendly words. Then, they spend some time grouped in a circle where their word of the day becomes a starting point for broader discussions.

McKie said, “I want my second-graders to have a chance to connect with me and one another. Most importantly, I want to give them a voice.”

Hammond Hill’s second-graders have indeed connected with McKie’s warm and outgoing demeanor. McKie believes part of this bond might be due to his students’ need for a reliable male role model. With an overwhelming majority of public school teachers being female, McKie stands out amongst his colleagues.

McKie said, “I think that students respond differently to men in the classroom. It shows them that men can be strong leaders in the community and that education is important for everybody.”

Mentorship and inclusivity are of high importance to McKie: “I went into education with the desire to be a positive male role model, not just for my male students who need the encouragement to grow up and be a good man, but also for my female students who need to see strong leaders of all genders. It’s obvious that many of my students lack this at home. Sometimes they’ll even call me ‘dad’ because I’m the closest thing to a father figure in their lives.”

A year is a relatively brief amount of time for a young graduate to become acclimated to the responsibility of a full-time job, especially in a field as demanding as education; however, McKie has adjusted from college to career exceedingly well. He credits USC Aiken with setting him up for success.

“All of my professors were wonderful, especially the professors in the School of Education. They gave me the opportunities to have great classroom experiences that helped me become a better educator. They even offered their own experience and shared the lessons they had learned throughout their careers,” McKie said.

“I felt so supported by the faculty,” McKie continued. “USC Aiken’s professional program is creating educators who are prepared to enter the educational system and make a difference in the lives of students.”

McKie said, “Helping my students get through various life circumstances and being someone they can rely on makes me realize that I’m doing what I should be doing, and I’m where God called me to be.”

“This is so much more than a job to me. I’m not in it for the income; I’m in it for the outcome. My philosophy is that a student doesn’t learn well with a teacher who doesn’t care for them. All students need a champion in their corner,” McKie said.

With a year’s worth of experiences and memories under his belt, McKie is ready to tackle his second year in second grade. Devone McKie’s teaching career is off to a bright start. In the coming years, countless children will undoubtedly be inspired by this educator who so well represents the values of USC Aiken and the School of Education.
State teacher demographics reveal an alarming disparity between the number of white teachers in classrooms and their African American colleagues.

While 42 percent of South Carolina’s K-12 (kindergarten through twelfth grade) students are African American, only 17 percent of the state’s teachers are African American. Just three percent of all African American teachers in the Palmetto State are males, and only one percent of elementary grade teachers in South Carolina are African American males. This data illuminates the need for more African American teachers, and specifically, more African American male teachers in South Carolina schools.

To address this need, the Aiken County Public School District and Williston School District 29 have joined Aiken Technical College and the University of South Carolina Aiken in a partnership to launch the Call Me MISTER® program in fall 2018. The program is based at Clemson University and primarily recruits and prepares African American male students for teaching at the elementary or middle school level. Upon college graduation, a fully certified teacher candidate from the local program will accept a teaching position with either Aiken County Public Schools or Williston School District 29.

The new collaboration will serve as a pipeline to increase the number of certified African American male educators through the program’s 2-year to 4-year transfer agreement. An identified cohort of five local high school seniors, including three from Aiken County Public Schools and two from Williston School District 29, will first matriculate from high school to Aiken Technical College. The students will enroll in a two-year university transfer program, and upon graduating with an associate degree, will transfer to USC Aiken’s teacher education program to earn a bachelor’s degree and be recommended for teacher certification.
Preparing for generations of scholars
BY LESLIE HULL-RYDE

When she graduated from USC Aiken in December 2002, Martha Clyatt Messick never dreamed of building the foundation for Aiken’s brightest scholars, but that’s what she’s doing.

After years of teaching and working as an assistant principal at South Aiken High, Messick is tackling a first – a first for her, a first for students in the area, a first for USC Aiken, and a first in the state. In her first role as principal, she’s establishing the Aiken Scholars Academy (ASA).

This unique school is a partnership between the Aiken County Public School District and the University. Unlike universities that offer programs to high school students or dual-enrollment options, ASA is an actual four-year high school located in the heart of the USC Aiken campus.

The elite program is only available to 50 students per grade. Prospective students go through a rigorous selection process. Academic performance is undoubtedly an important factor, but the selection committee takes a holistic approach to determining which students are accepted. Whether from public or private schools or homeschooled, all students from Aiken County are encouraged to apply.

Of those selected for the inaugural cohort, 10 of 11 Aiken County Public School District middle schools are represented in the 2018 freshman class. There are three ASA students from an area private school, one who has been homeschooled, and another student who has attended an online charter school.

The school district says that all students entering the academy have already taken English I or English II and advanced mathematics coursework in both Algebra I and Geometry. To date, 36 students of the 50 in the initial cohort have already begun study in one of four world languages: French, German, Latin, and Spanish. When ASA classes start, many of these students will have a full computer science credit. Several students will also bring in elective credits as well.

Those who participated in standardized assessment data ranked among the top academic percentiles nationally. The PSAT/NMSQT is an assessment for students in the 10th and 11th grade to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship program and correlates with anticipated performance on the SAT. Percentile ranks are comparisons to 10th-grade students, not same-aged peers.

Outside the classroom, they are equally focused. Many have had leadership positions in student organizations or have served through various civic or church outreach programs. Several of them are musicians who have written and produced original scores. One is a successful philanthropist who raises money for victims of domestic violence. Another started researching a cure for cancer at age 10. One is writing a novel. One has created space-related inventions, and one is already an entrepreneur.

“They are all unique and very focused on school and their futures,” Messick said. “They are highly motivated, and many of them have a clear idea of what they want to do. Our faculty will guide them as they develop their plans and will expose them to paths to their goals on a broader scale.

“Here, they will have more time to synthesize their knowledge and apply it toward problem-solving.”

Influenced by Aristotle, Galileo, famous inventors, prolific authors, and their parents, these students know where they are going: one wants to be a pediatric surgeon, one a physicist, another an educator, scientist, astronaut. The ASA faculty will help them to continue navigating their career paths.

“Our faculty team has a common way of thinking to provide an optimal classroom experience. Our assessments won’t just track academic growth but personal growth in areas that are of interest to them,” Messick said.

During their freshmen and sophomore years, students at this exclusive high school will undertake an engaging blended curriculum that includes state requirements, customized county requirements, and international advanced placement requirements. During their junior and senior years of high school, ASA students will be immersed into a full-time collegiate experience. They will
take USC Aiken classes alongside other college students. When they graduate from high school, these students will have two years of college behind them. Parents will realize significant cost savings because the county will pick up the bill for any tuition costs above ACPSD’s annual registration fee of $65. Tuition and books will be free to these students and families.

After four years, students can complete eight advanced placement courses, which includes two pre-college research courses, and 48 or more hours of college credit. After graduating from the academy, students could continue at USCA and complete their college degrees in as little as two years.

“We have an opportunity in partnership with the university to create a small school environment for students where we can heighten the pace of learning, but it’s also small enough to personalize the experience,” said District Superintendent Dr. Sean Alford.

Extracurricular programs will complement ASA’s quality educational offerings. The academy will offer school activities, such as student government, debate team, National Honor Society and service clubs based on interest. Students also will maintain athletic and band eligibility at their home schools in their attendance zones, provided arrangements can be made to ensure team and band requirements.

The first cohort starts classes Aug. 20 in the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. Academy students will have access to a variety of University resources including the Gregg-Graniteville Library, the Math Lab, and the Writing Center.

Not since building Aiken Middle School in 1995 has the district started a new school from scratch. Messick is managing every aspect of the academy from coordinating with university and district officials to working with the construction team. She is also determining the course curriculum and schedules, purchasing classroom and office equipment, and hiring faculty and staff. Messick must also decide on lunch and breakfast options, create carline procedures and bus routes and plan student and parent orientation. It’s like flying a plane as you build it, but she’s doing it methodically and with the best interest of the students in mind with every decision.

“These young people have accepted the challenge to take on an accelerated and rigorous curriculum, and I am honored to lead the school,” she said.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the Aiken County Public School District which contributed to this story.
"Al was a terrific instructor and he is such a unique individual. His work continues to inspire and his humorous side made it a joy to be in his classroom. His knowledge of the history of fine arts and careful instruction made a huge impact on how I approach new projects."
—SARA REYNOLDS, Fine Arts '16

"A wonderful man and a wonderful artist! He always came through with beautiful art for the Pacers and Polo poster and was a pleasure to work with!"
—DEIDRE MERCER MARTIN

"I was and still am a terrible artist. But Al always made me feel like I was monumentally talented!"
—KIM MCNEELY

"I always had the best time in his classes! I learned a lot from him and greatly improved my art skills thanks to him! He pushed me to be the best artist I could be and I'm thankful for that. Cheers to you, Al! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!"
—STEPHANIE MCDANEL SUMNER

"Al is an inspirational professor. He is passionate about art, and he cares about his students. Enjoy your retirement, Al! It is well earned."
—MIKE PARSONS, Fine Arts '86

I found that when I listened to Al's advice, even when it went against what I thought was right for my art, he was always right (it's like he knows his stuff or something).
—ANNIEBELLE QUATTLEBAUM, English, '18

"When I think of Al, I always picture him bringing a flatbed of art books back to the Library to renew each year. Sometimes it was several! I wish you all the best on your retirement, Al!"
—JANE TUTEN

"Al was much more than a mentor during my college career. He became a lifelong friend. Al knows how to connect with students on a personal level to encourage them not only to strive for the best in the studio but to be their very best in all aspects of their lives. Every time I visit USC Aiken I slip a note under his door. In the week or two it takes him to call me back I always wonder if the note has become lost in the "organized chaos" of his beloved office. Al, I wish you the very best in your retirement! You are well loved and have made a real impact in my life."
—ED REDD Fine Arts '10

"Al was my mentor all throughout my undergraduate education. He taught me how to draw the figure and how to paint in oils. The foundation of skills I learned from him afforded me a path to an illustration Master's degree and everything beyond."
—CRAIG BRASCO
Thanks, Al!

Al Beyer concludes 30+ inspiring years. A brilliant artist, a terrific instructor and a unique individual – his presence will be missed on campus.
Broken Ink at 50
BY MEREDITH GRACE HAWCROFT

Editors of the University’s literary and visual arts magazine, Broken Ink, released the 50th edition this spring. Broken Ink serves as an outlet of self-expression for the campus’s artistic community. The magazine showcases a broad range of mediums including poetry, prose, short stories, creative nonfiction, song lyrics, play scripts, photography, comics, paintings, digital art, drawings, spoken word and music.

Faculty advisor Professor Roy Seeger and editor-in-chief, senior English major Anna Kay Norris guided the anniversary edition of the publication and its subsequent reveal in a celebratory event hosted in the Learning Commons of the Gregg-Graniteville Library. The event featured guest speaker Derek Berry, a novelist and poet who is a native of Aiken County.

Berry read several original poems that dealt with a variety of topics, including his complicated relationship with Southern culture. In his poem “Elegy for an Accent,” Berry passionately proclaimed “If you listen as I speak, you will hear a smothered drawl, a crooked echo, a violence in this voice erasing its past. You will hear heritage, a secret I cannot unspeak.”

After Berry’s reading, the Broken Ink staff announced the winners of multiple award categories, beginning with the Washington Group Award, a creative writing award made possible through an endowment fund established by Washington Group International.

David Corder won first place in the prose category with his piece “Breakfast.”

“It’s an honor to get first for prose,” Corder said. “My first submission as a freshman was ripped apart. Broken Ink has helped me improve as a writer.”

Corder’s other wins for the night included third place in the prose category for “Shoes Full of Sand” and second place in the poetry category for “Splash.”

The University’s Art Department honored the top-ranking visual artists with the Ink Splat Award. Tory Robins took first place for his photograph “Liberation.” Maisy Ellinger placed second for her original painting, “Yellow Towel”; and Lizzie Abshire placed third for her photograph “Pause of a Moth.”

This year, Broken Ink continued to expand multi-media submissions by featuring original music and spoken word recordings accessible through a scannable QR code in the magazine. The Rollover Beethoven Award, made possible through the generosity of the University’s Music Department, was presented to Jeremy Smith for his audio piece “Creation No. 1.”

Following the award portion of the evening, artists featured in the magazine were invited to read their pieces aloud during an open mic segment.

Liam Dakin, who won first place for the poetry category, performed his winning piece “Wild Turkeys.”

Dakin began by saying, “Unlike most of the people in the room tonight; I’m not from the South. I’m not from the North either. I’m not really from anywhere because I’m from Oklahoma.”

This setting was the basis for Dakin’s poem as he explored childhood memories from the woods of Oklahoma.

Editor-in-chief Anna Kay Norris said, “I am incredibly proud of Broken Ink’s 50th volume. I could not have gotten through the year without my very dedicated and supportive Broken Ink family.”

The staff of Broken Ink was once again excited to show off the product of their labor as well as the tremendous talent of the student body. The open mic and magazine combined to create a vivid demonstration of the young talent emerging from USC Aiken who helped make the last 50 editions possible.
Charles Peter Reeve, called Charlie by most, has found a new happiness at age 74, which he credits to his involvement at USC Aiken as a donor and member of the New Horizons Band.

Charlie's first experience in higher education was in the fall of 1962 when he began his math degree at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. Although Charlie did well at Georgia Tech initially, he ran into problems later on.

Charlie said, “Being in downtown Atlanta meant numerous temptations. During my junior year, I decided to drop out because I was struggling academically.”

After working in a textile factory folding rugs for a while, Charlie decided to go back to college. This time, he attended the University of Tennessee. This soon brought on a major life change for Charlie Reeve. While studying at the University of Tennessee, he met a girl at nearby Maryville College. Their romance was idyllic.

Charlie recalls their early relationship with fond memories: “I saw this beautiful 17-year-old girl and invited her to a barbecue. We started dating right away. Eighteen months later, I asked her to marry me; she said yes. We were soon married.”

Charlie left the University of Tennessee and began working again. He acquired a position as a statistician with the National Bureau of Standards in Maryland, computerizing calibrations and writing their programs.

Charlie became eager to finish the undergraduate degree that he had started many years before. His father-in-law offered to pay for his final year of college, saying “I can't think of a better use of money than to help you complete your education and help you provide for my daughter.”

Charlie earned his bachelor's degree and continued working for the Bureau who then helped him earn his master's degree in statistics at Florida State University. In total, Charlie worked for the National Bureau of Standards for 21 years—a full, successful career. But, eventually, the lure of the South became impossible to resist, and Charlie relocated to Aiken with his wife and two children. He began the second half of his career at the Savannah River Site.
Shortly after his relocation, Charlie became acquainted with USC Aiken; his children Jeff and Julie attended the university in the 90s.

In those days, Charlie’s love of USC Aiken was still in the developmental stages. He said, “I didn’t fully appreciate the true beauty of the campus yet.”

This didn’t occur until after a tragic incident in 2013. He had a massive heart attack, which nearly killed him. All he can recall is his doctor saying, “The Lord was with you.”

To help facilitate his recovery, Charlie’s doctors referred him to the USC Aiken Wellness Center for the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, a collaboration between the University and the Aiken Regional Medical Center for patients who experienced heart-related health issues.

Charlie said, “I came to USC Aiken three days a week for twelve weeks and walked on the treadmills and did other activities. This excellent program helped save my life. That is when my love affair with USC Aiken began.”

Life has not been easy for Charlie since his heart attack. He has faced a series of challenges that have put his optimistic spirit to the test.

After 47 years of marriage, Charlie’s wife Teresa passed away unexpectedly in 2015. This was a great loss for Charlie. “I spent the first year after Teresa’s death getting used to being alone. I hadn’t been single since I was 24. Getting used to not having that companionship was incredibly hard. But, after a while, I realized she was still with me in my heart, forever intertwined. Her spirit will always be with me.”

Charlie’s health also continued to be a cause for concern. In 2016, he was hospitalized after having a stroke. His body was left numb after the incident, particularly his left hand. The feeling was slow to return, but Charlie has made an impressive recovery.

“The hardest part was trying to type with one hand,” he said. I had been a writer for over 30 years and missed being able to type freely. I was thrilled when the feeling began to return.”

After the stroke, Charlie faced another massive blow from his doctors: a prostate cancer diagnosis. Charlie is still battling the cancer but is hopeful for a full recovery in the future.

These experiences motivate him to live every day to the fullest, and as a result, Charlie is exuberantly happy.

“I’ve always had a strong religious faith,” Charlie said. “My life has been miraculous since the recent nine-month period in which I read the Bible all the way through.”

Because of his recent health issues, Charlie decided to sell his home and moved into the Cumberland Village Assisted Living Community.

One afternoon, USC Aiken’s New Horizons Band performed for the residents. Charlie decided to join the band, which is designed for participants who are 50 years of age or older. Charlie began learning the saxophone but struggled with the finger movements because his hand mobility was still limited from his stroke. He switched to the trumpet and has been playing the instrument ever since. He demonstrated his progress in a New Horizons concert during the spring 2018 semester with his beginner band.

After his performance, Charlie said, “I feel deliriously happy. I’ve got this trumpet. I’ve got friends at Cumberland. I’ve got connections at the University with the band. I’ve made a wonderful discovery in USC Aiken. I thought I’d be nervous at the concert, but I felt so loved. All my friends were there. I had a wonderful experience on the stage.”

Since then, Charlie has remained determined to give back to the university that he feels has given so much to him. He began by donating to the New Horizons scholarship fund. Charlie has also donated several times to USC Aiken’s Steinway Fund to help the school in their efforts to become an all-Steinway facility. He has also donated to the Theatre Program’s scholarship fund. Charlie and his wife often visited the Etherredge Center for plays and greatly enjoyed each one of them.

Charlie’s renewed interest in USC Aiken has given him a sense of purpose and fulfillment during his retirement years, but what he has given back is far greater; his support of the University’s artistic endeavors will allow students and community members to continue enjoying musical and theatrical productions on campus for many years to come.
Dr. Deb: A Passion to Serve
BY CHRIS QUIRK

When looking back at the arc of a great detective story, part of the surprise is often the realization that the critical clues were hidden in plain sight. You could apply the same notion to the career of Deborah Kladivko. From as early as her high school days, one could see in Kladivko a desire to serve others, a gift for empathy and a sterling sense of fairness combined with compassion, traits that made her a natural for working with students.

Affectionately known by all as Dr. Deb, after 25 fruitful years at USC Aiken, Kladivko is leaving her post as vice chancellor for student life and services, and moving up, so to speak, to USC Upstate, where she will be managing the school's community service efforts. The move will allow Kladivko and her husband to spend more time with their children and grandchildren who reside near Greeneville. “I'm not ready to retire,” Kladivko declared.

Student services is a field that Kladivko was drawn to well before she had concrete ideas about her career path. Despite moving frequently while growing up—Kladivko attended three high schools in three different states—one could see in Kladivko a desire to serve others, a gift for empathy and a sterling sense of fairness combined with compassion, traits that made her a natural for working with students.

At the University of Virginia, where Kladivko studied marketing and management as an undergraduate, it dawned on her with surprising specificity that higher education administration might be just the right place for her. She recalled being reprimanded by a business professor, who was asleep at the switch as it turned out. “I had to write a paper on my career plans for a management class,” Kladivko recounted. “I wrote that I really wanted to work in student affairs. The professor gave me a ‘D’ on the paper, and criticized me for wanting to go into the field by default.” The fact of the matter, of course, was not only was Kladivko’s aspiration organic and genuine, as it turned out, she was blessed with the exact personal qualities and talents needed to be a success. “I look back on that experience now and think, ‘Hmm, isn’t that interesting’?” she said with a wry chuckle.

After graduation, Kladivko continued at Virginia, earning her master’s degree in counselor education with an emphasis on higher education. Right after graduation, she went to work at Ohio University-Lancaster as the assistant director of student services. “It was a small school, and I got to do so many things. I was a recruiter; I worked on the financial aid scholarship committee; I ran the babysitting service; I did academic advising; I wore a lot of hats. It was just the perfect introduction to the world of student affairs.”

After three years at Lancaster, she took over as director of student services at Ohio University, Zanesville, the start of an intense and rewarding decade, both professionally and personally. While running the department at Zanesville, Kladivko also travelled to the Ohio University main campus in Columbus two weekends each month for several years to complete her coursework for her doctoral degree. She and her husband, Bob, also began their family; their two children, Rebecca and Rob, were born during this time.

Kladivko worked for nine years at Zanesville, and found herself ready for a new challenge. “Bob, who was teaching at a tech college at that time, is a wonderful husband, and I could not have done what I have without his support. He was happy to follow my career, but wanted a state where the weather was warmer.” As it would happen, USC Aiken was in need of a director of student services. “It was a great fit, and the position was broad. I have always been a generalist, so I was happy to be responsible for a whole bunch of different areas.” Bob took a position in computer services, and served as USC Aiken’s director of communications and computer
Kladivko’s extensive portfolio at USC Aiken has at any given time comprised student life, Title IX, counseling, student health, disability services, campus recreation and wellness, multicultural affairs, international programs, admissions, financial aid, university police, records, career services, judicial affairs, orientation and housing.

The assistance provided by student services departments has become more important to universities as barriers to graduation increase. In his book “Wellness Issues for Higher Education: A Guide for Student Affairs and Higher Education,” David Anderson explains that social integration is critical for keeping students in college, especially for first-generation college students, and a significant number of USC Aiken students are first-generation college attendees.

Benefits reaped by students through participation in student organizations, athletics and other extra-curricular activities in the student services umbrella provide opportunities that complement academics. Communication, leadership, the ability to resolve conflicts, and other so-called soft skills can sometimes be as vital to career success as subject matter expertise. A recent survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities asked employers their opinions of college graduates regarding their preparedness for the workforce in key areas. Only 37 percent rated students as well prepared to work with others in teams, and just 28 percent thought that students’ oral communication skills were adequate to the demands of the professional workplace. “When the students have the ability to live with others in college, participate in community service and work together, these co-curricular activities add a piece to their experience, and their ability to do well once they leave,” Kladivko explained.

USC Aiken’s expansion of its international programs is a further example of opening new vistas for students. “Our international student body has grown tremendously in recent years, and I think that has really enhanced the environment on campus,” Kladivko said. “Some of our students have never been outside South Carolina, so the chance to interact with international students and learn about their lives is invaluable and further preparation for the global mix students will experience later. And of course, when our students have the opportunity to go abroad to study, that is life-changing.”

Through the late 1990s, USC Aiken was primarily a commuter school, with only about 10 percent of the students living on campus. With the vast majority of the students departing campus by late afternoon, the atmosphere often felt subdued. Under Kladivko’s guidance, the university purchased a student housing complex that had been operated by a vendor and built more units, eventually bringing the population of on-campus students to 30 percent. The feel of the campus changed radically. “It became more vibrant,” Kladivko recalled. “There were students hanging out in the quad and the student center, and getting active in student organizations. I remember a faculty member telling me that it felt like a real college now.” Ahmed Samaha, interim vice chancellor for student services, worked with Kladivko for more than 20 years, and remembers the difference vividly as well. “I am often told by visitors that it feels as if all our students live on campus. There is so much going on. The increase in student housing made things better for the school, and it changed the culture on campus.”

Kladivko perhaps had almost as much influence on her staff and co-workers as her students. As Kladivko’s close colleague, Samaha is quick to cite lessons he’s learned from her. “One of the biggest things is patience, and listening to others,” said Samaha. “I’m not naturally that patient, but Deb really lets people know that they are being heard, and she has an uncanny ability to put herself in someone else’s shoes. Even if the decision she makes may eventually go against them, they feel their voice has been heard. She is also great at building consensus and articulating how a decision is made.”

Former athletic director Randy Warrick, who retired last year, partnered with Kladivko frequently during his career, whether in the cultivation of USC Aiken’s stellar crop of high-achieving scholar athletes, in the planning of the Convocation Center, or at times regarding student discipline. “When we had some issues with a student or student athlete, Deb was just so even-keeled about matters. She’s a great listener, and she evaluates the situation with herself in someone else’s shoes. Even if the decision she makes may eventually go against them, they feel their voice has been heard. She is also great at building consensus and articulating how a decision is made.”

Warrick recalls one day in particular that brought together the combined might of the university’s student athletes and Kladivko’s passion for community service—the massive ice storm that blasted the county in February of 2014, taking down trees and power lines, and causing power outages for thousands of people. The entire athletic department volunteered to spend a day assisting with the clean up. Kladivko was platooned to work with the baseball squad for the day. “It was a total team effort,” said Warrick. “We had about 220 people out there picking up tree limbs and trying to get things back to normal.”

Ellis Reeves ’16 is a recent graduate who is now a Student Services Coordinator for Palmetto College/SOBA. He credits Kladivko for inspiring him to dive into public service and also for helping him beef up his leadership skills through Kladivko’s Citizen Leadership class, one of the many community service initiatives she instituted at USC Aiken. “It was fantastic. It was one of my favorite things of my time studying here, and Dr. Deb inspired a lot of students to get involved in public service,” Reeves said. “We
went to New Orleans for Alternative Fall Break in 2015 to build houses in areas that were still recovering from Hurricane Katrina. I had never done that before, and it was hard work, but it was also incredibly rewarding to meet people who were living in houses that had been built previously as part of the Habitat for Humanity project.”

Kladivko has played a key role at Aiken County Habitat for Humanity. She was president for two years and was the adviser to the Habitat for Humanity chapter on campus. She is also no slouch with a hammer or paint roller. The organization has built more than 100 homes for Aiken-area residents. “Habitat changes lives,” said Kladivko. “It provides families with the opportunity to have a decent, affordable home in a safe area where their children can grow up. The homeowners pay a mortgage and do sweat equity working on their own house, so there’s a lot of extra pride when they get the keys to their home and move in.”

Another student who recalls the influence Kladivko had on her time at Aiken is Meredith Hawcroft ‘17. “I knew from her address on orientation day that she was devoted to make us feel welcome, and that she was someone that I could talk to,” Hawcroft said. After being named Outstanding Senior Student last year, Hawcroft was called upon to give a speech at the Etherredge Center, and was, understandably, a little nervous. She recalled Kladivko seeking her out backstage prior to the speech. “She told me how proud she was of me, and she took the time to sit with me and make me feel more at ease,” Hawcroft said. “For students this college is all about connecting with people, and Dr. Deb is one of the people who helped make my time here meaningful.”

For 14 years, Trish McClain worked with Kladivko daily as her administrative assistant before retiring four years ago. “She is all about students. I don’t care what she’s doing, her door was always open for the students. They did not always get their way, but she listened and cared genuinely about them,” said McClain. The concern extended to her staff and co-workers. “One of the ways you could tell she was a good leader was her sense of discretion. People had to talk to her about sensitive subjects at times, and she knew how to resolve problems while keeping confidences.”

Mila Padgett, the director of campus recreation and wellness, flourished while working under Kladivko. “Deb encourages her directors to lead their departments in their own way,” Padgett said. “She asks questions, while moving things in the direction the university wants to go, but she is encouraging and wants you to learn and grow.”

Kladivko was tireless in fostering programs to improve the wellbeing of USC Aiken students and the university community at large. A timely example is the sexual assault bystander intervention training. The initiative, funded by a state university grant, provides training on how student bystanders can recognize and safely intervene in cases of potential sexual assault on campus and in social situations. More than 3,000 have had the training so far. “With this training and in the area of Title IX, Deb was an advocate in getting things rolling,” said Padgett. “The big picture is that Deb was always a champion on campus for student success. That is where she wanted the focus to be, and she felt we needed to meet the students where they were and help them overcome their barriers.”

Kladivko also recognized the need for a permanent counseling
center and student health center. “Prior to that, the university did a lot of referrals out, or there were resources here on a part-time basis,” said Cindy Gelinas, the director of Counseling, Student Health, and Disability Services. “Deb was a catalyst for those centers. As we grew, she recognized the need for permanent, on-campus facilities to serve the students and the university, and she made them happen.”

Gelinas worked closely with Kladivko for 15 years, and recalls her natural modesty. “One thing you learn about Deb is that she’s slow to take credit herself and quick to credit others,” Gelinas said. True to form, Kladivko flips the equation around. “I was always fortunate to have a staff that was creative and willing to do what was necessary to get the job done,” Kladivko recounted. “We’re in a state that has seen a lot of budget cuts, and people have had to step up and wear multiple hats, and they have. The people who work here really care about the students and the school, and that’s why I have stayed here so long.”

As a treasured presence on campus for so many years, Kladivko’s departure will be felt by all who knew her, but students to come will yet benefit from her efforts. “Everyone rightly describes her as compassionate, but that is not just with the students. I’m going to miss Deb, her support, and her ability to maintain calm and think clearly and objectively in moments of crisis,” Gelinas said.

“Dr. Kladivko has been a committed member of the leadership team, handling each and every aspect of her responsibilities with a positive attitude and integrity. Every decision focused on student development and wellbeing,” said Dr. Sandra Jordan, the chancellor of USC Aiken. “Students often comment that their USC Aiken experience was like being a part of a second family. I believe the ‘student first’ atmosphere is what makes this university special and is due to the work of Dr. Deb.”

Kladivko will be missed in the community as well. “I’ll tell you what, Deb is the consummate giving professional,” said Cam Varner, who ran the Aiken County Helpline for 15 years after retiring from a career in the military. “Deb worked with us for six years and became the president of our board. She worked her tail off for our fundraisers and other things and even opened her home for board retreats and provided meals so that we could save money for the organization. I have the greatest respect for her, not only as board member and president, but as a very good personal friend.”

“One of the things I have enjoyed the most at USC Aiken is that the other senior administrators I’ve worked with are as student-centered as I am,” said Kladivko. “I have never felt like a lone voice in advocating for students. My colleagues understand and believe in creating an environment where students can succeed, and that has made my time here very rewarding.”
USC Aiken's 15th Annual Pacers and Polo, the “Third Jewel of Aiken's Triple Crown,” took place on March 31. More than $10,000 raised from the match and the related silent auction will go toward student scholarships and programs.
Hall of Fame Honors
Eight former Pacers inducted during homecoming weekend

Dagoberto Darezzo, Men’s Tennis (2007-09)
Dagoberto Darezzo ’09, a native of San Carlos, Brazil, holds the school record for most singles wins (56), doubles wins (56) and overall victories (122). He is the only Pacer to claim the title at the Fall ITA Regional (along with doubles partner Ed Horne). Darezzo held the highest national doubles ranking in school history at No. 2. He helped guide the program to a No. 5 national ranking in 2009, marking the highest team ranking in the program’s history. An All-American in 2009, Darezzo picked up all-conference honors in 2007 and 2009 in singles action and in 2008 and 2009 for his performance in doubles matches.

Roberto Diaz, Golf (2005-09)
Roberto Diaz ’09, a native of Veracruz, Mexico, was a four-time PING All-American. He was named to the National All-Freshman Team after the 2005-06 season. A four-time all-PBC performer, he led the Pacers in scoring average twice. Diaz notched 20 top-10 finishes for his career, including a career-best eight as a junior. He claimed titles at the 2006 Bobcat Invitational (+3, 213), 2007 Cleveland Golf Palmetto Intercollegiate (-2, 208) and the 2009 Wexford Plantation Intercollegiate (-2, 214). Diaz’s 71.90 scoring average during the 2008-09 season is the third best in school history.

Bruno Seves, Men’s Tennis (2005-09)
Bruno Seves ’09, a native of Araraquara, Brazil, is third on the school’s overall wins list with 116. He holds the school record for most career wins at No. 2 singles (31-4). Seves is fourth in school history for most singles wins (50) and doubles wins (66). He helped guide the program to a program-best No. 5 national ranking in 2009). An All-American in 2008-09, Seves was a two-time all-conference performer (2008, 2009). He holds the third most wins in a single season in school history with 18. Seves played No. 1 on the school’s best team in history. He also picked up three PBC Player of the Week honors.

Ray Shepherd, Baseball (1987-89)
Ray Shepherd was a standout baseball player while USC Aiken was competing in the NAIA. Shepherd, who played from 1987-89, was a two-time NAIA, ABCA and Converse First-Team All-American. He was a NAIA all-District Six selection. A two-time all-state honoree, Shepherd garnered a pair of all-Area 7 selections. Shepherd was solid in the classroom as well. He was named a NAIA Baseball Scholar-Athlete in 1988. That same year, he was a District Six all-academic team member. Shepherd was a two-time Scholar-Athlete while at USC Aiken.

Kim Thomas, Women’s Basketball (1980-83)
Kim Thomas was a two-time NAIA all-District 6 selection. The all-middle South region honoree was selected to play in the NAIA District 6 all-star game. In 1982, she was also a District 6 Player of the Week. Thomas finished her career as the school’s career leader in scoring with 1,489 points. Additionally, she holds the single-game record by tallying 41 points. Thomas was on the team from 1980-83.

Nick Wandless, Baseball (2003-06)
Nick Wandless was on the team from 2003-06. He ended his career as the NCAA saves leader in Division II with 32. Wandless claimed the school and PBC-best 17 saves in the 2006 season. Throughout his time, he appeared in 107 contests. A first-team ABCA and NCBWA All-American, Wandless was an all-region and all-conference selection in 2006. He was drafted in the 36th round by the Cincinnati Reds.

Randy Warrick, Athletic Director, (1978-2017)
After 39 years with the institution, Athletic Director Randy Warrick stepped down at the end of May 2017. During his tenure USC Aiken programs appeared in 76 NCAA Division II National Tournaments, won 29 regular-season PBC championships and 14 tournament titles.

Warrick was an integral part of the
formation of the PBC and helped guide USC Aiken from NAIA to Division II. He was also the longest serving Director of Athletics in the history of the South Carolina system. Under Warrick’s watch, the intercollegiate programs expanded from seven to 11 teams with the addition of men’s tennis, softball, cross country, women’s tennis and women’s soccer.

Raymond Werts, Men’s Basketball (1973-77)

Raymond Werts was a four-year starter on the men’s basketball team from 1973-77. A two-time MVP, he was the school’s all-time leading scorer upon the completion of his career. Werts guided USC Aiken to a PAC Championship during the 73-74 campaign. A three-time team captain, Werts was an all-academic team selection.

Von and Vicki Snelgrove Establish Endowed Basketball Scholarship Fund

In February, Von and Vicki Snelgrove made a $50,000 contribution toward the University of South Carolina Aiken men’s and women’s basketball programs by establishing the Snelgrove Family Men’s And Women’s Endowed Basketball Scholarship Fund.

“We are thankful for the continued support from Von and Vicki Snelgrove toward Pacer Athletics and specifically our basketball programs,” Director of Athletics Jim Herlihy said.

“Their generosity enables us to provide scholarship assistance to deserving student-athletes in both our men’s and women’s basketball programs for years to come.”

The Snelgroves have been long-time supporters and fans of USC Aiken Athletics.

Von graduated from the University of South Carolina (USC) with a degree in biology and later earned his master’s in education. Vicki graduated from USC with a degree in English prior to earning her juris doctorate from the USC Law School three years later.
Our Athlete Scholars

A “Win-Win” for Women’s Basketball and Students at Aiken High School

This spring the women’s basketball team served as mentors and placed a full-court press of positive attention on a classroom of students at Aiken High School, and teacher Francesca Pataro says they have made all the difference in the world.

“My students rarely get the opportunity to interact with college students, and they often don’t even see themselves as college bound, so I wanted them to consider it as a possibility,” Pataro stated. “The players from USC Aiken provided that experience for my students. They were honest and straightforward about the challenges of college, and I wanted my students and the USC Aiken students to communicate openly and find common ground.”

“My students truly enjoyed the experience. They all found it inspiring,” Pataro added.

One student in Ms. Pataro’s class described the experience this way:

“They inspired me to stay in school and not quit. I feel motivated by them, and I miss seeing them. I hope I get to see them again.”

Another student at Aiken High shared this thought, “I guess I better get serious about school if I want to do something with my life.”

Mentoring sessions took place at Aiken High and USC Aiken, where Ms. Pataro’s students also had the opportunity to tour the campus.

USC Aiken Women’s Basketball Coach Mark Miller said the partnership was especially valuable for his players, who were not only able to serve in the Aiken community, but also develop new friendships and improve themselves as individuals.

“This experience has benefitted our program tremendously,” Miller commented. “Anytime we can give back to the community it is a win-win situation, and it was nice to see both the high school students and college students learning from one other. Our players were able to be more involved in the community, where students and others can see them very differently than they do when they are just running up and down the court.”

Janae’ Simpson, a redshirt sophomore forward with the Pacers, is an elementary education major, and she agrees that the new partnership helped students of both schools.

“Visiting with the Aiken High School students was a great experience, and one that I would love to do again,” Simpson stated. “When you’re a new face in someone else’s classroom it can be awkward, but we all warmed up to one another, and our greetings...
were more exciting each time we met. Working with kids and teens will always be an ideal experience for me.”

Ms. Pataro recalled one particularly productive small-group session that impressed her.

“We did an exercise as part of my unit on The Odyssey where my students and the USC Aiken students had to decide if they were refugees going on a voyage, what they would take with them on a journey – and with only one minute to decide,” she commented. “They got into small groups and discussed their choices and what was important about each item. It was great to watch them speaking so sincerely about their choices. They were all equals.”

Simpson says meetings with the Aiken High students were filled with memorable moments.

“During a session we had at Aiken High, I volunteered to read a part in the book Romeo and Juliet with a teammate, and being so engaged with our characters really made the students appreciate reading and encouraged more participation,” Simpson stated. “The interactions during our group discussions led to deep conversations and critical thinking.”

Coach Miller and the Pacers want to continue the dialogue with Ms. Pataro and her students at Aiken High during the next school year.

“Ms. Pataro has been great, very helpful, and very understanding of our schedule,” he said. “Everyone we have worked with at Aiken County Public Schools has been outstanding. We are looking forward to helping out again next year.”

Ms. Pataro says she could not be happier with how the partnership has developed and deepened, most especially with the changes she has witnessed in her students.

“Coach Miller and the USC Aiken players have been flexible and genuine from the very beginning, and it has been a wonderful experience that has benefited everyone,” Pataro commented. “I am so pleased that we have had this opportunity. It has meant so much to my students. My students know when someone is being genuine, and they knew Coach Miller and the players truly cared about them.”

“My students have always been wonderful to teach, but I saw a change in their maturity,” she added. “They seemed more focused after their involvement with the USC Aiken students. They have been more concerned about their grades and their direction for the future.”

Editor’s Note: Courtesy of Aiken County Public Schools
A Closer Look with Johnson Holliday

BY ATIYA FIELDS

How many college student-athletes do you know that do yoga? Well, Johnson Holliday isn’t your typical college student-athlete.

Holliday took up yoga after a harsh chest injury, which helped him recover physically and mentally.

Holliday is originally from Galivants Ferry, S.C. which is a small community in Horry County.

The Aynor H.S. standout started playing golf when he was young. However, he didn’t start competing until he was in high school. Holliday played baseball and tennis before he made a decision to stick to golf.

“At one point, I was a pitcher. My coach put his son to pitch over me… and kept me on the bench, which happened too many times.” Holliday said. “I like how much freedom you have in golf compared to tennis, and my family loved golf more than anything.”

Holliday doesn’t recall how he got injured. His team was on the way to Nationals when he felt an aching pain in his chest, and started to worry since he was uncertain as to why the pain was there. Before Holliday played, he would take Advil to help mask the pain. However, the pain continued to come back resulting in Holliday needing to take a few weeks off.

Over the summer, Holliday spoke with a doctor about the pain he was experiencing in his chest. However, the doctor told him to continue to rest and take Advil to help with the pain. Continuously, Holliday took Advil, but it didn’t help, which resulted in him seeking out a doctor in Charleston.

“The doctor said that it was a mixture of colostrum colitis and pectoral tendonitis… I had a bad problem with carrying my bag on one shoulder,” Holliday said. “There wasn’t enough blood flowing to my muscles causing them to be pulled.”

Holliday’s mother was the reason he found out about yoga. His mother would go to yoga sessions and tell him to join since it was a great form of exercise.

“When we lived in Charleston my mother had to deal with my older brother and was looking for a stress reliever,” Holliday said. Holliday tried hot yoga with a friend before he was injured just to see how it was. He expressed how intense it was; however, it made him feel good after he was done, and he enjoyed it.

“I’m into extreme things… hot yoga was fun,” Holliday said.

Physically, yoga has helped Holliday get into better shape than he was before. Mentally, yoga has helped Holliday focus on and off the links. Holliday uses breathing techniques from yoga to help him relax while being under a lot of pressure on the field.

“I’m a lot slimmer than I was in the past few years, and have built muscle as well,” Holliday said. “Mentally yoga has helped regain my focus and has also helped with stress… it’s called the ‘Ujjiayi breathing’ technique that helps slows down my heart rate to help me be in the moment as I’m playing instead of being caught in the moment.”

Holliday plans on continuing yoga after he’s done playing golf to help him stay active and to balance stress. Holliday expresses how there is a lot of strain on his body due to various movements while playing on the field.

“I want to be more mobile, and playing golf there’s a lot of twisting and turning causing a lot of strain on my body… being more flexible will allow my body to have a better chance not to become injured in the long run,” Holliday said.

Editor’s Note: Story courtesy of Pacer Sports, and sponsored by Innovative Solutions.
Sports Briefs

**BASEBALL**

**Spence and Wiggins Named To All-Academic Team**

Mitch Spence and Daniel Wiggins were named to the PBC all-academic team in May.

Spence is a sophomore pitcher from Cary, N.C. He is majoring in business administration. Wiggins is a sophomore pitcher from Evans, Ga. He is majoring in business administration.

The team is part of a season-long program recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of PBC student-athletes in the classroom as well as on the field. To be eligible for the All-Academic team, a student-athlete must participate in at least half of their team’s events and be either a starter or significant contributor; achieve a 3.30 cumulative GPA; and complete at least one full academic year at his or her current institution and have reached sophomore athletic eligibility.

**Four Earn All-League Honors**

Four USC Aiken baseball standouts picked up all-conference honors in May. Jose Bonilla and Daulton Weeks earned first-team honors while Christian Aragon and Brian Parreira garnered second-team accolades.

Bonilla, a senior outfielder, led the PBC in games played and plate appearances. He was second in at-bats, sixth in hits (74) and 13th in stolen bases (10). Bonilla’s two triples were eighth-most in conference action. He registered a pair of sacrifice flies (10th), 15 walks in conference action (11th) and three sacrifice hits (11th) against conference foes. He batted .344 on the season, produced a .419 on-base percentage and slugged .508 against conference competition. Bonilla had a pair of four-hit contests, coming in wins over UNC Pembroke and Lander. He was a preseason NCBWA all-region honoree and a preseason all-conference selection.

Weeks, a senior third baseman, led the Pacers with a .347 batting average, which was 17th best in the league. His 15 doubles were fourth most in the league while his 70 hits were ninth overall. Weeks tallied 51 runs, which was 10th best on the year. His 14 home runs were third in the league and are the fifth most in a single season in USC Aiken’s Division II history. In the PBC, Weeks slugged .706, which is second best. He is third in total bases (84) and RBI (37) against conference foes. Weeks had a four-for-four performance in the 10-2 win over Lander. He registered a season-best five RBI in the win over Chowan. Weeks was the PBC Player of the Week on Apr. 16.

Aragon, a senior pitcher, tied for fourth in the league with eight victories, finishing with an 8-1 mark. His five wins against conference foes were the fifth most, and he did not register a loss in PBC play. Aragon finished seventh with 84 strikeouts, and his 10.36 strikeouts per game was eighth in the PBC. Against conference competition, Aragon held opponents to a .197 batting average. His 1.87 ERA in league play was second in the conference. He struck out a season-best 10 batters in wins over North Georgia and Lander. Aragon was tabbed the PBC Pitcher of the Week on Apr. 9.

Parreira, a senior utility player, saw action in all 50 games. He concluded the regular season with 12 round-trippers (seventh in the league), eighth in sacrifice flies (four), ninth in RBI (51) and 11th in total bases (105). Parreira was a preseason NCBWA all-region honoree. He had a pair of multi-homer games on the year, coming in wins over Shepherd and UNC Pembroke. Parreira drove in a season-high six runs in the win over Emmanuel. He was a preseason all-region honoree. As a junior, Parreira picked up NCBWA National Hitter of the Week accolades.

**Aragon Inks Deal with Angels**

Former USC Aiken baseball standout Christian Aragon has signed a contract...
with the Los Angeles Angels.

“I am so proud of Christian for all his hard work and dedication to Pacer Baseball,” head coach Kenny Thomas said. “I’ll never forget the last game he pitched for us against Columbus State in the PBC Tournament. He competed like I’ve only seen a few times in a must-win game. Christian deserves this opportunity.”

Aragon, a 6-2 left-handed pitcher from Atlanta, Ga., was a second-team all-region selection in 2018. He picked up all-conference and all-tournament team accolades as well.

During his senior campaign, Aragon played in 17 games, earning 15 starts. He worked 81 innings, holding opponents to a .228 batting average. Aragon struck out 90 batters and wrapped up his senior season with a 9-1 record. He garnered PBC and NCBWA Pitcher of the Week honors.

In two seasons with the Pacers after transferring from Andrew College, Aragon completed his career with a 13-4 record. He appeared in 40 games, earning 23 starts. He tallied 141 strikeouts while limiting the opposition to a .268 batting average.

**BASKETBALL**

**Dean and Terry Earn All-Conference Honors**

Doniel Dean and Markus Terry were named to the PBC all-conference team, as announced by the league office in March.

Dean picked up first-team honors while Terry earned third-team accolades.

Dean, a junior guard from Newnan, Ga., is fifth in the PBC in scoring, averaging 17.2 points per game. In league games, he ups his average to 17.4 markers a night (5th). In league play, Dean is second in assists (101), fourth in made field goals (135), seventh in three-point percentage (42.1 percent) and ninth in steals (34).

Dean poured in a career-high 35 points against Georgia Southwestern and again at Young Harris. He had a season-high nine assists in the win over Flagler and eight rebounds against the Saints. Dean’s five thefts in the win over the Hurricanes also marked a season-best effort. He scored in double figures in all but two games and reached the 20-point plateau eight times.

Terry, a redshirt-senior guard from Atlanta, Ga., is seventh in the league in three-point percentage, canning 41.5 percent of his attempts. In league play, he ups that to 42.1 percent from downtown (8th). Against conference foes, Terry is seventh in points (333), points per game (15.1 percent) and points per 40 minutes (22.4). He is 10th in field goals made (123) and 11th in three-point field goals made (45).

Terry poured in a season-high 26 points in the win over Columbus State. He made a season-best nine field goal attempts in the victory over Lander. His five three-point buckets against the Cougars marked a season-high effort. Terry snagged a season-high seven boards in the win over Francis Marion and dished out a season-best five assists in the win over Young Harris.

Dean’s selection to the first team marks the first time a USC Aiken student-athlete has been a first-team honoree since DeVontae Wright in 2014.

**Jalin Barnes Inks Professional Contract**

Former USC Aiken men’s basketball standout Jalin Barnes has signed a professional basketball contract.

Barnes, a native of Raleigh, N.C., was an all-conference performer for USC Aiken during the 2016-17 season.

Barnes recently inked a contract for a club Cojutepeque, in Cuscatlán El Salvador. He arrived for camp back in January and started the season in February. In the season opener, Barnes registered 27 points, seven rebounds and three assists. As of March 17, Barnes was averaging 24 points, seven rebounds and seven assists a game.

“I’m very excited that Jalin was offered the opportunity to further his talents overseas,” head coach Mark Vanderslice said. “He was obviously a very talented player, but he possessed a unique set of leadership qualities that made others around him better. Jalin brought his best to practice and games every single day. I’m thrilled that he is able to fulfill his dream of playing after college. His hard work has paid off, and I couldn’t be prouder.”

Barnes led USC Aiken by netting 15.9 points per game. He guided the Pacers to an 18-9 mark and the third-best league record at 12-7. During the 2016-17 campaign, Barnes netted 51 three-point baskets, which was second-best on the team. He poured in a career-high 31 points against Columbus State and drained a
season-best seven three-point buckets against North Georgia. Barnes helped lead the Pacers to the postseason for the first time under Vanderslice. “Playing under head coach Mark Vanderslice at USC Aiken really helped my confidence to become a next-level player,” Barnes said. “I would like to thank him and the coaching staff for believing in me.”

GOLF

Golf Team Wins PBC Championship
In April, the No. 9 USC Aiken Golf Team won the Peach Belt Conference Championship while Johnson Holliday took home the individual title.

Head coach Michael Carlisle’s team shot 14-under par, 850. The tally marked the lowest three-round score in PBC Championship history.

Columbus State was second (864) while Young Harris was third (882).

Holliday led from the outset, finishing eight-under par. For the tournament, he posted scores of 68-66-74. Holliday won the event by three strokes. Last year, he finished second at the PBC Championship.

Axel Östensson tied his best mark of the tournament, shooting two-under par, 70, on Sunday. For the event, Östensson shot three-under par, 213. The score was good enough for third place.

August Lindvall shot one-under par, 71, for the final 18 holes of play. His score for the event was one-under par, 215. Lindvall’s spectacular second round and solid third round pushed him into a fifth-place finish.

Rookie George Eubank tallied a top-10 effort. After opening with an even-par, 72, he posted scores of 73 and 74, finishing three-over par, 219. Eubank tied for eighth in the loaded field.

Dan Sheehan finished 29th.

Holliday, Östensson and Lindvall each earned all-tournament team honors.


Golf Team is Eighth in Coaches Poll
The University golf team remains at No. 8 in the latest Bushnell Golfweek Division II Coaches Poll released in May.

It marks the second consecutive poll that head coach Michael Carlisle’s team has been No. 8. The Pacers received 310 points in the poll.

West Florida is No. 1 for the eighth consecutive poll. The Argonauts are followed by Florida Southern, Nova Southeastern, Florida Tech, Barry, Lynn and Newberry. Limestone and CU-Colorado Springs round out the top 10.

Östensson Tabbed PBC Golfer of the Year; Holliday and Lindvall Pick Up Accolades
The USC Aiken golf team placed four student-athletes on the PBC all-academic team, as announced by the league office in April.

Johnson Holliday, August Lindvall, Axel Östensson and Dan Sheehan all picked up the prestigious honor.

Holliday, Lindvall, Östensson and Sheehan are all majoring in business administration.

USC Aiken Golfer Earns PGA Latin America Tour Card
Two-time first-team All-American Brandon Robinson-Thompson earned his PGA Latin America Tour Card.

Robinson-Thompson, a native of Totland Bay, England, tied for eighth at the PTLA Qualifying Tournament - Argentina, which wrapped up Feb. 2. The tournament took place in Pilar, Argentina. Robinson-Thompson shot seven-under par, 281, for four rounds. He posted scores of 72-73-68-68, helping him move up nine spots on the final day of competition.

With the top-eight finish, Robinson-Thompson is now fully exempt for the PGA Tour Latin America.

In 2015, Robinson-Thompson was tabbed PBC Golfer of the Year. He also tied the school record for lowest round (64).

TENNIS

Pacers Earn Top-15 National Ranking
After a tremendous 2018 campaign, the University men’s tennis team finished the season No. 13 in the final ITATennis.com national poll.

Head coach Steve Dahm’s team soared as high as No. 8.

The Pacers wrapped up the season with a record of 16-7. The team finished fourth in the PBC, registering a 5-4 mark. Dahm’s
team was 8-3 at home and notched an 8-2 road record.

The No. 13 national ranking is the second-highest finish for USC Aiken. In 2009, the squad finished No. 5.

Men's Tennis Places Three on All-Academic Team

Three University men's tennis standouts were named to the Peach Belt Conference All-Academic Team in April.

Alvaro Garcia Gil, Antonio Sabugueiro and Tales Silva have each earned the accolade.

Garcia Gil is majoring in exercise and sports science. Sabugueiro and Silva are each majoring in business administration.

Three Earn All-Academic Team Honors on Women's Tennis Team

Kayla Calvert, Victoria Giannaccini and Alice Neves were each named to the prestigious Peach Belt Conference All-Academic Team in April.

Calvert is majoring in nursing while Giannaccini and Neves are majoring in business administration.

Veskovac and Dias Garner All-Conference Accolades

University women's tennis standouts Olivera Veskovac and Teresa Franco Dias were named to the all-conference team, as announced by the league office in April.

Veskovac, a native of Belgrade, Serbia, picked up the second-team accolades in singles action and doubles action.

Franco Dias, a native of Oeiras, Portugal, joined Veskovac on the second team for doubles play.

Veskovac played at the No. 1 spot in each of the 16 matches in which she competed. She went 10-6 in singles action, including a 5-3 mark in league play. Veskovac is fifth in school history for career singles wins and is 10th for career doubles victories.

Veskovac and Franco Dias combined for an 11-8 ledger in doubles play, including 10 wins at the top spot. The two picked up the win in the lone match they played at No. 2. The dyad combined for a 6-3 ledger in league play.

Hannah Price Picks Up All-Conference Honor

USC Aiken softball standout Hannah Price was named a first-team all-conference honoree, as announced by the league office in May.

Price, a junior from Seneca, S.C., garnered first-team accolades as a utility player.

Price saw time as the designated player, pitcher and first baseman throughout the season.

She wrapped up the season with a .394 batting average overall, including a .370 mark against conference foes. Price finished eighth in the league in batting average, 12th in on-base percentage and 14th in hits.

She led the team in games played and started (50), at bats (142), hits (56), doubles (9), total bases (71) and on-base percentage (.463). Price was second on the squad in RBI (24) and slugging percentage (.500) and was third in runs scored (16). In the circle, she led the team in wins (6), starts (19), complete games (13), innings pitched (110.0) and strikeouts (81).

Softball All-Academic Team Honors

Hannah Price, Kathleen St. Peter and Courtney Strauss have all been named to the PBC all-academic team this spring.

Price is a junior exercise and sports science major from Seneca, S.C. St. Peter is a sophomore exercise and sports science major from Spring Lake, N.C., while Strauss is a sophomore business administration major from North Augusta, S.C.

The team is part of a season-long program recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of PBC student-athletes in the classroom as well as on the field.
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We are so happy to be part of the Pacer family and cannot wait to see what the future holds.”

Shaakira Jones (biology) is a Public Health Advisor for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She joined the federal government in 2015. In May, she was selected to the Young Government Leaders - Atlanta's 2018 Class of the 2nd Annual YoungGov40 Awards. The YoungGov40 Awards honor and highlight the metro Atlanta region’s top government employees under the age of 40. Young Government Leaders (YGL) is an 8,000+ member, non-profit organization committed to providing the authentic voice for our generation of aspiring government leaders. The Atlanta chapter’s membership includes over 1,000 public servants on a federal, state, and local level. Honorees were awarded during the 2nd Annual YoungGov40 Awards Ceremony in May at Atlanta City Hall, during Public Service Recognition Week, sponsored by Atlanta City Councilman Andre Dickens.

2015
Larry Tyler Shealy (biology) is employed at Augusta University Medical Center as a cardiology staff nurse. He has also become...
a tutor of Pharmacology and Pathophysiology and clinical instructor of Medical-Surgical Nursing at the Augusta University College of Nursing.

2017

Kaylee Cora Heath (elementary education) was offered her dream job as a third grade teacher at JD Lever Elementary in Aiken, S.C. before she graduated. “My first year as an educator has been a roller coaster in many ways. It has been so exciting and fun and it had its twist and turns. I thank the USC Aiken education department for helping and preparing me to be the best educator I can be. Now approaching the end of the school year, I am happy to say I have been chosen as the First Year Teacher of the Year for JD Lever Elementary. I would not be where I am today without the support of so many people on the USC Aiken campus through my college years and even today”

Lauren (Oxner) Woodward (early childhood education) was married on June 17, 2017.

Visiting Athletes Tour Campus with Proud Alum

While in town for a softball tournament, a USC Aiken alumna and former University softball pitcher, took time to give her players a tour of the campus.

Monica Melton Barfield coaches the Indian Land High School Warriors softball team. The athletes were in Aiken for the Triple Crown Invitational at Citizens Park in April.

Before their big game, Coach Barfield wanted to give her players a chance to meet her coach and get to know her alma mater.

While on campus, the exercise science and sociology major took the team to the Convocation Center, where they were surprised to see her picture hanging in the lobby.

They also had a chance to meet Coach Jerry Synder, USC Aiken’s softball coach, for whom Barfield played when she attended the university almost 20 years ago.

Snyder maintains the longest tenure in the Peach Belt Conference and is the only coach in the league to have coached since the PBC’s inception. He is now in his 31st season as the head of the Pacer softball program.

Barfield, ’96, shared with the Indian Land Warriors that “the campus has changed a lot” since she attended USC Aiken.

The library has a different vibe. Coffee, cell phones and conversation are now allowed as students are encouraged to collaborate on projects and study together in the Learning Commons. And, there was no Starbucks when she attended the university.
Celebrating the Horticulture of South Carolina

The Pacer Pedestrian Bridge, completed in late 2016, provided a unique opportunity for University landscape designers. The steep slope of the site leading from the Convocation Center allowed for the introduction of native plant materials from across the state. Ascending the steps of the bridge is akin to a walk across South Carolina from the coastal zone and its salt tolerant plants, through the Sandhills and the Piedmont regions, and concluding with cold hardy species of the Mountain zone. No other state can boast such diversity of native plants in such close proximity – only a few hundred miles apart.
Coastal Zone & Inner/Outer Plains
Starting at the base of the ramp and stairways, you begin your journey in the coastal regions of South Carolina. Here is where you will find native coastal varieties scattered about in a sandy area, with palms, and a sand dune covered in sea oats, surrounded by other grasses, yuccas and even a prickly-pear cactus.

Sandhills
As you continue your journey inward from the coast, you begin to see some local varieties you might find on other areas of campus, in Aiken, or even growing in a ditch along the highway. But you would find it very difficult to find some of these varieties, as some are seldom used in landscape design.

Piedmont
Leaving the relatively flat Sandhill's region, as you begin your climb to the uppermost region of South Carolina you start to see river rocks, plant varieties normally located along the abundant streams as they make their decent, eventually exiting in the coastal waters of South Carolina. This is where you will find the American Beautyberry which was used by Native American for medical purposes to treat illnesses such as malaria and dysentery.

Mountain Zone
After seeing some of the rarest-of-the-rare plant varieties South Carolina has to offer in the Piedmonts, you now find yourself at the base and the start of the Blue Ridge Mountain range. The granite outcropping of rock lets you know you have arrived. With the presence of evergreen conifers, conveniently placed blueberry bushes so visitors may enjoy their fruits, and Kalmia, this area will leave a lasting impression before you make your way across the bridge.

The Pacer Bridge has allowed for this truly “one of a kind” landscape design. It is a beautiful addition to USC Aiken, recognized as a Tree Campus USA by the Arbor Foundation.