From The Chair

The USCA Department of English had a fine year in 2008.

The English faculty continued to add to their impressive record of scholarly/creative activity and service. As a whole, they made 19 presentations at professional conferences; published 36 articles, reviews, and creative pieces; and engaged in 3 editing projects. Collectively, they served on 11 Faculty Assembly committees and 12 ad hoc campus-wide committees; provided service to 6 professional organizations, either as officers or session chairs; advised 3 student organizations; and made 16 significant contributions of individual time and effort to our local community.

This fall, two new faculty joined our ranks: Andrew Geyer, who earned his Ph.D. in creative writing and American literature from Texas Tech, and Roy Seeger, who earned his M.A. from Ohio University and his MFA from Western Michigan.

The Department’s many and varied co-curricular programs continued to flourish. Here are some highlights:

- The Aiken Writing Project, administered by Dr. Lynne Rhodes, held its second summer institute, hosting seventeen teachers from Aiken County in an effort to help them become better writing instructors by writing themselves. USCA is proud to be one of 200 universities across the country that serve as sites for the National Writing Project, one of the most important nationwide efforts to improve writing in this country.
- The Department once again hosted the Oswald Distinguished Writers Series, with appearances by novelist Elizabeth Cox last spring and novelist/short story writer Richard Bausch this fall. Our public readings consistently attract large audiences from the campus and the surrounding community, and our visiting writers enrich our curriculum. Last spring, for example, many of the students in AEGL 102 read and examined Cox’s story “The Third of July,” and two of our seniors based their capstone projects on her novels Night Talk and The Slow Moon.
- Last March, the Epsilon Upsilon chapter of Sigma Tau Delta inducted fourteen new members, including twelve students and Drs. Katie Kalpin and Doug Higbee. Dr. Carla Coleman was the keynote speaker at the annual induction dinner.
- The Oswald Review, the first inter-collegiate journal in the country devoted exclusively to undergraduate research in the discipline of English, published its tenth anniversary issue this September. Julie Long, senior English major, served as this year’s editorial intern.

Richard Bausch, who currently holds the Moss Chair of Excellence at the University of Memphis, graced the campus of USCA as part of the Oswald Writers Series in October of last year. Author of ten novels and seven collections of short stories, Bausch focuses primarily on American family life, with a strong emphasis on the varying levels of love within it. His novel Take Me Back (1981) was nominated for the PEN/Faulkner Award, and Bausch won the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story in 2004.

For his public reading, he selected a short story entitled “Aren’t you Happy for Me?” about how a father reacts to the news that his young daughter has fallen in love with and become impregnated by her sixty-year-old professor. This work showed his keen ability to blend detail and feeling into a story with a strong, yet short plot. In fact, while visiting Dr. Mack’s AEGL 275 class the following day, Bausch stated, “A good story is one that evokes emotion from a reader. Art is about the nerve endings.”

During the classroom visit, Bausch took questions from the students, which he answered with such brilliance that many in the room could not help but ask another. Students also enjoyed his exaggerated comments, such as “Women have maybe fifty thoughts a minute, while men have probably two a day. Therefore, women fascinate me and I often find myself more interested in describing the mentality of a woman than that of a man.”

Ultimately, Bausch sees life like everyone else. When he was asked by a student, “Do you set out to design your stories along the classic, S-part Freytag pyramid?” he responded that the parabolic shape of a story is reflective of life. Every event that a person encounters in his or her life can be analyzed in the stages of rising action, climax, and falling action. After all, does our life as a whole not follow the same general pattern?

-Alex Bush
DR. TOM MACK

Dr. Mack had a great year in 2008.

In May he was named a Carolina Trustee Professor in recognition of his outstanding record in teaching, service, and scholarship; this particular professorship is awarded to only one full professor each year on the eight campuses outside of Columbia.

Last spring Dr. Mack also made a national call for papers to be presented at a special session that he organized for the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. Set for this December in San Francisco, the panel entitled “The Capstone Project: Designing the Senior Experience for English Majors” will include three presentations, including Dr. Mack’s own paper on his design of the senior seminar in literary studies at USCA.

In addition to working on a number of ongoing scholarly and creative projects, Dr. Mack saw the following publications reach fruition: review-essays on David Leavitt’s The Indian Clerk and Joe Hill’s Heart-Shaped Box (Magill’s Literary Annual, 2008) and an article on Steven Saylor (Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction, Ed. Carl Rollyson, 2008). Saylor is the author of a popular mystery series set in ancient Rome and featuring his resourceful sleuth, Gordianus the Finder.

Mack also continued to write his popular weekly “Arts and Humanities” column for The Aiken Standard, and he edited the tenth anniversary issue of The Oswald Review.

In August, he was elected to the Board of Governors of the South Carolina Academy of Authors, and he has already convinced his fellow board members to host their 2011 induction ceremony on the Aiken campus as part of USCA’s fiftieth anniversary.

DR. HARRY HOOTMAN

This marks the fifth year that Dr. Hootman has taught freshman English classes since he received his doctorate at USC Columbia. He has had a long-time relationship with USCA starting as a student with night classes in 1964-72, teaching computer programming 1979-80, and algebra, calculus, and finite mathematics in 1990-93. He is an avid book collector. His major interest is nineteenth-century British and American Literature, and he maintains three websites on the internet concerning British Literary Annuals and Gift Books from the period 1823-1861 available at: www.britannuals.com, www.geocities.com/britannualsinfo., and www.britannualsinfo.com. The Britannuals website is currently linked to Romantic Circles and the British Library in London. Dr. Hootman is currently actively engaged in further research, editing, and networking in this academic area.

DR. LYNNE RHODES

Dr. Rhodes teaches AEGL 101, AEGL 362 (Literacy and Media Cultures), and AEGL 460 (Advanced Composition). This past summer, she taught AETE 760 as the credit-bearing course for the Aiken Writing Project. The seventeen K-12 teachers that participated in this program are now back in their Aiken and Edgefield classrooms with lots of great ideas about how to introduce students to successful writing strategies.

In the Fall 2008 semester, she worked with Karl Fornes and Vicki Collins to plan for this year’s Aiken Writing Project’s Summer Institute, and with Dr. Matt Miller, Karl Fornes, and Dr. Doug Higbee on a presentation that they gave in November at NCTE in San Antonio on USCA’s departmental writing assessment. She also worked with Dr. Windy Schweder to give a presentation in December at the annual meeting of SACS (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) (again in San Antonio). Dr. Rhodes also gave a panel presentation in Raleigh in October at the North Carolina Symposium on Teaching Writing with colleagues at UNC Asheville and Charleston Southern University. In addition, she has had a manuscript accepted for publication in College Composition and Communication (CCC).

Personally, she is enjoying being a grandmother to the sweetest baby ever, Alexander Thomas Nord, and continues to stop and smell the roses at every chance she gets.

DR. MATT MILLER

Since last year, Dr. Miller has had the opportunity to teach courses in African and African-American literature, non-Western literature and films, and writing. Thanks to a course redesign grant sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor’s office, he developed a specialized course on Globalization and Literature. He comments, “This course is exciting for me because I get to use both my American and non-Western literary knowledge bases.”

In research, Dr. Miller has been very active, having attended five conferences last year. He presented papers on a variety of texts including Toni Morrison’s Beloved, J. M. Coetzee’s Life and Times of Michael K, and Gilbert Hernandez’s graphic novel collection Palomar. Over the summer, he revised and submitted two research essays: one on Jacques Lacan’s concept of living between two deaths in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man and another on Chang-rae Lee’s A Gesture Life and the recuperation of identity. In addition, he plans to attend two national conferences and one regional conference this year.

He is currently the chair of the Campus Life Committee and has started to serve on the Academic Assessment Committee. He also chairs and coordinates the American Democracy Project film series.

His oldest son is now in first grade. His twins are talking (and yelling) constantly. He comments, “My wife and I are enjoying domesticity blissfully.”
VICKI COLLINS

Professor Collins teaches English 101, 102, 111 (ESL), and 201. In the spring ESL class, she taught several athletes whose first language is Spanish and two German men who are employed by Kronotex in Barnwell, SC.

She is the Department of English liaison to the Writing Room and serves on the First Year Experience and Faculty Welfare Committees. Each semester, her English Department Workshop covers grammar skills. In June, she attended the AWP Summer Institute and directed the Young Writers’ Camp. In November, she attended the NCTE/NWP Conference in San Antonio.

In addition, she participated in a poetry workshop with a creative writing class at South Aiken High School and a poetry demonstration at an Aiken County Teacher In-Service, judged poetry submissions for the Aiken County Language Arts Festival, and judged the Teen Poetry Contest at the Augusta Library.

Recent poems by Collins have appeared in the 2008 Kakalak Anthology of Carolina Poets and Poetry of the Golden Generation, a Kennesaw State University journal. As the current president of The Authors Club of Augusta, she helped to organize “Authors Respond to Art” at The Morris Museum of Art and The Authors Club participation in the inaugural Westobou Festival.

Tennis is Professor Collins’ leisure activity; she is the Combo Coordinator for the CSRA Tennis Association and plays on several leagues. In her free time, she works crossword puzzles and watches Jeopardy.

KARL FORNES

Last spring, Professor Fornes collaborated with his wife, Jennifer Onofrio, on a paper presented at the Southeastern Writing Centers Association conference. The paper, entitled “Articulating a Path Forward: What Can We Learn from the Visual Arts,” explored the parallels between scholarship concerning writing centers and studio critiques in the visual arts with an historic emphasis on the role of the renaissance Italian Academy and the Salons of Paris. He also continued his regular column in Southern Discourse, spending two columns this year discussing the role of plagiarism in the 2008 presidential election.

Also in the spring, he worked closely with Dr. Lynne Rhodes and Professor Vicki Collins when he assumed the role of Technology Liaison for the Aiken Writing Project, a chapter of the National Writing Project. Among the projects associated with the Aiken Writing Project, he participated in the Summer Institute for area K-12 teachers and developed the Aiken Writing Project web site (http://www.aikenwritingproject.org).

Professor Fornes continues to enjoy teaching English 101 with an emphasis on writing and technology and a specific focus on electronic and information literacies.

DR. KATIE KALPIN

Dr. Katie Kalpin began this year by teaching a new class that was recently added by the department, English Renaissance Literature. She enjoyed developing this class and was grateful to have a particularly motivated—and Hardy--group of students to share in the experience of the course. She also taught the first half of the British Literature survey and AEGL 102. She will teach a new course this spring for the honors program, an honors colloquium investigating modern filmic adaptations of Shakespeare and youth culture under the title “Teen Shakespeare.”

Dr. Kalpin has begun work on a new research project: editing All’s Well That Ends Well for the New Kittredge Shakespeare. In November, she presented a paper entitled “The Name and Not the Thing: Performing Marriage in All’s Well That Ends Well” at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) conference in Louisville. She also served as the chair for the Southeastern Renaissance Conference session at SAMLA. This summer, her article on Mary Sidney Herbert’s poem “To Thee Pure Sprite” was published in The Companion to Pre-1600 British Poetry. Currently, she is looking forward to traveling to Washington, D.C. in the spring to present a paper at the Shakespeare Association of America Conference.

KATHRYN HAUER

Professor Hauer is excited to re-join the USCA adjunct faculty after a 17-year hiatus, during which she raised two children and worked as a technical writer and editor. Her hair is flatter and her waist wider, but she is just as enthusiastic today about being a part of “this wonderful university” as she was in the 90’s. She comments, “How we have improved! Our physical appearance is exceeded only by the very high academic level we have achieved, as documented by the regional and national acclaim that grows every year!”

Last semester, Professor Hauer taught two sections of English 102, Composition and Literature. She was pleased to have many scholar-athletes in her classes, in addition to several, returning, non-traditional students. This semester, she is teaching one evening section of English 101.

She is currently shopping a book called Three Squares Family – The Importance of Feeding Your Children Three Meals a Day. While attempting to acquire a publisher, she plans to offer training classes, a website, and other services to encourage parents to feed their children regularly.

In her “other life,” which she suspects her students doubt she has, she is the mother of two children and wife of her husband of 25 years, Kim. Her daughter, Christine, is a junior at USC-Columbia in the international business program, and her son, Patrick, is a senior at Aiken High, heading to either USC-Columbia or the U S Naval Academy next year.
DR. CARLA COLEMAN

Dr. Carla Coleman participated in two national conferences last spring. In March, she attended the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century British Women Writers Conference, where she presented a paper focusing on Geraldine Jewsbury's "actress novel" *The Half-Sisters*. In April, Dr. Coleman flew to sunny Miami for a meeting of the interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Association conference. While there, she spent three days not on the beach but in a chilly hotel, listening to papers and delivering one of her own on *Queen Victoria's Leaves from a Highland Journal*. This year she prepared papers for two conferences, one of which (The North American Victorian Studies Association) took her up to the hallowed halls of Yale University, a prospect which, she must admit, she found both intimidating and exhilarating.

Last year, in addition to teaching English 101 and 102, Dr. Coleman offered a well-received course on the Literary Gothic, as well as Recent Western Drama and the second half of the British literature survey. This past fall, she moved herself to tears as she read aloud Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" to her Romanticism students; she is also looking forward to offering Victorian literature in the spring.

Additionally, she organized the 2009 Aiken County Language Arts Festival, an annual event that provides an outlet for students from area middle and high schools to come to the USCA campus one Saturday in February to collectively tap into their inner actors, poets, storytellers, and public speakers.

Outside of the department, Dr. Coleman tries to find time to hike, camp, and travel—this past summer she explored Oregon’s Columbia River Gorge and Mount Hood region. She also plays with her grumpy old lady of a cat and spoils her young niece and nephew in Tennessee.

DR. ERIC CARLSON

Dr. Carlson has added significantly to his teaching repertoire over the past year. He taught English 102 and Rhetorical Grammar this past spring, Writing in the University during Maymester, and English 101 during Summer I. This fall, in addition to AEGL 101, he taught English Grammar and "Beowulf and Germanic Legend," a course that proved to be particularly scintillating. In the realm of scholarly work, he presented a paper (in conjunction with Dr. Doug Higbee) at the annual College English Association conference in St. Louis this past March, in which he explored Tim O'Brien’s short story "On the Rainy River" as part of the Indo-European heroic tradition. Currently, he is working on a study of the social concerns surrounding bodily imagery in *Beowulf*, research from the project is part of two separate conference papers. The first, titled "Shouldering the Burden of Peace: Violent Reconciliation as a Christian Concern in Beowulf" was presented at the Poetics of Conflict and Resolution conference in Bridgewater, Virginia in October. The second paper, tentatively titled "Dismembering the Outlaw: Shoulders and Social Cohesion in Beowulf," continues the study initiated in the first by comparing imagery in *Beowulf* to various other medieval Germanic analogues. It will be presented at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan in May.

During football season, Dr. Carlson’s Saturdays are structured around the Wisconsin Badgers, whenever possible, and Sundays are for Coach Mike McCarthy and the rest of the Green Bay Packers. For the record, Dr. Carlson could not care less who Brett Favre plays for these days, but he is very happy that it is not the Minnesota Vikings.

In other news, Dr. Carlson’s superhero alter ego recently added the Yo-Yo of Justice to his utility belt.

DR. DOUG HIGBEE

In addition to teaching English 101 and 102, Dr. Higbee has recently conducted courses in modern British literature, non-Western literature, and the literature of the First World War.

Dr. Higbee’s essay on British veterans’ organizations of the First World War, entitled “Practical Memory,” was published in a volume of essays on the war and popular culture (Brill Press, June 2008). His essay on the British poet Ivor Gurney is forthcoming in an issue of *The Space Between*, an academic journal devoted to the study of early 20th century literature and culture. His essay on the relationship between veterans’ organizations and peace is forthcoming in the *International Encyclopedia of Peace* (Oxford University Press). Dr. Higbee is currently editing a volume of essays about the intersections of academic and military cultures.

In March 2008, Dr. Higbee presented a paper on teaching war literature (with Dr. Eric Carlson) at the annual CEA (College English Association) conference in St. Louis. In November 2008, he presented a paper on the relation between undergraduate research and disciplinary writing at the annual NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) conference in San Antonio. He has also been invited by the Great War Society to present his research on First World War veterans and the Versailles treaty at its annual meeting in Kansas City in June 2009. Dr. Higbee is currently planning to present papers at conferences located elsewhere than the Midwest (not that there is anything wrong with that).

Dr. Higbee enjoys spending his spare time with his various children and his wife, getting in a run in Hitchcock Woods, and relaxing at the downtown brewery. An avid novice deer hunter, he recently learned how to fire and clean his grandfather’s 1898 U.S. Army issue Krag 30-40 rifle.
Professor Saine teaches AEGL101 and AEGL 102. He is a full-time English teacher during the day at Aiken High School where he teaches the IB and pre-AP students, primarily juniors.

He is currently planning to write a paper for Dr. Doug Higbee's project on the intersection of the military and English literature, having served in the U.S. Army for 25 years, three of which were as an English instructor teaching freshman 101 and 102 courses, as well as the junior British and American lit survey courses at West Point.

He is also working as a volunteer interviewer with the federally funded “Veterans History Project.” The project involves interviewing combat veterans and sending to the Library of Congress the DVDs produced from videotapes of the interviews. In the CSRA, the project is concentrating on World War II veterans since they are rapidly disappearing. Statistically, 1000 die per day.

Sigma Tau Delta Speaker: Dr. Carla Coleman

At the Spring 2008 International English Honor Society induction dinner, Dr. Carla Coleman was the guest speaker. Her speech focused on her love for both literature and language, a feeling shared by English majors around the country.

Dr. Coleman’s love for English literature stems from her childhood. When she was very young, Dr. Coleman’s parents began reading great works of literature to her. Although she enjoyed the classic childhood stories, she was also exposed to “the shrieking rabbits in snares of Richard Adam’s Watership Down and Smog the dragon and the creeping Golum in Tolkien’s the Hobbit and all of the Lord of the Rings trilogy.” This experience helped guide her life and gave her what she now sees as some of her best friends, books. In their pages, one can see the world from a chair in one’s living room, find answers to questions that seem impossible to find, and experience impossible feelings like death, without actually taking part in the process. The freedom associated with this relationship between the reader and his or her books is perhaps one of the strongest that can be formed.

When Dr. Coleman first faced the choice of what to study as an undergraduate, English was an easy choice. It presented her with the opportunity to become an academic in the field which she had come to love so dearly. Recalling her mother’s birthday last year, Dr. Coleman stated “About 10 years ago, after my little brother was through college and moved out of the house, my mother—the chemist—started going through the books we’d left behind on the shelves—traditional high school fare, and she started reading them. As a result, when she received birthday money from my grandmother this year, she elected to purchase, not DVDs, but leather-bound copies of Bronte and Austen.” This recollection is relevant to the feelings that Dr. Coleman has towards English as a language.

She believes in the power of language and literature and that all people should have the opportunity to properly experience them. Many individuals spend their entire lives without so much as cracking the cover of a book, thereby missing what could be, literally, a life-changing event. "The nice thing about being an English major—or any avid reader of good literature—is that you have access to the best voices," said Dr. Coleman, “ones that might actually be worth listening to. And, if you write as well as read, you have the chance—just maybe—to contribute your own voice to that vast and worthy archive, as well.”
Dr. Andrew Geyer

This has been a full year for Dr. Andrew Geyer. He left his job at Arkansas Tech University and his home in the Ozark Mountains of Northwest Arkansas for a new position at the University of South Carolina Aiken and a hundred-plus-year-old fixer-upper in Graniteville. Both Dr. Geyer and his wife, Emily, are excited about the move.

For the Fall 2008 Semester, Dr. Geyer’s first at USCA, he was teaching Introduction to Creative Writing and Composition I. He is happy to be back in the classroom in South Carolina (he got his MFA at USC Columbia) and eager to get to know the faculty and students in the Department of English.

As for creative work, Dr. Geyer has followed up last year’s publication of his first novel, *Meeting the Dead* (UNMP 2007), with the publication in 2008 of five short stories and a piece of creative non-fiction about the writing process. Two of the short stories and the creative non-fiction piece appeared in *The Langdon Review* (September 2008), one story appeared in *descant* (September 2008), one story appeared in *Concho River Review* (June 2008), and one story appeared in *Taj Mahal Review* (June 2008). Dr. Geyer also attended the Writers Conference in Honor of Elmer Kelton at Angelo State University, where his short story “Have Boys Not Girls” won the First Annual Short Story Competition; and he was a showcase author at the Langdon Weekend Festival of the Arts in Granbury, Texas.

As busy as he has been with the move and the new job, Dr. Geyer has found some time to write fiction. He has just finished rewriting a novel manuscript, *Dixie Fish*, which is set in Columbia, SC. He is currently at work on two more book-length projects: a novel entitled *So Close Yet So Far Out* and a short story cycle entitled *Lesser Mountains*.

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

Roy Seeger

Before joining the USCA faculty in the fall of 2008 to teach English 101 and 102, Roy Seeger lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he worked as a part-time instructor at Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Western Michigan University, teaching classes in composition, literature, and creative writing. He received his M.A. in poetry at Ohio University in 2000 and his M.F.A. in poetry from Western Michigan University in 2005.

Although Mr. Seeger’s area of primary study is creative writing and contemporary poetry, his academic interests stretch into composition, Marxist theory, post-colonialism, ecological criticism, and popular culture studies. He has recently presented conference papers with titles such as “The Hegemonic Discourse in Sylvia Plath’s *Ariel*” and “Show Me the Funny: The Uses of Humor in Poetry.” Currently, he is finishing his second poetry manuscript tentatively titled “The Distance of the Stage.”

Mr. Seeger’s manuscript, *The Boy Whose Hands Were Birds*, won the 2008 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Contest; he was also the winner of the 2007 Gribble Press Chapbook Contest for *The Garden of Improbable Birds*, and his work was featured on *Verse Daily*, an online poetry anthology. His poems have appeared in *Cream City Review, Gulf Coast, Mississippi Review, Green Mountain Review, 32 Poems, Southeast Review, Hotel Amerika, Quarter After Eight*, as well as other journals. Poems are forthcoming in *Main Street Rag* and *The Laurel Review*. He also presented a poetry reading in November at the Main Street Rag Offices in Charlotte, NC.

In his spare time, Mr. Seeger reads subversive comics and applies critical theories to television and bad movies (especially horror movies).
Dr. Phebe Davidson

The academic afterlife is a wonderful thing. Looking back to USCA with affection, Dr. Phebe Davidson is heartened to see The Oswald Review, which she and Tom Mack began together in 1998, celebrating its tenth anniversary, and to see the Distinguished Writers Series attracting such fine writers. When she misses the hurly burly of department life, she reminds herself how much she likes her writing desk in the boonies, with its view of the Tugaloo River, and nostalgia gives way to contentment.

2008 has been busy so far, with a book of new poems (Fat Moon Rising, Main Street Rag, February 2008) and a second edition of her first book of poems (Milk and Brittle Bone, Main Street Rag, August 2008). Milk and Brittle Bone was a particular pleasure, as she had the opportunity to look at early work—any comp teacher understands this feeling—fix the things she’d have done better if she’d been more experienced. She comments, “I enjoyed hunting up the original cover artist and securing a new foreword to accompany the original introduction.” Dr. Davidson still maintains an active schedule of readings in the Carolinas and is still working steadily as an editor (Reviews Editor for Yemassee) and writer (Staff Writer for The Asheville Poetry Review). The next few months will see some of her newer reviews published in American Poetry Journal, The Asheville Poetry Review, and South Carolina Review.

Despite continuing drought, Dr. Davidson is reminded of how wonderful the place she lives is. She comments, “An academic manuscript sits on my desk, awaiting review. The air is clear and brilliant. From the back porch, I can hear an osprey’s cry. It’s time to walk down to the dock and see what’s doing at the waterline.”

Dr. Stanley Rich

Dr. Stanley Rich has been busy since retirement after twenty-eight years of teaching in the USCA English Department. In May 2007, he participated in a Citizen Diplomacy trip for two weeks to Iran, sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The trip enabled him to meet Iranian citizens face-to-face, to have some wonderful conversations, and to travel to Tehran, the Caspian Sea, Shiraz, Esfahan, and the ruins of ancient Persepolis. In February 2007, he traveled to Thailand and to northern China, climbing one of the sections of The Great Wall. In October 2007, he traveled to Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam for a month of exciting adventures in Southeast Asia. Spending two days exploring the temple ruins of ancient Angkor in Cambodia provided some memorable and inspiring times.

In May 2008, Dr. Rich moved to Birmingham, Alabama, his birth city, and he has been getting re-acquainted with his native state, especially the music scene in Birmingham, where a high level of musical and artistic quality reigns. Recently, he joined the newly-formed Magic City's Men's Chorus, a sixty-man group singing both popular and serious music. This group has already garnered high praise for its vibrant quality.

His recent reading has included Michael Chabon, David Leavitt, Alan Furst, Mary Oliver, J. A. Jance, Steven Saylor, John Grisham, Jeffrey Archer, Joe Keenan, among many others.

In late October and in November, Dr. Rich taught an evening course entitled "Four Southern Fiction Writers" at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and in January and February 2009, he plans to teach another evening course in Greek mythology at Samford.

The Oswald Review Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The Oswald Review is celebrating its tenth anniversary. The first intercollegiate journal of undergraduate research and criticism in the discipline of English, TOR was founded in 1999 by Dr. Tom Mack and Dr. Phebe Davidson of the University of South Carolina Aiken’s Department of English. Boasting a review board of English faculty from five colleges, TOR is a pioneering journal in the burgeoning field of undergraduate research. The fall/2008 issue includes six essays by undergraduate scholars at the following institutions: John Carroll University in Ohio; the University of Pittsburgh, Penn State University-Berks, and Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania; Winthrop University in South Carolina; and Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. Julie Long, a senior English major, served as this year’s editorial intern, assisting Mack in the production of the journal by negotiating revisions with the student authors.
In the fall of 2006, Dr. Lynne Rhodes applied for the necessary grant to initiate a new site for the National Writing Project here at USCA. After much hard work, the grant was approved, and Dr. Rhodes, with the assistance of Ginger Dunker, a high school English teacher at South Aiken High School, set about establishing what was to be an annual Summer Institute (SI) for local English teachers to hone their teaching skills in the field of writing. Dr. Rhodes commented, “The basic concept behind the SI is that it gives teachers in K-12 an opportunity to present and polish demonstrations of their practice so that they can become Teacher-Consultants who can go back to their respective schools and give in-service demonstrations: Teachers are the authoritative experts who can best share their pedagogies with other teachers.”

In addition, participating teachers are given the opportunity to write and work in response groups dealing with the analysis of professional literature. The goal of this is to “ground their practices in theory and research,” says Dr. Rhodes.

In the two years of its existence, participation in the Aiken Writing Project (AWP) has nearly doubled, marked by a growth in teacher participation from eight persons to fifteen. Many of these teachers have gone on to become Teacher-of-the-Year nominees, now giving in-services for the District and helping to expand USCA’s connections with schools across Aiken and Edgefield Counties.

“The beauty of the Aiken Writing Project is that it is part of a much larger network--The National Writing Project--so it benefits from the collective wisdom of writing project activities and research across the nation,” comments Dr. Rhodes. This past year, Professor Karl Fornes became the technical liaison for the AWP, and Professor Vicki Collins became the coordinator for a Young Writers Camp, which was a tremendous success this past June and which the AWP will be sponsoring again this coming summer. In addition, Ginger Dunker coordinated in-service workshops in March of 2008 and again in August, at which SI teachers gave demonstrations that were very well-received by other teachers in attendance.

The AWP hopes eventually to serve Aiken, Edgefield, McCormick, Barnwell, Allendale, and possibly Hampton and Orangeburg counties. In addition to the Summer Institute, the AWP held its first of several retreats and workshops for K-12 teachers on November 1, 2008 at the Ruth Patrick Science and Math Center, with Dr. Gary Senn as the featured speaker. Furthermore, the AWP is also coordinating staff development for several middle schools, with the assistance of individuals in the USCA School of Education.

-Alex Bush
Perspectives from the Writing Room: Kiri Dunlap

“As part of the Academic Success Center, the Writing Room is an asset to many students at USCA,” Kiri Dunlap recently replied to a visitor asking her about the Writing Room. As a consultant, Kiri helps students with any part of the writing process that they feel uncomfortable in completing. The service that all five of the Writing Room consultants offer is invaluable. “We sincerely want to influence students to become independent and confident in their writing,” said Kiri.

The USCA Writing Room aims to assist any student of the university who has any difficulty related to the writing process. Its services range from guiding the editing process, to encouraging the development of intelligent ideas, to providing students with the necessary reference sources while compiling a works cited page or developing an essay in an unfamiliar language style. Its staff is made up of knowledgeable individuals committed to these goals.

Kiri has been tutoring since high school, but she confesses, “Working in the Writing Room is more fulfilling because I get the chance to help so many students.” Even though she has been a consultant only since May of 2008, Kiri has already experienced what she calls “the craziness of the Junior Writing Portfolio.” Many students usually take advantage of the free services offered in the Writing Room immediately before the portfolio deadline, making the days before the due date more hectic for all consultants. “The week before midterms and exams is busy for us too because so many students come in for help on their term papers,” said Kiri.

Despite the various stresses that accompany her position as a Writing Room consultant, Kiri enjoys being part of the tutoring services offered at USCA. “Helping people by sharing my talents in writing makes being a consultant the perfect job,” replied Kiri.

As an English major, Kiri knows how to help students on anything from poetry explications to research papers. Kiri looks forward to continuing her service as a consultant and hopes that students at USCA will take advantage of all the free tutoring services that the Academic Success Center offers, beyond just the services that the Writing Room provides.

-Alex Bush

Balancing School and Family: Leslie Walters

“I want my kids to see that a woman can achieve her academic dreams even when the odds are against her,” says Leslie Walters, a senior English Education major at USCA who has to juggle school with helping to support a family. In 1999, Leslie began making her dream of creating a family unit come true by getting married. In the following years, she had two children and quickly discovered the struggles associated with raising a family without being able to pursue a professional career.

Walters enrolled at Aiken Technical College in the spring semester of 2004. After two and a half years, she transferred to USCA and is currently entering her third year of study. When asked what her reasoning was for going back to school, she replied, “I wanted to pursue what many returning students want, a better career. However, I also felt that there was a glimmer of mental potential within me that had not found fulfillment.”

“Being a mother is challenging,” says Walters. “Completing a college education is difficult in itself. However, when the challenges of it are coupled with those of raising a family, one can feel overwhelmed at times. For example, there have been many times when I have had a large amount of schoolwork to complete, but my children have somewhere to be that evening. When this happens and my husband cannot take them, I must fulfill that obligation. The same is true when I have to work to assist him in paying our monthly bills. Sometimes homework just has to take a temporary back seat, until I can return and complete it when I should be sleeping.”

Upon graduation, Walters hopes to become a teacher in the local public school system. Eventually, she plans to obtain her Master’s degree, perhaps from USC-Columbia. She encourages people to understand that college is meant to be a life-enriching experience, not merely an opportunity to please oneself and others by making all As. “Having a family to support while in school is a challenge. Yet, I believe that any mother who has the drive to pursue a dream outside of her family can do it and that it will ultimately serve as a good example for your children.”

-Alex Bush
Prior to enrolling in USCA, I had spent 23 years in emergency services as a firefighter/paramedic, serving in the military, private, and public sectors. Understanding the fact that I was a burnout, I enrolled, initially, as a nursing major—as all burned out paramedics do. I took a Non-Western Lit class with Dr. Claxon that ignited a passion I had not felt since high school—the appreciation and love for words. When I changed my major, several of my former colleagues thought I was insane. They could not understand the beauty of a piece of poetry or fiction, thought there was no merit in debating what an author was truly trying to get across. As a writer, I understood all too well. A story, regardless of genre, needs to be told so the reader can either be entertained or learn.

The professors in the English Department were second-to-none. They enlightened me and challenged my cynicism and doubt. My transition from a career professional to student was fantastic in more ways than I can relate. In essence, I became alive again. I began to write and, thanks to the writing workshops that helped me escape self-criticism, continue to do so. My short-term goal is to have at least one short story accepted for publication this winter.

Professionally, I am the Director of Farm Operations on a 422-acre organic farm that borders Shenandoah National Park in the mountains of Virginia. Working and residing on the property has granted me the opportunity to combine my love for nature and my writing; there can be no greater muse than my current environment. To have bears literally play 10 feet away from your back door is inspirational. Of course, I continue to write satire, but we must all have our vices. Dr. Mack, Dr. Gardner, Dr. Hampton, Dr. Davidson, Dr. Rich, Professor Law, and Dr. Claxon inspired (and gave me outstanding references) that allowed me to achieve my current position. Working as an intern on The Oswald Review, introducing visiting writers, and being the President of Sigma Tau Delta were fantastic experiences that can never be recreated. Dr. Duran and Professor Calderon will be happy to know that their instruction finally kicked in as half my staff are native speakers of espanol....

My degree has helped me in several ways. The farm is prestigious due to its size and history in a very affluent county. Besides mapping out a long-term plan for economic success, I interact, in both writing and speech, with various agriculture and conservation organizations. I write policy and procedures for my staff and comprehensive business plans that will guide our ventures over the next several years. I interact with DC politicians, diplomats, CEO’s, and local business people on a daily basis, promoting the values of conservation, local foods, and stewardship of our planet. Had it not been for the confidence that the staff of the Department of English re-instilled in me, I would have been just another fool, bumbling blindly, like so many others. What value is an English degree? In my opinion, it gives you life. You see, you hear, you question. In a nutshell, you are not like the little blackberry-carrying voice boxes I saw in DC, but rather an individual who is never afraid to speak his mind, whether it is by voice or with a pen.

I opened a box the other day with my lit books in it and felt my heart skip a beat. It was like being re-acquainted with old friends. I am re-reading most of them now, one at a time, as they are wonderful reminders of the time I spent at USCA. I told Dr. Mack that I would be back in 5 years as part of the writers’ series. Due to my current workload, I might have to extend that a couple of years. We will see what happens this winter....

Michael F. Clune
B.A., English, 2006
Christine Kansanback

“Yes, I’m an English major; no, I’m not going to teach.” While I attended USCA, this statement was my default response whenever someone inquired about my major. After graduating in May of 2007, I realized that I would probably be giving this disclaimer for the rest of my life because I have never planned to use my English degree to teach. I have always wanted to be a writer, and that is what I am pursuing.

Since graduation, I became employed as a teller with Georgia Bank and Trust. I know, this occupation does not give me many opportunities to exercise my English skills, but I do get to proofread an email or write a banking article for the Intranet occasionally. I did not want to have a profession where I would be required to write all day, then go home and try to work on my creative writing. I did not want to overload my mind, and this plan is working well for me so far. I have had a slow start in beginning my writing, but my writer’s itch is getting overwhelming. I am currently working with a couple of ideas, trying to develop plots and characters, but I am not sure whether they will end up being short stories or longer works. I am just excited to be writing.

I have utilized my English skills by remaining active in my church. I volunteered to edit, design, compile, and produce a newsletter for the church, which I now publish bimonthly. I value the time I spent working on the English department’s annual newsletter under Dr. Mack’s direction; the knowledge I gained during that internship has been essential for me to distribute a quality piece of work. I also benefited from my internship with Karl Fornes, where I created informative brochures for the Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience with the English department at USCA. I built lasting relationships with both students and professors and developed a proficiency in English that will benefit me no matter where I go or what I do. I will take my knowledge and use it to benefit others by offering my abilities to God and by doing what I love, writing.

Christine Kansanback
B.A., English, 2007

Atiya Padgett

In May of 2008, I graduated from USCA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a minor in sociology. The years I spent at the university will always be cherished. My experiences at USCA helped me to be able to manage my time, be more efficient in my work, and pay more attention to detail in writing. They helped me to enhance my leadership skills and become more organized. Upon graduation, I obtained a position as the Administrative Assistant for the Central Savannah Math and Science Regional Center, located in the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. After being very involved as a student on campus, I found that going from that status to becoming a staff member was a tremendous change, but a great one. In the future, I hope to continue my education by obtaining my master’s and then doctorate. My love for English is obvious and has been heightened tremendously now that I have a degree in that area. Now, whenever I am reading something, I automatically start to edit it, a process that now comes naturally to me because of the proper training that I received in pursuit of my degree.

I am forever grateful to those in the department who helped me reach my goals. I am nothing but optimistic about my future and hope that current students of English at USCA continue to benefit from the same dedicated faculty who were so gracious to me.

Atiya Padgett
B.A., English, 2008
The Ellen Lott Smith Scholarship: Jean Congreve

The Ellen Lott Smith Scholarship exists, in part, as a means by which to convey the idea that "the humanities allows people to develop capabilities of thought, judgment, communication, appreciation, and action that are essential to living well." A former USCA English professor, Dr. Ellen Lott Smith, created this scholarship in 2006.

Applicants for this scholarship are asked to explore, in a one-page essay, how studying a field in the humanities can be both important and a source from which to draw for personal growth. Available to English and English-Education majors, students who enter the competition must have already completed a minimum of twelve credit hours at USCA and not be a current senior at the time of application.

The 2008-2009 recipient of this scholarship is Jean Congreve. In her essay, Congreve sought to highlight how a study in the humanities helps develop a perspective of compassion and desire to understand oneself and others. She recalls having used the following quotation from To Kill a Mockingbird: "you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view — until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." She believes this quote "speaks to a large number of the problems we have in this country and in a larger context, the world." While she understands that every person will never entirely agree, she does believe that each person, at least at an unconscious level, tries to understand how and why others think the way they do, in an effort to understand those people. In this idea lies her relative belief that humanity is inherently good and that good is found in no greater quantity than in the study of literature and the humanities.

-Alex Bush

From the Editor

What a wonderful year! Having the opportunity to produce this year’s newsletter has proved both challenging and satisfying. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with those specifically mentioned within this edition of Words, Words, Words, as well as the rest of the USCA English community.

As many of you know, the pursuit of academic achievement within an English curriculum is not easy; it pushes one’s mind to look at everything from different angles; it encourages one to interact with others in both written and oral communication; it influences the way a person thinks by encouraging the habit of analyzing and questioning everything that one reads. However, possibly the most satisfying effect it has on its students is its ability to enlighten the mind. My experience at USCA has proved these things to be true.

The learning environment established by the USCA English Department is second-to-none. I have nothing but praise for those kind, intelligent professors who have guided my path for the past four years. It is because of them and the brilliant students whom I have had the privilege of meeting that I will miss this place when I graduate.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Mack for guiding me in the process of editing and producing this year’s newsletter.

-Alex Bush

2008 Sigma Tau Delta inductees share a moment during their induction ceremony. The annual ceremony was held at the Mi Rancho Mexican restaurant in Aiken.