The USCA Department of English is about to celebrate a milestone; the year 2011 marks our twenty-fifth anniversary as an autonomous academic unit.

Although the B.A. in English was one of the first degree programs established on our campus in 1977, the year that USCA began granting baccalaureate degrees, members of the English faculty were initially organized as a subgroup of the Division of Arts and Letters until the establishment of undergraduate colleges in 1986. In that year, the English faculty were first organized into a department. The very first Chair was Dr. Liz Bell (1986-fall 1990), and I have had the privilege of serving in that capacity since the spring of 1991.

In contemplating this landmark event, I decided to look through my collection of campus catalogs (as one might imagine, they go back many years). By comparing the 1986 catalog to this year’s, one can easily see how dramatically the department and its programs have evolved over time:

- The curriculum has expanded by roughly the same percentage, and course offerings are much more diversified.
- The quality of the degree program has been enhanced by the creation of both a gateway and a capstone course (senior seminar).
- Twenty-five years ago we managed one minor (general English); we now have three, including literature, professional writing and creative writing.
- In 1986 we sponsored one campus writing prize (the Kaplan Award); we now have three, including the Oswald Freshman Writing Award and the Davidson Creative Writing Prize.
- The writers’ series, which once hosted readings in one of the rehearsal rooms of the Etherredge Center, now sometimes fills the 700-seat main theater.
- Twenty-five years ago, we had no discipline-based internships; we now regularly offer internships in professional writing, both off- and on-campus, including a chance each year for students to hone their editing skills by working on the annual issue of The Oswald Review, the first intercollegiate journal of undergraduate research in the discipline of English, now in its twelfth year.

Our department has certainly changed with the times, in some cases, as in diversification of the curriculum, keeping abreast of current developments but in other cases, as in assessment and undergraduate research, blazing a trail for other departments to follow.

I am proud to have played a part in shaping our department’s progress, and I am grateful to the faculty, past and present, and the students, past and present, who have contributed so significantly to our proud history. Here’s to the next twenty-five years! May they be as rewarding as our first quarter century!

- Dr. Tom Mack
Professor and Chair

The Department of English has a number of endowment accounts from which annual student scholarships are funded. If you would like to make a donation, please mail a check (payable to The Aiken Partnership) to the Office of Advancement, USCA, 471 University Parkway, Aiken, SC 29801. You can earmark your donation to one or more of the following funds:

- Steve Gardner Scholarship Fund
- Stanley Rich Scholarship Fund
- Phebe Davidson Writing Prize Endowment
- English Faculty Scholarship Endowment
- English Honor Society Scholarship Endowment

Dr. Mack and his new friend “Wolfie” in Salzburg, Austria in May, 2010.
**Dr. Tom Mack**

Professor

Dr. Mack had another great year in 2010. He made two trips to Europe; he traveled in May to Germany to explore Munich and the Bavarian Alps for the first time, and he made a return trip to London, England in August to present a paper entitled “Emily Dickinson and Alice James: How dreary to be somebody” at the International Emily Dickinson Society Conference at Oxford University.

Published work also took center stage in 2010. In support of his new book, *Circling the Savannah: Cultural Landmarks of the Central Savannah River Area* (Charleston, SC: The History Press), Dr. Mack made author appearances across our region. Highlights of the book tour included a presentation and book signing at the Augusta Museum of History in February, a panel presentation and book signing at the South Carolina Book Festival in Columbia in February, and a presentation and signing at the Aiken County Historical Museum in May. This fall he offered a two-part course on *Circling the Savannah* to members of the Academy for Lifelong Learning; the first week featured a Powerpoint lecture on the book’s general contents, and the second week featured a field trip to cultural sites in Barnwell, Blackville, and Denmark.


In March, Dr. Mack presented a paper on the genesis and evolution of an undergraduate research journal at the annual meeting of the Philological Association of the Carolinas at the College of Charleston. This piece was accepted for inclusion in an anthology of essays to be published by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR).

In the summer, Dr. Mack edited the twelfth volume of *The Oswald Review*, which included essays by undergraduates at Kansas State University, the University of Maryland, Winthrop University, the University of Southern Indiana, and the Open University in the United Kingdom.

This year (2010) marks the twentieth anniversary of Dr. Mack’s popular weekly column, “Arts and Humanities,” which appears every Friday in *The Aiken Standard*.

**Dr. Lynne Rhodes**

Associate Professor

Dr. Lynne Rhodes continued her work with the Aiken Writing Project for 2010. She worked with K-12 teachers to set up a successful 2010 Summer Institute, and she coordinated a number of workshops and inservices for the Teacher Consultants involved with AWP. She also presented conference papers connected with her National Writing Project work at the National Council of Teaching English in Philadelphia, at the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English, and at the South Carolina International Reading Association. Additionally, she was awarded the second G. L. Toole Endowed Chair in English to conduct research in creative non-fiction and memoir.

As a classroom teacher, Dr. Rhodes has initiated a new class for the English Department: Business Writing (AEGL 345). This course is highly recommended for English majors seeking a concentration in professional or technical writing. Additionally, she has greatly enjoyed teaching Advanced Composition, Technical Writing, and Literacy & Media Cultures, all required for Secondary Education/English majors.

Dr. Rhodes also continues her work with writing assessment. Recently she was appointed to the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators’ Executive Board of Directors. The Carolinas WPA is an affiliate of the National Writing Program Administrators.

**Dr. Bill Claxon**

Associate Professor

Dr. Claxon continues to enjoy teaching Composition, Writing Across the University, Introduction to Non-Western Literature, Southern Literature, the South in Film and Fiction, and major authors courses. He is working on a paper entitled “The Chinese Cultural Revolution Re-imagined in Memoir and Fiction,” which he hopes will be accepted for presentation in February 2011, at the 39th Annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900. He has also submitted a short story, “Forbidden Fruit,” for presentation at the same conference. He continues his work on the relationship between Nadine Gordimer and *The New Yorker* and on masculinity in 20th century Southern literature.

**Dr. Eric Carlson**

Assistant Professor

Life has continued apace for Dr. Carlson in 2010. In the scholarly arena, he presented a paper in May at the annual International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Simply titled “Egil Pukes,” the paper was an investigation of the function of humor in *Egil saga Skálalagrimsonar*. During the summer
months he completed work on his article “Dis-membering the Outlaw: Shoulders and Social Cohesion in Beowulf” While this article has not yet been placed in a journal for publication, Dr. Carlson is hopeful that he will be able to publish it in the near future. His final scholarly effort for the year was the presentation of a paper at the Southeastern Medieval Association annual conference in Roanoke, Virginia, in November. His paper, “Devolution of the Skrælings: A New World Ogre in Its Infancy,” showed how depictions of human Others in medieval texts may serve as the point of provenance for later monstrous antagonists in such texts.

On the home front, Dr. Carlson is proud to announce that he and his wife Ali are now expecting their first child. Variously referred to as Baby Olaf or Wulfila, Dr. Carlson’s mewling heap o’ joy is expected to arrive in mid-May of 2011. Now more than ever Dr. Carlson is terrified by the prospect of having to grow up.

Dr. Katie Kalpin
Assistant Professor

Dr. Katie Kalpin began her fifth year with the department in the fall of 2010. Over the last year, she taught Shakespeare, English 102, the first half of the survey of British Literature, and the English Renaissance classes. She is surprised every year to see how many students are already graduating out of the program, but is pleased to see new faces every fall.

Last spring she presented her paper, “And Now Behold the Meaning: Audience, Interpretation, and Translation in All’s Well That Ends Well,” at the Shakespeare Association of America conference in Chicago. That work has been requested for submission in an edited collection entitled: Who Hears? Onstage and Offstage Audiences in Shakespeare. She is currently at work adapting that paper for this collection. In the summer of 2010, she completed her editing of All’s Well That Ends Well for the New Kitredge Shakespeare series (to be published in 2011 by Focus Publishing). That series is intended for classroom use and is also focused on reading the play through performance. She plans to bring the ideas she developed while working on this edition into the performance project for the Shakespeare classes in the spring.

Also over the summer, Dr. Kalpin travelled with her family to visit two national parks: The Grand Tetons and Yellowstone. The picture here was taken during that trip, while enjoying a break between rapids on the Snake River in Jackson, Wyoming.

Dr. Carla Coleman
Assistant Professor

Over the last year, Dr. Carla Coleman has found herself busy. On the teaching front, she taught her usual composition courses and the second half of the British literature survey. In the fall semester, she was able to return to British Romanticism, where she took her students on a tour of terrains as varied as Heaven and Hell with Blake, the Lake District with Wordsworth, and the witty world of Byron. In addition, she once again taught her Modern Western Drama class, in which she enjoyed puzzling her students with many of the previous century’s most intriguing dramatis personae, from Tom Stoppard’s ping-pong playing Ros and Gil and the gender-bending cast of Caryl Churchill’s Cloud Nine to Samuel Beckett’s always waiting Vladimir and Estragon.

In the realms of scholarship and service, Dr. Coleman spent much of her summer break fine-tuning a paper on the theatrical reviews of Victorian critic R. H. Hutton, a paper currently out for review. She also presented two conference papers, one on Mary Augusta Ward’s 1884 ‘Actress Novel’ Miss Brother-hood, presented at the Victorians Institute Conference in Spartanburg; the other on the novel writings of G. H. Lewes, presented at the Nineteenth Century Studies Association Conference in Tampa. Closer to home, she was thrilled to participate in the Aiken County Public Library’s “Stiff Upper Lips” series, where she led a spirited discussion of Austen’s Mansfield Park, and she remains involved with the Aiken County Language Arts Festival, which will be celebrating its sixth birthday on February 5, 2011.

Outside of work, Dr. Coleman continues to try to find time to hike and travel. This summer, she was able to fit in trips to the Colorado Rockies and the Oregon coast; she also spent time in Tennessee, where she explored old graveyards with her genealogy-obsessed parents and spent time with her adorable niece and nephew. When not traveling, she continued to work on her yard and (with the help of a friend) finally covered the color samples that she had painted on her kitchen wall before she moved in to her new house a year ago.

Dr. Doug Higbee
Assistant Professor

Dr. Doug Higbee has just edited and introduced a collection of essays entitled Military Culture and Education (Ashgate Press 2010). The collection examines the myriad intersections, conflicts, and overlaps, between the military and higher education, especially in service academies such as West Point. For a fuller description see: http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?pg=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=10342&edition_id=13230
Dr. Higbee is working on an article on J.D. Salinger’s World War II stories, having presented papers on Salinger at recent conferences in Portland, OR, and Atlanta. He has also written three book reviews, on subjects related to the literature, culture, and history of the First World War, which will be published in 2011.

Dr. Higbee enjoyed reading and discussing with students the fiction of D.H. Lawrence in a Fall 2010 Major Authors course. He is an avid backyard composter and a semi-avid fisher and hunter.

Dr. Andrew Geyer
Assistant Professor

Dr. Andrew Geyer is enjoying the beginning of his third year at the University of South Carolina Aiken. In the Spring 2010 Semester, Dr. Geyer added Survey of American Literature II and Fiction Workshop to the list of courses he has taught at USCA. In the Fall 2010 Semester, Dr. Geyer took on American Realism. All three of these new courses have been most enjoyable to teach and have introduced Dr. Geyer to many more English majors.

As for creative work, Dr. Geyer’s new short story cycle, Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin, was published in January 2010. Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin—a collection of twenty-two tightly interwoven first-person narratives—is Geyer’s second story cycle and third book of fiction overall. In February, Dr. Geyer served as the 2010 Featured Fiction Writer for the Batchelor Emerging Writers Series at Barton College, NC, where he read from and lectured about his new book. He also read from his new story cycle at the 14th Annual Writers Conference in Honor of Elmer Kelton at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas; at the Lamar Literary Festival at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas; at Café Caffeine in Austin, Texas; and at the Aiken County Library.

Dr. Geyer did a four-class-visit writers workshop at Aiken High School, where Siren Songs from the Heart of Austin is being taught. In addition to the publication on his new book, Dr. Geyer published a short story entitled “Sugar Britches” in an anthology of gambling-related stories called Texas Told ’em. Legendary Texas Hold ’em player Doyle Brunson wrote the introduction for the collection.

As busy as he has been with landscaping his 117-year-old house in Graniteville, settling into the new job, and promoting the new book, Dr. Geyer has found some time to get writing done. This new writing was greatly aided by the course reduction for research Dr. Geyer received in the Spring 2010 Semester. He finished editing a new novel manuscript, entitled Dixie Fish, that he rewrote and revised last year. The new novel is currently under consideration. He is also making slow progress on three more booklength projects: a time travel/alternative history novel that Dr. Geyer is co-writing with another author, a magical realist novel entitled So Close Yet So Far Out, and a short story cycle entitled Lesser Mountains. And he is putting together a poetry chapbook, entitled Renovation, that centers around fixing up a 117-year-old house—but he can’t decide whether art is imitating life, or vice-versa.

An avid canoeist and distance-runner, Dr. Geyer also made some time to get outdoors. This summer, he and a friend spent four days canoeing a sixty-mile section of the Illinois River in Oklahoma. It was on the Illinois River that Dr. Geyer and his writer/canoest friend cooked up the idea for collaborating on the time travel/alternative history novel. Maybe they brought along too much beer . . .?
The highlight of Vicki Collins’ spring semester was teaching a major authors course on the literary canon of Tennessee Williams. For the Academy for Lifelong Learning, Professor Collins taught a class on the minimalist writings of Raymond Carver. She also helped to select the winners of the Student Leadership Awards. Currently, Professor Collins is leading a staff search committee, and she has begun her second year on the Pacer Club Athletic Board.

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For the Aiken Writing Project, Professor Collins directed the Young Writers Camp. She led a poetry workshop for students from Italy who visited Aiken through Partners in Friendship, presented the CHOICES program to Leaville McCampbell Middle School students, and judged poetry for The Aiken County Literary Arts Festival.

Professor Collins is the College Director of the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English. At the 2010 SCCTE Conference, she presented “Writing under the Influence.” She is a manuscript reviewer for the SCCTE journal South Carolina English Teacher. In September, she co-presented “Frida Kahlo: a Poetic Perspective” at the Southeast TESOL Conference in Miami.

Her scholarly and creative activities include the Augusta Poetry Group and the Authors Club of Augusta. Her published works in 2010 are poems in The Teacher’s Voice (New York), The Sheltered Poet (PA), and Traveling Time: A Poetry and Prose Anthology (Old Mountain Press, NC).

Roy Seeger worked with several students and faculty to create a poetry club for USCA called “The Guild of Poetic Intent: Savannah River Poets of the USCA.” Already, the Guild has become a presence on campus, organizing an ice cream and used book sale, an open microphone cookout called a “Read N’ Feed,” and a monthly open microphone reading event at local Cuban restaurant Café Rio Blanco. As a member of USCA’s 50th Anniversary planning committee; he was also invited to write a commemorative poem for the event.

Mr. Seeger has developed an online version of AEGL 102: Composition and Literature which he taught for the first time in the summer. Also this summer he spent a week in Louisville, Kentucky, grading AP literature exams, comparing Louisville Irish Pubs, and spending as much time as he could by the river. Afterwards, he went canoeing in Michigan’s Ausable River and didn’t fall in once.

David Bruzina’s poems appeared in Waccamaw (Spring Issue, 2010.) and Story-South (Fall Issue, 2010). His poem “The Whale” won the 2010 Robert Watson Literary Prize from The Greensboro Review (Spring Issue, 2010). Currently teaching AEGL 101, he is working to help first year students survive the transition from high school to university. Adopting a rhetorical approach to composition, he focuses on improving students’ understanding of the professor as audience. This approach to teaching freshman writing will be the subject of his presentation at the SCCTE conference this winter. Assisted by Assistant Professor Doug Higbee, Bruzina has spent his free time exploring local lakes and ponds in search of the elusive Micropterus salmoides.
Dr. Amanda Warren  
Lecturer

Dr. Amanda Warren’s interest in teaching Freshman Composition and Composition and Literature at the University of South Carolina Aiken centers on helping students expand their worlds and improve their ability to communicate their ideas, experience, and opinions to others in a clear, concise and effective manner. Her students will often hear her repeat, throughout the semester, “As a human being you should have something to say, and you should have enough respect for your ideas to want to be understood.”

In her secret, double-life as a poet, Dr. Warren was a winner of the 2009 South Carolina Poetry Initiative’s annual chapbook competition; her chapbook will be published in early 2011 by Stepping Stone Press. She was awarded a research fellowship from the Mütter Museum of Medical Anomalies in Philadelphia, where she spent days looking at conjoined twins, trepanated skulls and other “abnormal” human remains. Several poems inspired by her visit will be published in the museum’s forthcoming retrospective The Bell Curve, which chronicles the 150-year history of the museum and its patrons. Her full-length manuscript was a finalist in several first book prizes, and she was given honorable mention for her poetry from both the 9th Annual Gival Press Oscar Wilde Award and the Berry Southern Women’s Writing Emerging Writer Award.

This year Dr. Warren hopes to publish more of her creative work and some of her academic writing in the fields of Appalachian literature, ecofeminism and contemporary American poetry. She also hopes to improve her banjo playing.

Kathryn Hauer  
Lecturer

Kathryn Hauer teaches Freshman English at USCA and has also taught as an adjunct professor at the College of Charleston. She currently works in business development for a construction company and spent many years as an editor for Savannah River Site environmental impact documents. She is committed to helping her students become the best writers and readers they can be.

Dr. Rich welcomes news from former students at johns-rich@bellsouth.net

Dr. Stanley Rich  
Professor Emeritus

Dr. Stanley Rich has had another busy year “back home” in Alabama. Singing in the Men’s Chorus (85 men) of the four-year-old Magic City Choral Society has proven to be much fun and it offers many musical challenges. The Society had several newly-commissioned musical pieces composed for the group and has made its first professional recording.

In July 2010, he returned to London for three weeks of a theater program (sponsored by the University of California Berkeley). The tour group saw over a dozen plays and musicals. Currently he is conducting a six-week’s class at a local Presbyterian Church in Birmingham on “Southern Short Fiction and Robert Coles’ Concept of the “The Moral Imagination.”

Dr. Phebe Davidson  
Professor Emerita

Dr. Phebe Davidson reports that one of the most attractive aspects of retirement is, well, retiring, which for an academic means not keeping track of credits for annual review files.

In retirement, work (scholarly, creative) becomes a less pressured-cooked and more enjoyable discipline.

Dr. Davidson continues: ‘I’m still at it. I’ve cut way back on public readings. My poetry has garnered excellent reviews in The Hollins Critic and in other small magazines including the Journal of New Jersey Poets. Occasionally, a publisher will ask a journal for me specifically as a reviewer of new books—which I take as a grand compliment. I’m still writing and publishing (no surprise here) in sundry poetry mags, and I am still a Contributing Editor for Tar River Poetry and a staff writer for The Asheville Poetry Review. I’ll appear as the featured poet (poems plus an interview) on the Town Creek poetry website: www.towncreekpoetry.com
I continue to caution anyone who'll listen that poetry is a peculiar life-choice. There's no money in it.”

An Evening with Gary Gildner

Award-winning author Gary Gildner gave a fiction and poetry reading at USC Aiken on Oct. 20, 2010. The author of more than 21 books that range from poetry to memoirs, Gildner read selected poetry for a group of over 75 students and faculty in Penland 106. He was introduced by Dr. Andrew Geyer.

Gildner interspersed his readings with anecdotes from his life. Gildner grew up in Flint, Mich., and has traveled the world since. He currently lives on a ranch in the Clearwater Mountains of Idaho.

His time in Poland inspired his book, The Warsaw Sparks, which recounts his adventures coaching a Polish baseball team during Communist rule. Gildner read a few of the poems he wrote during this time and told stories about the screwball antics of men on the only amateur baseball team in Warsaw.

Gildner also spoke about playing baseball as a younger man. As he tried to impress the scouts attending his games, he did more and more damage to his pitching arm, losing the ability to play through a game because of the pain. It was then that he knew he would have to find a different profession. Luckily, he discovered the work of Ernest Hemingway, finding his alternative to sports by deciding to become a writer.

The subject and muse of several of his poems, his daughter Margaret was also the intended audience for the poem with which Gildner ended the night. Written to entertain Margaret when she was a child, “Frog on the Mountain” is a rare children’s poem for the author.

- Gatlin Massey

English majors in the USCA Honors Program

The Honors Program at USCA has 6 English majors enrolled. Here are some of their experiences in their own words:

Brady Morris: “Being a member of the Honors Program has provided a number of benefits. The special Honors courses I’ve taken have been very interesting, and have been on a variety of different subjects that wouldn’t have been in other courses.”

Justin Edwards: “When I first joined the honors program, I was worried that the work load would be overwhelming. However, I’ve come to learn that this is not the case. In fact, I’ve found that the benefits outweigh the extra work.”

Tayler Rodgers: “Due to my plan to take core classes in the first two years of my college education, I have not yet had the opportunity to enrich classes at this point. Nonetheless, being a part of the Honors program has vastly contributed to my educational success in my first semester in college.”

Leah Stanley: “I have really enjoyed the entire experience that I have gotten from being in the Honors Program here at USCA thus far. The Honors Program has helped me enrich my learning experience at USCA.”

Alix Smith: “I really enjoy the convenience of having an Honors lounge in the H&SS. It’s close to many of my classes and offers a quiet refuge. It’s great to have a place to read in between classes.”
This March, the USCA English Department will host two major events as part of the James and Mary Oswald Distinguished Writer Series. On March 17, celebrated authors Percival Everett and Sue Monk Kidd will share the stage, reading from and talking about their latest works.

Both authors are prolific. Percival Everett has written 22 books including 17 novels, 3 short story collections, and 2 volumes of poetry. Raised in Columbia, South Carolina, Everett now makes California his home. He is currently a Distinguished Professor of English at the "Other USC," the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Sue Monk Kidd hit the bestseller lists with her first novel The Secret Life of Bees, which along with The Mermaid Chair, was made into a motion picture. Other works include the memoirs When the Heart Waits and The Dance of the Dissident Daughter, as well as Traveling with Pomegranates, a dual memoir with her daughter Ann Kidd Taylor. A current resident of Florida, Kidd lived in South Carolina for many years. In addition, she has chosen Charleston, South Carolina as the backdrop of her next book, a historical novel set in the nineteenth century.

The March 17 reading is free and open to the public, but tickets must be reserved by visiting the Etherredge Center box office.

The second event is the annual induction ceremony of the South Carolina Academy of Authors. During this gala evening on March 18 at USCA’s Etheredge Center, Sue Monk Kidd, Percival Everett, and the late Gamel Woolsey will be inducted into the state’s literary hall of fame.

Founded in 1986, the Academy seeks to “identify and recognize South Carolina’s distinguished writers, living and deceased, and to promote the reading and rediscovery of their works.”
Dr. Geyer mentors Aiken Senior High writers

Whenever possible, English Professors at USCA share their knowledge and experience with the broader Aiken community. During the fall, Dr. Andrew Geyer was able to offer his expertise to a creative writing class at Aiken Senior High taught by two USCA English graduates: Francesca Pataro and Zeke Miller.

Dr. Geyer’s involvement with the class can be traced to last year’s Aiken County Language Arts Festival. While working at the festival, Ms. Pataro asked Dr. Geyer to serve as a visiting writer in a creative writing class scheduled at Aiken Senior High for the 2010-11 school year.

As part of the course’s short story unit, the class read Dr. Geyer’s Siren Songs from the Heart of Texas. The students were able to have a Q&A with Dr. Geyer about his story cycle. Dr. Geyer discussed with the class the overall structure of the story cycle and various thematic concerns that underpin the book: the environment, the difficulty of building and maintaining love relationships, death and rebirth, and the nature of truth.

A real treat for Dr. Geyer was hearing several students read aloud their works in progress. Geyer believes that the AHS students are “talented young writers” and that they have written some “pretty promising stuff.”

- Gatlin Massey

2010 USCA ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

The following students, all outstanding English or English education majors, were inducted: Justin Edwards, Leah Stanley, Kevin Kinsey, Elizabeth Fonte, Shauna Walton, Whitney Gunter, David Welcher, Dana Blackmon, Mary Ward, Andrew Hasben, Jenny Powell, Robin Kronberg, Melody Baird, Alix Smith.

In addition, two new faculty members, Drs. Amanda Warren and David Bruzina, were accepted for membership.
**Working as a Research Editor: Jacob Carter**

**Jacob Carter** (B.A. English, 2010) is currently working with Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Steve Naifeh and Greg Smith on their latest project, a new biography of the artist Vincent Van Gogh. He has supplied the following information on his experience:

“In working on the biography, my official title is ‘research editor.’ In this sense, an English curriculum has helped immensely not only in the more obvious tasks of grammar, style, and spelling but also in my enhanced ability to read closely, think critically, and grasp large quantities of scholarly material in short order. I’m immersing myself in hundreds of detailed, academic footnotes on a daily basis; it is my task to polish, streamline, and otherwise scrutinize each and every line of text. The intellectual credibility supporting this book depends on these copious and often sprawling essay-length footnotes, and so to be entrusted with their editing is a humbling and rewarding experience.

However, editing has not been my sole responsibility. In previous months, I have also supplemented Naifeh and Smith’s research with expertise of my own. They added me to their extensive bibliography for a short essay that I wrote on John Keats – in reference to a poem that Van Gogh mentioned in his letters. Similarly, their larger company has used me as a general editor for a ‘Best Lawyers’ project. I spent about a month and a half reading and editing text written by lawyers, doctors, CEOs, and other prestigious individuals. Finally, I have been credited on the masthead as an editor of a Best Lawyers/U.S. News publication they recently finished. I reviewed a number of articles and interviews written by various experts in their respective fields. It was a daunting but enriching experience to study the words of these individuals.

Again, I believe that my studies at USCA prepared me tremendously for my many responsibilities. The English Department engendered in me a sense of scholarship and academic zeal that transforms countless hours of studying footnotes into an enjoyable endeavor. My supervisors at Woodward White, Inc. have faith in my growing proficiency in the reading, writing, and editing of the language – which is a skill set made possible only by my taking many English courses at Aiken.

As for the project itself, the biography is currently undergoing its latest publisher-mandated round of general editing. I believe Naifeh and Smith intend to title their work simply *Vincent Van Gogh* without a qualifying subtitle to satisfy their vision of a singular, seminal text for the next fifty years. The authors intend this to be the definitive work on the artist for quite some time. To be a part of that ambition is very exciting.”

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**Attending Grad School in Augusta: Austin Hall**

**Austin Hall** graduated in December 2009, with a B.A. in English. Here is what he has to say about his current graduate studies:

“I chose English because I have always enjoyed reading and writing. A year before I was due to graduate, I began to question what I would be able to do with an English degree. I thought that I might enjoy teaching English or composition so I decided to enroll in the M.A.T. program at Augusta State University. I will be done with my graduate program next fall, 2011 and be certified to teach secondary English.

The literary and composition skills that I learned while attending USCA have been very beneficial to me during my time in graduate school. The program requires a significant number of essays, research papers, and other writing assignments. With the instruction I received from my former professors, I am able to handle the writing assignments with ease and face few problems with organizing my ideas. I also benefit from my familiarity with scholarly databases and how to incorporate the information to support my ideas. Many of the M.A.T. students without an English background do not benefit from the same skills that I was able to develop as an English major at USCA.

So far, I am enjoying the M.A.T. program at Augusta State. I feel that graduate school is enabling me to sharpen my composition and research skills. My writing assignments have been much easier to manage because of the English curriculum at USCA.”
Working as an English teacher: Jessica Mouser

Since graduating from USC Aiken in the spring of 2007, Jessica Mouser has been very busy. In the fall of 2008, she studied in Oxford, England as a visiting student at Christ Church College. While in Oxford, she was able to use its famous Bodleian Library, visit C. S. Lewis’s house, and see the well that inspired Lewis Carroll’s rabbit hole. Mouser’s current career is one that for several years she told many people she would never choose—an English teacher. “It is both an extremely challenging and rewarding profession. I must say, there is much I now appreciate about my former English professors that I did not appreciate before,” Mouser said. “There is far too much that I have learned through teaching to include here, but let me at least say this: if your professors are taking a long time to get your papers back to you...they have good reasons.”

The experience she is most excited about at the moment is the writers’ group that a fellow USCA alumna, Amanda Morris, and she have started together. Their writers’ group is an informal six-person organization that meets about once a week. The group is partially indebted to some lessons Mouser learned while at USCA, lessons that cannot be drilled into students’ heads but which have to be lived. At USC Aiken, she learned how to read and love poetry, for which she owes an enormous debt to Dr. Stephen Gardner. This was a lesson she learned during quite a few classes over several years. The other lesson was on the importance of community to encourage good writing. “While we were in school together, Amanda and I would occasionally meet in a coffee shop to share poetry, and I eventually realized I was always more excited about writing after we did this,” Mouser said. Also, on one occasion, Dr. Gardner, Dr. Davidson, and Prof. Harper gave a poetry reading. That reading inspired her, and immediately afterward she wrote the draft of a new poem, which she never would have written otherwise. Her belief about the importance of a community to encourage good writing has fermented in Mouser’s mind over the years, and in January of this past year, their writers’ group began.

Graduate School in Nursing: Elizabeth Hoefs

Elizabeth Hoefs (B.A. in English 2010) submitted the following information on her current activities:

“I took a non-traditional path after graduation and applied to the Medical College of Georgia for my Masters of Science in Nursing. MCG has an accelerated program for those who have their undergraduate degree in any discipline other than Nursing, and I have always had an interest in helping others, so I decided to pursue this degree.

When I was filling out my application and completing the interview process, I distinctly remember the program coordinator commenting on the fact that I was an English major. She told me that no English major had ever applied, and she was interested to see how my background would help me in this program. I will admit that while I knew I was interested in the nursing field, compared to a lot of other people in the program who were science majors, I was nervous about the program and whether or not I would succeed.

Once I began the program, even though it is a science degree, I was surprised how many papers and written assignments were required. As an English major at USCA, I wrote a great number of papers and had to do research and find appropriate peer-reviewed and scholarly articles to complete these papers and validate my claims. As a nursing major, I still do a lot of the same things- the main difference is the subject of my writings. Also, the group assignments at USCA helped me out in that I am not afraid to speak up and share my opinions with the group as well as having the skills to effectively communicate with a group of people. As a result, most of the time, I have the task of performing the final review of papers that our groups submit, and many friends ask for my help editing papers we complete independently or with their citations.

All in all, while my writing skills have definitely given me an advantage in this program, I feel that the analytical skills I gained as an English major have done me the most service. In my English classes, I was always encouraged to think for myself, to form my own opinions, and to look beyond the words on the page in order to garner the underlying meaning. While I am no longer explicating poetry, I do have to think through questions and use empirical evidence to determine the underlying causes of the symptoms the patient displays. I am very grateful to my professors at USCA for their encouragement to be an innovative thinker because I feel that my ability to think analytically and critically, a two-part skill to be a successful English major, will help me succeed in the field of nursing.”
TWO NEW BOOKS BY ENGLISH FACULTY

All's Well That Ends Well
Edited by Katie Kalpin
The New Kittredge All's Well That Ends Well from Focus Publishing provides a classroom-friendly text with an emphasis on performance-related issues. In addition to an introduction to the play and explanatory notes, the edition includes notes on the play in performance, a historical timeline, study questions on the play and on the performance of the play, and an essay on reading the play as performance.

Military Culture and Education
Edited by Douglas Higbee
While studies of American military culture have proliferated in recent years, and the culture of academic institutions has been a subject of perennial interest, comparatively little has been written on the multiple ways the military and academe intersect. Focusing on this subject offers an opportunity to explore how teachers and researchers straddle the two quite different cultures.

Running a Ballet School: Diane Toole Miller

Diane Toole Miller graduated from USCA in 1983. After performing and teaching dance, especially ballet, for about 21 years, Ms. Miller purchased Crosby School of Dance in 2005 and became co-Director of the Aiken Civic Ballet.

Ms. Miller uses her English degree daily, whether in her administrative duties for the school and ballet company or in creating new ballets for her students from a special poem, story, idea or motif. She has great memories of her wonderful college professors — Dr. Tom Mack, Dr. Sue Lorch, Dr. Stanley Rich, and Dr. Stephen Gardner — to name a few, and is very proud to be a USCA alumna.

From the Editor: Gatlin Massey

As an editor of the 2011 English Department newsletter, I would like to thank Dr. Mack for selecting me to collect and compose the text, as well as designing the overall look of the publication.

I enjoyed all the assignments despite, in some instances, having to beg people to give me their information and photos. I feel this has been a great opportunity in furthering my interest in journalism, a field I am looking to pursue after I graduate in May 2011.

This editorship has been a great learning tool in developing my writing and editing skills, although I’ve certainly had plenty of practice as an English major!