



Newsletter

vol. 2, no. 1: Spring 2009

TRANSITIONS

NEW FACULTY

Dr. Alan Baily, Assistant Professor of Government.

Dr. Court Carney, Assistant Professor of History.

Dr. Rhiannon Fante, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Daryl Farmer, Assistant Professor of English.

Mr. Roderick Hanks, Assistant Professor of Social Work.

Ms. Jennifer Jacobson, Instructor of Government.

Mr. Dustin Lawhorn, Instructor of Communication.

Dr. Linda Levitt, Assistant Professor of Communication.

Dr. Radhika Makecha, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Kristina Mao, Assistant Professor of Government.

Mr. Lee Payne, Instructor of Government.

Dr. Cindy Pressley, Assistant Professor of Government.

Dr. Gabriela Miranda Recinos, Assistant Professor of Spanish.

Dr. Jose Naftali Recinos, Assistant Professor of Spanish.

Ms. Sudeshna Roy, Instructor of Communication.

Dr. Mark Sanders, Professor and Chair, Department of English.

Dr. Jason Tebbe, Assistant Professor of History.

Dr. Andrew Terranova, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Lisa Topp, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Ronald Tumelson, Assistant Professor of English.

DEAN'S WELCOME



A better tomorrow
demands action today.

This past year for the College of Liberal & Applied Arts was dedicated to self-analysis, outreach to constituents (old and new), and faculty-led strategic planning. The result is the development of a far-reaching vision to move the College to higher levels of excellence. We are carving out an identity for innovative programs that address national needs and for preparing students to compete in the contemporary marketplace.

In building the vision, we learned a great deal about ourselves. A survey of the College's alumni revealed that 90% are either satisfied or greatly satisfied with the education they received. Our current students, on the website ratemyprofessors.com, ranked SFA an impressive fourth in the entire nation in terms of satisfaction with the quality of instruction provided. Yet focus groups in Dallas and Houston informed us that SFA and the College are not well known across the region. Thus we continue being a "hidden treasure" as SFA was called in 2004 by *The Unbiased Guide to the 328 Most Interesting Colleges*.

While the College is highly respected, we also learned that changes in society and the world are compelling higher education to adapt. Our alumni told us that more practical skills are required by students in the humanities and social sciences in order for them to compete effectively in the workforce. The focus groups echoed this concern and added the importance of responding to the challenges imposed by globalization. In addition, recent studies are warning about the stale condition of classroom instruction and the shrinking differences among traditional academic disciplines; students, for example, learn better in groups using multi-media tools within a framework where the lines separating history, sociology, and literature merge.

A series of faculty committees reviewed the input we received and formulated several proposals that should elevate the College into a position of leadership. First, a committee recently began work considering ways by which all students in the College obtain a comprehensive set of work-related skills before they graduate. A second recommendation from the faculty was to engage the College's students with the wider world. Toward that end, we are scheduled to sign up to four agreements with universities abroad not merely to exchange students but to establish joint degrees and certificate programs. As early as next year, we hope to graduate students with credentials from SFA as well as from an overseas institution. Our students are becoming citizens of the world and will soon have qualifications to prove it.

The final proposal was to establish research centers in two areas that contribute to regional and national well-being. *The Center for a Livable World* will generate ground-breaking research related to society's transformation to a sustainable future. While science will someday deliver a victory over environmental deterioration, we need to retain the human dimension as the world moves into an age of scarcity. *The Center for New Media & eCulture* will investigate the global shift in culture that is taking place due to technological progress in electronic communication. As "new media" transforms how humans learn and understand, cultural distinctions could become less important and unique identities—regional, national, and ethnic—blurred.

The College of Liberal & Applied Arts is making strides not simply to embrace the future but to shape it. We invite all interested individuals to contact us with ideas and opportunities.

TRANSITIONS RETIREMENTS

Dr. Verna Barron, Professor of Psychology.

Ms. Mary Carns, Associate Professor of Political Science.

Dr. Barbara Carr, Professor of English.

Dr. Wanda Mouton, Associate Professor of Communication.

Dr. Joseph Oliver, Professor of Communication.

Dr. Allen Richman, Regents Professor of History.

SHORT NOTES

On October 17, Mr. **Tom Winn** addressed students about "The Value of a Liberal Arts Degree." Mr. Winn is an alum with a degree in Criminal Justice. He currently works as the Senior Chief of Operations and Intelligence for ASI Group. According to Mr. Winn, Liberal Arts students possess the skills demanded in the contemporary marketplace: critical thinking, oral and written communication, and problem-solving. These skills are transferrable to almost any area of employment.

Enrollment in the College of Liberal & Applied Arts **jumped 4.5%** from Fall 2007 to Fall 2008. The College is clearly offering the courses students want to place them on the road to success.

Award-winning poet **B.H. Fairchild** delivered a reading of his work in November. This presentation launched the English Department's reading series. Mr. Fairchild has received the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Gold Medal in Poetry from the California Book Awards and the Texas Institute of Letters Poetry Award. He also is a recipient of the Bobbitt Award from the Library of Congress, given on behalf of the nation for "the most distinguished book of poems published in the previous two years."

In October, representatives of the **Caddo Nation** visited SFA to review three sets of human remains and about sixty pottery vessels stored in the University's Repository. The College's Center for Regional Heritage Research coordinates the artifacts.



From left to right: Dr. Jerry Williams (Chair of Sociology), Mr. Bobby Gonzalez (Caddo NAGPR Coordinator), and Ms. LaRue Parker (Caddo Chairperson)

NEW INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATE

In December, Dean Brian Murphy and Dr. Freddie Avant—Director of the School of Social Work—traveled to Germany to sign an agreement with the University of Applied Sciences München (MUAS) to launch a new collaborative program entitled the "International Certificate in Community Development." In this program, students on both sides of the Atlantic will enroll in online courses taught by professors from SFA and MUAS. The certificate will be available through SFA's Master of Social Work program. Students at SFA and MUAS will have the opportunity of earning a certificate conferred jointly by the two institutions, giving our students a credential from a European university. The development of the online courses will begin in March, 2009 and the initial courses are scheduled to be offered in Spring Semester, 2010. A workshop in Munich is planned for October, 2009 to bring the two faculties together.

From left to right: Dean Murphy, Dr. Susanne Elsen, Dean of Applied Social Science at MUAS, President Michael Kortstock of MUAS, and Dr. Avant



ACADEMIC DIVISION FORMED

In October, the Board of Regents approved the creation of the Division of Communication and Contemporary Culture within the College of Liberal & Applied Arts. The new unit combines the former Department of Communication with the Philosophy program. The division was established after a year-long analysis to position SFA at the forefront of national trends on the cultural and communication implications of changes in the media. The Philosophy curriculum was included to provide perspective on the influence of contemporary culture on media messages. The division will also house the College's *Center on New Media and eCulture* that will facilitate research by faculty and students. A national search is underway to locate a director who will supervise both the division and the center.

These changes will have no adverse impact on current students and their degree programs. According to Provost Richard Berry, "This is a great leap of progress for SFA (T)he changes will only expand students' opportunities and deepen the programs in which they are enrolled." Within a few years, the goal is to develop a program with a national reputation for excellence.

FACULTY ACCOLADES

NEWS

The SFA **Debate Team**, under the College's Director of Forensics Stephen Jeffcoat, took a six member squad to the University of Arkansas at Monticello to compete in the annual Weevil Wars tournament held from October 3-5, 2008. The team brought home 15 trophies and won 64% of its rounds.

The College established the **Academic & Career Advising Office** in September. Ms. Carol Antill (below) was selected from a deep pool of applicants to direct the Center. Aside from advising students during their freshman and sophomore years, the Center conducts alumni networking events linking current students with alumni who graduated in their major. We always need help from alumni to engage with students!



CENTER FOR A LIVABLE WORLD

The Center for a Livable World is being developed within the College of Liberal & Applied Arts at Stephen F. Austin State University. Our goal is to create a resource for businesses, community leaders, and others to engage in critical thinking and conversations about livability in the settings and communities in which we live. A special collaboration will be built with corporations to emphasize transitioning to niches for local economies that complement larger outside entities, following the concepts of comparative advantage and global specialization. Transitioning will occur in stages with the eventual goal of thriving local, regional, and global entities.

The Center will explore the human dimension of environmental problems and offer an alternative vision of the future that emphasizes the importance of community, self-reliance, and local knowledge as important facets of the global ecosystem. Specifically, it will examine the roles that social science and the humanities play in making our lives both more sustainable and more livable.

SOCIOLOGIST ELECTED VP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Dr. Ray Darville, Professor of Sociology and Interim Chair of the Department of Communication, was elected vice president of the Southwestern Social Science Association, an interdisciplinary organization with over 1,000 members. He will become President-Elect at the next meeting in April, 2009 and then President in 2010. Dr. Darville has served the Association in various capacities, including workshop director, general program chair, secretary, and convention director. He previously served as president of the Southwestern Sociological Association



Dr. Ray Darville

SOCIAL WORK PROFESSOR A FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR

In 2008, Dr. Sharon Templeman, Associate Professor of Social Work and Director of the Master of Social Work Degree, made a fourth trip to Russia. Her visit to Izhevsk was sponsored by the Fulbright Senior Specialist' program and was designed to collaborate with colleagues on multicultural issues in higher education. While in Russia, Dr. Templeman lectured to students, addressed community organizations, and delivered a paper at an international conference. She intends to continue focusing on the influence of multiculturalism in community development by contributing to the College's certificate with the University of Applied Sciences München as well as a possible new relationship with the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.



Dr. Sharon Templeman

FIRST HISPANIC STUDIES PH.D.

Assistant Professor Juan Carlos Ureña is the first Hispanic Studies Ph.D. graduate from Texas A&M University. Professor Ureña joined the SFA family in August, 2004 as a member of the Department of Modern Languages. When Texas A&M began its new Hispanic Studies program, he was interested because the program allowed students not only to focus on language and literature but other related disciplines as well. Dr. Ureña, a well-known singer and songwriter in Costa Rica, began his musical education at the Universidad de Costa Rica and then came to SFA to earn a Master's degree in Musical Composition.



Dr. Juan Carlos Ureña



Duck Patrols Hall

ELECTION SURVEY

The College's **Center for Applied Social Research** conducted a mail survey across the region to determine public opinion prior to the presidential election. The survey revealed that the economy easily ranked (67.9%) as the most important issue among potential voters in East Texas, with only 5.4% citing the war in Iraq. In terms of ideology, 64% professed conservative tendencies, 16% middle of the road, and 20% liberal.

Mr. Lee Payne, Center Director, discussed the survey on SFA-TV2 along with Drs. Ken Collier and Steve Galatas of the Department of Government. The Center will continue with its surveys of regional opinion on a regular basis.

A liberal and applied arts education promotes the kind of background that provides students with a broad set of skills and a wide knowledge base enabling them to move seamlessly among occupational contexts.

OUR VISION

Our commitment is to deliver an education that combines intellectual with practical approaches toward knowledge. Since the job market of the future will be different in unknown ways, students must be equipped to make connections between bodies of information, to interact in an international environment, and to shift easily from one career to another. We are shaping our curriculum to accomplish these goals and, as a result, to provide an education designed for the 21st century.

CENTER FOR REGIONAL HERITAGE RESEARCH: *THE PIERCE PAPERS*

During spring break in 2008, a chance discovery and quick action by Carolyn Spears (Stone Fort Museum), Will Godwin (Biology), and Jeff Roth (Sociology/Geography) resulted in the preservation of legal documents, maps, tax records, and other historic documents. Within two days, the Pierce Collection became a Center for Regional Heritage Research (CRHR) project because of the materials' potential for original research by university and community scholars. The Pierce Collection (c. 1880-c.1960) includes the papers of Judge Jack Pierce, J. J. Greve, and C. A. Hodges as well as Nacogdoches County school tax maps, timber and gas leases, county court cases, tax records, and numerous other primary sources. After fumigation in the Biology Department, Will Godwin and Perky Beisel (History) began moving the papers to a workroom assigned to the Center's Director, George Avery.

During the summer Chris Elzen, a Public History M.A. student, worked with Linda Reynolds and Jennifer Brancato of the East Texas Research Center (ETRC) to gain intellectual control of the collection according to standard archival practices. The History Department assigned two additional graduate assistants to help on the project and the CRHR funded undergraduate students to work alongside project managers. In addition to sorting, cleaning, and filing historic documents, Elzen and fellow graduate student Sara Baker produced a ten-minute documentary that highlights materials in the collection as well as the archival process. By the end of October, the Pierce Collection will open to researchers at the ETRC.



At work on the Pierce Papers

Giving Opportunities

Please consider joining our effort to establish something truly special. Any amount would be of great benefit. To discuss options, please contact:

Ms. Jill Still, Director of Development
Office of University Advancement
Local Phone - (936) 468-5406
Toll Free - (800) 319-9517
E-Mail: jstill@sfasu.edu

CONTACT INFORMATION

College of Liberal and Applied Arts

Stephen F. Austin State University
Ferguson Liberal Arts Building, Room 273
Box 13033 SFA Station
Nacogdoches, TX 75962

Phone: (936) 468-2803
Fax: (936) 468-2190
E-mail: libarts@sfasu.edu