

COLLEGE OF Arts and Sciences

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2017

Taking the Stage with Dr. Andra Bohnet



Professor Andra Bohnet

As a child, Dr. Andra Bohnet, Professor of Music, dreamed of being the following: (1) principal flutist with the Chicago Symphony; (2) manager of the Chicago Cubs; and, (3) an astronaut and/or astronomer. If she had not become a musician, perhaps she would have made history by leading the Cubs to a World Series championship before 2016 because Bohnet makes things happen by following her passion. The passion is evident wherever she is performing: as principal flutist of the Mobile Symphony Orchestra or with the Silverwood Quartet and Mithril or with the Trebuchet Wind Trio or in her USA classrooms, teaching students to play the flute.

Bohnet came to USA in the fall of 1984 as an adjunct faculty member and became a full-time faculty member in fall 1991.

She says the Department of Music has grown in size and in quality, adding that the Jaguar Marching Band has had a lot to with improvements in the Department.

Bohnet enjoys teaching everything about playing the flute and says she “love[s] nurturing young musicians and helping them reach their musical potential.” Teaching the Flute Choir and the Celtic Crúe are exciting, because, in Bohnet’s words, “It is fun to help an ensemble of flutists grow in musical maturity Not only do we play and perform well, but we regularly deal with the great mysteries of life in the classroom as well.”

Bohnet started playing flute in 5th grade when a local band director gave her mother a flute to see if Bohnet wanted to play it. The band director knew Bohnet liked music because she was selected to the All-City Tonette Ensemble while in the 4th grade. Needless to say, Bohnet liked the flute and has never, figuratively speaking, put it down since then.

According to Bohnet, she was “largely self-driven as a player” and “always wanted to be the best wherever she was.” At the University of the Pacific, Professor Shirley Dominik introduced Bohnet to the basic flute repertoire. There, Bohnet set her sights on being the best

flutist at her school, a feat she accomplished by the end of her freshman year. She earned her Masters of Music degree at the University of Southern California, where Bohnet says professor Roger Stevens had the most influence on her flute playing. She earned her Ph.D. in Music at Texas Tech, where her major professor, Dr. Michael Stoune, taught her what she needed to know about academia.

Bohnet loves playing with the Mobile Symphony Orchestra and is its “original” principal flutist. The MSO, Bohnet says, “has grown from a sort of good community orchestra into a world class regional orchestra.” For Bohnet, highlights include MSO “performances with Yo-Yo Ma but also the appearances of Mithril as soloists with the orchestra.” According to Bohnet “pretty much every concert is totally awesome. We play fantastic repertoire, our conductor Scott Speck is phenomenal, and I have incredible colleagues to play with.” While she did not get to be the principal flutist for the Chicago Symphony Bohnet says playing with the MSO “is just as good!”

In addition to playing a variety of flutes, Bohnet plays Celtic and orchestral harps. She can also play saxophone and clarinet.

Bohnet’s Celtic band, Mithril,

developed from the Silverwood Quartet when Bohnet and Tom Morley, the violinist/fiddler, discovered a shared passion for Irish music. Bohnet says they “recorded [their] first CD by multi-tracking [themselves] doing everything and then realized ... to play stuff live” they needed to form a band, so Mithril “was born in 2003.” They have recorded seven CDS.

Bohnet praises flutist James Galway “because he has done pretty much everything and made a ton of money doing it,” and she lists “Lunasa, Flook, Chris Norman, Solas, Tulla Ceili Band, Loreena McKennitt, Cherish the Ladies, [and] Joanie Madden” as her favorite Celtic performers.

When she is not teaching or practicing or performing music for an audience, Bohnet loves to read science fiction and fantasy novels, to work out, and to snow ski. She says she “regularly practice[s] martial arts and yoga,” and she and her husband love to visit national parks, where they can go hiking.

If you are looking for an artist to check out, Bohnet recommends Chris Norman; “He made a big splash with his ‘Man with the Wooden Flute’ CD several years ago.” She also says her work with the Trio—as well as her work with Mithril and the Silverwood Quartet—is available on iTunes.



Message from the Dean

In this issue of the College of Arts & Sciences Newsletter you will find informative articles about faculty members, students, and alumni. I think you will agree that the work highlighted in this Newsletter is well worth your attention.

After you read the cover article about Professor Andra Bohnet of the Department of Music, be sure to read about the exciting science research and teaching by Professor Romulus Godang of the Department of Physics and by Professor Just Cebrian of the Department of Marine Sciences and about the many scholarly accomplishments of Professor Ted Poston in the Department of Philosophy.

A & S alumna Monica Whatley is highlighted—she works for the Southern Poverty Law Center—and please read about our featured undergraduate, senior Sarah Meeker, a major in Modern and Classical Languages and Literature.

This issue also contains an article on Mr. Daniel Miller, Management Systems Specialist for the College of Arts & Sciences.

As well, you will find news items about many other A & S faculty members, students, and alumni.

I hope you enjoy reading the A & S Newsletter, and please share it with friends.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrzej Wierzbicki
Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
HUMB 118

Dr. Romulus Godang's High-Energy Physics



Dr. Romulus Godang

Dr. Romulus Godang, of the Department of Physics, has been at USA for nine years. He received his Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in 2000, held a research fellow position at Cornell University, did some of his training at Harvard University, and then took a postdoc position at the University of Virginia. After UVA, he became a research scientist at the University of Mississippi before coming to USA as an Assistant Professor.

In 2013, Godang was promoted to Associate Professor, and in 2016, he was promoted to Professor. At USA he has received many awards: the Hengstberger Symposium Award in Germany in 2009; the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Sponsor Fellowship Awards from 2013-2016; he was named as one of the recipients of USA's 50 Outstanding Researchers in 2013; and, he has been selected three times as a Mortar Board "Top Prof" by students in USA's Azalea Chapter.

Godang researches high energy physics—specifically, high-intensity frontier colliders. According to Godang, he works on two international experiments: BABAR and Belle II experiments. "BABAR and Belle II are international collaborations consisting of hundreds of physicists and engineers from many institutions and countries around the world." Godang's research helps him to better understand "the beauty of the nature of the universe that we live in [and] especially to learn about the origins of matter and antimatter asymmetries."

The BABAR detector is located at Stanford University, and Godang and other scientists use it to study the millions of B mesons produced by the PEP-II storage ring to understand the matter and antimatter asymmetries (CP violation). A B meson is a

particle composed of a bottom antiquark and another quark (up, down, strange or charm). These particles are generated in high-energy collisions produced by accelerators. In 2001, less than two years after the data was collected, both the BABAR experiment (US) and the Belle experiment (Japan) discovered one of the sources of the matter and antimatter asymmetries in the universe. Godang says these results demonstrated that the hypothesis of Kobayashi and Maskawa for the origin of the CP violation is correct. The discovery provided the experimental foundation which led Kobayashi and Maskawa to their half of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics (Yoichiro Nambu received the other half of the 2008 prize).

Godang says Belle II is the next-generation of the B-factory experiment. The detector is located in Tsukuba, Japan, and hosted by the SuperKEK, Japanese High-Energy Accelerator Research Organization. Its primary purpose is to explore New Physics beyond the Standard Model and increase our understanding of the matter and antimatter asymmetries in our present universe. The first beam of SuperKEKB is expected this year, and the physics run will start soon after that. The Belle II is projected to collect 50 times more data than the previous Belle detector.

For his research, Godang has received grants from the U.S. Department of Energy, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and other agencies.

In addition to his passion for research, Godang loves teaching, especially first and second year Physics classes. He says he has "always been passionate about teaching lower level physics classes," adding that it is "gratifying to see students who are eager to learn the basic physics concepts." He tells students that "physics is not as intimidating and as difficult ... as they thought but rather fun and an enjoyable subject to learn."

Good outcomes in the Physics classroom center on curiosity, hard work and developing mathematical skills. While many students come to Physics classes needing more training in mathematics, Godang is happy to work with the students. He stresses working hard and staying focused—if students can do that, then they can improve their mathematics knowledge and succeed in Physics classes as they move forward in the curriculum.

Modern Physics is another class Godang

enjoys teaching. It covers, among other topics, special relativity, wave-particle concepts, Schroedinger's equation, and elementary particles. Godang says students, for the first time, "learn and prove the failure of classical physics concepts of space and time." Such lessons lead, he says, to "Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity which is a modern way of understanding space and time."

Godang also relishes supervising undergraduate research. He trains students to work on proper research methods for high energy and elementary particle physics. This training prepares students for subsequent graduate research.

Research and teaching for Godang are anchored in global thinking and proper research methods. He has active international collaborations, and these research projects help to contextualize his pedagogy. According to Godang, "Without global thinking and working together as a team, I do not believe we can achieve good outcomes."

Godang credits a high school teacher with encouraging him to pursue his interest in physics. The desire to challenge himself to understand nature also played a key role in his decision to become a physicist. He is inspired by nature's beauty to explore some of the universe's secrets.

When he is not teaching classes and conducting research, Godang enjoys time with his family, listening to music, and watching programs about nature. He also admits that even at home he is a voracious reader of journal articles. One of his goals is to channel this energy for research into further enhancing undergraduate research opportunities for Physics students.



Researching Coastal Ecology With Dr. Just Cebrian

Dr. Just Cebrian joined the USA faculty in 2000 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Marine Sciences. In the past 16 years Professor Cebrian has established an international reputation in coastal ecology. He researches coastal ecosystem functionality and resilience and the effects of human activities on these ecosystems. He is the author of 115 peer-reviewed publications and has been the Primary Investigator (PI) or Co-Primary Investigator (CPI) for grants totaling approximately \$16 million. He has also served on numerous research panels and on several editorial boards of marine sciences journals.

According to Cebrian, “Coastal ecosystems provide numerous services and benefits to humans, and understanding the interactions between ecosystem functioning and human development is essential to create environmental policies for maintaining healthy and resilient coasts in the face of increasing human pressure. ... Our goal is to provide sound research-based foundations to justify environmental actions and policies towards a sustainable world.”

To date, Cebrian has been either the PI or Co-PI for approximately 70 grants and has received funding from the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Corps of Engineers, Sea Grant, and the State of Alabama, as well as from other foundations and local agencies.

The research Cebrian conducts involves a variety of coastal systems. He and his research team study seagrass beds, oyster reefs, sediment flats, marshes and mangroves. According to Cebrian, “We study all these systems in concert across long temporal and large spatial scales to obtain a good understanding of how coastal ecosystems function. We conduct research throughout the U.S. Gulf of Mexico coast, ranging from the Florida Keys to Laguna Madre in Texas.” He also conducts research in Argentina, Mexico

and Spain.

Cebrian says he was always curious about the natural world around him and “fell in love with the sea at an early age” and knew he wanted to “dedicate [his] life to studying marine life.” It is hard work, but, he notes, “the reward is well worth it. ... discovering knowledge and providing answers to long-standing questions is undoubtedly one of the best thrills and rewards in life” Cebrian adds, “We only have one world, and we need to keep it healthy and sustainable.”

Originally from Spain, Cebrian came to the United States as a post-doc researcher. Now a U.S. citizen, he says of the States, “I dearly love her as I also love my birth country.” When asked if he has faced racism and prejudice as an immigrant, Cebrian says he has not encountered major problems: “I have experienced some giggles and reservations towards my persona, but I am sure this mostly has to do with my strong accent and rather idiosyncratic personality, and I take no offense with it.”

Noting that racism or prejudice is “often a double-ended problem,” Cebrian says immigrants can “embrace, love and celebrate the culture and life style of the adoptive country” without renouncing the culture of one’s country of origin. According to Cebrian, one can “harmonize and love both cultures. ... For U.S. nationals, it is important to realize this country has been made by immigrants from its very inception, and that we all need to be understanding and welcoming, of course, without renouncing to our commitment to unity and defense of the American values.”

Engaging with globalization is an important part of education at USA, and Cebrian says “promoting global thinking and collaborations is capital in today’s world. We all confront big challenges, no matter what our work discipline is, and solutions to those challenges require cross-disciplinary, multicultural approaches. We all need to recognize this and

work towards learning from other colleagues worldwide” Cebrian says students should look for educational opportunities overseas, and he teaches a course for USA Marine Sciences graduate students every other year in Spain.

Key coastal environmental challenges abound as the biosphere is under constant modification as a result of expanding human activity. According to Cebrian, “Human modifications come in many ways: coastal urban development and deforestation; pollution; overfishing; climate change including sea level rise, rising temperature, acidification and altered rainfall patterns; and alterations in freshwater river inputs through irrigation and damming.”

Having a strong publication record is one way Cebrian seeks to contribute to solutions to environmental problems. Likewise, he prioritizes training future marine scientists and that involves helping them publish their research. He says “passing the torch is one of the most important duties professors have since we need to leave the world in good hands.”

When he is not at work at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab or on the water doing field research, Cebrian enjoys cooking for his family and friends. In Spain, his grandmother and mother taught him recipes. He also enjoys playing soccer—another life-long passion. According to Cebrian, “Along with fieldwork, soccer keeps me healthy.”



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Meeker



Ms. Sarah Meeker

Senior Sarah Meeker is majoring in Spanish and Russian and writing her Senior Honors Thesis on translation. She says she decided to major in languages “because they have always fascinated [her]” and because she “always wanted to acquire proficiency in a foreign language.” She adds that she has “really liked all of my professors in the Modern and Classical Languages and Literature Department.”

An advantage of the languages major is the study abroad requirement. While at USA, Meeker has been to Spain twice: once on a faculty-led program to Cuenca, Spain, and once through a program of the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Calling study abroad “an enriching experience,” Meeker notes that “although there are differences of appearance, opinion, etc., between people both within and between countries, one learns to recognize the ways in which people are the same.”

On her second trip to Spain, to Ciudad Real, Meeker taught English for nine months. “The best part of this second trip to Spain was,” she says, “travel[ing] by [herself] without a

large group.” Every day she had to hone her Spanish language skills in order to understand a host of issues: “the residence hall, transportation, shopping and events.”

An advantage of being in the Honors Program is the requirement of a Senior Honors Thesis. For her project, Meeker is translating into Spanish a novella she wrote in English. Ms. Jenny Faile, a Senior Instructor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature, is her Thesis mentor. After she graduates in May, Meeker plans to pursue a Master’s Degree in Translation/Interpretation. She says she wants “to be able to help bridge the communication barrier between speakers of different languages.”

Meeker lists Dr. Federico Perez-Pineda and Dr. Zoya Khan, both Associate Professors of Spanish, as being among her favorite college teachers. She praises Dr. Perez-Pineda for “advice and encouragement” concerning her work as a tutor and her graduate school plans. She recognizes Dr. Khan for serving as her academic advisor and as a member of her Honors Thesis Committee, for helping her get an essay published in a journal, and for encouraging her to go on her second trip to Spain, where she taught English.

The decision to come to USA for college was not a hard one for Meeker to make. She says “I chose USA because of its generous scholarship opportunities and the strength of its Spanish program, which I discovered the spring before I came to USA when I visited a Spanish class and met a faculty member.”

Meeker was recently elected president of the Modern Languages Honor Society, Phi Sigma Iota. As president, she wants to “continue with and build upon the traditions and activities that

we have developed over the years in order to help [the] chapter grow stronger in its mission to promote foreign languages.” According to Meeker, “Phi Sigma Iota is a community comprised of people with at least one shared interest and united by a common goal, the promotion of languages, through which they can build relationships with others both within and outside of the society.”

When asked to identify courses that have been the most challenging, Meeker notes that no one course stands out among the rest: “Each has challenged me in unique ways from literature courses that explored a wide range of ideas, to writing classes that compelled me to improve my written communication in multiple languages, to grammar and conversation classes that have forced me to improve my general knowledge and ability in various languages.”

Reading and writing fiction are two of Meeker’s hobbies. Particularly, she enjoys reading fantasy and historical fiction and says her favorite writers include J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Jane Austen. She says she also enjoys swimming, crocheting, and sewing “quilts or decorative items like quilted pillows.”

Getting to Know Epistemology,

Getting Know Dr. Ted Poston

Dr. Ted Poston, Professor of Philosophy, specializes in epistemology—particularly as it engages with the reasons people express for the beliefs they hold. Poston says he has “always been stuck by the extreme confidence that some people have in their beliefs, a confidence that is often out of proportion with the evidence they have for their beliefs.” He explores such issues in first book, *Reason and Explanation* (Palgrave-Macmillan).

His second book, *A Critical Introduction to Knowledge How*, co-authored with a colleague at Edinburg University, focuses on practical knowledge (it due for publication by Bloomsbury early this year). Also due for publication this year is Poston’s third book, which he has co-edited with Kevin McCain at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Titled *Best Explanations: New Essays on Inference to the Best Explanation*, this third book is a collection of scholarly essays from Oxford University Press. Inference to the best explanation involves an inference from some surprising data to a conclusion about the hypothesis that best explains that data.

Upcoming research, Poston says, will focus on the history of epistemology. Two criticisms of his field of epistemological study are (1) a lack of sufficient history and (2) that it has an insufficient impact on enhancing people’s lives. Poston believes these criticisms are mistaken, and his book project will explain why.

As a result of his research on epistemology, Poston created, in 2009, the Orange Beach Epistemology Workshop. This significant annual conference is now internationally recognized as scholars from around the world regularly participate in it.

Another major accomplishment is receiving the Younger Scholar prize in philosophical theology, a prize associated with Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion in 2012. Poston received the award for his paper “Social Evil,” which posits that “in addition to the evils that arise from personal decisions and nature forces, there are evils that arise from group action.” He says a dinner conversation about the “economics of access to healthcare for the uninsured and uninsurable” with a professor from Harvard’s School of Public

Health sparked his ideas for the paper.

Teaching philosophy and exciting students to pursue research are passions for Poston. He notes his good fortune in directing “some very talented students on summer research and thesis projects.” He likes upper-level classes because he engages students with ideas and disciplinary practices he has “spent a lot of time thinking about.”

His favorite class to teach, however, is Introduction to Philosophy. At the beginning of the semester, the Intro students have little understanding of philosophy. Poston says “it’s a very special opportunity to introduce them to a swath of our very best thinkers. Many of our students haven’t thought through the issues that motivate different political philosophers or the arguments for various conceptions of the human person.”

Poston appreciates the accomplishments and hard work of philosophy majors. He says, “One of the main foci of our program is the ability to think critically and write well. It does take some effort for our majors to develop this skill, but it is very much like learning how to play the piano. It takes practice, dedication, and the ability to learn from good feedback.” He notes that people with a degree in philosophy “do very well in the knowledge economy. Employers are looking for smart, interesting people who have good critical thinking skills. ... The data consistently shows that philosophy graduates have the top scores across a wide variety of majors.”

Undergraduates decide to major in philosophy for a number of reasons, but Poston says many choose the major because of the large intellectual questions the discipline examines: “Does human existence have meaning? Is morality a feature of the universe or a cultural construction? Are persons free, or is behavior determined?”

Poston took a circuitous path to academia. While living in Dothan, Alabama, attending a very small college, working at a Winn-Dixie, and fishing on the beach a lot, Poston stumbled on Will Durant’s book *The Story of Philosophy* and soon started reading texts by Nietzsche. He says this reading began to reorient his life-world. He finished college, went to a seminary,

and then went to get his Ph.D. in Philosophy. Had he not happened upon Durant’s book, Poston thinks he might have ended up working in marine science or in forestry management because he “never wanted a desk job” and “love[s] being outdoors.”

As a philosophy professor, Poston is impressed with Ernie Sosa’s work on virtue epistemology, noting that “Sosa has developed Aristotle’s picture of human knowledge as resting on skill that begins at a rudimentary cognitive grasp and develops through experience and reflection to constitute a complete cognitive grasp of the world.” Poston also praises the work of Richard Fumerton and Richard Swinburne.

When not teaching or writing, Poston is an avid cyclist who wishes Mobile had more bike-friendly roadways and trails. He and his wife enjoy watching the Tour de France every July. Poston also loves to fish and is mindful of conservation. He notes that “on most weekends, you’ll find me miles offshore pursuing the big catch.”



Dr. Ted Poston



Alumni Spotlight

Monica Whatley



Ms. Monica Whatley

USA Alumnus Monica Whatley graduated in Spring 2011 and now works as a Data Marketing Analyst at the Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC]. She was hired in June of 2016 after previously working in Washington, D.C., for the Association of American Medical Colleges [AAMC]. She says she made the job change after “looking for ways to dedicate more of [her] time to [her] family and to causes that [she] care[s] about.” The SPLC position attracts her, she says, because she can use her “quantitative skillset towards a social justice mission that means a lot to [her] personally.” That the SPLC is headquartered in Montgomery is a plus because the Mobile native is now much closer to her family.

As a marketing analyst for the SPLC, Whatley works behind-the-scenes but says she “feel[s] part of the mission and dedicated to social justice both in [her] career and in [her] spare time.” The issues of immigrant justice and immigration policy reform inspire her as do issues of racial and economic justice. She says these issues are important to her in large part because she is a native Alabamian. She is also concerned for non-human animal rights.

Whatley graduated with a B.S. in Mathematics and Statistics while also completing the USA Honors Program. Upon graduation she was hired by the U.S. Census Bureau. Next, she went to Florida State University to earn her Master’s degree in Demography. After an

internship at the Migration Policy Institute she worked at the AAMC as a data analyst.

In her SPLC job Whatley says she applies daily what she learned in her major at USA: “In graduate school and in my career, I have used SAS statistical software and the R programming language, both of which I first learned in Dr. [Bin] Wang’s Statistical Computing and Graphics course.” She says a challenging Honors Program Seminar, Statistics through Simulation, taught by Dr. Madhuri Mulekar, helped motivate her to “concentrate in statistics within [her] mathematics major.” She adds, “Dr. Mishra’s statistics courses were not any easier, ... but I graduated with a rich appreciation for statistics and will probably spend my entire career trying to understand it.”

Whatley says her minor in Spanish was very helpful in graduate school and in her career to date: “Minoring in Spanish helped steer my interest in immigration and social justice issues, which are still two of my biggest passions today. It’s pretty cool that I was able to get the quantitative skills that I wanted through the Department of Math & Statistics and learn how to channel those skills into causes I really care about through the Department of Foreign Languages.”

The USA Honors Program played a key role in recruiting Whatley to USA. The Honors scholarship was attractive but so were the smaller classes, community, and mentorship. She adds, “I also liked the idea of doing an honors thesis and diving deeply into a topic under the mentorship of a professor.” Her thesis on Eastern European immigration to the United States was directed by Dr. Nader Entessar, chairperson of the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice. She says the “thesis turned out to be one of the most challenging parts of [her] undergraduate career, but it made graduation day all the more meaningful.”

Other meaningful learning experiences at USA were taking a logic course with Dr. Ted

Poston of the Department of Philosophy, taking Intro to Population with Dr. Marc Matre in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, and taking Intro to Human Geography with Dr. Rajiv Thakur in the Department of Earth Sciences.

Whatley says work at the Census Bureau was eye-opening because the Bureau “does a lot more than count people every ten years!” It routinely conducts surveys and studies that track businesses, schools, and government entities, and it does data collection for government agencies. At the Bureau, Whatley worked in the foreign trade division, gathering data on export shipments out of the U.S.

Now back in Alabama, Whatley says life is going well: “Montgomery is a great town, and it is near so many larger cities, so the transition has been easy.” She likes being active in her new local community. With her passion for social justice activism, Whatley says she “look[s] forward to bringing that energy to Montgomery, the heart of the civil rights movement.”

When she wants to unwind, Whatley says she likes “drinking tea or wine on the front porch, and walking in [her] neighborhood.” She also enjoys cooking and seeking “new music and art” and “being outdoors.” Travel is also important, and she says she fell in love with Montevideo on a trip to Uruguay and Argentina.

Whatley urges USA students to “pay attention to their strengths” and to “inspect their weaknesses and give them lots of attention.” If she could change anything about her education at USA it would be to take more writing classes. She also recommends the following to current students: “Go to class and stay afterwards if you can. Talk with your professors and get engaged with your work beyond just showing up for lecture and completing assignments. Try to connect your personal life with your academic life. What do you think about when you are not studying for a particular class? That is the advice that helped me find my major and my thesis topic.”

Technology in the College of Arts & Sciences



Mr. Daniel Miller

Mr. Daniel Miller, Management Systems Specialist, has been working six and a half years for the College of Arts & Sciences. A typical work day for Miller centers on solving computer and other technology-related issues for College faculty and staff members. There is little that is routine in his daily work.

Miller works alongside Ms. Jill Showers-Chow and their student assistant, Jack Riales. Miller became interested in computers largely because when he was younger his father, a Field Service Engineer with Unisys Corporation, would take Miller to work sometimes. According to Miller, his father serviced “large business machines (check sorters, line printers, and the like) and mainframe systems” and bringing Miller along to “help” when he was not in school was a way to get Miller “out of mom’s hair.”

While working full-time for the College of Arts & Sciences Miller is also pursuing a Ph.D. in Computing from USA’s School of Computing. He is currently working with Dr. Glisson in the School of Computing. According to Miller, he is “performing preliminary research on the existence and implications of residual data resulting from Additive Manufacturing processes (3D Printing).” He adds that he is “also busy writing a journal article documenting this preliminary research.” He has three courses to complete before he can take his Qualifying Exams.

Miller comes to USA by way of rural Central Virginia. He was raised in between Richmond and Fredericksburg (about one and a half hours from Washington DC). He first learned about USA from a high school friend and visited the campus. At that time, Miller was interested in the Emergency Medical Services Program USA offers (in Virginia, Miller was a certified and practicing Emergency Medical Technician). After enrolling at USA, Miller eventually changed majors to Computer Science and earned his B.S. degree in Information Technology in 2008. Miller says he worked in 2009 at “USA Hospitals as a PC Applications Specialist” and then was hired by the College of Arts & Sciences in 2010.

In terms of career goals, Miller says he “would like to find a position as a Program or Organizational Director or similar leadership position where [he] can have a more direct effect on aligning the use of technology with the organization’s goals.” His graduate research experience, however, has him also considering other career options such as becoming a senior researcher. He also notes that he has not “ruled out teaching as a possibility.”

When he is not at work for the College of Arts & Science or working on his graduate courses and research, Miller enjoys watching *Dr. Who*. When he gets a chance to visit his parents in Virginia, he likes to go sailing with his father. According to Miller, his father “sails competitively in races around the Chesapeake Bay.” Miller also enjoys music and notes that he “used to be a relatively competent flautist and oboist” but now he does not “have much time or reason to play anymore.”



Dr. Scott Carter, Professor of Mathematics & Statistics. In December 2016, the Knots in Washington XLIII Conference was held in honor of Carter's 60th birthday at George Washington University. Internationally recognized in the field of Knot Theory, Carter was one of the plenary speakers for this conference.

Dr. Madhuri Mulekar, Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Mathematics & Statistics. Mulekar has received the HERS CBL STEM Scholarships from the Henry Luce Foundation. She is one of 12 people nationally to receive the award, and she will participate in the HERS Institute at Bryn Mawr College this summer in July.

The College of Arts & Sciences set a record in terms of research dollars generated: \$9.151 million. 108 grants were funded.

The Steve and Angelia Stokes Endowed Chair in Environmental Resiliency. Dr. Steve Stokes and his wife Angelia Stokes established a \$1 million endowed Chair in Environmental Resiliency. **Dr. Sean Powers**, Chairperson of the Department of Marine Sciences, says the Chair in Environmental Resiliency "shall be a recognized expert in the fields of environmental, marine, biological or chemical sciences, whose scholarly activity is focused on Environmental Resiliency of coastal ecosystems who meets the academic requirements for a faculty position." The chair will serve as Director of the Stokes Center for Environmental Resiliency.

Alumnus **Nicholas Brownlee** made his Metropolitan Opera debut on December 2016 in the production of Richard Strauss's "Salome." He also recently won the 35th International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition in Cape Town, South Africa. This is his latest operatic triumph. Brownlee graduated from the Department of Music in 2012.

Alexa Garrett graduated with a degree in Political Science in December 2016 and has entered the Masters in Public Administration Program. In fall 2016, Garrett had her article, "Religiosity and Attitudes toward Crime in Latin America," published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Politics and International Affairs* from the Ohio State University.

Dr. Phillip N. Smith, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, has been awarded a \$306,000, 3-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to fund the JagConnect Campus Suicide Prevention Program. The purpose is to increase access to mental health services for those at risk for suicide via a multi-level, public health approach. JagConnect will improve connectedness and collaboration among USA mental health service providers, university administration, and community partners; increase USA's readiness to respond to suicidal and other crises; increase student, faculty, and staff's willingness to

seek mental health services as well as promote emotional well-being and social inclusiveness; and increase the number of students, faculty, and staff who are equipped to recognize, identify, and respond to individuals who demonstrate risk factors and warning signs for suicide.

Phi Sigma Iota (PSI), the Honor Society for the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature, raised \$11,000 in 18 months to endow a chapter scholarship. According to **Dr. Zoya Khan**, the PSI faculty mentor, the University has matched the \$11,000 raised, so the PSI endowment now stands at \$22,000. The first Phi Sigma Iota scholarship will be awarded this current spring semester.

The Center for the Study of War and Memory opened its exhibition, "War and Remembrance on the Alabama Gulf Coast," in January 2017 at the USA Marx Library's Rodning Gallery. Both of the Center's Directors, **Dr. Steve Trout**, Professor and Chairperson of the Department of English, and **Dr. Susan McCready**, Professor of French in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature, made remarks at the opening of the exhibition.

Dr. Susan McCready also had her monograph, *Staging France between the World Wars: Performance, Politics, and the Transformation of the Theatrical Canon*, published by Lexington Books in fall 2016.

Department of Chemistry. There are new chemistry labs for students taking 100-level chemistry courses as a result of a \$3.5 million renovation initiative in the former the Engineering Laboratory Building. According to **Dr. David Forbes**, Chairperson of the Department of Chemistry, there are now four large instructional labs, two classrooms, a staffed/equipped stockroom, full-time faculty offices, and a part-time/graduate assistant office with the goal of having course-specific instruction of General Chemistry I lab (CH 131L), General Chemistry II lab (CH 132L), and Survey of Inorganic and Organic Chemistry (CH 101L). Forbes says "The Department is truly grateful for the support of Administration as well as the efforts of many [others]," and he offers special recognition to Mr. Daniel Greer and Mr. David Strain (Engineering, Design, and Construction) and Mrs. Ruth Cochran, Mrs. Jessica Evans, Ms. Becky Hoffman, and Mrs. Diane Roe (staff and faculty of Chemistry).

Theatre & Dance. **Jodie Cain Smith**, a 1999 BFA graduate in Theatre from USA, has returned to Mobile to direct the upcoming Theatre USA production of *The Fabulous Fable Factory*. Smith is a writer, content editor, speaker, and teaching artist, who has previously served as the Middle School Theatre Director for UMS-Wright Preparatory School in Mobile, Alabama. She has performed, directed, and designed for theatres in several states, and she is the author of the award-winning novel, *The Woods at Barlow Bend*.