



English Matters

Summer 2014

WORKING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Greetings from Samford's English Department

Dr. Brad Busbee, Chair

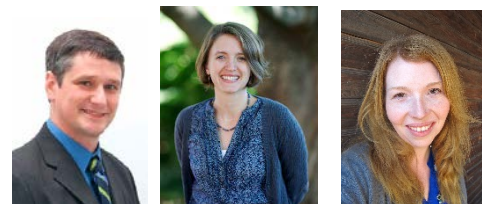
As the new department chair this year, I have enjoyed learning what you already know: that Samford English majors are ever busy creating and learning and gearing up to change the world, that their professors are working hard to ensure their success, and that you, alumni and friends of the department, are a driving force behind what we do.

The stories in this and future newsletters animate the department's new mission statement. (See the [mission statement](#) on our department website.) They show a collective purpose focused on training students to be successful and thoughtful members of their post-Samford communities. You will read about how our alumni are putting their skills to work in the world, about the achievements of the class of 2014 as they leave Samford, about the honors and scholarships our majors earned, and about the scholarly papers on literature and film that students and faculty presented at academic conferences, like the Annual Sigma Tau Delta Conference, and published in scholarly journals, like *Wide Angle*, our own internally produced academic journal.

These academic accomplishments validate our mission. But the driving energy for the department begins with you: our community of students, professors (current and retired), and alumni. Alumni and former faculty continue to support the department by giving coffee talks and by giving generously to our various funds and scholarships. All of these communities ensure our continued growth and success. Thanks to Gretchen Sexton, our new department administrative assistant, the bi-annual Balcony Bash brought new and continuing students together with new (me), current, and retired faculty; thanks to Dr. Keya Kraft, our connection with BACHE, remains strong; thanks to Dr. Geoff Wright, our majors and other students from across the campus gathered regularly for Film Club meetings.

I hope that this newsletter will compel you to visit us and take part in Samford's English department. Send us your stories.

We love to hear from you!



Alumni in ActionPage 2

Christopher George, Deandra Little and Heather Jassy are making a difference in their communities.



Students in Action.....Page 3-4

Sigma Tau Delta represented the Department of English very well in Savannah, Georgia at the National Sigma Tau Delta Conference.



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Alumni in Action

Christopher George is the senior pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone



Mountain, GA. George received a BA in English and History. After Samford, George went to Harvard University, where he received a master's degree in

theological studies with a specialization in Christianity and culture. He received his Ph.D. from Methodist Theological School, OH, in April. George said he felt the call from God at a fairly young age. "I responded to a call to go into Christian ministry while in high school in Greenville," he said. I am very ecumenical on matters of faith," George said. He also says he sees his commitment as "not only professional, but also personal. My wife grew up in the Catholic church, so we still occasionally attend Mass to honor this tradition," he said. "I am personally passionate about community service and missions."

Deandra Little went on to receive a Ph.D. degree in English from Vanderbilt. From there she spent several years as Associate Professor and Assistant Director at the Teaching Resource Center of the University of Virginia. In 2012, Little joined the *Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning at Elon University*. There she is the managing director for the Center and Associate Professor of English. Her



research and publications focus on educational development in higher ed, scholarship of teaching and learning, and teaching with images and visualizations. Little recently served on the Board of Directors for the POD Network, an international association for teaching and learning centers in higher education, and is an associate editor of the *International Journal for Academic Development*. Dr. Little's current research interests include disciplinary thinking, course design, and measuring hard-to-quantify student learning goals.

Heather Jassy is vice president of member operations at Etsy, the e-commerce website with over 800,000 active sellers worldwide focusing on



handmade or vintage items as well as art and craft supplies. She works out of Hudson, N.Y., in support of the network of 6,000 teams. She also works in

seller development, seller education, marketplace integrity, and community building. "This is alignment with who I am," says Jassy, who has been a small business owner for most of her working life, owning both an independent bookstore/café and a therapy/coaching 'practice.' Jassy's work takes her into the tech world, into job creation programs, into community events, and even into her own projects making large scale sculpture. In simple terms, she says "we make it easier for people, especially women, to start their own creative businesses."

Our thanks to the following donors for their generous giving:

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Brown, Miss Sharon K. Brown, Ms. Caitlin Branum, Dr. and Ms. Sigurd Bryan, Dr. A. Wayne Deloach, Dr. Rosemary M. Fisk and Mr. Howard P. Walthall, Dr. and Mrs. Rodney R. Fitzgerald, Ms. Katy Flinn, Ms. Elizabeth Gardner, Mr. and Mrs. John R. Halsell, III, Mr. Jacob Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. Russ F. Hovater, Ms. Jodi R. Hughes, Ms. Katherine Little, Mr. and Mrs. Bill W. Mathis, Col. and Mrs. Robert R. Mullins, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher C. Newton, Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Charles A. Parker, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. C. Ladell Payne, Ms. Olivia Pollard, Dr. Sandra Randleman, Mr. and Mrs. Jason Roland, Ms. Linda Russo, Mr. and Mrs. Bill L. Wear, Dr. Nancy Whitt

Alumni Visits

In October, Alum **Katie Ormsbee** led a Coffee Conversation with English majors to discuss her experiences in the publishing industry and, in particular, her new book. After graduating from Samford in 2011 as valedictorian with a degree in English, Ormsbee spent a year teaching English as a Foreign Language with the Junta de Andalucía in Seville, Spain. Upon her

return to the States, she moved to Austin, Texas to intern for the Austin Film Society. Ormsbee then returned to Birmingham to collaborate with fellow English major Destiny Soria on a Shakespearean web series. She currently writes children's literature full-time and continues to enthusiastically support her local arts community. In 2012, Katie signed a two-book deal with Chronicle Books. Her first novel is slated for publication this year.



Student Activities

SigmaTau Delta Succeeds in Savannah

By Caitlin Branum, Chapter President 2013-14, Sigma Tau Delta



Back Row L-R: Dr. Jane Hiles, Katie Little, Abigail Kawell, Taylor Burgess, Audrey Ward
Front Row L-R: Frances Isbell, Elizabeth Gardner, Alyssa Duck, Caitlin Branum, and Megan Burr

The Samford University chapter of Sigma Tau Delta was well represented at this year's National Conference in Savannah, Georgia. Nine students presented academic work, representing a variety of interests within the discipline, including Shakespeare, 20th century poetry, novels, theoretical works, and film. Samford had one of the largest representations out of all the universities at the convention. In honor of this, we were asked to enter the Most Active Chapter Display contest. Elizabeth Gardner composed a lovely poster illustrating all the things Sigma Tau Delta has done this year and the activities of the members outside of the chapter. The presenters were also able to explore Savannah, enjoying the delicious food, beautiful city, and of course the many bookstores. Whether they were having thoughtful discussions with other English majors at the conference or singing show tunes with jazz pianists, the Samford branch of Sigma Tau Delta used their time at the conference to the very fullest.



Frances joins other panelists for her presentation.

2013-2014

B A C H E

VISITING WRITERS' SERIES

Last year, we hosted three excellent writers for the BACHE series. **Joan McBreen, Kathryn Davis, and Sheri Joseph** (pictured left to right below). Each poet/author gave a reading and engaged students about the life of a writer.



Look for another year of good writers as we host Chantel Acevedo, Tayari Jones, and Brian Turner. Acevedo is the author of several books including: *Love and Ghost Letters*, *Song of the Red Cloak*, and her most recent *The Distant Marvels*. Jones has penned *Leaving Atlanta*, *The Untelling*, and *Silver Sparrow*. Turner's books are: *Here, Bullet*, *Phantom Noise*, and *My Life as a Foreign Country: A Memoir*. Schedule of Readings this year:

September 22, 2014—Chantel Acevedo

November 10, 2014—Tayari Jones

February 23, 2015—Brian Turner

Please plan on attending at least one of these events.

SU Film Club Notes



The defining moment of fall semester was the screening of *Pride & Prejudice*. A record-setting 250 people attended the film and the panel discussion, which featured Dr. Wright, Dr. Steward, and Abigail Kawell. Spring term, English alum Josh Crute debuted his original web series *WebCamelot*, which he created with fellow alum David Rice.

ABOVE: Former Dean and English Faculty member, **Rod Davis**, reads a chapter from *Pride and Prejudice*.



Wide Angle had another excellent year. In the fall of 2013, we published issue 3.1, which is available in the archives.

We published issue 3.2 this spring. One exciting new feature in this issue is the Special Series of reviews on Oscar-nominated films. If you are going to catch up on films this summer, be sure to check out these reviews, located on the journal's homepage. Another exciting development for the journal this semester was the ad-sharing exchange we entered into with the journal *Mosaic*. For this exchange, our editorial staff created a signature ad designed specifically for circulation in other academic journals. You can check out *Mosaic's* web site and their call for papers through the links on our homepage. Click [here](#) to check out the journal.

DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Pat Courington Scholarship:
Hope Lewis, Megan Burr

Margaret O'Bryan Brodnax Scholarship:
Megan Burr

Gaines S. Dobbins Scholarship
Audrey Ward, Katy Ward

James M. and Mildred Ray Hire Scholarship
Stone Hendrickson, Caroline Hammond

Myrtis Tureman Kurz Memorial Scholarship
Jud Potter, Bekah Ray

David Ingram Purser, Sr., and David Ingram
Purser, Jr., Scholarship
Hayden Davis

James L. Treadway Memorial Scholarship
Elizabeth Mullins

Dean Percy Pratt Burns Scholarship
Alex Da Ponte

Joseph L. and Dora Evelyn King Scholarship
Callie Phelps

Lizette Van Gelder Mitchell Scholarship
Sarah Howard

English Award Winners

Ladell Payne Exemplary English



Major Award Winner:

Alyssa Duck. A Senior English and French double major from Chattanooga, TN, Alyssa was a

Howard College Ambassador for the English and World Languages departments, and she worked in Samford's Communication Resource Center and French lab. A member of Sigma Tau Delta, Pi Delta Phi, Phi Kappa Phi, and Alpha Lambda Delta honor societies, Alyssa was a National Merit Scholar, a Presidential Scholar and last year's recipient of the English department's Dobbins scholarship. The department is proud of Alyssa and her achievements. We wish her the best of luck in her graduate studies this fall at Emory University.

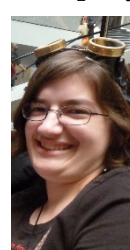
Vivian Lankford Campbell Creative Writing Award



winner: Taylor Burgess. A Senior English major with a concentration in Creative Writing, Taylor hales from Tallahassee, Florida. As an

accomplished poet and fiction writer, Taylor also serves as the Creative Writing editor for *Wide Angle*, a columnist and copy editor of the *Crimson*, and a writing tutor in the Communication Resource Center. As a member of Sigma Tau Delta, Alpha Lambda Delta, Omicron Delta Kappa, and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies, Taylor is also a Samford University Presidential Scholar and president of Restoring Eden. Taylor counts among his influences such writers as Kazuo Ishiguro, Zadie Smith, Sharon Olds, and Galway Kinnell. We look forward to the continued expression of Taylor's creativity as he tours the Southeast with his band this year and then pursues an MFA in creative writing.

Exemplary Film Studies Award:



Megan Burr is a junior in the Film Studies Concentration and is from Guntersville, Alabama. Along with her valuable leadership in Film Club and *Wide Angle*, which you've read

about, Megan is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and Alpha Lambda Delta. This year and last, she presented papers at the annual Sigma Tau Delta Conference, and she has published in *Water Cooler Journal*. Megan has won the Dean's scholarship, last year's Kurtz Memorial scholarship, and an Alabama grant.

Special Thanks to Dr. Whitt



Until last year, the London Studies scholarship was given annually in memory of C. Maxwell Lancaster. This year, the scholarship has been graciously reinvigorated with a one-time gift from Dr. Nancy Whitt. (Thank you, Dr. Whitt, for your wonderful generosity!) Dr. Whitt's gift to this scholarship is set up to assist a student to study at Samford's facility in London this fall. The deserving student is Rae Patterson.



Rae Patterson is a sophomore from Frisco, TX. She is a university fellow who holds an Academic scholarship and a one-time Legacy scholarship. Before

coming to college, she travelled to Uganda on a mission trip that has inspired her wanderlust, and this fall she will be travelling to London to study and will stay at the Daniel House.

Faculty Matters

Julie Steward was promoted to the rank of Full Professor this year. Her scholarly activities include continued work on a book about effective teaching strategies and a presentation of original poetry at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association annual convention in Vancouver, WA this past fall.

Geoff Wright presented a paper on Sebastian Junger's *War and Restrepo* at the Rocky Mountain MLA convention in Vancouver, WA (Fall 2013). He was elected Chair of the Film panel for RMMLA in 2014, and he will present a paper on Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds* at the convention next fall. Dr. Wright also had a paper on The Postapocalyptic Politics of Ethics in AMC's *The Walking Dead* accepted into a conference on dystopia hosted in Oxford, England, this summer. Dr. Wright served as faculty sponsor for the SU Film Club and as General Editor for *Wide Angle*.

Rosemary Fisk completed her term as president of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society and organized the 2014 conference: 'Hawthorne in the Berkshires' which was held at Massachusetts College of the Liberal Arts in June. She will lead a class to Myanmar next JanTerm.

Brad Busbee has been appointed co-editor for the international journal *Grundtvig-Studier*, based in Copenhagen, Denmark. His article "The Case for a Sleeping Spell in *Beowulf*" will be published this summer in *Medieval Perspectives*, an annual publication based at the University of Mississippi. Last fall he presented "China in Robinet Testard's Preservation Fantasy" at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Medieval Association in Boone, NC.

Keya Kraft will present a paper titled "Radcliffe, the Female Gothic, and the Disruption of Picturesque Modes of Viewing" at the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism (NASSR) annual conference in Washington, DC (July 2014).

Steve Epley concluded his term as Chair of the Samford Faculty Senate in May this year.

Steward Receives Buchanan Teaching Award



Julie Steward received the John H. Buchanan Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching. This is the premiere teaching award given each year by Samford University, as voted on by students.



Caroline Reid-Donaldson Wins the President's Cup

Donaldson, a double art and English major from Greer, S.C., received the President's Cup-the valedictorian award-for having the highest grade point average in the senior class. She was presented the trophy at the graduation ceremony for Samford's School of the Arts and Orlean Bullard School of Education. She is a University Fellow.

We Want To Hear From YOU!

Please let us know what you're up to. Call us at (205)726-2946, write us at English@samford.edu, or just drop by.

