

Office of the Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

February 19, 2007

Dear Friend:

In this fast-paced world we communicate by email, instant messaging, and quick telephone conversations. Unfortunately, "modern" methods of communication and learning often leave out a technique that historically has led to path-breaking discoveries, new innovations, greater civility, more understanding among disparate groups, and a better quality of life. The technique: long conversations with a relatively small group of people in a relaxed and comfortable environment.

On Thursday, March 22, 2007, starting at 6 p.m., the USC Upstate College of Arts and Sciences will feature "An Evening of Great Conversations." On that night, over an elegant dinner at the Piedmont Club in downtown Spartanburg, the College will host eleven conversations on a variety of important topics (please see the enclosed). Each dinner table will engage in a different conversation, facilitated by a faculty expert on the topic. You have the opportunity to join one of these lively conversations for the evening. Although the method may be "traditional" or even "old-fashioned," the topics are fascinating and cutting edge!

If you enjoy talking over ideas with colleagues and friends (old and new) in an extremely inviting environment, then please select **your great conversation** for March 22nd. One word of caution, though: please sign up early for this special event. Our previous Great Conversations dinners have sold out in advance, and a number of people were disappointed that they could not be included. Please don't be left out. Sign up for the conversation of your choice today. Enclosed is your map for the evening.

You will see that several tables will feature special guests for the evening. The day after the Great Conversations event, USC Upstate is hosting an International Conference that will feature a number of prominent speakers from around the globe. We are honored that several of these speakers will join our Great Conversations tables. We have enclosed a separate postcard with information on the International Conference to be held the day after Great Conversations. We would love to see you at the conference on March 23rd as well as the Great Conversations dinner on March 22nd.

Sincerely,



York Bradshaw
Dean

Conversation...

"In my opinion, the most fruitful and natural play of the mind is in *conversation*. I find it sweeter than any other action in life; if I were forced to choose, I think I would rather lose my sight than my hearing and voice."

--Michel Eyquem De Montaigne (1533-1592)

"*Talk* is by far the most accessible of pleasures. It completes our education, founds and fosters friendships, and can be enjoyed at any age and in almost any state of health."

--Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1895)

"The first ingredient in *conversation* is truth, the next good sense, the third good humor, and the fourth wit."

--Sir William Temple (1628-1699)

"To effectively *communicate*, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to communicate with others."

--Anthony Robbins (1960-)

THE CONVERSATIONS

1. China: The New World Leader in the 21st Century?

Today, no country is being talked about more than China. A booming economy, extensive construction projects, and a population of more than 1.2 billion people have positioned China as a world leader. In fact, some analysts claim that China will be the most influential country in the world during the current century. Will this happen? Or will poverty, pollution, and lack of democracy slow down or even doom these projections? Don't miss an opportunity to sit at this table and consider all of the possibilities. You will leave with a much better understanding of and appreciation for this remarkable country.

Your table host will be **Dr. Qiliang He**, Assistant Professor of East Asian History. A native of China, Dr. He teaches a variety of courses related to history and politics in China and other Asian countries. He has also published a number of outstanding articles on China. This table will feature two special guests. **Mr. Jun Fang** and **Mr. Jiang Zhao** are both First Secretaries for Education at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC. Their contributions to the table will be invaluable, as they clearly know the contemporary scene in both China and the United States.

2. So, You are Running for President

Presidential politics are inherently interesting – from the institution and its place in American politics to the personalities who occupy the office. Since we are currently witnessing the most open field of presidential contenders since 1928, presidential politics are going to be especially interesting in the coming year. This **nonpartisan** table conversation will focus on presidential politics in modern America, the dramatic landscape of the race this electoral cycle, and an unbiased evaluation of the candidates and their chances. Drawing on insights from political science and history, the table will discuss why presidential politics are so interesting, and why it means so much in America. The conversation will also take special note of South Carolina's featured place in both the Republican and Democratic primary schedules. It is going to be a terrific evening! And who said you shouldn't discuss politics at the dinner table?

Your table host will be **Dr. Timothy Dale**, Assistant Professor of Political Science. Dr. Dale teaches courses and conducts research on American politics. A popular professor and political analyst, he has the unique ability to make politics fun, interesting, and understandable. All in a nonpartisan way!

3. Incredible Change: Creating (and Sustaining) Democracy and Development in South Africa

What country has experienced more change over the last 20 years than virtually any other? Easy answer: South Africa! Less than 20 years ago, South Africa was governed by apartheid, Nelson Mandela was in prison, and the country was isolated from the international community. Today, South Africa is a democratic country with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, Nelson Mandela is the former President of South Africa, and the country is embraced by the international community. What caused this incredible transition? Can it be sustained? And what are the lessons for other countries, including the United States?

Your table host will be **Dr. Jim Brown**, Professor of History and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Brown has conducted research and taught about Africa for three decades. This table will also feature two special guests. **Mr. Coetsee Bester** was a member of the first democratically elected parliament in South Africa (1994) and has worked closely with both former Presidents Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. He was part of the transition to democracy and, therefore, is in a unique position to give you an inside view of what contributed to the changes in South Africa. And **Mr. Kgosi Maepa** is an executive with ABSA Brokers in South Africa and a leading consultant on business ethics. He is also Deputy CEO of Young Entrepreneurs for the New

Partnership for Africa's Development, a dynamic organization that promotes economic, social, educational, and health initiatives across the African continent.

4. Community Outreach in Spartanburg and the World: Developing Youth Leaders and Building Character

Just over a year ago, USC Upstate was one of only 13 universities throughout the nation to be awarded a "Community Outreach Partnership Center" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Since that time, USC Upstate has initiated programs that have reached more than 1,700 young people, primarily on the Southside of Spartanburg. Two of the most successful programs include (1) a dynamic fine arts initiative that teaches young people how to resolve conflicts and (2) a youth leadership institute that develops the next generation of leaders. Learn more about these special programs and see what a difference they are making in Spartanburg! Moreover, this conversation will look at several community outreach projects in other areas of the world that emphasize youth development.

This table will be hosted by two faculty members. **Dr. Rachelle Prioleau**, Chair of the Department of Fine Arts and Communication Studies, is nationally-known for using the fine arts to develop conflict resolution models. And **Dr. Jennifer Parker**, Assistant Professor of Psychology, has published extensively in the area of youth development and leadership. Together, Drs. Prioleau and Parker are responsible for the incredible success of USC Upstate's youth-oriented programs in Spartanburg. This table will also feature a special guest. **Dr. Stephen Ndegwa** is a policy analyst for the World Bank and a prolific author on issues related to public policy and non-government organizations. He has broad experience working in Africa and Asia, particularly on projects that improve the lives of young people.

5. West to East and East to West: Europe's Continuing Transformation in the Modern Era

Less than two decades ago the Berlin Wall came crashing down, communism ended, and new European countries were created. These historical events produced many other changes: new government structures, new educational systems, new medical schemes, new security arrangements, a new common currency, the expansion of the European Union, and others. How successful have these changes been throughout Europe? And what are the challenges ahead for this important region? And, in the end, will Europe develop into the most powerful region in the world, or will cultural divisions, political disagreements, and economic differences slow down this area?

Your table host will be **Dr. Rob McCormick**, Assistant Professor of History. He has written extensively and taught courses on Germany and other European countries. Joining Dr. McCormick will be two special guests from Europe. **Dr. Nataliya Lishchenko** is the Director of the Nursing Institute at Ternopil Medical University in the Ukraine – part of the old Soviet Union. She travels frequently to the United States and has participated in a highly successful exchange program between her institution and the Mary Black School of Nursing at USC Upstate. And **Professor Guenter Wendt** is Professor of Social Science at Magdeburg Technical University in Germany – part of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Many German institutions have undergone enormous change over the last 15 or so years, and Professor Wendt will discuss some of these transitions.

6. Spartanburg History through Literature: The Unique Contribution of African-American Writers

Several prominent African-American writers have included Spartanburg in their fictive worlds. The books depict the city at various points in its development. This table conversation will focus on these profoundly important literary contributions. Several locations, institutions, names, and personalities are recognizable to discerning readers who are familiar with Spartanburg. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about the history, culture, and social relations of your city – all

through the eyes of gifted writers who tell the story from a wonderfully “different” vantage point. This table discussion is a fantastic addition to the celebration of Spartanburg’s 175th anniversary.

Your table host will be **Dr. Warren Carson**, Professor of English and Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Carson is a nationally-known author and expert on African-American literature. His numerous books, articles, and reviews have helped to define the field. Dr. Carson is also director of the USC Upstate Gospel Choir, well-known throughout the southeast and beyond for its inspiring performances and outstanding young people.

7. Everyone Wants this Magic: The Many Faces of Education around the World

Virtually every government in the world stresses the importance of education – at least in theory. Education leads to economic development, higher incomes, better quality of life, empowerment of women, and other benefits. Although governments usually agree on the value of education, they often disagree over the best way to achieve a high-quality educational system. Moreover, many countries face significant challenges when trying to improve school enrollment and quality. This table conversation will look at various educational systems in the world and discuss how they cope with change amid different cultural, political, social, and economic situations.

Your table host will be **Dr. York Bradshaw**, Professor of Sociology and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Bradshaw’s early research was on education in East Africa. He will be joined by two special guests. **Ms. Penny McNair** is Headmistress of the Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) in South Africa. She led the PHSG through a remarkable transition as South Africa became a democracy in 1994. And **Dr. Charles Love** is Dean of the School of Education at USC Upstate. He is nationally known for developing curriculum models and training teachers for international education.

8. A Reflection of Society: Discovering the World of Southern Folk Art

What, exactly, is folk art? Why has it become so popular recently? What does it say about society? And what do collectors look for in such art? Table participants will discuss each of these questions during the evening’s conversation. In addition, conversationalists will have the opportunity to view several pieces of Southern folk art at the table and discuss their value in the current world of art history. Art is a reflection of society, and you will come away from the evening with a better understanding of this point. In fact, the next time you see a piece of folk art, you will see much more than “just” a wonderful piece of folk art.

Your table host will be **Dr. Mary Lou Hightower**, an artist and long-time art educator who teaches in the Department of Fine Arts and Communication Studies. She has taught art to a wide range of ages, from elementary school to university students. She has a special interest in folk art and teaches a popular course on the topic. Dr. Hightower is also extremely active in university outreach programs that teach art to children throughout the Upstate.

9. Islam in the Modern World: Separating Fact from Fiction

The world’s second largest religion is little understood in the United States. Americans often ask the following questions: Is Islam a violent religion that spreads terrorism and hatred? Is it a peaceful religion that encourages tolerance and humility? Is it something else? And what is the difference between Shiite and Sunni Muslims? These questions and more will be asked and discussed during the evening. Instead of the emotionalism that frequently accompanies discussions of Islam in America, this conversation will focus on fact and fiction. You will leave with a better understanding of Islam in the U.S. and other countries.

Your table host will be **Dr. David Damrel**, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. He joined the USC Upstate faculty this year and has already been awarded a very prestigious Fulbright Fellowship to develop a comparative religion program in Indonesia! We are extremely fortunate to have

successfully recruited Dr. Damrel, a Duke Ph.D. who has published widely in the field and is considered a national expert on Islam. During the evening, Dr. Damrel will give a short primer on Islam (Islam 101), and then you will discuss the facts and fiction associated with this religion.

10. Saving Money and Saving Lives: Enter the World of Computer Simulators and Artificial Intelligence

What do soldiers, airline pilots, doctors, and students have in common? Answer: they all benefit from computer simulators that improve skills, save money, and save lives. For example, training a soldier for battle is extremely difficult and expensive; it costs more than \$5,000 an hour to operate an F-16 fighter jet. Thus, military computer simulation systems are used to supplement the training process by immersing pilots (and other soldiers) into a computer-generated environment that very closely resembles the conditions they will face in battle. Computer simulations and artificial intelligence are widely used in other fields as well – even in the education of young children. This table conversation will delve into the world of computer simulation and artificial intelligence, and it will discuss how they can be used – and abused – in contemporary society.

You will have the opportunity to learn from one of USC Upstate's most popular professors. **Dr. Sebastian van Delden** – Assistant Professor of Computer Science and director of the University's Robotics Laboratory – will be your host. He has published research in the field, presented it at prestigious conferences, and worked with companies to program their robots. Whether you are an expert in computer simulation and artificial intelligence or know nothing about the topics, you will enjoy this table!

11. The Real CSI: Chemistry, Crime, and Forensics

Television shows don't begin to tell the whole story! Crime scene investigations are neither glamorous nor simple – but they are extremely important. Real crime scene investigations are a sophisticated blend of evidence gathering and chemistry, of outstanding police work and forensic science. Learn the entire process of how serious crimes are *really* solved during this conversation. The next time you watch CSI, you may find yourself saying, "Oh no, it's not really done that way. Actually, they . . ."

You will have the opportunity to learn from two experts in the field. **Dr. Christopher Bender** is an Associate Professor of Chemistry and director of the forensic science program at USC Upstate. And **Dr. Stephen Ruegger** is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice with a background in law enforcement. Together, these two individuals have extensive knowledge and experience on what it takes to solve puzzling crimes.



An Evening of Great Conversations
Thursday, March 22, 2007
The Piedmont Club
361 E. Main Street, Spartanburg, SC
Reception: 6:00 p.m.
Dinner: 6:45 p.m.

Reservations for this event are \$65 per person. Please reserve your place no later than Monday, March 19th by calling 864-503-5218 (Office of University Advancement, Susan Hodge/Ryan Boggs) with your Visa or Mastercard, or mail your check and reservation form to:

Susan Hodge/Ryan Boggs
Office of University Advancement
University of South Carolina Upstate
800 University Way
Spartanburg, SC 29303
Email: rboggs@uscupstate.edu

Checks should be made out to the Carolina Piedmont Foundation (ref: "Great Conversations") and should be received in our office by March 19th.

Cut along dotted line

Great Conversations Dinner Reservation Form

Your Name: _____

Other Guest Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Menu request: Beef Tenderloin and Crab Cake Pasta and Vegetables

Conversation Choices: 1st choice: _____ 2nd choice: _____ 3rd choice: _____

Please indicate which conversation you want to join for the evening (see conversation numbers on the previous pages). Preferences will be assigned in the order they are received. Please designate a second and third choice in case your first preference is not available. Reserve your seat soon! The last Great Conversations event sold out in advance.

In the event you should need to cancel your reservation, a full refund will be granted until Monday, March 19th. Thereafter, a partial refund may be given.

Please note that business attire is required at the Piedmont Club.