At First Glance...There's More Than Meets the Eye

For many, graduating cum laude while double majoring in mathematics and computer science would be enough academic achievement for a lifetime. For 2010 USC Upstate graduate Nicole Tobias, it was just the beginning.

After completing her degrees at USC Upstate, Tobias enrolled in Clemson's computer science Ph.D. program. As part of her studies, she now works as a graduate research assistant in the Biometrics and Pattern Recognition Lab (BPRL).

“My work is currently focused on soft biometrics in the presence of age,” said Tobias. “Soft biometrics refers to the study similar to biometrics; however, it is not entirely concerned with establishing the identity of an individual. It is more concerned with establishing other information that may help us narrow down the search space when trying to establish the identity of an individual.”

According to Tobias, aging drastically changes the appearance of the human face, causing all sorts of problems with recognition.

“I am interested in finding models that would help reduce the inaccuracies in facial recognition and the sub-areas that are caused due to aging of the face,” she added.

Tobias attributes much of what she’s accomplished, thus far, to her start at USC Upstate.

“I really value the connections I made at Upstate,” she said. “The faculty got to know you and care about you. Many of them also became mentors to me, and I am very grateful for that. I definitely liked that I was a name and not just a number on a roster.”

Tobias hopes to complete her doctoral study in May 2015.

Capital Campaign Contribution to Fund Lecture Series

In response to USC Upstate’s ongoing $50 million, five-year capital campaign, 2011 Arts and Sciences graduate Chris Crowley and his wife Garrow have provided a significant contribution that will be used to establish The Dr. John B. Edmunds Jr. Distinguished Lecture Series.

The lecture series will feature important scholars from around the world who will examine significant issues in history, political science, philosophy, American studies, or religion. The speaker will deliver a keynote address on the USC Upstate campus, and the following day, will attend several classes and interact closely with students in the History, Political Science, Philosophy and American Studies Departments.

The series is named for the first faculty member to be hired by the university when it opened, the founding faculty member of USC Upstate’s History Department, and first dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
NEWS BRIEFS

Mobilizing the Middle East around Environmental Issues

Dr. Lizabeth Zack, an associate professor of sociology, has been researching environmental activism in Jordan since 2006 when she spent a year in the area as a Fulbright Scholar. This past summer, she returned to continue her study.

During her 2006-2007 trip, Zack saw evidence in protest campaigns, the media, and government policy-making circles of a growing concern over how natural resources were being used. She decided to document some of the ways Jordanians were mobilizing around environmental issues.

“Over the last few years, I’ve been tracking individuals and groups mobilized around various environmental issues, such as industrial pollution, recycling, water, and species and habitat protection,” said Zack. “This latest project focuses on efforts to address the decline of the Dead Sea, an important World Heritage site that sits on the border of Jordan, Israel and the West Bank and is known for its healing properties and biblical significance.”

Williams Awarded National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

Dr. George Williams, assistant professor of English, has received a $49,339 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities.

Williams will be the project director for a team that will support development of a tool to make digital texts in the humanities accessible to visually impaired readers by converting text to Braille. He and his team will be responsible for designing and deploying a Word Press-based accessibility tool that will create Braille content for end-users who are blind or have low vision.

Flynn Contributes to Understanding of Violence against Animals

Sociology professor Clif Flynn’s new book, “Understanding Animal Abuse: A Sociological Analysis,” is his latest contribution to the growing field of anthrozoology. Flynn’s work seeks to better understand the connection between animal abuse and human violence, an area he has studied for 15 years.

Over the past two decades, anthrozoology has grown from a relatively small area of study to a modern interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of human-animal relationships, interactions, and perceptions. Through his teaching, international conference presentations, and books, Flynn has been at the forefront of the field’s growth.
Jay Coffman Takes Center Stage

By day Jay Coffman is known as a German instructor at the University of South Carolina Upstate. But when not on the USC Upstate campus, Coffman is serving as the executive artistic director of the Spartanburg Little Theatre, where he is making amazing things happen.

This season opened with Rodgers and Hammerstein’s much-loved musical “The King and I.” All seven of the performances were sold out, generating excitement for the 2012-2013 season. Coffman is now preparing for the November production of “Moonlight and Magnolias.” The season also includes “Chicago,” “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” and ends with Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire.”

Colleen O’Brien Receives Prestigious Fulbright Award to Study In London

Dr. Colleen C. O’Brien, an assistant professor of early American literature, has been awarded the Fulbright Research Chair in North American Studies at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada during the Fall 2012 semester.

O’Brien will research the history of black loyalist communities, African Americans who emigrated to Canada after the Revolutionary War and eventually settled in Sierra Leone. O’Brien is one of approximately 1,100 U.S. faculty and professionals who will travel abroad through the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program in 2012-2013.

Akkerman Named Series Editor for Scarecrow Press Music Project

Dr. Gregg Akkerman, associate professor of music and director of jazz studies and commercial music, was recently named “series editor” for an upcoming line of books from New York publisher Scarecrow Press.

The new series, titled “Experiencing Music,” will feature books written by performing musicians to describe the act of creating, playing, and recording their art in terms appreciable by non-performing music enthusiasts. Topics will be both genre based, such as blues, reggae or classical, and artist based, such as Duke Ellington, the Grateful Dead, and Jimi Hendrix.

In addition, Akkerman’s own book, “The Last Balladeer: The Johnny Hartman Story,” was recently published by Scarecrow Press. The work is the first biography of jazz vocalist Johnny Hartman (1923-1983), a critically acclaimed artist known for his iconic album with saxophonist John Coltrane and as the singing voice in Clint Eastwood’s “The Bridges of Madison County.”

In the course of his research, Akkerman interviewed legendary figures such as Tony Bennett, Billy Taylor, Bill Cosby, Jon Hendricks, and Kurt Elling.

Johnson’s Work Featured in “Rethinking Women’s and Gender Studies”

Dr. Lisa Johnson, director and associate professor of women’s and gender studies, will have a chapter of her work featured in the forthcoming book from Routledge. Johnson’s chapter is on the critical genealogy of the term “sexuality” in the academic discipline of women’s and gender studies.

“Rethinking Women’s and Gender Studies,” which is edited by Catherine M. Orr, Ann Braitwaite and Diane Lichtenstein, re-examines the field’s foundational assumptions by identifying and critically analyzing eighteen of its key terms. Each essay investigates a single term (e.g., feminism, interdisciplinarity, intersectionality) by asking how it has come to be understood and mobilized in women’s and gender studies and then explicates the roles it plays in both producing and shutting down possible versions of the field.

The goal of the book is to trace and expose critical paradoxes, ironies, and contradictions embedded in the language of women’s and gender studies—from its high theory to its casual conversations—that relies on these key terms.

Neary Studies ‘McDonaldization of Society’

Professor of Sociology Brigitte Neary traveled to the southern wine-producing region of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, September 4-25 as part of her recently awarded sabbatical.

Neary studied what distinguished sociologist George Ritzer termed the “McDonaldization of Society” – “the process by which the principles of the fast-food industry (characterized primarily by the ever-increasing search for efficiency) are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as of the rest of the world.”

She conducted unobtrusive observation in fast food restaurants (eight American and four German) to investigate how areas rooted in a rich local culture and history localize the inescapable process of globalization.
Leaders of Tomorrow Brighten Downtown Spartanburg

Fifty local rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors left their mark on downtown Spartanburg this summer. Literally.

As part of USC Upstate’s sixth annual Youth Leadership Summer Institute, the students created a mural on one side of Magnolia Street Pub and another building across the street, painting silhouettes against a kaleidoscope of color.

The Institute, directed by USC Upstate psychology professor Jennifer Parker, is a one-week residential experience aimed at inspiring students to become more aware of issues regarding their physical and social environments. Through lectures, workshops and field trips, students examined leadership and civic engagement from both local and global perspectives. This year’s theme was “Community Vibrancy.”

Visual Arts Program Graduate Wins Greenville ADDY Competition

Stacey Gardner, a December 2011 graphic design graduate of the University of South Carolina Upstate’s visual arts program, is already receiving professional acclaim from her peers. This past spring, Gardner received a Gold Student ADDY award for her Guinness Heist Campaign from the American Advertising Federation (AAF) of Greenville.

ADDYs are considered the industry’s most prestigious creative achievement, and many in the advertising field strive for it. They are presented each year by the AAF which is made up of 40,000 professionals in 200 national clubs.

Gardner entered three ads in a series. The first, called “The Really Long Straw Technique,” shows connected straws bent toward the beer glass. The second ad, “The Drunken Cowboy Technique,” shows the glass held by a lasso. Finally, the third ad, called “The Old Geezer Technique,” shows a walking cane touching the glass.

FACULTY UPDATES

Faculty Retirements
Dr. Danielle Raquidiel
Dr. Jack Turner
Dr. Linda Saucier

Promoted to Associate Professor with Tenure
Dr. Rachel Snow
Dr. Reid Toth
Dr. Susan Ruppel
Dr. Andrew Beer
Dr. Muhammad Hameed
Dr. Wei Zhong

Promoted to Full Professor
Dr. Andy Myers

Dr. Tyronne Toland
Dr. Angelina Tzacheva
Dr. Paul Grady
Dr. David Damrel
Dr. Celena Kusch
Dr. George Williams
New Arts and Sciences Faculty

Dr. Xinli Wang
assistant professor of mathematics
(began January 2012)

Dr. Virginia “Ginny” Williams-Webb
assistant professor of biology (microbiology)

Dr. Tricia Oney
assistant professor of music (commercial)

Dr. Araceli Hernandez-Laroche
assistant professor of comparative literature & modern languages

Dr. Virginia “Ginny” Williams-Webb
assistant professor of biology (microbiology)

Dr. Scott Meek
instructor of psychology

Dr. Chun Yu Ai
assistant professor of computer sciences
(begins January 2013)

Dr. Anselm Omoike
assistant professor of chemistry

Dr. Araceli Hernandez-Laroche
assistant professor of comparative literature & modern languages

Dr. Jonathan “Brett” Barwick
assistant professor of mathematics

Dr. Scott Meek
instructor of psychology

Dr. Kandy Velazques
instructor of biology

Giving Back To Ensure Continued Success

The College of Arts and Sciences is the heart of USC Upstate. We are committed to being one of the Southeast’s best Colleges of Arts and Sciences at a liberal arts university. Our diverse student body participates in a wide variety of exceptional programs and learning opportunities that prepare them to be effective regional, national, and global citizens.

You can help further these worthy endeavors with your gift. Visit www.uscupstate.edu/academics/arts_sciences/ and link to Online Giving today!
Shoestring Players 2012-13 Season Under Way

The curtain is up and the Shoestring Players have begun their 2012-2013 season. All shows will be performed in the Humanities and Performing Arts Center Theatre on the USC Upstate campus.

To purchase tickets, call the Performing Arts Center Box Office at USC Upstate Monday-Friday from 1-5 p.m. at (864) 503-5695. For additional information, contact Michael Dickins, Performing Arts Center box office and art gallery manager, at (864) 503-5868 or mdickins@uscupstate.edu.

“Is He Dead?”
October 4-6, 8 p.m. • October 7, 3 p.m.

“Look Homeward Angel”
November 15-17, 8 p.m. • November 18, 3 p.m.

“As It Is In Heaven by Arlene Hutton”
February 21-23, 8 p.m. • February 24, 3 p.m.

“Assassins”
April 11-13, 8 p.m. • April 14, 3 p.m.

ALSO ON TAP

Student Piano Recitals
September 27 at 5 p.m.
Humanities & Performing Arts Center Recital Hall
Directed by Susan Davis, presented by the USC Upstate Music Department

Curtis R. Harley Art Gallery
September 28-October 26
Twelve Invited Artists, Still Life Invitational, Joint Exhibition with Spartanburg Art Museum
Humanities & Performing Arts Center First Floor Lobby

Humanities & Performing Arts Center
November 5-9
Stephen Unwin, artistic director of London’s Rose Theatre, will conduct master classes at USC Upstate.

Keep In Touch With The College of Arts & Sciences
Web: uscupstate.edu/academics/arts_sciences/