Moving Forward: Progress in Graduate Education at Southern Miss

Dean’s Report (April 2015)

Student Spotlight

Daniel McNair, M.S. Student in the Department of Biological Sciences, was named Graduate Assistant of the Year 2015. Daniel was selected from a large pool of master’s and doctoral nominees. Daniel’s major professor is Dr. Mac Alford. Daniel’s research involves cataloging vascular plants of Wayne County, MS. In addition he is digitizing USM’s herbarium collections as a part of the Magnolia grandiflora Project, funded by the National Science Foundation. After learning photography as a necessity of his project, Daniel garnered 1st and 2nd place photography awards at a national conference, and his work is featured in online resources such as The University of Washington Herbarium Image Collection. Daniel published two peer-reviewed manuscripts and presented his research at local, regional, and national meetings. The Graduate School is delighted to honor Daniel as the inaugural GA of the Year.

Congratulations to new National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Fellows! On March 31, four current USM students were named GRFP fellows, including Laken Kendrick, a senior in Polymer Science, Abagail Williams and Cassandra Reese, both doctoral students in Polymer Science, and Dexter Dean, a doctoral student in Chemistry and...
Biochemistry. Lisa Lauderdale, a master’s student in Psychology received honorable mention. GRFP fellows receive a stipend of $34,000 per twelve-month fellowship year for a maximum of three years. The financial support may be used in any three, 12-month units, starting in summer (June 1) or fall (September 1) over a five-year period that begins in 2015. USM will receive a $12,000 Cost of Education Allowance in lieu of all required tuition and fees for each of the three years the students choose to utilize the fellowship funding.

Faculty Kudos

Dr. Douglas Masterson was named the 2015 Graduate Mentor of the Year. Dr. Masterson, an Associate Professor of Chemistry in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, earned his B.S. in Chemistry in 1995 from the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Oklahoma in 1999. Following a three year postdoctoral fellowship at Vanderbilt in the laboratory of Dr. Ned A. Porter, Dr. Masterson taught general chemistry for non-scientists at Vanderbilt (2003-2004) before arriving at USM in 2004 as an Assistant Professor. Promoted to Associate Professor in 2009, Dr. Masterson was appointed associate chair of his department the same year. He has published numerous articles with his students in peer-reviewed journals and received funding from the American Chemical Society, The Eppley Foundation for Research, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation. Dr. Masterson has mentored Master’s, Ph.D., and undergraduate students in chemistry. His students describe him as an enthusiastic teacher who is patient and committed to their success. In addition to ensuring his students are well-prepared chemists, he considers their career goals and tailors individualized development plans to equip them to meet those goals. His students and colleagues praise his commitment to quality graduate student mentorship. Congratulations to Dr. Masterson.

- Improving Efficiency in the Graduate School
  - Changes in AdmissionPros:
    - Automatic email reminders: Emails are being sent out on Monday mornings to alert all reviewers to log into the portal to review applications. The email reminder is prompted after an application has been in “My Reviews to Complete” for at least 7 days and is sent once a week.
    - New Prospects* tab on the Review Portal: AdmissionPros installed a new tab in the review portal entitled PROSPECTS. This tab will now allow reviewers to view potential students who have not yet applied to graduate school but have shown interest in specific academic programs. To view, reviewers should double click on the student’s name to access biographic/demographic information and any official test scores received. By clicking on the email address, communications can be sent to the prospect’s email account, facilitating easy communication. It is important to note that the email will launch from the reviewer’s email account and not that of the department. Finally, these are prospective student records; therefore, any emails that are sent personally will not be captured in the student’s contact history.
*These prospective student records come from GRE/GMAT scores, recruitment fairs, or from people who have shown interest via our web page or message board. This feature will allow us all to recruit these prospective students and grow our enrollment.

- **Certificate and Non-degree Applications:**
  - Both certificate and non-degree applications are now available online through AdmissionPros. Departments **must** remove links to paper applications, discard any hard copies of applications on hand, and refer students to the Graduate School application portal. Paper applications will not be accepted past the summer application period. Certificate applications will be reviewable by departments if requested. Non-degree applications will not be reviewable by departments. However, to block non-degree coded students from registering for classes without permission, a restriction will be placed on all graduate courses. Non-degree students will be referred to departments to obtain a class permission override to register. Once class permission is granted by the departments, non-degree students will register themselves for classes.

- **Policies:**
  - **Graduate Student Leave of Absence**
    The following policy was approved by Human Resources and can be accessed on the Graduate School website at [https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/leave-absence](https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/leave-absence).

    "Under special circumstances (illness, family hardship, military service etc.) a student may request a leave of absence from his/her graduate program. A leave of absence will be granted for one semester or longer as circumstances warrant. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted via the Leave of Absence Request Form to the department chair or director. The chair/director should forward the Leave of Absence Form to the Graduate School indicating the department’s recommendation regarding leave. Upon final review by the Dean of the Graduate School, the student and chair/director will be notified of the final decision."

  - **Degree Applications and Deferment**
    Application for Degree forms should be submitted the semester prior to the anticipated graduation (fall for spring; spring for summer; summer for fall), according to posted deadlines. These applications require the signature of the advisor and chair, and should not be approved if the student clearly will not be ready for graduation the following semester. The new $50 late fee for graduate applications submitted after the appropriate deadline is effective July 1. A graduation deferment request must be submitted if the student will not complete as anticipated. Currently the deferment request requires a $50 deferment fee. Effective July 1, the Graduate School will waive the fee for the first deferment request. However, any subsequent deferment requests must be accompanied by the $50 deferment fee.
o Responsible Conduct of Research Training

Current Graduate School policy on Responsible Conduct of Research Training states, "All graduate students must complete the RCR training modules required by the Graduate School and their departments the first semester they are enrolled in graduate school." Yet, Graduate School degree auditors find that many students have not completed this training late in their graduate programs. Putting off RCR training defeats the purpose of the training requirement. Therefore, during Fall 2015, a Block Next Term service indicator will be placed on all new and continuing students who have not completed RCR training, prohibiting them from registering for Spring 2016 (or later semester) classes until training is completed. This new restriction will not impact registration for the upcoming Fall 2015 semester.

o Application fee increase

As a reminder, all application fees will increase to $60 effective July 1.

➤ Professional Development

• Professionals in Preparation

A call for applications for participation in “Professionals in Preparation: a Pilot Program Aimed at Strengthening Graduate Student Professional Development” was emailed to department chairs, deans, and associate deans on March 31. Professionals in Preparation (PIP) will engage an annual cohort of 20-25 graduate students from any discipline. The goal of PIP is to strengthen students’ professional presence and personal growth, giving them a competitive edge in the increasingly-challenging job market. Students will participate in a 2-semester program designed to enhance “transferable skills” which are essential to success in any discipline. The students will:

o Participate in a series of seminars and workshops designed to develop communication skills, leadership, integrity, networking skills, and personal development
o Develop an individual development plan
o Learn to be effective mentors
o Participate in community outreach
o Compete for $500 scholarships to support domestic travel to present their research/creative works at a national-level professional conference or exhibition

Applications are due Monday, April 27 at noon. Please encourage students to participate.

➤ Recruiting

• Graduate School recruiting during April included the following events: Rust College Fair, William Carey University Fair, USM Career Fair, USM Graduate School Recruitment Fair/Troy University campus visit. All prospect information is available via the AdmissionPros Prospect tab.
Focus on Graduate Education at USM

- 2015 Graduate Student Hall of Fame

Portraits of twelve graduate students were unveiled in McCain Library on Monday afternoon, April 6 to a packed house. Featured students were joined by mentors, department chairs, graduate coordinators, administrators, colleagues, and friends. An Open House followed the unveiling. This event kicked off USM’s first-ever participation in Graduate Student Appreciation Week.

Left, Drew Davidson, next to his portrait, is a College of Arts & Letters featured student. Drew is pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre. Right, students and attendees from all colleges enjoyed refreshments at the Graduate School Open House which followed the portrait unveiling.

- Graduate Student Appreciation Week Was a Success!

In conjunction with the national event, Graduate Student Appreciation Week was celebrated at USM April 6-10.

Our graduate students had the opportunity to:
  - Attend professional development workshops and departmental events
    - Aquila Digital Community and Citation Management workshops were co-hosted and led by Library staff Josh Cromwell and Elena Azadbakht, respectively. Those workshops were also attended by students at Gulf Park, GCRL, and Stennis via interactive video networking. About 25 students attended each workshop.
    - Thirty-four students attended a workshop entitled Plagiarism: What Grad Students Need to Know, hosted by the Office of Research Integrity and led by Dr. Sam Bruton. The workshop is currently available by enrolling in Blackboard Collaborate.
    - Candace Bright, Research Associate in the Department of Political Science, International Development, and International Affairs, held a workshop on Social Network Analysis that was attended by 11 students.
  - Mingle with other graduate students at the “Live at Five” mixer hosted by the Graduate Student Senate and sponsored by the Graduate School.
• About 40 students enjoyed music, food, and fun at the season’s first Live at Five at Town Square Park.
  ▪ Represent their graduate programs at an on-campus graduate school recruitment fair in the Union on Friday from 10:00 A.M. to noon.
  ▪ Nearly 30 USM graduate programs were on display at the Graduate School Fair, held on Friday, April 10 from 9:00 AM to noon in the Union. Our own undergraduate students, as well as students visiting from Troy University* were able to meet students or other departmental representatives to discuss graduate degree programs.
  ▪ Attend functions hosted by their home departments.

*The Graduate School hosted an on-campus visit by 35 students from Troy University on Friday morning, April 10. The Troy students were treated to breakfast and lunch, attended a Q&A session by Graduate School staff, toured the campus, and attended the recruitment fair.

• The 2015 Dr. Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium and Luncheon was held March 25 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM in the Thad Cochran Center. The 2015 Graduate Research Symposium featured a new, half-day format topped off by the awards luncheon. Another new addition was the poster session. One-hundred high-quality oral (83) and poster (17) presentations were delivered. Cash awards were presented for most outstanding oral presentations (Yarbrough Awards) and best poster presentations by college. See below for winners. Also new this year were the inaugural Graduate Assistant of the Year and Graduate Mentor of the Year awards, won by Daniel McNair and Dr. Doug Masterson, respectively (page one). A special treat was the keynote address delivered by Dr. Melinda Gray Lucas, a Hattiesburg dentist and daughter-in-law of President Emeritus Aubrey K. Lucas, who discussed perseverance in the face of adversity as illustrated by her trek to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro with her family following a diagnosis of breast cancer.

Yarbrough Award Winners:
Adam Collier- Ed & Psych
Flem-Flam Flemister- Nursing/Health
Jeremy Kellet- Arts & Letters
Keith Parsons- Science & Tech

Poster Award Winners:
Joyce Lui- Ed & Psych/Arts & Letters
Ramesh Ramakrishnan- Science & Tech/Health
Scenes from the Graduate Student Research Symposium and banquet. Top: Award winners are pictured with VP for Research Gordon Cannon and Dean Coats; Middle left: Emily Jane Dever, Educational Studies and Research, presents her poster; Middle right: Dr. Melinda Gray Lucas gives the keynote address; Bottom left: Cory Russo, Coastal Sciences, receives a departmental award; Bottom right: Emmalea Gomberg, GSS President, emcees the program.