

GRADUATE DEAN'S REPORT: INFORMATION AND UPDATES FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Spring 2018/January

INAUGURAL ISSUE OF GRADUATE SCHOOL MAGAZINE LAUNCHED

The winter 2017-18 issue of *arete*, a brand-new magazine produced by Graduate School staff and graduate students is hot off the press for January release. The magazine showcases excellence in graduate education at Southern Miss by featuring articles about faculty research projects involving graduate students, student participation in professional development activities, exemplary graduate mentorship, and recognition of outstanding student accomplishments. The contributions of the following individuals made the magazine possible: Vanessa Molden, former Coordinator of Special Projects in the Graduate School, served as managing editor; mass communication and journalism graduate students Brandy Medders and Karyn Lewis were responsible for design and layout and article content; and USM photographers Kelly Dunn and Danny Rawls provided many of the photographs for this issue. The magazine will be published annually to spotlight graduate education at Southern Miss and to support recruiting and fund raising efforts.

GRADUATE COMPETITIVE TRAVEL AWARD (GCTA) RECIPIENTS NAMED

Seventeen master's and doctoral students were selected by a panel of faculty judges to receive Graduate Competitive Travel Awards (GCTA) during the fall 2017 competition to be used for travel to professional conferences during spring and summer 2018. All awardees will present their original research or creative work at prestigious national and international meetings in poster, oral, or design format. A maximum of \$500 was awarded for domestic travel and up to \$1000 was awarded for international travel (including Puerto Rico) totaling \$10,000 in travel funds awarded. GCTA awards are funded jointly by the Graduate School and the Vice President for Research. A call for GCTA applications for fall 2018 travel will be released during the summer. The following list includes students receiving awards and the conference each student will attend:

- Corbin Bennetts, M.S. student in Coastal Sciences, The Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society Southern Division Meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Aaron Bermond, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Brain & Behavior), Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, Georgia



Arete cover photo featuring the research of Dr. Leila Hamdan, associate professor, Coastal Sciences

- Cheyenne Brady, Ph.D. student in Biological Sciences, Society for Freshwater Science Annual Meeting, Detroit, Michigan
- Melissa Brock, M.S. student in Coastal Sciences, 2018 Ocean Sciences Meeting, Portland, Oregon
- Mitch Brown, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Brain & Behavior), Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, Georgia
- Caitlyn Chambers, Ph.D. student in Psychology (School Psychology), National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois
- Taylor Daley, M.S. student in Coastal Sciences, 6th International Otolith Symposium, Taipei, Taiwan
- Catherine Dean, M.S. student in Biological Sciences, Society for Freshwater Science Annual Meeting, Detroit, Michigan
- Annmarie Fearing, Ph.D. student in Biological Sciences (Marine Biology), Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections Annual Meeting, Dunedin, New Zealand
- Paula Floyd, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Clinical Psychology), Society for Research on Adolescence Biennial Meeting, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Caleb Garner, MFA student in Theatre, Southeastern Theatre Conference, Mobile, Alabama
- Chris Hair, Ph.D. student in Geography, 35th Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers, San Jose, Costa Rica
- Angie Hoover, M.S. student in Coastal Sciences, Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Claire Houtsma, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Clinical Psychology), American Association of Suicidology 51st Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.
- Erica Mathis, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Counseling Psychology), Society for Vocational Psychology Biennial Conference/National Career Development Conference, Phoenix, Arizona
- Dylan Richard, Ph.D. student in Psychology (Counseling Psychology), Society for Vocational Psychology Biennial Conference/National Career Development Conference, Phoenix, Arizona
- Laura Whitmore, Ph.D. student in Marine Science, 2018 Ocean Sciences Meeting, Portland, Oregon

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS



Professionals in Preparation (PIP) Spring Schedule Begins

January 26

The spring 2018 PIP series will begin with panel discussions intended to assist students as they prepare for the job market. The first session, a panel discussion slated for Friday, January 26 entitled “Interviewing for an Academic Job”, will explore the expectations of heads of academic units when interviewing job candidates. Panelists will be Dr. Lisa Nored, Director, School of Criminal Justice; Dr. Jeff Wiggins, Director, School of Polymers and High Performance Materials; and Dr. Edward Sayre, Chair, Department of Political Science, International Development, and International Affairs. A second panel discussion to be held Friday, February 9 will focus on “Interviewing for a Job in Business or Industry.” Panelists will include Chad Newell, President of the Area Development Partnership; Jan Farve, Corporate Human Resources Manager at Merchants Food Service; and Krystyna Varnado, Associate Vice President for Human Resources at Southern Miss. The panel discussions will be held from noon to 1:00 p.m. in the Union Hall of Honors. These events are restricted to PIP participants.

Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium

The annual Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium will be held April 5, 2018 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Thad Cochran Center. To inform students about the expectations of the symposium, guidelines for oral and poster presentations, a sample judging rubric, and FAQ’s can be found on the Graduate School website at <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/susan-siltanen-graduate-student-research-symposium>. Registration and a call

for abstracts is now open. The submission deadline is February 9. All graduate students conducting research are encouraged to participate to hone their presentation skills in a friendly environment and compete for a prize for an outstanding presentation.

NEWS FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

POLICY AND PROCEDURE UPDATES

Leave of Absence without Pay Policy for Graduate Assistants

As USM employees graduate assistants fall within the scope of the “Leave of Absence without Pay Policy” that applies to all other benefit-eligible and non-benefit-eligible employees. All aspects of the policy are applicable to graduate assistants and other student workers. The policy statement was updated during the fall 2017 semester by Krystyna Varnado, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, with input from the Office of General Counsel and the Dean of the Graduate School. The updated policy follows with insertions in red and deletions stricken. This policy is included in the Employee Handbook. This policy is distinct from the “Leave of Absence for Graduate Students” academic policy found in the Graduate Bulletin which allows any graduate student to request a one to two semester leave of absence based on exceptional circumstances. However, the “Leave of Absence without Pay” HR policy should be consulted in conjunction with the academic policy for graduate assistants requesting an extended leave of absence because it clarifies the impact of leave on a graduate assistant’s stipend, benefits, and reinstatement.

Leave of Absence without Pay

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of the University including non-benefit eligible such as adjunct faculty, graduate assistants and student workers.

Policy

In no instance are leaves of absence granted automatically. All leaves of absence require a written request from the employee, approval and support of the employee's supervisor, and the final approval of the AVP of Human Resources. **Medical certification may also be required from a healthcare provider, if applicable.**

- No leave of absence without pay in excess of one year's time will be granted to an employee.
- Leave of absence without pay may be granted to staff employees for the following reasons:
 - Necessary absences due to illness or for emergency reasons when such absences extend beyond available personal and major medical leave accruals **(or the employee is not eligible for personal and/or major medical leave).**
 - Approved professional development in the areas of education, research, and advanced training. This reason must be justified as being "in the best interest of the University" and, therefore, be job and profession related.

Reinstatement

Leaves of absence will be granted with the assurance of reinstatement to the same or comparable position within the University unless circumstances make it clearly impractical. Personal and major medical leave time will **not** accrue during leaves of absence without pay; however, earned leave credit may be carried forward.

Employee Benefits

When on leave of absence without pay, an employee may continue to participate in certain employee benefit programs, such as the group health insurance plan. The total cost of participation in a benefit program while the employee is on leave without pay must be paid by the employee. The employee is responsible for making arrangements with University Human Resources so that benefits can continue during his or her absence. Failure to do so within 30 days will result in termination of the insurance **and an inability to reestablish coverage until the next enrollment period.**

Employment Requirements

~~Leaves of absence without pay will not be granted to any employee with less than one year's previous service with the University.~~ A Personnel Action Form will be required on all employees **beginning and** returning from leave of absence without pay status. This form will re-activate the employee and place him or her back on "active" pay status.

Change in Proquest Submission Requirement Begins Summer 2018

During Fall 2017 Graduate Council affirmed a proposal by Dean Coats to allow doctoral students the option of submitting dissertations to Proquest rather than requiring them to do so. This change aligns USM with many top-tier U.S. institutions with open access institutional document repositories who now allow optional submission of dissertations to Proquest. This policy change at those institutions has yielded no negative impact on dissemination of their students' work, as these digitally-archived documents are findable through Google, Google Scholar, and other "discovery platforms" (<http://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9039/9866>). Submission to Aquila, USMs' open access digital document repository is required for all students completing theses, dissertations, and nursing capstone projects. Therefore, USM documents have a "highly discoverable" digital presence (<https://aquila.usm.edu/>). This change in the Graduate School's procedures for finalizing graduation requirements *does not* take precedence over departmental expectations for their students. Departments may continue to require their students to submit dissertations to Proquest if important to the discipline. This change in practice has no impact on the student's right to embargo their document if permission is obtained from the major professor. The new practice is effective for doctoral candidates graduating in summer 2018 and later. The change reduces the graduation fee for summer 2018 and later doctoral candidates by \$55.

GRADUATE SCHOOL AWARDED SOUTHERN MISS FUND GRANT TO SUPPORT GRE TRAINING

A \$7000 Southern Miss Fund award to the Graduate School will support the project "GRE Bootcamps: a Pilot Program Fostering Student Success." The intent is to help prepare Southern Miss undergraduate students at Hattiesburg, Gulf Park, and online campuses for the GRE with the goal of improved GRE scores and more competitive applications to graduate school. The project plan is to hold five full-day Saturday bootcamps during 2018 (two in spring and fall and one in summer) including sessions on verbal and quantitative reasoning led by qualified doctoral-level graduate assistants. Each bootcamp will be limited to twenty total participants (face-to-face and online) to allow maximum time for personal interactions and questions. A \$50 fee will be assessed to all pre-registrants to minimize "no-shows." The participation fee will provide the stipend for instructors. The funds provided in the grant will be used to supply course materials for each participant. Preparations are underway to hold the first GRE bootcamp early in the spring 2018 semester. More information will be released in the coming weeks. Bootcamps will be advertised broadly to encourage students to pre-register.