



## Academic Affairs Newsletter

### Making Progress in the Fast Lane!

**Dr. Virginia Carson**

Vice President for Academic Affairs



*Dr. Virginia Carson*

The 2005-2006 academic year at Georgia Highlands College boasts new teaching sites in Cartersville and Marietta, 12% enrollment increase over Fall 2004, and many new faculty and staff members. Yet, there are a number of valuable and innovative programs taking place in which the college reaches for and achieves progress toward quality educational outcomes. From the first institutional observance of Constitution Day, to disaster relief efforts, to faculty professional gains, to introspection and planning for student success, there is much evidence of positive progress in the face of greater workloads due to institutional growth. Thanks to all who are involved in these endeavors!

### Constitution Day Recognized at Cartersville and Rome Campuses

On Tuesday, September 13, students, staff and faculty at the Cartersville site celebrated Constitution Day. Dr. Bill Mugleston, Professor of History, and Lucinda Baker, Assistant Professor of Political Science, organized the activities. Free pocket copies of the US Constitution and Declaration of Independence were distributed, compliments of the Student Life Office. The main event was a panel discussion on the issue of the divided war-making powers between the president and Congress. Some 60 students, faculty, and staff were in the audience. The panel consisted of three students, Eva Chambers, David Hannah, and Barbara Hardin, and four faculty members, Lucinda Baker (Political Science), Michael Gattis (History and Political Science), Bill Mugleston (History) and Scott Powell (History). Spirited discussion with much audience involvement took place for over an hour. Democracy in action!

There was a similar observance held on the Rome campus coordinated by Teresa Hutchins, Instructor of Political Science. Pocket copies of the Constitution were distributed, followed by a September 15 panel discussion covering the issue of amending the Constitution so that foreign-born U.S. citizens can run for president. The discussion covered the history of why the Founding Fathers placed the requirement that the President be a natural-born U.S. citizen in the Constitution, the historical attempts to amend the Constitution to end this requirement, and the politics surrounding the issue. The panel consisted of Teresa Hutchins (Political Science), Steve Blankenship (History), Mary Ellen Pethel (History), and Scott Powell (History). Over 40 students and faculty attended the event. A vigorous discussion concluded the panel presentation!

Student responses indicated that the events were a success, providing both additional knowledge of the Constitution and a forum to express opinions about modern day Constitutional issues. This first observance of Constitution Day has likely set a standard for subsequent such events at Georgia Highlands.



# In the Trenches of the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort

By Lynn Herman  
Associate Professor of Nursing

I was activated as a member of the 116th Medical Squadron, Georgia Air National Guard to support the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. Our mission, once we arrived at Gulfport, MS, was to create a hospital to support Department of Defense personnel. The nation responded to the disaster by sending 7,000 Guard personnel. Our job was to provide those troops with medical care, if the need arose. As such, we obtained a building and created an ER with limited patient holding capabilities. We saw about 60-70 patients a day with various rashes, bug bites, gastro-intestinal problems, cuts, broken bones, seizures, high blood pressure, colds, etc. We were also responsible for numerous immunizations, as troops were sleeping in field conditions with no water, and public health issues were a true concern. Additionally, we were the medical resource for other non-military people in the area such as FEMA workers, etc.

Our next job was to locate patients in remote areas and meet their medical needs. We were flown in by helicopter to conduct medical assessments on the stranded victims, provide medications, and locate life-saving resources such as dialysis. Our group also went door-to-door to provide immunizations to the left-behind victims, while other members of our unit set up distribution centers for water and food and engaged in security for traffic control and looters, search and recovery in homes, debris clean-up, and anything else that was needed. One particularly onerous job was to set up a decontamination area for troops working with dead chickens, sewage, and stuff we could not identify.

This area is completely decimated. The pictures in the media do not truly do it justice. The community of Gulfport welcomed us and thanked us more times than I could count. I actually got to see Air Force One three times and hug Sonny Perdue - that was pretty cool. But mostly, I was humbled by what I saw and very proud to serve. Leaving my three-year-old son and husband was hard, but the experience has changed me. I'm thankful for a soft bed, a roof over my head, a family that is safe, and hot cooked meals.



*Destroyed House*



*Flag Stands Amid the Rubble*

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## Lending a Helping Hand to the Community

Earlier this semester Susan Claxton's Interpersonal and Helping Skills class had the unique opportunity to put into practice key concepts covered in the course. Mrs. Claxton is Associate Professor of Human Services and Sociology. After the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, students in the Human Services Program wanted to do something to help the numerous victims who had been relocated to the Rome area. After all, a desire to help others is what led many of these students into the Human Services Program in the first place. With this in mind the class decided to volunteer at RomeCares, a local organization established by governmental and non-profit agencies to support hurricane victims.

Excitement was in the air when the class arrived at the organization's headquarters on September 15. After a day of helping, many students realized that it not only takes those on the "frontlines" of a volunteer program to make a difference, but those who work diligently behind the scenes are an integral part of the effort as well.

One student said, "We mainly folded and organized clothes. I had a chance to speak to a couple of people and helped them find some clothes. Mrs. Claxton reminded us that we did make a contribution." The students had hoped to have more direct contact with people and families who had been affected by Hurricane Katrina, but what they found is that helping may not always be direct service. It includes organizing and standing on ready as well.



*Human Services Students*

## ***Increasing Expectations Update***

**By Dr. Catherine King**  
Professor of Physical Education



The *Increasing Expectations* project is being refined and progress has been made in implementing the Year of Dialogue, the first-year action plan. Dr. Laura Musselwhite is completing an annotated bibliography of current resources related to increasing student learning and faculty development. These resources will be held on reserve in the library while the annotated bibliography will be housed on-line at the academic affairs website. Laura and I have hosted interest group discussions on what improving student learning means at GHC, and the Division Chairs have developed strategic planning strategies related to this dialogue. I attended the "Learning Conversations" conference hosted by Valencia (Florida) Community College and brought back a great deal of material and resources related to the *Increasing Expectations* project. A retreat is planned for mid-December for the Advisory Committee of the *Increasing Expectations* project to further develop strategy.

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## ***SACS Reaffirmation Update***

**By Dr. Laura Musselwhite**  
Associate Professor of History and SACS Reaffirmation Chair

As the College approaches its SACS Reaffirmation visit in AY2007-08, I will be providing regular updates through the Academic Affairs newsletter. Much good preliminary work has been undertaken by various members of the GHC family to prepare for the visit. Last spring, we conducted a compliance audit to see where we stood.

As many of you know, SACS now uses a revised set of criteria. These new Principles of Accreditation are available online at: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/PrinciplesOfAccreditation.PDF>. There are twelve Core Requirements, and sixty-one Comprehensive Standards. A compliance audit entails looking at the sixty-one Comprehensive Standards to examine the school's level of compliance with each one. The committee conducting the audit discovered that GHC is in pretty good shape.

Of course, there are some areas we need to work on. Some work will involve creating a policy or procedure, and some will involve simply making data and documentation available. I (and those of you lucky enough to be tapped to help me) will be working on closing those loops this year. The Statutes and Faculty Affairs Committee, in conjunction with the faculty as a whole, will be examining the Statutes to ensure they are updated and comprehensive in advance of the Reaffirmation visit.

With Dr. Mark Knauss as Educational Program Assessment Team Coordinator and Brent Griffin as Administrative and Educational Support Unit Assessment Coordinator, we are making terrific progress on the assessment facet of reaffirmation. Both of these individuals are going the extra mile to continue and improve our work thus far. Unit Plans were due in October, with Mark and Brent planning to tidy up any loose ends so that 2005-2006 assessment can go off without a hitch.

I look forward to the work this year. I anticipate that this advance planning will mean that we can rest a bit easier next year and concentrate on our continued improvement of student learning through the creation of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

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## ***A Poet Amongst Us***

Dr. Diane Langston has placed four sonnets for publication over the summer and fall. One appeared in the Summer 2005 issue of *The Lyric*. Two are in press in the November/December issue of *Mobius*, and the fourth will appear in the 2006 issue of *Measure*, an annual review of formal poetry published by the University of Evansville (IN). Congratulations, Diane!

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## ***Timely Tidbits: Advising, First-Year Course, and Learning Communities*** ***Academic Advising***

**By Laura Ralston**  
Associate Professor of Mathematics

Academic advising is a joint venture between students and faculty involving exploring and determining educational options, which will ultimately lead to achievement of personal and professional goals. It is available to all students at each educational site. Advising is teaching and as such should be an integral part of a faculty member's career. Academic advising is an expectation of all faculty.

An academic advising plan with embedded assessment is under development. Several activities include:

- ◆ Advising 101 Skill-shops are being offered at each educational site.
- ◆ Advising for Pre-Health Professionals Skill-shop is being offered on the Floyd and Cartersville campuses.
- ◆ Deliberate and intrusive advising will be conducted during Late Start Fall 2005 term for any student enrolled in Learning Support courses on the Floyd campus.
- ◆ First-time students enrolled during Spring 2006 on the Cartersville campus will be assigned to a faculty member within their chosen program of study.
- ◆ Advising DAZE continues to be conducted at each educational site.

# First-Year Course

By Joan Christian  
Instructor of Mathematics

The FCST Committee has found that first year experience courses alone do not generate higher retention and academic success rates. But, when a mandatory first year experience course for all full-time beginning freshmen is accompanied by programs providing one-on-one interaction with college faculty and/or administration/staff, there is ample statistical evidence showing significant improvement in retention.

Among the successful programs with a first-year experience course embedded are the following:

- ◆ Advisor/mentor programs are designed to provide each student with a specific faculty/staff trained to successfully guide a student academically. Each student is assigned an individual advisor/mentor.
- ◆ Comprehensive retention programs are designed to provide students a one-on-one interaction with specified personnel after they have shown high-risk behavior in a course. Reports are invited from faculty at two weeks and mid-term. Students reported are then tracked and administered one-on-one interaction throughout the remainder of the course.
- ◆ Learning Communities participation significantly increases retention.
- ◆ Create a campus culture that provides an environment that promotes informal interaction between students and students with faculty and staff.

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## Learning Communities

With the above in mind, Beth Harrison, Associate Professor of Developmental Reading, is chairing a committee charged with preparing a proposal to pilot learning communities in Cartersville and the ATP program at West Georgia. The Fall 2006 pilot will be for at most 25 Learning Support students at each of those locations. After assessing the pilot, there will be expansion to other campuses and possibly include credit courses as well.

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## Dr. Alberta Johnson Leads National Student Organization

Recently, Dr. Alberta Johnson, Professor of Psychology, attended the American Psychological Association (APA) Convention in the capacities of convention presenter and a member of the Psi Beta National Council (Psi Beta is the national honor society in psychology for two-year and community colleges). Her presentation, entitled "Identifying and Fostering Students' Leadership Skills," was part of a symposium on leadership skills.

In the continuing position of Psi Beta VP, Southeastern Region, this begins Dr. Johnson's third year of service on Psi Beta's National Council. At the Council's annual meeting, traditionally held during the APA Convention, she officially began her term as national president-elect of Psi Beta. Included in the National Council's meeting agenda was a presentation of awards (\$500, \$300, and \$200) to winners of the Allyn & Bacon/Psi Beta Student Research Paper Contest. Dr. Johnson feels "it was a challenge and an honor to be one of five national judges for this competition."

During the convention, she attended many interesting lectures, including ethical decision making, service learning, and students' legal rights in the classroom. Particularly enlightening was the interaction with several Native American youth (Psi Beta members), who were participants in APA's *Diversity Project*.

Note:

The Georgia Highlands chapter of Psi Beta, chartered in 1994 with Dr. Johnson as its faculty sponsor/advisor, was the first in the state of Georgia. Today in the United States, there are 106 chapters with a total membership of approximately 25,000.

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## New Office Assignments Make a Positive Difference for Faculty

It is 1:30 on a Thursday. I am at Cartersville. My 9:30am class ended at 10:45 and I have a 2pm this afternoon. But something very strange is going on...something new and exciting.....

Instead of hanging out in my car between classes, or at the Taco Bell, or driving from one location to another, I am actually in my office....WORKING! I have never had such a liberating experience before. I actually have multiple classes at a single campus on which I have an office - an absolutely amazing concept and I love it!

On behalf of myself and the other giddy faculty I meet in the halls and offices of Cartersville, THANKS.

Let's hope we can continue to work toward allowing faculty to teach the majority of their classes on a single campus where they have an office. We're not there yet. I still teach on three campuses this semester. However, this is marked improvement! Having a primary location is good. It's good for the faculty, it's good for the students, it's good for the college, it's good for everyone all the way around (and it's especially good given gas prices).

Thanks, Dana Pergrem