From the Chair

The Spring Semester is off to a good start and promises to be an exciting one. We have a number of opportunities for faculty and student collaboration including the American Democracy Project Regional Conference and Geography fieldwork in El Cerrito. And for current and prospective students, plans are currently underway for the first History and Geography advisement day. For more information on these and other events, be sure to check out our department web site at www.ucok.edu/history/!

- Dr. Stan Adamiak

Department Hires New Museum Director

UCO's Department of History and Geography is pleased to welcome Ms. Heidi Vaughn as the new director of the Laboratory of History Museum. Ms. Vaughn's early interest in history led her to study archaeology at the University of Oklahoma. While a student, she participated in digs in Oklahoma, southwest New Mexico, and Israel. After graduating with a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Oklahoma in 1993, Ms. Vaughn worked for the Oklahoma Archeological Survey for two years. In 1998, she graduated with an M.A. in History-Museum Studies from the University of Central Oklahoma. Since completing this degree she has worked as a curator at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the director of the Museum of the Cherokee Strip in Enid. We are pleased to welcome Ms. Vaughn back to UCO.

Ms. Vaughn began her new position as director of the Laboratory of History Museum in January of this year and has already begun a number of important projects. Currently she is overseeing a graduate-student effort to overhaul the museum's pioneer gallery. She is also coordinating an inventory of the museum's entire collection. In addition, Ms. Vaughn is planning a number of projects that will improve the museum's look and make the collections more organized and accessible. She explains "My primary goals are to make the museum more visible, increase the use of museum best practices in the operation of the museum, and further develop the museum as an educational resource for museum studies students before they enter the job market". As the new director, Ms. Vaughn also hopes to use the museum to promote the university's history and to offer more programs and guest speakers for alumni and the Edmond community.

In an effort to promote the university's history and increase the visibility of the museum, Ms. Vaughn is currently working on the Laboratory of History Museum's first web site. This site will contain important information about the museum's collection, hours of operation, and programs offered. The site can be found at http://www.ucok.edu/history/museum.htm.

The Laboratory of History Museum is located in Evan's Hall on the University of Central Oklahoma campus. For information on historical walking tours or in-class presentations on UCO's history, please contact the museum at 974-4669. For more information on internship opportunities for students, please contact Dr. Pool, Director of Museum Studies, at cpool@ucok.edu.

Ms. Heidi Vaughn is the new director of the UCO Laboratory of History Museum
American Democracy Project Regional Conference
The University of Central Oklahoma recently hosted the American Democracy Project’s regional conference “Democracy and Civic Engagement: A Call to Action”. The conference was held at the UCO campus 10-11 March 2008 and brought together students, faculty, staff, and community partners for panel discussions, poster presentations, roundtables and workshops on building and fostering civic engagement at all education levels. Dr. Patti Loughlin, of the Department of History and Geography, organized this year’s event. George Mehaffy, founder of the American Democracy Project and Vice President for Leadership and Change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) came to the conference and delivered a keynote address on “Developing Informed and Engaged Citizens: The Imperative for Higher Education.” The conference was co-sponsored by the University of Central Oklahoma, the American Democracy Project, Oklahoma Campus Compact, and The New York Times. For more information on the American Democracy Project visit http://www.ucok.edu/AmericanDemocracyProject/main/about_adp.htm.

Geography Student Organization
The Geography Student Organization (GSO) invites all students, faculty, staff, and alumni to participate in forthcoming events. In addition to monthly meetings and Foreign Food Nights, please join us for our Saturday, March 8 field trip to the Weatherford Wind Energy Center-Route 66-Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. The trip will be led by alum Ajax Delvecki and Dr. Doug Hurt. Also, the GSO Spring BBQ is scheduled for Saturday, April 19. For more information contact GSO president Jeff Widener at ucogeography@yahoo.com.

Several graduating geography majors are continuing their studies in graduate school. Students have been accepted to programs at Louisiana State University, the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, the University of Kansas, the University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma State University.

Phi Alpha Theta
Rho Lambda, the UCO chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, has a lot to report about past and future activities. Last January Faculty Advisor Dr. Jeff Plaks and two officers—Rene’ Deloria and Jeff Widener—went to the 2008 Phi Alpha Theta Biennial National Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico. All three presented scholarly works. Rene’ Deloria gave a paper on “A Question of Obedience: Martin Luther’s Response to the German Peasants’ War of 1524-1525”, Jeffrey Widener presented on “The Beginnings of the Barbary Wars: The Factors Leading Post-War America into Her First Naval Engagement,” and Dr. Plaks discussed his research on “Russia’s First Populists: The Decembrists and Revolution from Below.” In addition, the UCO delegates participated in conference activities and found some time to go sightseeing. February was a good month too. President Rene’ Deloria reports that the chapter initiated 16 new members on February 12 at the first meeting of the year. Officers of Phi Alpha Theta planned some wonderful activities for the spring semester: two movie nights, a regional conference in Oklahoma City, a field trip to Tulsa, a Holocaust survivor presentation, and an end-of-semester party. See www.libarts.ucok.edu/history/pat/ for more information.

Western Pacific Institute
The Western Pacific Institute in the Department of History and Geography announces two new appointments. Dr. Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen and Dr. Robert Kerr now serve as Associate Directors. In addition to these new appointments, the Western Pacific Institute will host an academic delegation from China in April.

Department’s New Web Site
The department recently launched a new web site that now includes more department news, updated faculty information, and new links for student and alumni. The department plans to add even more to the site in the next six months including information on future course offerings, the Laboratory of History Museum, and available geography facilities. Department Secretary Candace Carollo noted that the new site is a “good way to let prospective students, current students, and the community know what is going on in the department and what we offer.” Visit the new web site at www.ucok.edu/history/.
New Minor Program
The Department of History and Geography will offer a new minor in Russian Studies starting this fall semester (2008). For more information, contact Dr. Jeff Plaks at jplaks@ucok.edu or 974-5357.

Congratulations To:

Dr. Xiao-Bing Li received the “Distinguished Service Award” from the Association of Chinese Professors in the U.S. (ACPUS) at the annual conference. He served as the executive editor of the Journal of American Review of China Studies for eight years.

The Oklahoma Humanities Council has awarded Dr. Michael S. Springer one of its 2008 Scholar Research Grants. This award will help fund Dr. Springer’s research this summer at the Hessen State Archive in Marburg, Germany.

The department is pleased to announce that the Oklahoma Historical Society has awarded Ms. Julie Bennett-Jones (MA 2007) the Outstanding History Thesis Award for her thesis “A Giant in Oklahoma Politics and Public Service: The Political Life of Helen Cole, 1960-2004”.

S. Matt Sandidge has been awarded the “Edward J. Pugh Outstanding Graduating Geographer Award” for 2007-2008. Mr. Sandidge has worked for the past 18 months as an intern with Oklahoma City's Planning Department and plans to attend Texas A&M University and study urban planning.

Jeff Wiclener, majoring in history and geography, was recently awarded an internship in urban redevelopment with Oklahoma City’s Planning Department. Mr. Wiclener also recently started a new job working in Government Documents, which is part of the Archives/Special Collections at the UCO Chambers Library.

Ashley “Eddie” Edwards, majoring in public relations with a minor in history, won the 2008 Miss UCO in January. Ms. Edwards will now compete in the Miss Oklahoma pageant this coming June.

Faculty Updates

Dr. Xiao-Bing Li will travel to China during spring break with ARCIMEDIA, an Australian film company, to interview Korean War veterans. The filmmakers are working on a documentary about the Australian Army’s engagement against the Chinese forces in the Korean War. Dr. Li has also signed a publication contract for his new book “Civil Liberties in China”. The book is a volume in the Understanding China Today series, published by Greenwood Press. The book will be available in 2009.

Dr. Jeff Plaks presented a scholarly paper at the 2008 Biennial National Convention of Phi Alpha Theta in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 5 January 2008. His paper was on “Russia’s First Populists: The Decembrists and Revolution from Below.” In addition, Dr. Plaks was elected to serve a two year term on Phi Alpha Theta’s National Council.

The College of Liberal Arts and the Office of Research and Grants sent seven faculty members to Washington D.C. in February to meet with representatives at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Accompanying Dean Pamela Washington on the trip were Dr. Patti Loughlin and Dr. Michael S. Springer (History and Geography), Linda McDonald and Wayne Stein (English), and Dr. Catherine Webster and Dr. Stacy Southerland (Modern Languages). All seven faculty members are currently working on grant applications to the NEH and had the opportunity to discuss their proposals with NEH staff. “We received thorough and helpful feedback on our proposals”, noted Dr. Springer. He added “the direct, face-to-face discussions will help strengthen our final proposals and should increase UCO’s success when applying for these grants.”

Recent Publications

Mark Your Calendar

May 1  
Phi Alpha Theta presents:  
Eliezer Ayalon, Holocaust Survivor  
7:00 P.M., Constitution Hall, Nigh University Center  
Free and open to the public

May 19-23  
El Cerrito Geography Field Dig  
For more information, contact Dr. Hurt at dhurt1@ucok.edu

May 25-June 9  
Study Tour in Italy: Survey of Rome  
For more information, contact Dr. Sheetz-Nguyen at jsheetznguyen@ucok.edu

2 June  
Summer Block I Classes Begin

30 June  
Summer Block II Classes Begin

Do you have news or events you would like to see in the newsletter? Would you like to have an electronic copy sent directly to your email account? If so, we would like to hear from you. Please contact the editor, Dr. Michael Springer, at mspringer@ucok.edu.

Department of History and Geography  
University of Central Oklahoma  
100 North University Drive  
Edmond, OK 73034-5209