



Academic Affairs Newsletter

by Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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New Faculty

Dr. Amber Paulk is an Assistant Professor with a joint appointment across the Departments of Human Environmental Sciences and Sociology. Amber grew up in Florence and graduated from Wilson High School. She received all of her higher education from Auburn University. Amber graduated with a B.A. in Psychology in 2003; M.S. in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) in 2006; and Ph.D. in HDFS in 2008. From 2008 – 2011, Amber was an Assistant Professor at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington.

Amber is a Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE), whose present activities primarily focus on developing and evaluating programs that teach interpersonal skills to children, adolescents, and adults. Her most recent project focuses on programming for college students with Asperger's Syndrome (i.e., an Autism Spectrum Disorder that is characterized by social skills deficiencies). The goal of the program is to teach a variety of interpersonal skills to students with Asperger's in order to help them be more successful inside and outside of the classroom. The program also hopes to bring awareness about Asperger's to UNA students and faculty and teach them how to best work with this unique population of students.

Outside of work, Amber's primary hobbies are reading (mostly memoirs) and traveling (she have been to almost every state in the U.S.). Amber is very excited to be returning home to Florence, and she is extremely proud to be part of the UNA family!

Early Scholars

At the December Board of Trustees meeting, approval was granted to rename the program Early College with benchmarks for participation and continuation in the program. The change in title will more accurately reflect the mission of the program. The benchmarks will help ensure that students who participate are prepared and committed to the program. A program to replace Early Scholars that is truly targeted toward high school scholars will be developed.

Kilby School

Members of the Strategic Planning and Budget Study Committee continue to look at models to address the budget issues at Kilby School and also ways to strengthen its lab school mission. A group of faculty and Kilby staff will visit a lab school in Kentucky in late February to get some ideas. The President will be appointing a committee of university faculty and staff to develop a report for submission to the Board of Trustees regarding Kilby. Also, several UNA administrators will attend the next Kilby PTO meeting to answer questions and gain insight from parents and teachers about a course of action that serves the best

needs of all involved.

Good Teaching

Christian McGee, a Florence early scholar student, and a student of Dr. Yi-Min Cai, was recently named a finalist for the Young Artist Audition with the Huntsville Symphony. She was one of seven finalists state-wide. In giving thanks for the recognition, she acknowledged Dr. Cai as a wonderful teacher. We are continually reminded of the dedication of our faculty and the great job they do teaching and mentoring to our students.

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