

ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE SOUTH



President's Newsletter - February 2020

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DEAR ACS COMMUNITY,

As the (relatively new) president of the Associated Colleges of the South, I send you greetings from Atlanta! I've been enjoying my campus visits and having the chance to meet many of you, and I look forward to a few more visits over the next two months. In addition to a week at Centre College for the CFO Meetings and the CAO Meetings (both the third week in March), I'll be spending a few days at Trinity, Davidson, Millsaps, and the University of Richmond in February and March! Thank you to everyone who has made these visits possible and to all of you who have spent time with me, helping me to understand your campus initiatives and how ACS can help bring collaborative efforts together on the things that matter most to you! As we anticipate a transition to a new newsletter format for next fall, I will be sending out a simpler e-mail with important news several times over the spring and summer.

In the spirit of our new newsletter format, I'd love to hear from you in terms of what would make YOU read our newsletter. What information would you like to see? From my campus visits, I am eager to share some of the great best practices that are out there on our campuses in areas such as holistic advising, team mentoring of new faculty, holistic student development programs, study abroad, innovation centers, diversity initiatives, and much, much more! I would also like to have a place on the newsletter where you can develop collaboration partnerships – either for larger grant initiatives

or even for smaller problem-solving questions. For example, faculty may want to find someone who has expertise in a particular pedagogy, software, or lab technique or instrumentation. We should have a way to match you up for these purposes! We also need to keep a quarterly calendar of ACS-sponsored events.

For now, I'd like to share with you about our staff; let you know what we're up to at ACS; provide you with information about our next cycle of ACS/Mellon grant deadlines and details; and share a calendar for ACS-sponsored events in the next quarter.

MEET THE STAFF OF ACS

Stephanie Fabritius

I joined the staff of ACS as president in July 2019, following the retirement of R. Owen Williams. Previously, I served as vice president for academic affairs, dean of the college, and professor of biology for 12 years at Centre College. Prior to that, I was a faculty member in biology and associate provost and director of the Paideia Program at Southwestern University, joining the faculty at Southwestern in 1988. I am a behavioral ecologist focused primarily on reproductive strategies and outcomes in grassland nesting birds (although I have dabbled in similar questions in chaparral plants and parasitic wasps). I was transformed through undergraduate research while earning my BS at Pepperdine University, and then continued my passion for field biology at Purdue University where I earned my Ph.D. in biology. Throughout my career I have been very interested in the impact of collaboration – collaborative research, team-teaching, and collaboration at the intra- and inter-institutional level. I was very involved in a number of ACS initiatives including the environmental studies fellowship and grant program, the ACS teaching and learning workshop, ACS/Mellon grants, the ACS Council of Deans, and the 2015-2016 strategic planning initiative, so it is with great joy that I now work closely with developing and maintaining collaborations within the ACS on a daily basis!



Rashida Kirton

Originally from Washington, D.C., Rashida Kirton holds a B.S. degree in business management and accounting from University of Phoenix. As the Director of Finance and HR, Rashida handles all financial accounting, reporting, payroll, and grants management details for the organization. Prior to her appointment at ACS, Rashida's career included experience in construction accounting and office management, government contracting, and real estate. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, reading, traveling, and volunteering with various organizations such as Junior League of Atlanta. She has been with ACS since May 2015.



Deanna Lord

Deanna Lord joined ACS in March 2016 as the Operations Coordinator. She is responsible for supporting the operational activities of the Association, the president, and the board of directors. Deanna brings over 20 years of experience as an administrative professional to ACS. Her background includes both public and private universities, as well as for-profit and not-for-profit business environments. She attended Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, and Georgia State University in Atlanta. She studied English with a concentration in Journalism and enjoys writing and the study of languages and cultures. Ms. Lord is a member of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP).



Dave Morton

David Morton joined ACS in 2015 as its Director of Communications and Technology, serving in that capacity until late last year when he became Director of Faculty and Staff Programs. Dave has had a long career in academia that prepared him well for his current role, holding positions in both the faculty and staff. With much of his experience coming from large, public universities, Dave has enjoyed learning the ways of our small, private, liberal arts institutions, although he reports that the early transition presented some surprising challenges and a steep learning curve. He now works with our faculty and staff to develop, administer, and promote ACS grants, and looks for ways to improve our processes for providing new opportunities for faculty and staff development.



Before ACS, he was a research scientist at Georgia Tech (where he also received his PhD in the history of technology), helping develop new Web-based technologies and best-practices for people with disabilities. Early in his career, before he made the transition to Web design and programming, he worked as a historian in a specialized research center at Rutgers University, teaching and writing about the history of electrical engineering. He is the author of two books on his specialty, the history of sound recording, and several other books in the history of electrical technologies.

Douglas Wofford

Doug works with us on a contract basis in a variety of areas; he started this fall. He is the person to contact regarding tuition exchange, cost-saving initiatives, and potential projects involving data sharing and data analytics. He also helps us keep our technology up and running. Doug insistently proclaims that his life-long commitment to the value of a broad liberal arts education is reflected in both his academic and career choices.

Starting with a BS in Chemistry/Biology and then winding through a BA in History, a master's in marketing management and a doctorate in education finance, his academic work laid the foundation for, of course, 30+ years of work in enrollment management software development and data analytics (a liberal arts education prepares one for any career!). His work career maintained a broad theme with stints as a Director of Admissions, a college consultant, lead researcher for a major National Science Foundation project, founder of two enrollment management software companies, Executive Vice President for the College Board's higher education products and services and Executive Vice President for Technology at what is now Ruffalo Noel Levitz.



ACS DELIVERS

- Faculty & Staff Development
- Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives
- Leadership Advancement
- Membership Services
- Professional Networking

WHAT DOES ACS DO?

On my campus visits, I am frequently asked is to describe the programs and work of ACS. We are in the process of adding some new initiatives and programs, but, in a nutshell:

Faculty and Staff Development

ACS has long funded various programs that provide faculty and staff development to our member institutions. This currently includes initiatives such as:

- **ACS/Mellon Grant opportunities in the areas of Innovative Instruction, Collaborative Curriculum, and Diversity and Inclusion.**

Development opportunities through the grant includes member-developed workshops, research projects (especially on the scholarship of teaching and learning), blended learning projects, pedagogical experimentation, and projects on improving student success (particularly underrepresented students). The FOCUS program, a five-day workshop for developing networks of underrepresented early career faculty members is one example of a product from the ACS/Mellon Grant. Another example is the shared language course in Classics. For more examples, visit our website (<http://www.colleges.org/grants/>).

- **ACS Teaching and Learning Workshop.** This long-standing and much-heralded program is in its 28th year. It is a six-day immersive experience during June where faculty from all career stages work to help good teachers who want to teach even better. (For example, younger faculty wanting to learn new skills, mid-career faculty refining teaching styles or changing teaching approaches, and senior faculty wanting to modify courses as well as approaches to teaching. The workshop utilizes several microteaching experiences in which a short snippet of each participant's teaching will be videotaped, analyzed and discussed extensively within a small group of about five participants. The workshop is an opportunity for participants to experiment with new approaches to teaching, observe other teaching styles, try new techniques, and analyze issues and challenges of teaching and learning. (Most of this description comes directly from the ACS Teaching and Learning Workshop website – <http://www.colleges.org/programs/summer-workshop/>)
- **Inclusive Pedagogy Workshops.** These are regional workshops spanning three days in August that focus on pedagogies that are inclusive to all students. The first workshop was held in August 2018 at the University of Richmond, with faculty and staff invited from the University of Richmond, Furman, Davidson, Rollins, Spelman, Morehouse, and Washington and Lee. The next workshop is scheduled for August 2-4, 2020 at Centre College and is first offered to faculty and staff from Centre, Sewanee, Rhodes, Birmingham Southern, and Hendrix. For information on nominations, please talk with your academic dean. A third workshop will be held during the summer of 2021 for faculty and staff from Trinity, Southwestern, Millsaps, and Centenary; a location has not yet been identified.
- Another faculty/staff development initiative being discussed is the development of a **biannual topical workshop** where institutions would send teams to discuss a topic of interest, resulting in a grant proposal, white-paper, or campus plan.

- Finally, ideas are emerging out of campus visits and conversations with you. This is still very much in flux and we welcome your ideas.

Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

- *FOCUS*, the Inclusive Pedagogy Institute (both mentioned above), as well as grant-funded projects on inclusive pedagogy, studies on microaggressions, archival research related to race, diversity, and inclusion, and others.
- Another initiative currently being discussed, initially to be funded through the ACS/Mellon Grant, includes developing an annual Diversity Officer Institute.
- Other possible initiatives under discussion include faculty/staff workshops on intergroup dialog; workshops on implicit bias for members of search committees; and potential collaboration in developing shared course(s) and/or course materials on slavery/reconstruction/civil rights.

A Focus on Leadership Advancement

- National headlines and local campus concerns focusing on the evaluation of faculty teaching led to informal and formal campus conversations at many of our colleges. Following discussions at the fall 2019 meeting, the deans decided to dedicate their spring 2020 meeting to a working meeting on researching and developing tools and resources for those on-campus conversations about the evaluation of teaching. A planning grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to ACS has enabled us to assemble small teams of deans, faculty and staff to **research the literature and existing campus practices for teaching evaluation. From this research, the teams will develop tool kits that deans can use on their home campuses in the discussion of the processes for the evaluation of faculty teaching.** The grant funds enable teams to work both virtually and in person, to visit some non-ACS campuses that appear to be doing well with the evaluation of teaching, to hold campus conversations, and to develop the tool kit. Funding is in place through October 2020.
- A **Summer Leadership Institute** is in the early planning stages. In its initial iteration, it will be designed to benefit department and academic division chairs, primarily, and will focus on developing broad institutional perspectives.
- An emerging idea is to facilitate a **virtual book club**, where small groups meet monthly on-line to discuss current books focused on issues in higher education.
- Promote and support small, residential liberal arts colleges in the South (through the accomplishments of our member institutions)

Membership Services:

- **Tuition Exchange.** ACS administers this program, which is an employee benefit at participating institutions for the qualified children of faculty and staff. Interested students apply for tuition exchange through the employee's home institution and move through the regular admission and financial aid process at participating ACS institutions. There is an annual fee for participation. Receiving tuition exchange is not guaranteed and is at the determination of the receiving institution. For more information, qualified employees should consult with their HR office.

- **Cost-saving initiatives.** Most ACS institutions are also members of E & I Cooperative Services, a member-owned non-profit purchasing cooperative for education. We are currently working with E & I to increase our benefits by utilizing our participation as a consortium.
- **Subscriptions.** As part of our cost-savings efforts, ACS purchases several e-subscriptions for libraries and research use at a consortium price rate, and then passes on those savings to interested member institutions.
- Several other services are in the discussion phase; they include a **Registry of ACS Consultants, data sharing and benchmarking**, and something I'm calling "**Big Ideas.**" The "Big Ideas" project involves selecting an important topic (such as advising/mentoring, internships, resilience, well-being, international recruitment, or others) and providing research into best practices and variations on how institutions carry out their goals. The choice of topics will be member-driven and may come from shared data and member interests, and the research from the project will lead to a large consortium-wide special topics symposium (see under faculty/staff development).

Professional Networking:

- **Consortium-wide meetings of individuals in particular roles.** Currently ACS helps with the logistics and the building of agendas for the college/university presidents and chief academic officers. The presidents meet together in June, and again by phone in January. The chief academic officers meet together twice a year – September and March – and again, by phone, in January. The president of ACS also attends and participates annually in the meetings of the Deans of Student Affairs (November), Chief Diversity Officers, and the Chief Financial Officers (March). We also participate in quarterly calls of the Grants Officers. When invited and available, we also visit other group meetings. Those who currently meet regularly or who are planning meetings include: HR Directors, Library Directors, International Program Directors, and IT Directors. We are happy to help collaborate with other groups to help think about meetings or quarterly zoom conferences.
- We have **role-specific email listservs** that unite campus leaders in a large number of professional roles. We will soon be moving to a web-based format that will further facilitate collaboration.
- We have several **topical communities of practice**. These will take on a larger role when we move to a new web-based format later this summer or fall. **If you have a topic or idea, please contact me.**
- I often say that a big part of our job is to serve as **non-traditional matchmakers** – helping to facilitate collaborations among member institution faculty and staff. Please remember that we are only a call or e-mail away when you are trying to find someone else who shares a research, academic discipline, or work-related knowledge.

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At ACS, we also try to stay informed about what you are doing at our member institutions. What are your initiatives that might be strengthened through collaboration? What are your points of distinction and how might that help the consortium? What can we learn from the best practices within the institution? We stay plugged in to what you are doing through campus visits, phone calls, emails, and other work with you. **For that reason, we ask that you reach out with your great ideas.**

ACS/MELLON GRANT CYCLE 6

ACS/Mellon Grants are administered by our Director of Faculty and Staff Development, Dave Morton. Preproposals for the next round are due March 20 and Final Proposals are due May 29, 2020. These are for grants that would be implemented from July 1, 2020 through July 1, 2021. We will be requesting an extension on our Mellon grant and plan on having at least one more additional cycle of grants in the fall of 2020 (for implementation January 1, 2021 through January 1, 2022.) Full grant information is available on our website (<http://www.colleges.or/grants>). You also might want to join our Facebook grants page; do so by searching for ACS Grants Group. We will also plan on putting out additional special calls for proposals and workshops, so stay tuned!

Thanks for all your work in the spirit of collaboration!

Best,



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Contact Us

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UPCOMING ACS EVENTS

(If you know of an ACS-sponsored event, let us know so we can add it to the list.)

March 6	Library Directors meet at Rhodes College
March 18 – 20	CBOs meet at Centre College
March 20 – 22	CAOs meet at Centre College
June 1-6	ACS Teaching & Learning Workshop at Sewanee
June 1-3	CAOs working meeting in Atlanta
June 3-6	Presidents Board Meeting in Atlanta
Summer 2020	FOCUS meets at Millsaps College
August 2-4	Inclusive Pedagogy Institute at Centre College