

# **Annual Report 2009-2010**

## **African American Studies College of Charleston**

**Dr. Conseula Francis, Director**



**not just in february**

## **I. Academic Program**

The program continues to have healthy enrollments in our courses.

During Fall 2009 we offered:

- ❖ 2 sections of AAST 200: Introduction to African American Studies
- ❖ AAST 300: African American Politics
- ❖ ENGL 216: Introduction to African American Literature
- ❖ ENGL 395: Nineteenth Century Women Writers
- ❖ HIST 216: African American History to 1865
- ❖ THTR 316: African American Theater

During Spring 2010 we offered

- ❖ 2 sections of AAST 200: Introduction to African American Studies
- ❖ AAST 300: African American Politics
- ❖ COMM 213-001: Debate
- ❖ 2 sections of COMM 387: Rhetoric of Social Movements
- ❖ ENGL 313: African American Literature
- ❖ HIST 211: American Urban History
- ❖ HIST 217: African American History since 1865
- ❖ HIST 320: Lowcountry History
- ❖ HIST 366: Comparative Slavery in America
- ❖ MGMT 351: Minority Entrepreneurship
- ❖ THTR 316: African American Theater
- ❖ THTR 489: African American Theater II

During Maymester 2010 we offered:

- ❖ ENGL 359: Contemporary American Poetry

During Summer I 2010 we offered:

- ❖ AAST 300: Plantations and Sea Islands of Charleston

During Summer II 2010 we offered:

- ❖ 2 sections of AAST 200: Introduction to African American Studies
- ❖ 2 sections of AAST 300: Hip Hop: Evolution and Impact
- ❖ ENGL 313: Survey of African American Literature
- ❖ SOCY 337: Prejudice

It is worth noting that the Summer II AAST offerings are part of the College's SPECTRA program. All of the program's near 80 participants were enrolled in at least one AAST course (many took both courses). The hope is to recruit minors from this cohort of students.

Because AAST is an interdisciplinary program (rather than its own department with dedicated faculty), we depend upon course offerings from other departments for our minor. We have been able, in this last year, to increase the number of courses taught in other departments that qualify for the minor, as well as increase the number of faculty members who participate in the minor. To maintain this trend we were able to offer

curriculum development grants to faculty members to revise existing courses or create new courses that would count for the AAST minor. Faculty members could apply for monies to purchase materials, travel, or fund research stipends. We awarded grants to:

- Larry Krasnoff, Philosophy—funds to purchase materials for a course on African- and Jewish-American Comedy
- Laquita Blockson, Management and Entrepreneurship—travel to a conference in support of a course on Minority Entrepreneurship
- David Moscovitz, Communication—travel to a conference in support of a course on race and rhetoric
- Julia Eichelberger, English—research funds for a course on Charleston literature
- Conseula Francis, English—research funds for incorporating Avery resources in to AAST 200

The curriculum development grants were made possible through support from the Provost's office and from Academic Experience. We will have another round of grant funding in Fall 2010.

## **II. Students**

At the end of Spring 2010 the AAST program had 15 minors in 8 different majors. We graduated five of those minors.

We plan to make a stronger recruiting effort during the 2010-2011 academic year. Students take numerous courses without pursuing the minor, some of them because they are simply unaware of the minor. Better advertising and more pointed recruitment of specific students should push the number of minors above 20 by the end of Spring 2011.

Notably, the students in the Intro course, all of whom have to complete activism projects, have posted their projects on YouTube. The videos are a great celebration of their work and also an excellent advertisement for the program and the College. The videos can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/professorneka>.

## **III. Programming**

One goal of the African American Studies program is to strengthen the relationship between the program and the community, both the community of faculty/staff/students on campus and the community off-campus. We have several programs that work toward this goal:



❖ *Bridging Divides: A Lecture by Dr. Johnnella Butler*

In October 2009, Johnnella Butler, noted expert in multicultural education and Provost at Spelman College, visited campus for a talk and workshop. The

workshop was attended by faculty, staff, administrators (including the interim provost), and students (including the president of SGA) and focused on the real work of diversifying CofC's curriculum and academic life. Dr. Butler's talk focused on the challenges and opportunities offered by multicultural education.

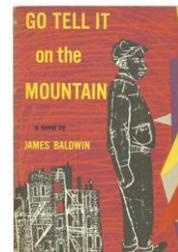
❖ *AAST Faculty Research Series*



This year we added a series of faculty talks to our list of annual events. The goal of this series is to highlight the AAST work done by faculty on campus. In the fall Consequa Francis, English, spoke on race and superhero comics. In the spring Simon Lewis, English, spoke on landscapes of British country houses, Lowcountry plantations, and Caribbean resorts; and Laquita Blockson spoke on using entrepreneurship courses to explore difference.

❖ *Brown Bag Book Discussion Group*

We continued the Brown Bag Book discussion group. We read two books, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Go Tell It On the Mountain* by James Baldwin. The program purchases a small number of books and gives them to people interested in participating in the discussions.



❖ *Girls Night In*

AAST sponsored a *Girls Night In* event at the Multicultural Center during Spring 2010. Approximately 25 faculty, staff, and students gathered for dinner and a book discussion. We plan to make this an annual event.

**Good Food. Good Friends. Good Times.**



❖ *Black Love Film Festival*

During February the program hosted the Black Love Film Festival. The festival was co-sponsored by Multicultural Student Programs and Services. We screened four films: *Love and Basketball*, *Love Jones*, *Brown Sugar*, and *I'm Through With White Girls*.



❖ *African American Read-In*

The AAST program participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> annual African American Read-In, sponsored by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English. Faculty and staff read aloud for several hours to a crowd of faculty, staff, and students. This is the third year we have participated in the read-in and it is one of our more successful events. We will continue to participate in the future.



## **V. Future Plans and Needs**

During the 2010-2011 academic year the program plans to propose a major. The ability to major in AAST will undoubtedly attract more students and will increase the program's legitimacy and visibility among the faculty.

In addition, the director plans to establish a more formal and sustained relationship with the Avery Research Center. There should be an AAST intern at Avery every semester. In addition, the program will seek funds for a postdoctoral fellow to be shared by Avery and AAST.

The program is still in dire need of space and administrative support. African American Studies features prominently in the College's new Strategic Plan; the Graduate School is pursuing a graduate certificate in African American Studies; there will soon be a new AAST major. While it is difficult to run the program now with no space or administrative help, it will be nearly impossible to do so should all the plans currently in the works come to pass. In addition, the director of this program should have release time and compensation comparable to other program directors if it is to grow and succeed.