Dear Alumni, Friends, and Colleagues:

I am proud to inaugurate the first biannual alumni newsletter from the Department of Education at Roanoke College. In recent years, a number of changes have occurred at the College and in our Department. Our new College President, Dr. Sabine O’Hara, is providing new program visions and challenging us to excel in our local community and across the state and nation by graduating highly qualified teachers. It is her goal, and our goal, to meet the demand for teachers by graduating fully licensed professionals committed to engaging students’ minds through effective pedagogy, rigorous content and with an understanding of the complexities of student differences and cross-cultural learning.

In the future, as we redefine and reorganize our program and Department, our newsletters will keep you informed. Currently, we are maximizing our strengths and building toward a stronger study and practice of teaching and learning through several initiatives.

We are expanding our faculty and course offerings. Additionally, the education program has initiated an international program. In 2002, the Department began offering a comparative international education course which travels to Europe. Also, students can complete their internship and student teaching in U.S. Department of Defense Dependents’ Schools in Vilseck, Germany, and Aviano, Italy. In future newsletters, you’ll hear more details regarding our students working and studying abroad.

Other Department initiatives include a new data system to track current students and program completers. We are also partnering with six local schools to provide service and to work together in common research and instructional projects. The Department is a member of the Southwest Virginia Professional Education Consortium, a group of 10 regional school divisions and four institutions of higher learning (Hollins University, Radford University, Roanoke College and Virginia Tech). The organization is funded through grants and works to strengthen field experiences and to mentor new teachers.

As you can tell, there is a great deal of activity in the Department. I invite you to visit our website (www.roanoke.edu/education) and to let us hear from you. Future editions of the newsletter will let you know how Roanoke College graduates are succeeding in the field.

On behalf of our faculty, I send warm holiday greetings.

Dr. Tim Reynolds
Associate Professor and Department Chair

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Dr. Timothy Reynolds, associate professor and chair of the Education Department, teaches courses in differentiated instruction and is co-director of the Copenhaver Institute for Teaching and Learning. His current research is in professional development and comparative international education.

Dr. Gary Whitt, associate professor, teaches instructional technology and science and secondary methods courses. He is currently studying the effects of aural retrieval cues on long-term memory and the effects of Senge-type organizational structures on the quality and utility of professional development of teachers.

Professor Lisa Updike, adjunct instructor, is a new visiting instructor and teaches Children’s and Adolescent Literature and Teaching Mathematics in the Elementary School. She also supervises Education interns and student teachers. She is working toward her Ph.D. in English Education at Virginia Tech.

Where in the World is Dr. Sarah Simmons?

Many alumni fondly remember Dr. Sarah Simmons, associate professor of education. Whether mentoring student teachers or teaching courses, this no-nonsense, student-centered professor was one of Roanoke College’s finest. Dr. Simmons received the Dean’s Council Award for Exemplary Teaching in 1990, a fitting award for this “teacher of teachers.” She served the Roanoke College Education Department for sixteen years, during which many benefited from her instruction in courses such as Exceptional Student, Children’s Literature, Diagnostic Reading or a field experience.

During her last years at Roanoke, Dr. Simmons began to substitute teach occasionally in area public schools, keeping herself authentically connected to the experience of teaching K-12 students. In 2004, she accepted a teaching position with Brunswick County Public Schools in North Carolina. After teaching preservice teachers for many years, she believed it was important for her to return to the K-12 classroom, bringing her career full circle.

Dr. Simmons left Roanoke College in August, 2004, and moved to Holden Beach, North Carolina. She believed that it was important for her to “walk the walk and not just talk the talk” of classroom teaching. She also claims that the warm winds of the climate called her “down south to the beach.”

During her first year at Brunswick County, she accepted the challenging position of teaching ninth-grade English. She summarizes her experience by saying, “I learned more from them than they learned from me!” Teaching the play, Romeo and Juliet, to 150 freshmen was definitely something new for her. She claims that her students learned to appreciate the drama, but were not as enthusiastic about Shakespeare’s style of writing.

Dr. Simmons’ “going-back-to-school” experience has been rewarding. For 2005-2006, she has moved into an administrative role. She is now assistant principal at Southport Elementary School in Southport, North Carolina. Dr. Simmons points out that she still works with student teachers, but in a different role. Coincidentally, one of her former Roanoke College students is a teacher at the school.

Dr. Simmons has moved away from the halls of academia in the Roanoke Valley to a world of school lunches and elementary curriculum near the beaches of North Carolina. She rises to the challenges of her new position every school day, and spends her after-school hours walking on the beach, gardening, and playing with her dogs, Hokie, Hoo and Izzy.

What’s New?

Please share your professional development news with us! Submit information about your recent professional endeavors to murrill@roanoke.edu for publication in an upcoming newsletter. Be sure to include your name, year of graduation, current position and a photo.
Dr. Mack Welford – A Man on the Move

Dr. Mack Welford is definitely one of the most memorable professors to teach at Roanoke College. Many alumni remember him as a fascinating teacher who possesses a way with words. He is genuinely dedicated to the teaching profession. Since his retirement in 2002, Dr. Welford has continued to stay connected to the field of education. During our interview, he shared a little about his past, present and future endeavors in teaching.

During his twenty-nine-year tenure at Roanoke College, Dr. Welford taught nearly every education course that the College offered, except Reading. He was one of two original faculty members in the Education Department, second only to Trudy Camper, who served as the department’s sole faculty member before his arrival. In addition to courses in education, Dr. Welford taught the Senior Symposium course, Perspectives on Death and Dying. He continues to offer summer courses for the College and plans to teach Educational History through Biography in an upcoming May term.

Dr. Welford’s impressive resume includes teaching high school courses in biology and psychology at Glenvar High School in Roanoke and in Mobile, Alabama. In addition to his work at Roanoke College, he has also taught a range of offerings at other post-secondary institutions, including Introductory Botany, Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Faulkner State Community College, Human Relations workshops at Virginia Western Community College, and Introduction to Curriculum and Secondary Curriculum for graduate students at the University of Virginia Extension.

Dr. Welford is making the most of his retirement. While studying his family genealogy, he discovered that he is a descendent of British royalty dating back to 534 A.D. He has also traveled the country with his wife, Alice, who recently retired after twenty-nine years of teaching. They have visited extended family in Alabama, spent time with their youngest daughter in Hawaii, and stopped at the Grand Canyon, Alamo, Smoky Mountains, Alaska and just about every place in between. Perhaps his most unique role since retiring has been a six-week stint as lighthouse keeper at a lighthouse in Cape Lookout, North Carolina. Dr. Welford’s future plans include a return to Hawaii, and a high school class trip to Italy and Greece with his daughter, a teacher. His two older daughters are both graduates of Roanoke College and one teaches at Glenvar High School in Roanoke County.

Dr. Welford exemplifies the career teacher. He has taught for over three decades and continues to impress young minds with his passion for teaching. In the field of teaching and learning, it is safe to say that he shows no signs of stopping! If anyone would like to personally thank Dr. Welford for his dedication to the profession, you might be able to find him at the Urbanna Oyster Festival or on a beach in Honolulu.
Mark your calendars for the Margaret Sue Copenhaver Institute, June 19-21, 2006.

Get Connected

Education Web site:  www.roanoke.edu/education
Education Department:  540-375-2470
Copenhaver Institute:  www.roanoke.edu/msci/
Give us a Name submission:  jtsutton@roanoke.edu
What’s New submission:  murrill@roanoke.edu

Wishing you a Joyous New Year

The Education Department