# STANDING COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY NEWSLETTER

ACPA – College Student Educators

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2012 EDITION

## A Letter from the Chair

Newsletter Chair: Rebecca Daniels

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Meet the SCD Directorate

Welcome to summer edition of the Standing Committee on Disability newsletter. Since you last heard from me, many exciting things have been happening within the Directorate and ACPA! We had an amazing time at the 2012 Convention and elected some new members to the Directorate team. Over the course of the upcoming year, you will be introduced them through our newsletter and website. As you read through this edition, you may notice some new names and topic areas– that is thanks to our new newsletter editor, Rebecca Daniels, please join me in welcoming her to the team.

We continue to seek feedback from members and colleagues in formal and informal ways. In the upcoming academic year you will see additions to the newsletter and information disseminated through the listserve. As we are adding additional topic areas to our coverage, I encourage you to keep in mind that not all opinions expressed within the newsletter or through the SCD listserve reflect the opinions of all SCD members. One of the exciting outcomes of a growing SCD membership is a broader expression of opinions and perspectives which are welcomed and valued for the diversity that they bring to our attention. I would be remiss, however, to not acknowledge that not all members view aspects of disability from the same lens. I encourage you to read with an open mind, ask questions from a place of wondering, and seek understanding when your perspective is different from those of colleagues around you.

One area that has been very noticeable within disability in higher education, is the recent creation and dissemination of updated documentation guidance from AHEAD. If you have not had an opportunity to review this document, please view it at the AHEAD website (www.ahead.org). The reframing of documentation standards to be more in line with the ADA amendments has raised a few questions and concerns from some disability resource providers within institutions of higher education. Conversely, the switch from heavy documentation requirements to more individualized evaluation of barriers that students with disabilities are experiencing has received positive feedback from individuals with disabilities, disability studies scholars, and disability advocates.

More specific to the SCD within ACPA, feedback is being sought regarding the use of the term "Standing Committee." I would very much like to hear from members your opinion about the use of the term "Standing Committee" and whether you think it is a reflective and inclusive term or whether there is a more intuitive/inclusive term that could be used across ACPA. Also specific to the SCD is the need for members to consider running for election this fall to become the SCD Chair for 2013-2015. My term as Chair will expire at the 2013 Convention and we will be hosting elections in the fall of 2012 to elect the incoming Chair. I encourage all interested parties to consider running.

Preparations are already under way for the 2013 Convention. The deadline to submit a proposal is quickly approaching. I wish you all a fantastic start to the fall semester.

Sincerely, Melanie Tucker Thompson Chair, ACPA Standing Committee on Disability

# What Student Affairs Professionals Should Know About College Students with Learning Disabilities

Dr. Wanda Hadley, The University of New Orleans

Students with learning disabilities in high school are provided accommodations and services based on the Individuals with **Disabilities Education Improvement Act of** 2004 (IDEIA). The supports for students with disabilities recommended under this legislation are intervening and extensive, but such levels of service are not required to be offered in the college environment. Because of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the amended ADA of 2008 college and universities are expected to provide "reasonable accommodations" for students with disabilities who present documentation. According to the Association on Higher Education and **Disability (AHEAD) learning disabilities** present themselves in students' struggles in oral and/or written communication, listening comprehension, basic reading and reading comprehension, mathematical calculations, time management and/or social skills.

One way to welcome students with learning disabilities to campus would be to encourage them to consider starting college in a summer session through "early arrival" or "summer bridge" programs. Summer classes, oftentimes, are smaller and professors might have more time to provide individual assistance. Another option for students with learning disabilities is to start their college career at a community or twoyear college. The open enrollment of community colleges, low tuition, articulation agreements with four-year institutions and close proximity to the student's home, makes them a practical option to ease the transition to the college environment.

It is important to note that curriculum modifications provided for students in high school will not be automatic at the college level. The college or university has the right to deny services requested by the student if they are deemed "unreasonable." The college or university can determine the specific service or accommodation it will offer as long as it is effective.

In preparation for coming to campus, students should plan to bring current documentation to present to the disability services direct provider in the office that houses support services for students with disabilities. Students are responsible for making all disclosures and contacts in the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). OSD staff are not required to seek out students with disabilities. Additionally, it is important for students to have a good understanding of their disability and how it impacts their learning. After arriving on campus, they will need to register with their OSD or student support office to receive accommodations. Typical accommodations may be text books on tape, reduced distraction environments for testing, and extra time to complete tests. Other services that are generally available include academic counseling, personal counseling, career counseling and tutoring. Students are expected to articulate their learning strengths and weaknesses as well as what compensatory strategies work best for them. The staff in the OSD are trained to help students with disabilities acclimate to the campus as well as negotiating needed accommodations with faculty.

The OSD is expected to treat disabilityrelated information as confidential. According to the "best practices" of AHEAD, one office or individual on campus should be assigned the responsibility of collecting and holding student data, to be shared on a limited basis when there is a compelling reason for such disclosure. What is typically shared with a professor is that the student has a documented disability and need for accommodations and what those accommodations are.

College students with disabilities, specifically learning disabilities, continue to enroll in colleges and universities in growing numbers. They influence the work of student affairs professionals by living in the residence halls, pledging fraternities and sororities, and participating in campus activities. It is important as student affairs professionals that we continue to understand this student population in order to best support their retention and persistence.

# Welcoming Students to Campus Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

## Andrew Beverly, California State University, Northridge

As Colleges work to support deaf and hard of hearing students in their transition to the institution, the diversity of these students requires administrators to learn new and multiple approaches to support deaf and hard of hearing students. Over the past three years, I have witnessed the unique challenges of deaf and hard of hearing students as they transition into college. I have come to realize how individualized this experience is for each deaf and hard of hearing student. Due to the great diversity and intersection of identities that exist with in this population of students, it can be difficult for administrators to know how to best to support students' with such varying needs including: language/communication preference, social maturity, and educational experience. At the end of the article I will discuss PEPNet 2.0 as a resource to support deaf and hard of hearing students.

The diversity of deaf and hard of hearing students begins with the spectrum of educational settings, family environments, and cultural experiences students have been exposed to throughout their lives. Unlike many hearing students who often experience similar class settings to their peers, each deaf or hard of hearing student may have a different K-12 experience. Educational settings for deaf and hard of hearing students can be comprised of deaf residential schools, oral programs, day schools using American Sign Language, main stream schools students, and many more.

Social and academic integration are key to a smooth transition to an institution of higher education. Social and academic integration for deaf and hard of hearing students can be difficult depending on their previous experiences. The transition can be particularly difficult for students transitioning from residential schools to a residential college. Students who attended a residential school often had every part of their day structured for them. They have someone to wake them up in the morning and prepare them for class. Other students may have gone directly to the work force for a few years before deciding to return to school. These students will be older than traditional age students and may struggle to connect socially with other students on campus.

All of these factors and many more play into college transition, however, the complexity does not end there. The student's individual identity plays an important role in how the student connects with the university. Intersection of identity will be different for each deaf and hard of hearing student. They all bring their past experience and their present attitude about their own identity. This will influence factors such as the accommodations they request and their ability to self-advocate. It can determine if student will disclose their identity as deaf or hard of hearing individual.

Only 10% of deaf children are born to deaf parents. Many hearing parents raise a deaf child and often make decisions with limited understanding of what it will mean for their child to be a deaf adult. With this in mind, it is very important to get good information into the hands of parents, students, and administrators to support each student's educational growth. Often parents and administrators who are not deaf or hard of hearing will have a difficult time understanding the way in which the student perceives the world around them. A great resource in supporting deaf and hard of hearing students is PEPNet 2. PEPNet stands for Postsecondary Education Programs Network. PEPNet 2 is a federally funded program by the department of education. PEPNet 2 was recently restructured and is now in its second iteration as a network. PEPNet 2 has employees with firsthand experience of attending college as a deaf or hard of hearing individual as well as a library of research on best

practices available to students, families, and administrators.

The mission of PEPNet 2 is to improve outcomes for students that are deaf and hard of hearing who desire to attend postsecondary education. The resources of PEPNet 2 are diverse in subject matter and format. PEPNet 2 is great source for information and recent news about issues surrounding deaf and hard of hearing students attending postsecondary education. Through their e-updates, twitter and Facebook account as well as their listserv and online forums it is easy to stay abreast to current happenings related to deaf and hard of hearing students in higher education. With over 900 members on the listserv and forums, PEPNet 2 allows for individuals to share information, resources and solutions with one another. There are also eLearning opportunities through online videos as well as resources and materials available by mail. If you work with deaf and hard of hearing students and are struggling to find resources, I encourage you to check out PEPNet 2 on their website (www.pepnet.org), Twitter (@pepnet\_2\_0), or Facebook (www.facebook.com/pepnet2.0).

## Interested in getting more involved with the SCD!?

## Sign up to be a program reviewer!

Volunteering to be a program reviewer is a wonderful way to get involved with the Standing Committee on Disability! Program Reviewers read each presentation proposal to determine if the SCD should sponsor a program at the ACPA Convention! The time commitment is minimal and the more reviewers who volunteer, the less the commitment will be.

The timeline for review is as follows:

Sept. 10, 2011 - All program submissions due

**Sept. 11-27, 2011** - Review process occurs (if you volunteer to be a reviewer, you must be available to review and submit feedback online during this time period)

I hope that you will consider reviewing program proposals for the Standing Committee on Disability - we would really appreciate your help! If you would like to volunteer, please e-mail me directly at <u>dmoneill@uno.edu</u>.

Thank you! Dale O'Neill, The University of New Orleans

# Bringing Disability to the Table No Matter Where You Work

Val Erwin, Southern Methodist University

In graduate school my boss told me "No matter what office you work at, you will bring your experiences with you, you will always be a disability, queer, and feminist activist wherever you work." Since then I have been bringing disability to LGBT and Women's centers but also ideas of feminism and queerness in disability groups and connecting their struggles and joys with each other.

When I started working in a Women's Center in graduate school my fear of never talking about disability was quickly dispelled. As I put up disability pictures and was very open about my disability identity I found students quickly came out of the woodwork to talk about disability. I also found that I was able to see disability in a way my colleagues did not, I found myself asking questions like: "Are these learning problems you are experiencing something that happened before your sexual assault?"; "Have you ever thought of seeing a counselor?"; or "I see that you are in pain? Is this a reoccurring problem?" I found that because Women's and LGBT centers are places students explore their identity, people with disabilities can use them as a way to

cope instead of going to a disability services office or professional.

I have been surprised by the many students I see who are diagnosed with a disability but will not go to disability services. Additionally, I find that when I am open about disability, students seek me out to talk about disability. On a routine basis I have conversations about why disclosure and getting accommodations is important. I have similar conversations about the importance of counseling after a violent situation. Going to see a counselor is a common conversation in centers but making that connection between counseling and disability services is an important connection that is not often discussed.

Since Women's and LGBT centers try to focus on intersectionality I am able to use disability as yet another way to talk about intersectionality and how it impacts our identities. I find that because a cultural look at disability can be new to people it allows me time to talk about how you can make identity and culture your own. This allows me to connect conversations about disclosure, coming out, and connecting your different identities, whatever they may be.

I have been put on many of the disability cultural programs I have long dreamed of doing in the half Women's center and half LGBT center that I work in. This disability connection focuses on, how it interacts with gender and queerness and has allowed people who were once scared to talk about one aspect of themselves to see the connections and hopefully feel more comfortable talking about their holistic self.

It has not always been easy talking about access in Women and LGBT communities. There are often questions about whether this is needed. I have also felt in subtle ways the question that because LGB is no longer classified as a disability, if we connect with this group is it assumed it is? This same argument is used with pregnancy. While the questions of classification are not offensive, some of the reasons why people find it important not to be classified as having a disability can be very offensive.

I know that all of these identities are a part of me, but the connection is often missed. In disability communities, it seems to be more of a problem when the disability is not seen as an identity, but a challenge to overcome. This often leads me to questions of how do I talk excitedly about disability and disability activism and its connections to these other communities if people do not see disability as an identity, or a culture to begin with?

To conclude, I think it is important to look at what these communities can connect on. Here are a few ideas:

> -Employment: Women with disabilities are employed 7% less than men with disabilities. Men with disabilities are employed 44% less than men without disabilities.(*O'Day* & *S. Foley*, 2008, p 4) This is a great area to consider highlighting through educational programming. Finding ways to do programing around employment discrimination and oppressed groups would be very helpful for all students.

> -Sexual Violence: People with disabilities have reported sexual violence and abuse at an alarming rate with incidences being double to ten times that of an abled bodied person (Smith & Harrell, 2011, p 10).

-Gender Neutral Bathrooms & Housing: Some people with disabilities prefer gender neutral bathrooms and housing so that if their personal attendant is not the same gender as them they are able to use the same bathroom. Advocating for gender neutral housing and/or bathrooms is beneficial for multiple populations on campus. -Sex Education: Because of the myth that people with disabilities are not sexual beings or should not engage in sex they tend to have less sexual education. There also may be questions that people are grappling with such as talking to a partner about their disability or if the act of sex changes with a physical disability. A lack of appropriate sex education is also a concern for many in the LGBT community and there can be a fair amount of overlap in this area (Irwin 2011).

## -Body Image/ Self Confidence:

Body image is often not talked about with people with disabilities considered or included. When you have been told you are stupid or ugly how does that affect your view of yourself? If you cannot find clothing that fits your body or get clothing that is easier to put on how does that affect the view of your body?

## References

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# Who We Are: Erika Heffernan Explores 'Re Learning to Learn'

Erika Heffernan, Rochester Institute of Technology

Learning is a journey we experience throughout our lives. We begin the process the moment we are born, starting with holding our heads up and leading to years of grasping at more complicated endeavors such as completing mathematical equations. These intellectual developments move our lives forward and research shows that there are many ways for individuals to learn. Varying conclusions direct us to which way is best; which methods are most impactful or most effective. As options pile up, so do choices. Is there an ideal teaching method, or is it possible that each of us learns and perceives things differently?

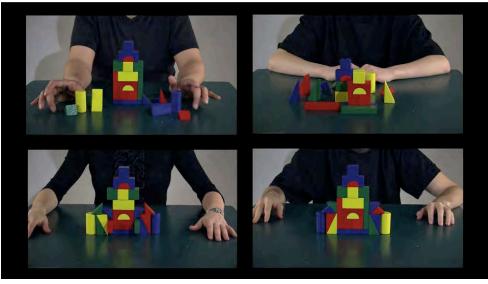
Learning and understanding have become the largest struggles in my life. The pressure of concealing my unique learning differences has been more important at times than learning itself. And this is the part of myself I was least willing to confront, until recently. I still do not understand everything about my learning process, but my focus has shifted away from concealment of my challenges toward a deeper examination of them.

My body of work "Re Learning to Learn," is my personal story of struggle with a learning disability. How we learn, comprehend, and interpret information is an internal process, rarely seen from the outside. While comprehension is invisible, our ability to communicate and understand relevant information is an observable measure of intelligence. The inner dialogue circulating inside a person's head remains a mystery. This artwork illuminates the difference between the internal standard of "right," and the illusive standard of what is "right" upheld in society.

I also explore the different ways we interpret standardized information. I question how we are expected to learn, and also the ways we are taught. An individual's approach to learning comprehension, working memory, perception and communication can differ greatly depending on one's ability to process and retain information. This discrepancy causes various interpretations of the same information. Several visual and auditory strategies invite the viewer to participate in a struggle for understanding. Instructional information is removed, manipulated and overloaded to confuse essential learning cues.

The central piece in "Re Learning to Learn" is *Learning How To Build*, a series of unique experiences recorded and interpreted in three different ways. The video, the grid of photographs and the building station work together to illuminate different aspects of the piece. Learning How To Build, the video, speaks directly to how our pre-processed knowledge and willingness to participate help our ability to learn new information. This video screen is divided into four; participants sit at a table, colorful blocks in front of them. A computerized voice gives step-by-step instructions on how the participant should build. --"Learning How To Build. Step one. Place the blue block..." Viewers watch as the participants struggle. The grid format forces us to compare the participants. Who is doing "better"? Who is building the "correct" structure? Who has given up? The video ends when the voice states, "Congratulations! You have learned to build!" But what have my participants really learned? They were

Along with learning styles, age and experience lead us to interpret information differently. During filming, I would disappear around the corner, allowing my participants to build without my presence affecting their response. I did not want to provide a voice to correct them or betray my thoughts with body language. Once the piece ended, I reemerged to photograph the "buildings." Everyone had something different to say, but there were a few distinct trends in reactions. One little boy declared to me triumphantly, "I built it perfectly." The blocks I saw displayed on the table in front of him were nowhere near the building I had written directions for, but his certainty about his abilities are an



Learning How to Build (2011)

not given a visual example of a "correct" building and they were not taught a new skill. They simply followed a set of instructions with no goal in sight. Seven groups of people with diversity in age range, ethnicity and learning styles cycle through the building process. No two buildings looked alike. And not one participant got it "right." example of uncrushed enthusiasm for learning and a trust in himself and his own vision.

The young boy was in the minority, however. Most people felt defeated or discouraged at getting lost halfway through the video or frustrated that I would not let them do it again or give them the right answer. One middle-aged woman, known for her direct and meticulous working style, struggled with her inability to control the situation. Listening to someone else give orders and being forced to process information struggling, feeling incompetent and always hiding my inability to comprehend. Unlike the little boy, I did not celebrate my ability to visualize things differently. I did not have confidence that I was right.



28 Variations of the Same Building (2011)

on someone else's timetable was a particular struggle for her. When I came around the corner she immediately stated, "I did this wrong," and asked, "Can you show me the right answer?" This gnawing need to be validated by the creator of the test was prevalent throughout the group. This speaks to the learners' understanding that there is only one correct answer and only one way to get there. Unlike with the child, the majority of the adults' building experiences left them frustrated and feeling inadequate, instead of elated, by their new creative structure.

This piece expresses my particular disadvantages while growing up in a traditional learning environment. Constantly surrounded by my peers that "got it" the first time around, I was left Even while creating this piece, I questioned every step of the process. Are the directions too hard? Will people be interested? Will anyone struggle with it the way I do?

The resulting photographic documents show 28 unique buildings. The individual participants are removed from the photographs in order to focus on their masterpieces. The photographs within the grid are a celebration of all of the different ways we understand. Each piece is correct for the creator but very different from the next builder. The grid format asks you to compare each structure, but I ask you, the viewer, to consider each participant as an individual. The end outcome is not about correct completion. Instead, it visually illustrates the same building that all the participants interpreted differently and correctly.

The final component of *Learning How To Build* is *Please Build*. This portion demands gallery viewers not only reflect This work is a celebration of how we all process and interpret information differently. Through using conceptual art



Please Build (2011)

on what they're being shown, but to join in the process. A building station placed in the gallery allows the passive gallery viewer to become a participant in my creation. The viewer could wear the headphones and follow the same directions presented to the participants in the video. They faced the same questions that all 28 of the original builders did only the gallery participant did it with an audience. Being involved with this portion of the piece activates learning within the exhibition space. in the form of video, photographs, installation, ceramic, glass, and interactive art this work questions how we are expected to learn, and also the ways we are taught in the classroom. The project explores how we process information from short-term or working memory into long-term memory and how learning disabilities affect this process. The art work is a physical expression of the challenges students with disabilities overcome every day.

### About the Author

Erika Heffernan was born in Maine, 1981 and currently lives and works in Rochester NY. She received her BA at University of Central Florida, earned her Post Bac from School of the Museum Fine Arts Boston and recently graduated with her MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology. Her work explores the conceptual side of learning and new understandings of perceived norms. As a DeCordova Museum Lending Artist her work has been exhibited widely throughout the Boston area in addition to WORK-DETROIT, Booksmart Studios, the University of Virginia, and 1st Thursdays Orlando Museum of Art. She also gives various lectures and guest speaking appearances on learning differences as well as art.

## **Standing Committee on Disability Newsletter**

## Meet the 2012-13 Standing Committee on

## **Disability Directorate:**



### Melanie Thompson, Chair

Melanie Tucker-Thompson is the 2011-2013 Chair of the Standing Committee on Disability. Melanie has been involved with the SCD since 2008, serving as the Newsletter co-editor prior to becoming the Chair. In addition to the ACPA SCD, Melanie is actively involved with two other professional organizations, including AHEAD, where Melanie is part of the Member Development Standing Committee Leadership Team, and NASPA, where Melanie is a member of the Disability Knowledge Community Leadership Team. Melanie has an Ed.S. in Counseling Education from Southeast Missouri State University, a M.Ed. in Counselor Education from the University of New Orleans, and a BA in Applied Psychology from Eastern Washington University. Currently, Melanie is a Doctoral Student pursuing an Ed.D. in Adult and Higher Education from Northern Illinois University, where Melanie is the Acting Assistant Vice President. Melanie's research areas include disability diversity, the use of humor as an educational tool, and faculty/staff development. Melanie has presented nationally on topics including universal design, disability as a tenet of diversity, female leadership in student affairs, diversity within higher education, and program assessment.

### Megan Lucsko, Liaison to the Deaf Culture Initiative

My name is Megan Lucsko (formerly Wetzel, I JUST GOT MARRIED!). I am entering my third year as a Community Director in Housing and Residential Life at Webster University in St Louis. I did my undergrad at Rochester Institute of Technology in upstate New York. I received my Masters in CSP at Bowling Green State University. I am Deaf and use ASL. I am honored to be selected to be the liaison for the Deaf Culture Initiative for this upcoming year. DCI aims to become a subculture in ACPA where sign-language users will feel welcomed and included in the larger community. DCI has so much potential and I look forward to tapping into all of our knowledge to help DCI become successful!





## Dale O'Neil, Convention Program Selection Coordinator

Dale O'Neill is presently the Coordinator of Leadership and Service Programs at the University of New Orleans. Within this position, she oversees Leadership Development, Greek Life, and Community Service Initiatives as well as teaches a first-year success seminar. She is presently in her third year of her doctoral program, where she is obtaining a PhD in Education Administration. Dale also serves as the Newsletter Editor for the Standing Committee on Graduate Students and New Professionals. For the past two years, she has served as the Co-Chair for the SCD Newsletter. This year, she will be serving on the Directorate as Convention Program Selection Coordinator. She looks forward to a convention filled with presentations concerning the outstanding research, new trends, and best practices of the field. lf vou are interested in becoming involved with the committee, particularly in helping review program proposals, please feel free to email at dmoneill@uno.edu.



### Katie Stolz Madden, Awards Chair

Katie (Stolz) Madden serves as the SCD Awards Chair. She currently works as the Program Coordinator for the M-Bio Program at the University of Michigan, after working for the past seven years in residence life at Michigan State University. Katie earned her PhD in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education (HALE) at Michigan State with a research focus on disability in higher education. Katie served as the chair for SCD 2009-2011 and is excited to move into this new role on the directorate.



## Darren R. Gallant, Webmaster

Darren has served as the Webmaster on the directorate for about a year. Under his purview are updating the Standing Committee's pages on the <u>ACPA website</u> and increasing the SCD's social media presence on <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u>. Darren loves working with the Directorate and promoting the important, multi-faceted work it does.

Recently, Darren has moved back to the Northeast after living and working at Grinnell College in Iowa and is currently seeking his next step in higher education.

## **Standing Committee on Disability Newsletter**

#### Michael Kavulic, Research Sub-Committee Chair

Hello everyone, my name is Michael Kavulic and I currently serve as the chair of the research sub committee of the SCD. I previously worked at Northern Illinois University as the Coordinator of Residential Facilities, but have transitioned to Kent State University to pursue full time PhD work in Higher Education Administration. I will also begin work as a career development instructor in the Fall of 2012. The SCD and my role on the directorate have allowed me to connect with like-minded professionals from many different institutions and who serve in various different roles. My role with the SCD also allows me to positively contribute to the profession through the work we do at convention, the research, projects and writing we provide through SCD, ACPA and other publications. My time with SCD has helped me to strengthen my advocacy skills, to grow personally, and encourage others to do the same. The SCD is made up of an outstanding group of committed individuals and I believe that every year we do great work that improves our profession and the lives and experiences of all students.





#### **Rebecca Daniels, Newsletter Chair**

Rebecca Daniels is currently an academic advisor at the State University of New York at Albany. Rebecca previously worked as the coordinator for communications for the Office of Residence Life at Syracuse University, where she earned her Master of Science degree in Higher Education Administration and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Relations and English & Textual Studies. Rebecca is excited to join the SCD Directorate as the Newsletter Chair this year and is looking forward to learning a great deal from fellow directorate members and committee members alike. For questions about the newsletter or to discuss ideas for submitting articles, please contact Rebecca at <u>rdaniels2@albany.edu</u>.