ALUMNUS PROFILE:
MICHAEL C. SMITH
BUILDING A LIFE WITH HIDDEN DOORS

GENDER FUNDAMENTALS

LEOCON three

Fashion SHOW
Building a Life with Hidden Doors

Situated in historic downtown Marshall, Texas, the offices of Siebman, Burg, Phillips & Smith reside in a building called The Hub. From the outside, it is easy to mistake the structure for an old shoe store.

“This was the Hub Shoe Store from 1897 to 2001,” Michael C. Smith says as he leads us through the completely renovated offices which boast clever nods to the prior occupants throughout. He has also found a way to use the long hallway as a mini gallery to display local artists’ work. As shown in this issue’s cover photo, his three boys have a treehouse-like room built just above Smith’s own office—complete with hidden doors that peek out over his desk. Smith has found a way to maximize the functionality of his building. And his life.

In 1982, Smith transferred to East Texas State University, determined to be a computer science major. Then again, maybe he was going to be a photographer. Or perhaps a musician. Smith laughs at his indecisiveness as he recalls, “I had many majors.” He decided on history, but when he talks about his time at the university, you can tell he never really chose to focus on just one subject. He was fully involved in campus life: Student Senate, Golden Leos, band, orchestra, Trombone Choir, French Club. As the “historian” (club speak for “guy who takes all of the pictures”) for the band fraternity, Smith was able to put his passion for photography to good use. He has

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a treasure trove of photos documenting the sort of university experience we hope all of our students will have: dozens of special events, band and orchestra performances, intense Student Senate meetings, a bunch of students having the time of their lives. He was fully invested in campus life, which as it turns out, became a trend in his life.

After graduating from East Texas State University in 1986, Smith went on to get his master’s degree at the University of Texas at Austin and his law degree from Baylor University. But the guy who couldn’t decide on a major certainly could not have been expected just to practice law. The Hub is only one of Smith’s construction projects in Marshall. He invites us to lunch at a local pizzeria, Gucci’s. He tells us the restaurant had been a mainstay in Marshall for 20 years but closed about a year ago. Smith and his wife, Jamie, decided to invest in reopening its doors. It is lunchtime, and every seat is filled. A gorgeous wood-burning oven sits center stage.

“We’re very proud of the kitchen,” Smith says, telling us about all of the ideas he, Jamie and their business partner, Mehmet “Gucci” Sevik, bandied around for the redesign. There is an all-you-can-eat pizza buffet. True to form, Smith suggests we try a bit of everything.

When he isn’t practicing law, reconstructing historic buildings and overseeing a bustling pizzeria, Smith might be building a model aircraft carrier—or writing about one. He has written two books from Squadron-Signal publications, “Essex Class Carriers in Action” and “U.S. Light Carriers in Action.” Telling us about getting his first carrier book published, Smith is still astonished: “I got to see them putting it together. There were guys mocking up a design based on my specs. I walk in and I’m the expert. They all wanted to know if they were getting it right.”

He might very well have been a journalism or English major. In addition to his books on carriers, Michael produces a steady stream of literature on his profession. He’s the editor for the annual opus O’Connor’s Federal Rules and he maintains the EDTexweblog, a blog dedicated to practicing law in East Texas.

Oh, and remember, he has three sons: Grayson, Collin and Parker. When we return to The Hub after lunch, we notice the hand-

drawn sign next to a set of stairs. It is a set of rules signed by all the powers that be: the boys. That’s when we notice the room upstairs, and Smith tells us about the hidden doors.

I look at our photographer, Jared, and indicate that I’m going to ask him. Jared smiles. He thinks it’s a good idea.

“Michael, would you mind taking a picture in one of the doors?”

He doesn’t even bother to answer. He’s up the stairs and ready for his close-up. Yes, he’s probably excellent at the dad thing, too.

On the drive back to Commerce, Jared and I talk about the day—how we expected to interview an alumnus, a lawyer. Our alumni tend to be pretty fascinating, but Michael Smith is exuberant. It’s like meeting six people at once, and each of them has an incredible passion for what they do: lawyer, community leader, businessman, husband, father, etc. You realize you’re talking to someone who heard what we all hear quite often—“You can’t be good at everything”—but chose to ignore it.

That’s when we notice the room upstairs, and Smith tells us about the hidden doors.
The College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts offers undergraduates the chance to minor in gender studies. The classes that may be applied to the minor can cover a wide variety of topics concerning gender, women’s studies and sexuality. One of the required courses for the minor is Gender Studies 300: Fundamentals of Gender Studies. Tabetha Adkins has taught the course for the last couple of years.

“Students come in with really smart questions about the effects of gender on everyday life. They are aware. They know it matters, but they sometimes cannot articulate why it matters. I get to give them a vocabulary for explaining the why,” Adkins says.

Students have praised both the class and the minor. Many of Adkins’ students tell her it is their favorite class. “They tell me, ‘I see it, now,’ and they become advocates for gender equality,” says Adkins. “They understand that gender or sex should not determine opportunity; and they are aware that it has and does.”

Some students, even though they have chosen the minor, can be reticent. Adkins acknowledges, “It is about vocabulary again. There might be a misunderstanding of what feminism is. So the whole class starts to ask, ‘What is feminism?’ and I encourage them to push back and think about agendas.”

“Students come in with really smart questions about the effects of gender on everyday life.” Considering the subjects that can naturally come up in these classes and the inherent controversy of even discussing gender and identity, I ask Dr. Adkins to tell me about any challenges students may have given her in the class. “You know, it hasn’t happened yet. I think it could, of course, but I make sure they know I am here to help them get smarter.”

Professor Leigh Merrill’s work is currently on display at two exhibitions: “In Addition Two” at the Museum of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, and “Trace” at SCA Contemporary in Albuquerque, N.M. “In Addition Two” is a group show of recent acquisitions for the museum’s permanent collection, and “Trace” is a three-person group show. In addition to her current shows, Merrill’s recent exhibitions include “Leigh Merrill,” a solo exhibition at the Brookhaven Studio Gallery in Dallas and “The Here There,” group exhibition at the Sum Sum Studio Gallery in Winona, Minn. Both shows ran earlier this year. Merrill’s work is also featured on the cover of this year’s Mayo Review.

Richard Miller Encourages Students and Faculty to Be Engaged and Be Engaging

Rutgers University professor Richard Miller poses a question to his audience of literature and languages students and faculty members: “In a world of superabundant information, how do we train students to engage in this world?” By “this world,” he means the physical classroom. Everyone in the room nods their heads. They understand exactly what he is talking about.

“My first assignment to my students is to be interested. I tell them I don’t care what it is, just find something, anything, to research that they are actually going to care about.” Miller says that students don’t know how to be interested. “The scarcest resource in education is focus,” Miller says after students have guessed money or talent. Miller was invited to talk to literature and languages students as part of an ongoing series of presentations by professionals in the fields of composition, rhetoric and literacy studies. He challenges professors to adapt to students’ needs by incorporating the technologies they are using most often. He also challenges scholars to buck the antiquated publishing systems in which it can take months and even years to get research into the hands of peers. After publishing two books and several articles in the traditional ways, Miller now only publishes his research online at text2cloud.com.
Professor Josephine Durkin challenged her art students to create outfits inspired by contemporary art and artists. The students created their fashion pieces with paper and found objects and then put on a fashion show. Plastic spoons, toilet paper and construction paper stood in for the usual molded accessories and choice fabrics available to most designers. The requisite “celebrity judge” panel included luminaries Michael Odom, Pati Dye and Angela Scott. Look for a feature story on Durkin’s work with her students, her art shows across the nation and her involvement with several charity organizations in an upcoming issue.

Michael Farris Smith and R. Flowers Rivera Continue Author Series

A&M-Commerce’s Literature and Languages Department welcomed two southern writers as part of the author series initiated by Department Head Hunter Hayes last year. Novelist Michael Farris Smith and poet R. Flowers Rivera read from their works and chatted with students and faculty members after their readings.

“We just have different stories to tell in the South,” Smith tells a student who’s asked him to compare New York writers and southern writers. His book “Rivers” (Simon & Schuster), to compare New York writers and southern writers. His book “Rivers” (Simon & Schuster),...
### Vivian’s Advice
Make a Good Name for Yourself

Vivian Tomlinson is right at home in a classroom. Addressing a room full of graduate students eager to hear her advice about the job market and interviewing, Tomlinson places both hands on the front desk, leans forward, takes a pause, then almost whispers, “It’s all about your reputation. You have to make a good name for yourself.”

Though this seems like common sense, every grad student in the room is writing it down. Tomlinson knows what she is talking about. Alumni ambassador for the A&M-Commerce Department of Literature and Languages, Tomlinson began teaching at the college level in 1986. She has been at Cameron University in Oklahoma for most of her professional career, and she has, of course, seen hundreds of applicants come and go.

“Take every opportunity to network,” is one of the last bits of wisdom she offers her audience. After a round of applause, a dozen folks surround her, ready to exchange email addresses and business cards.

### Texas Association of Music Schools’ President-Elect

**Dr. David Scott**

Head of the A&M-Commerce Music Department Professor David Scott is now the president-elect of the Texas Association of Music Schools (TAMS). Scott will serve in the position for two years and will begin another term of service as the president in 2016. TAMS is the largest state organization of music schools in the country, composed of up to 70 schools. The organization promotes open communication between all schools involved to promote best practices on all campuses. We congratulate Scott on this high honor.

### The new Adventures of Sydni Walker

**IN-FLIGHT INTERN**

The competition for the editorial internship program with Southwest Airlines is intense. With 28,000 others vying for a spot, A&M-Commerce senior Sydni Walker rose to the challenge. She participated in the program over the spring semester, beginning in January. Professor Lamar Bridges of the department of mass media, communication and theatre praises Walker’s accomplishment: “This was a challenging assignment she took on for the airline, but I was confident she would do well. We have promising and hard-working students in journalism, and Sydni is an example of the talent in our department.”

Walker’s work has appeared in The Update, and we can certainly attest to her talent, dedication and professionalism. Along with Bridges, we congratulate Walker and thank her for representing the university well.

### Vivian Tomlinson

- **Position:** Alumni ambassador for the A&M-Commerce Department of Literature and Languages
- **Experience:** Taught at the college level in 1986, has been at Cameron University in Oklahoma for most of her professional career
- **Advice:** “It’s all about your reputation. You have to make a good name for yourself.”

### David Scott

- **Position:** Head of the A&M-Commerce Music Department
- **Title:** President-elect of the Texas Association of Music Schools (TAMS)
- **Service:** Will serve for two years and begin another term in 2016

### Sydni Walker

- **Position:** A&M-Commerce senior
- **Internship Program:** Editorial internship program with Southwest Airlines
- **Achievement:** Participated in the program over the spring semester

### Vivian Tomlinson’s Advice

- **Key Point:** “Take every opportunity to network.”

### Alumni Ambassadors

- **Alumni Ambassadors Day:** Hosted the 31st Annual Alumni Ambassador Forum on Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014
- **Honored Alumni:** Invited by each department gave talks, visited classrooms and shared their experiences with current faculty members and students
- **Invitations:** Alumni ambassadors for the College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts included (from left) Ron Melugin (History), Vivian Aytes Tomlinson (Literature and Languages), Jan E. Baker (Music), Erin Grace Trieb (Art), Rick Mann (Mass Media, Communication and Theatre) and our own faculty member, Louis Lukin (Sociology and Criminal Justice).
Time Lords Doing Good

The Doctor Who Society of A&M-Commerce has been very busy. Faculty advisor Jeffrey Herndon of the department of political science and members of the DWS collected and donated more than 400 cans of food and dry goods to the food pantry in Commerce during the fall semester. Right before the Christmas break, the DWS visited Commerce Elementary School and gave a book to every single child from kindergarten through fourth grade. In the end the DWS gave out more than 800 books. This semester the DWS took part in Relay for Life and collected items to donate to the women’s shelter in addition to taking an active role in university recruitment efforts.

UNIVERSITY HOSTS THE MODEL ARAB LEAGUE

The department of political science, in conjunction with the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, hosted the Southwest Regional University Model Arab League (MAL) from April 3-5. Founded in 1983, the MAL gives students the opportunity to take part in a simulation of the League of Arab States, requiring the various delegations to study regional and global issues and interact with one another as representatives of individual countries. Students from a dozen universities participated.

“Days of Remembrance” EVENT

In cooperation with the Dallas Holocaust Museum Center for Education and Tolerance, the political science department presented a two-day program, “The Holocaust - Days of Remembrance” on April 21 and 22. Artifacts from the Holocaust and a traveling exhibit from the Dallas Holocaust Museum were on display in the Rayburn Student Center.

Holocaust Education Summit

Professor and Student Invited

Asst. Professor of Political Science Jeffrey Herndon and Donna Gosbee, a graduate student in the political science department, were invited to participate in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Regional Summit on Holocaust Education in Dallas March 19-21. Herndon and Gosbee met with representatives from the USHMM, members of the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission, including its chairman, Peter Berkowitz, regional Holocaust museum officials from throughout Texas and a select group of educators from colleges, universities and public and private secondary schools in North Texas. The primary focus of the summit was to examine the state of Holocaust education in Texas, identify issues and problems and develop ideas and programs to address those findings.

LEOCON Third Time and Charming

The Sigma Phi Phi or “Syphers” student organization, led by faculty advisor Dr. Robin Reid, hosted its third annual LeoCon event on Saturday, March 29, 2014. LeoCon melds panels and events of scholarly and fan interest in science fiction, fantasy and popular culture.

“We had a goal of 200 attendees,” says Reid. “Based on our sign-in sheets alone, we exceeded that goal.” It is not hard to see the appeal of the event to the university’s campus population. The Syphers are promoters of their passions, be it comics, anime, gaming and/or cosplay, just to name a few. The Hall of Languages was abuzz with students and faculty members decked out in their con attire (including Professor Herndon in his famous Doctor Who outfit). Presentations included University of California, Riverside professor Sherryl Vint’s talk, “Varieties of Human Experience: Alien, Android and Animal” and several workshops on gaming, creating comic book pages and publishing. Attendees had the opportunity to meet author Martha Wells and technical director and visual effects artist Nathan Arbuckle. The day was packed with several other panels, a Yu-Gi-Oh game tournament, anime jeopardy, and it ended with the traditional costume contest and LeoCon dance.

CONFERENCE

Researchers in the fields of linguistics, communication and literature gathered at A&M-Commerce at Rockwall on Feb. 21-23 to share their work. The conference included traditional speaker presentations, poster sessions and symposia responding to this year’s conference theme “Intercultural and Cross-Cultural Humor.”
The Music Department
at the Meyerson

On March 25, 2014, the A&M-Commerce Wind Ensemble and Chorale performed at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas.

It was the world premiere of a piece the university commissioned from composer James Syler. Syler’s piece, “The Temptation of St. Anthony,” was inspired by the life of the third century hermit Anthony of Egypt, famous for his dramatic accounts of torment and temptation. This was the wind ensemble and chorale’s second collaboration with Syler after their performance of his “Symphony No. 1 ‘Blue’” at Carnegie Hall in 2012. That performance was also a world premiere of Syler’s work.

Congratulations to the following students who placed at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Awards Texoma Regional Voice Competition, Senior Men Division: Matthew Morales (3rd Place), Micah Krajca (semi-finalist) and James Melton (semi-finalist). Matthew and James are students of Professor Jennifer Glidden, and Micah is a student of Professor Martin Vasquez.

VOICE STUDENTS HONORED BY NATS

The Fourth Annual Texas Summer Flute Symposium features some of the nation’s finest flutists and pedagogues. This year’s guest artists include Bonita Boyd from the Eastman School of Music; Demarre McGill, principal flutist of the Dallas Symphony; Elizabeth McNutt, contemporary music specialist from the University of North Texas; Conor Nelson from Bowling Green State University; and Julee Kim Walker from A&M-Commerce.

Through master classes, performance, practice, chamber music and electives, flutists will learn from these fine professionals. High school, college and professional level flutists are welcomed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Director Julee Kim Walker
Julee.Walker@tamuc.edu
(903) 886-5328

UPCOMING EVENTS

4th Annual
Texas Summer Flute Symposium
June 8-13, 2014

2014 Guest Artists

[From left]

● Bonita Boyd (Eastman School of Music)
● Demarre McGill (Principal, Dallas Symphony Orchestra; Powell Artist)
● Julee Kim Walker (Texas A&M University-Commerce)
● Elizabeth McNutt (Contemporary Music Specialist, University of North Texas)
● Conor Nelson (Bowling Green State University)

Moving On

Every semester the landscape of the university changes. We say goodbye to our seniors and graduates, we welcome the newest crop of freshmen and we see all of those in the middle change right before our eyes. A university is a place of movement.

We want to take a moment to wish our friend, John McCarty, all the best in his new career. John is returning to faith-based fundraising—his calling in life—and though we will miss him, we know that change and progress is part of university life. Many of you probably met John, and if you did, you know that he certainly made the most of every meeting; he would know your whole life story in half an hour. John has left a mark on the College, which should not be surprising, as his work has always been our work; changing lives for the better, one at a time.—J.D. Isip

June 8-13, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS