

## Shew named BSC associate provost

Dr. Wayne Shew, Ada Rittenhouse Snavely Professor of Biology, has been selected to serve as associate provost for Birmingham-Southern.

Shew, who served as interim provost of the college for the 2004-05 academic year, began his new duties this summer.

“Dr. Shew’s long history with the college, his background in the sciences, and his administrative experience as division chair and interim provost will be valuable in his new role,” says BSC Provost Dr. Kathleen Murray.

Having joined the BSC faculty in 1978, Shew is a 28-year veteran of the college. He served as chair of the college’s Division of Science and Mathematics from 1987-91 and is a past recipient of the Exemplary Teacher Award from the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry of the United Methodist Church.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and his master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Shew

## Donahue’s debut novel wins national Langum Prize



Donahue

The Langum Project for Historical Literature has named Dr. Peter Donahue, associate professor of English at Birmingham-Southern, as the winner of its annual prize in historical fiction for 2006.

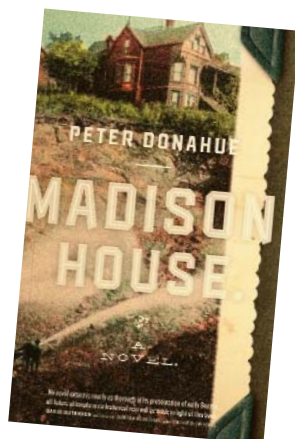
The Langum Prize is given to the best historical fiction book in the nation and includes a \$1,000 award. Donahue’s novel *Madison House* was released in paperback in October 2005. It focuses on the cultural transformation of 20th-century Seattle.

“This is the first big, national award I’ve received for my writing, so it’s very validating,”

said Donahue. “The award shows that the story told in *Madison House*—and the issues that the story raises—has appeal to readers beyond just the Northwest.”

The Langum Project for Historical Fiction, founded by David J. Langum Sr., is part of the Langum Historical Trust that sponsors the national competition. Two prizes in American history or biography and historical fiction are awarded annually.

Donahue joined the BSC faculty in 1999. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Washington, his master’s from Virginia Tech, and his doctorate from Oklahoma State University.



## Taylor elected to state retail board

Dr. Jack Taylor, Joseph S. Bruno Professor of Retailing at Birmingham-Southern, has been appointed to the 2006 board of directors for The Alabama Retail Association.

Taylor was elected to the board during the Retail Association’s February meeting in Montgomery. He is one of 28 directors nominated from throughout the state.

The retail group represents some 3,800 independent merchants and national companies that sell food, clothing, furniture, and other general merchandise at nearly 5,000 locations throughout Alabama.

Taylor joined the BSC faculty in 1987. He received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Central Florida, an MBA from Illinois State University, a J.D. from the Birmingham School of Law, and a Ph.D. from UAB.

# Professor's group sent satellite team in search of water on planet

BY PATRICK HICKERSON

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Physicist Duane Pontius doesn't hold back on his impressions of the new images from the Cassini satellite of geysers on Saturn's moon Enceladus.

"When I see the pictures from the imaging team, that show unambiguous huge geysers as big as the satellite, practically, it was one of the more amazing things in my life," Pontius said. "You don't expect something like that. Something that dramatic."

And Pontius, a Birmingham-Southern College professor, helped find them.

Pontius is part of a team of scientists who found charged particles coming from Enceladus. The particles, as he described them, are broken-up water molecules.

Their work and contributions from other scientists led Cassini's imaging team at the Jet Propulsion Lab in California to seek the cause of the phenomena.

JPL released images of the geysers Thursday. Evidence of water begged questions

on evidence of life.

"We realize that this is a radical conclusion—that we may have evidence for liquid water within a body so small and so cold," Carolyn Porco said Thursday. She is Cassini imaging team leader at Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colo.

"However, if we are right," Porco said, "we have significantly broadened the diversity of solar system environments where we might possibly have conditions suitable for living organisms."

The news, coming from 800 million miles away, has sent a charge through the international scientific community.

If true, Enceladus would join Jupiter's moon Europa, Neptune's moon Triton, and Earth as the only sites that show evidence of liquid water. Water in vapor and solid form are more common. Mars shows evidence of having had water billions of years ago.

"It's a pretty small club," Pontius said.

## Lots in a small package

As moons go, and Saturn has scads of them, Enceladus is puny. It's only 300 miles across. But it has enough to keep scientists busy. First, its surface is smooth in parts and pockmarked in others, which could show evidence of an active crust.

Scientists estimate the geysers might be erupting from near-surface pockets of liquid water right at freezing, 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Some scientists speculated the water could be only 10 yards under Enceladus' surface.

Pontius' specific role was developing a theoretical model that showed how the charged particles—the broken-up water molecules—swept around Saturn and passed by Enceladus. The data came from a device on Cassini that tracked particles and measured speed and composition.

Other researchers, looking at magnetic fields and heat from the moon, found reasons to take a harder look at the possibility of liquid water, Pontius said.

His next step is to determine how the material is coming off Enceladus and populating Saturn's magnetic field.

## A hometown guy

While his studies take him to Jupiter and beyond, Pontius hasn't moved from his native Birmingham. He graduated in 1979 from the Resource Learning Center that gathered in the old Rosedale High School in Homewood. It later was renamed the Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School and relocated next to Shades Valley High School in Irondale.

He attributed his participation in one of the great astronomical finds to "just great luck."

He was on a sabbatical leave last fall and traveled to Rice University, where he went to work with Tom Hill, a physics professor, and created a theoretical model that tracked the charged particles.

"The day I walked in, he said 'Look at this data,'" Pontius said.



Pontius

## Education professor Kirkpatrick retires to other passions

Dr. Katherine “Rusty” Kirkpatrick, associate professor of education and 1964 Birmingham-Southern graduate, retired from the college after the 2006 spring academic semester.

Kirkpatrick, who joined the faculty in 1989 and has served the college for 17 years, has been a “backbone” of support for America’s tradition of providing a good public education. “Retirement for me is bittersweet,” said Kirkpatrick. “I am certainly going to miss my students. But I’ll be able to spend more time with my four beautiful grandchildren.”

A native of Birmingham, Kirkpatrick earned her master’s and doctoral degrees in early childhood education from UAB. Her career began in 1964 as a first-grade teacher in the Huntsville school system. When the academic year ended, she returned to Birmingham, where she taught developmental reading for 20 years in elementary schools throughout the city.

In 1985, Kirkpatrick shifted her career to educating student teachers and specialized in the education of preservice teachers in reading methodology. Her work has culminated in the development and implementation of the Reading Buddies Program with Jonesboro Elementary School in the Bessemer school system, which provides a Reading Reference Room for children and free tutoring by BSC education students.

“Somewhere in the world there are men and women whom I have had the pleasure of teaching who hold degrees in elementary/collaborative education,” she said. “I have no way of knowing how many children’s lives they have touched and will touch in the future, perhaps in the hundreds or thousands.”

As an addition to her extensive list of achievements, Kirkpatrick was appointed to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Board of Examiners in 2001, of which she is still involved. Another accomplishment she is proud of is a 1995 exchange program in Brazil that she and former BSC Accounting Professor Bonnie Hairrell helped to develop. “The teaching techniques we learned, anchored in the theory of Cestin Freinet, crossed the disciplines of business and education,” she explained.

Kirkpatrick says she is looking forward to playing with her grandchildren and spending time with family and friends. Still, she admits she isn’t quite ready to loosen all of her ties with the field of education. “I would like to do some consulting work with the Alabama State Department of Education.”



*Kirkpatrick*

## Chinese delegation visits campus to explore exchange possibilities

About 22 members of the faculty and administration of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music in Shenyang, China, visited campus in February to explore the possibility of a cooperative exchange program with Birmingham-Southern which is under consideration that would involve faculty, students, and performances.

The visit came as a result of a relationship created between the conservatory and BSC Artist-in-Residence William DeVan, who taught and performed last summer at the Shenyang Conservatory. DeVan, a Steinway artist, was invited to teach there again this summer.

The group spent three hours touring the campus, observing fine and performing arts classes, and visiting with college administrators and faculty.

DeVan also visited China this past spring at the invitation of Xiamen University. During his stay, he performed two recitals at the School of Music at Xiamen and taught six master classes and three lectures. As a result of his performances and classes, DeVan has been invited to return to Xiamen and also has received an invitation to perform at the Music College of Yunnan Arts University in Beijing.



*William DeVan (second from left) and Professor of Music Mildred Allen (far left) greet members of the Chinese delegation following performances by BSC students in the Hill Recital Hall.*