The Division of Educational Outreach was created in August 2008. Under this new division, the offices of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt and the Office of Continuing Education were brought together, as well as a SACS liaison position with the Dean of Educational Outreach, Dr. Tina Naremore Jones. This is the first year that this division has gone through the planning and assessment process.

As the idea of a Division of Educational Outreach was formalized staff additions were considered in order to more effectively carry out the mission of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt which was created in August 2005 by the UWA’s Board of Trustees. Primarily, these positions involved hiring Valerie Pope Burnes as Director for the Center for the Study of the Black Belt. She has dual appointment duties in that she also teaches 2 classes each semester with the Department of History and Social Sciences and holds the rank of assistant professor. The next staff position was Director of Educational Programming, now held by Dr. Ashley Dumas. She holds a Ph.D. in archaeology and is charged with teaching one course per semester, along with working with overseeing the Fort Tombecbe project and developing educational outreach opportunities for all the units within the Center for the Study of the Black Belt.

A primary reason for the formation of the division was to help sustain the momentum of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt and encourage growth in Continuing Education. As a result, of its role as management entity for the Black Belt Heritage Area Task Force, the Center has been awarded the following grants in the 2008-09:

- Tombigbee RC & D: $10,000 (HDI Institute)
- Black Belt Community Foundation: $3000 (childen’s tour of the Black Belt)
- The Conservation Fund: $90,000 (SWAP – Blackland Prairie)
- Federal Highway Administration: $340,000 (Interpretation of BB Nature and Heritage Trail)

In addition the Center has secured funding for its other units:

- Tombigbee RC&D: $4300 (Campbell House) (BB Garden)
- UWA Research Grant: $900 (Derby Papers)
- Alabama Historical Commission: originally $50,000 prorated to $45,000 (Fort Tombecbe)

All of the grants allude to project specific programs, and has not included staff monies. The increased awareness surrounding the rich natural and cultural history of Alabama’s Black Belt has been encouraging. Since July 2008, members of the Division of Educational Outreach have conducted 17 public programs promoting the natural history of the region. Three staff members have been demonstrators in living history programs at Moundville (Hale County), Pioneer Days (Clarke County), and Alabama Frontier Days (Autauga County). Five mosaic tile classes for children have been conducted. The partner schools have each received either benches or stepping stones created by the children, and the Black Belt Garden and Sumter County Nature Trail have also received benches or stepping stones featuring native species of the Black Belt. This has been funded through an additional Black Belt Community Foundation Grant sponsored by the Sumter County Fine Arts Council. Staff has been asked and attended three national conferences this year to promote the Black Belt Heritage Area. Two state meetings have also been scheduled for March and May to promote the completion of the Feasibility Study for candidate heritage area. Twelve town hall meetings have been coordinated through the office for the ABBHA task force. Seven others are scheduled for the spring. Both Dr. Jones and Ms. Burnes serve as speakers for these events.

The office of Continuing Education has offered three courses each semester at the Demopolis Higher Education Center. Certification courses have been offered for EMT training on the UWA campus. The position for a director of Continuing Education was advertised and candidates were interviewed. Selected candidates turned down the position, primarily due to salary issues. To develop the program with the tracks of personal enrichment, career enhancement, and travel abroad in mind consideration needs to be given to increasing the salary for this
position. A decision was made to postpone the hiring of this position, until a well-developed strategic plan was in place.

Needs of the Division of Educational Outreach are primarily staff-related. Currently the Division shares one secretary, who is only ½ time. Her duties are split not only within the Division, but since the state offices for the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation are also housed in the Kelly Land Building, she serves as the executive secretary for this state non-profit, as per our contract with this organization. This person is also a living historian and is called on to travel to schools and living history events. Our grants require constant paperwork supervision and an additional person would be helpful to aid not only with grant paperwork, grant writing, but SACS paperwork as the QEP plans will start soon. We are looking for funding to ensure that part of Dr. Dumas’ salary will continued to be funded through the AHC grant as it is now. Proration has already taken its toll on these monies however. With the addition of a certificate program in Public History that has already been approved by SACS, Dr. Dumas’ continued residency in the Division of Educational Outreach is imperative. Finally we have a ½ position that has been funded this year only to work with archives. We would like to increase this to full time as more archival material is donated to the CSBB, the Black Belt Museum and the loose records project. We need someone whose sole duty works with these materials so that the public can gain quick access to these materials.

The Division is asking for the following:

Director of Continuing Education: $40,000
Projects and Policy Coordinator: $33,000
Records and Archives Maintenance: $24,500
Total $94,500