



Flight of the Phoenix

Alumni Newsletter from the WKU Department of English / Fall 2018 / Vol. III

Dear Alumni,

After a brief hiatus, we are delighted to share the third edition of the English Department newsletter.

As always, we offer you profiles of alumni, new faculty and staff, student Fulbright scholars, faculty award winners, and emeritus faculty who passed away this year. We also have an extended story about new English curriculum, and pieces about our New English Major Convocation and the departmental expansion.

One of the most difficult events of 2018 was surely the loss of Professor Mary Ellen Miller. Dr. David LeNoir has written a beautiful tribute to MEM in this issue, and the department has decided to rename *The Jim Wayne Miller*

Celebration of Writing as The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing. Mark your calendars because on October 28 at 2PM in the Kentucky Museum, we will celebrate Mary Ellen’s life and work. We hope you can join us.

Whether you’re reading a hard or electronic copy of the newsletter, we hope you enjoy it. We would love to hear from you and learn about what you’re doing, so drop us an email, give us a call, or come by Cherry Hall if you’re in the neighborhood.

All best wishes,

Rob Hale
Head of English
rob.hale@wku.edu



English Department Curriculum Change

Academic Year 2017-18 marked the inauguration of the English Department’s new curriculum. Historically, our department has focused on literary study and preparing English Secondary Teachers (EST), but over time, we have added concentrations in creative and professional writing and developed a certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). While we continue to uphold the central value of literature in our discipline and to cultivate the growth of excellent teachers and writers, the faculty saw a need to create more coherence within the major and to provide more flexibility for students in all of our concentrations. Consequently, we took a comprehensive look at our programs,

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developed a set of goals based on the positive work we were already doing, and created core learning outcomes to help all English majors be even more successful after graduation—not just on the job market, but as human beings.

Two aims that guided the revision of the English major were increasing course options for students so that they can explore their passions while also developing a core to the major across all concentrations to build coherence. Ted Hovet, chair of the curriculum review committee, believes that “the new curriculum will increase the connections that exist among classes within each concentration and across the English/EST major as a whole. Students will gain a stronger sense of how the variety of materials that they study within the major revolve around a handful of core learning outcomes. These learning outcomes—which emphasize communication, critical thinking, writing, and research skills—will prepare WKU English majors to make an impact on the world beyond Cherry Hall.”



Keith Epley and Dr. Trini Stickle

EST professor David LeNoir was pleasantly surprised at how the core establishes a certain amount of flexibility while retaining its cohesiveness: “Although they look very different in some respects, the concentrations employ the core in ways that make transitions among them possible. An EST major, for instance, can double-major in a literature concentration for as few as nine additional hours, a creative writing concentration for as few as eighteen hours, or a professional writing concentration for as few as twenty-one hours.”



Terence Elliott

Here are some of the specific changes to the English/EST majors:

- We made our English Language course (English 304) a 200-level course so that majors would fulfill this requirement earlier in their careers, allowing them to better apply their understanding of grammar and linguistics to style in creative and professional writing and literature classes. Exposure to linguistic concepts early in their careers would also give students more time to complete a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate, which could create more employment opportunities after graduation.
- We increased the number of course options for professional writing students to include courses from other departments. As Jeff Rice, professional writing professor, notes, “Revisions to the PW curriculum provide students with a strong base in traditional professional writing concepts, but also help develop writing skills required by many of today’s employers. The curriculum now includes courses in high-demand areas, such as social media writing and marketing, digital photography production, and writing with various technological platforms or purposes (like grant writing). Adding these courses to the PW curriculum will help make our students more competitive in a variety of professional writing fields.”

- We developed a new course called Reading as a Writer designed especially for students in creative writing. Creative writing faculty determined that students need to be more conscious of craft: the technical and artistic choices that professional writers make in the writing process. Creative writing professor Rebbecca Brown explains that “students will interpret and analyze a variety of texts through a writerly lens with the goal of becoming more aware of the creative choices they make when composing their own poems, shorts stories, essays, and dramatic works.” This course will free students from the limiting idea that creative writing is merely self-expression and give them a new tool for studying literature, which they will learn to see through the lens of an aspiring writer.
- We distributed required courses across concentrations, which will allow us to offer more special topics courses in each area. As literature professor Dr. Lloyd Davies comments, the redistribution allows us to be “more responsive than in the past to current research and teaching interests of faculty and gives us more flexibility to teach a variety of subjects and authors.”
- We expanded the capstone course for literature and EST majors to allow them to apply their skills to new literary topics appropriate for senior-level study and not simply to synthesize work already completed, as in the past capstone. Students will have opportunities to conduct significant academic research and bring to fruition a rich written project. Literature professor Alison Langdon explains, “The Literature/ EST capstone course will offer a unique opportunity to explore a particular topic deeply across a range of literary texts. The culminating project will showcase our majors’ skills in literary analysis, meticulous research, and critical thinking.”

The time and attention that the English faculty invested in this process demonstrate how much they care about student learning. Rob Hale, Head of English, introduced the idea of curriculum revision based on conversations he

had with colleagues during his first year on the job. He said, “In some departments curriculum revisions can be divisive, but in our collegial department, we put students’ interests first.” Linguistics professor Alison Youngblood “was pleased at how well the department worked together. There were a lot of strong feelings, but I never saw any unprofessionalism or disrespect among our coworkers. I’d expect nothing less from our group.”



Dr. Nicolette Bruner and Dr. Angela Jones

These changes further cement the English major as one of the most important, relevant, and powerful majors to seek. Lloyd Davies explains, “The English major, with its emphasis on reading and writing, continues to be the best route to a good general education at WKU; these are essential skills in all areas of life, especially in an increasingly technological world. The English Department’s focus on literature also provides indispensable exposure to the lives of people in other times and places, encouraging students to confront the enduring questions of meaning, purpose, and truth that they will face throughout their own lives.” In the new WKU English curriculum, majors will continue to graduate with reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that will enable them to thrive in a variety of careers. Faculty will also continue to nurture our students’ imaginations, to foster in them a profound love of literature, and to promote their understanding of the subtleties of language and how it can be used for a variety of purposes.

For more information please visit https://www.wku.edu/english/undergraduate_page.php

The Department's Inaugural English Major Convocation

In fall 2017, the English Department hosted its inaugural English Major Convocation to kick off the new year. Both professors and students, like Professional Writing Senior Lydia Anvar (*right*), spoke about different opportunities the department has to offer. Students and faculty felt that the convocation was a great success.

Recent English graduate Kayln Johnson ('18) said about the convocation, "Having the chance to hear upperclassmen from every concentration of English speak on their experience was uplifting. Not only did students talk about their experience within the department, but they validated their degrees by discussing publication opportunities." She continued, "*The Ashen Egg* and *Zephyrus*, both university publications, allow students to hone their craft outside of class. This event showcased all of the opportunities that are located within the English department, such as the Film Club, Korean Pop Culture Club, Professional Writing Club, and the English Club. What I found most striking about the event, however, was the amount of passion with which everyone spoke."

Though a few professors provided information about events and clubs, like the English Club and the Jim Wayne Miller Celebration, the convocation was, at its center, something student-driven. Students spoke about getting published in departmental magazines, like *Ashen Egg* and *Zephyrus*; about clubs, including the Film Club, Korean Pop Culture Club, and Sigma Tau Delta; and about academic opportunities, like internships and study abroad.

The convocation ended with a reading of a poem by the well-loved WKU Poet Laureate, Professor Mary Ellen Miller. Then everyone enjoyed free gourmet popsicles (yes, that's right, gourmet popsicles) in front of the Faculty House, with a special guest appearance by WKU President Tim Caboni. Because of the success of the department's convocation, it will surely only be the first of many.



English Major Lydia Anvar ('18)



WKU President Tim Caboni



English Major Katlyn Sulls ('19)

A Farewell to Tomitha Blair

Tomitha Blair has now rounded out her 13-year career with the English Department, moving on to her next chapter in order to work full-time as a realtor. She will be putting all of her energy into Premier Properties of South Central Kentucky, where she has worked part-time, alongside her position in the English office, for three and a half years.

Back in 2003, Tomitha joined the WKU campus as the massage therapist in the Preston Center, and then two years later, she joined the English Department staff. From then until her last day on June 29, 2018, she became an integral part of the departmental community. She managed money and accounts, yes, but she also brought a joy to her job that affected those around her. Many people in the department depended on her for discussion as much as financial help.

Professor Russell Moore mentioned that one of Tomitha's greatest virtues was patience, something the student worker writing this



would whole-heartedly agree with. He said, "She has been patient in mentoring and guiding the student workers and in meeting the needs of English department members, especially the needs of the 'special' members of the department, including, of course, me." When asked what she would miss most about the English Department, Tomitha replied without hesitation, "The people."

English Department Head Dr. Hale said, "I don't have the space to list all of her many contributions to the department. She has been a wonderful friend and colleague. She has helped make the English Department a wonderful place to work, and I'm really going to miss her." As Tomitha continues to work at Premier Properties of South Central Kentucky, she hopes everyone at WKU will stay in touch.

And a Welcome to Mary Johnson

Mary Johnson joined the English Department as our new office associate on July 2, 2018. Prior to joining the English Department, she was an office associate with the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex at WKU. Mary earned her bachelor's degree in English in 2015 from WKU and will graduate with an MA in Organizational Leadership in 2019.

Over the past 12 years, Mary has adopted three rescue dogs from the Bowling Green Humane Society and one from an owner who chose to re-home her dog. Mary's current adoptees include a seven-year-old Hungarian Vizsla and a one-



year-old Vizsla/Pit bull mix.

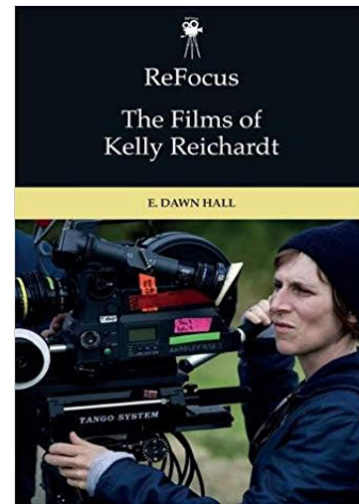
Mary grew up in Lebanon, Kentucky, but has lived in Bowling Green for most of the last 28 years. She lives with her husband Wayne and her daughter Kate

Upon arriving at her new position in the English Department she said, "It's exciting to work in the building where I spent so many hours as an undergraduate. I'm looking forward to working with such a creative and friendly faculty and staff!" We're also excited to have Mary joining our community!

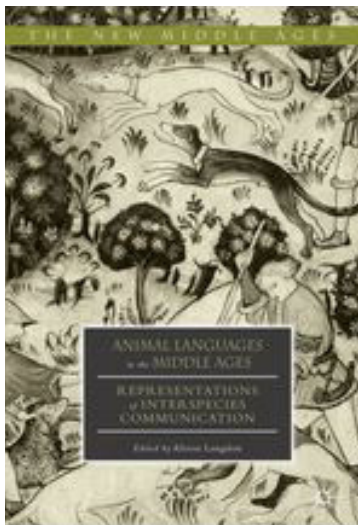
Recent Publications by Faculty Members



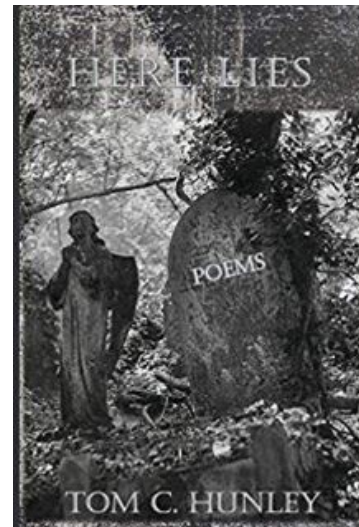
Dr. David Bell, Director of the English Department's MFA program and best-selling novelist, published his most recent novel, *Somebody's Daughter*. A story about a father who searches for the missing daughter he never knew he had, it was picked as one of the top 10 books of July by LibraryReads.



Dr. Dawn Hall published her recent work about the independent filmmaker Kelly Reichardt. She defines and analyzes all the elements of Reichardt's filming style, looking at questions of gender, feminism, socioeconomics, and sexual orientation, arguing that Reichardt has a lot to offer independent filmmakers.



Dr. Alison Langdon, the English Department's literature advisor, published her most recent work in the spring of this year. *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication* focuses on medieval perception of animals as linguistic beings in a range of literary texts.



Dr. Tom Hunley published his most recent collection of poems, *Here Lies*, praised for its combination of comic insight and wit. Amy Newman, author of *Dear Editor*, says that the cycle of poems are "eerie, original, fun, dark, and delightful."



From left to right: John Paul King, Paula Konokh, Brodie Gress, Hunter Little, Emily Diehl, and Marcee Wardell

Zane Dezeeuw interned with the literary journal *Sinister Wisdom* and was awarded the 2018 Potter College Award for Outstanding Student in English, MFA.

Esther French completed a Community Development internship this summer in the Adult Literacy department of the Nashville Public Library's Bringing Books to Life program, helped build activities, resources, and volunteer training materials for NPL's English Conversation Clubs, and surveyed community agencies working with new speakers of English to determine their volunteer training needs.

MFA Student Success

John Paul King published work in *BlazeVox* and *Drunk Monkeys Magazine*.

Elizabeth Upshur published in the *Pergrine Journal*, won the Fulbright Scholarship to research abroad in Benin, won a partial scholarship to the online workshop Winter Tangerine with Franny Choi and Tiana Clark, and won the 2018 Eleanor Clark Award from the Robert Penn Warren Circle.

Emily Diehl published three poems in *The Adirondack Review*, a short story in *Zephyrus*, and is an editorial intern at Worthy Publishing.

Marcee Wardell was the editorial intern at Sarabande publishing company, in summer 2018.

Leslie Fox published pieces in *Pine Mountain Sand* and *Gravel*, worked as an intern with Nashville Writer's collective The Porch, and in the fall will teach at WKU, while pursuing her graduate certificate in Gender & Women's Studies.

Cameron Moreno interned as a Writing Advisor with the Barrio Writers Workshop, was honored as a finalist for the Elizabeth R. Curry Poetry Contest, was an Honorable Mention for the Waasnode Short Fiction Prize, and was published in *Typishly: Online Literary Journal*, *The Hunger*, and *Passages North*.

David Haydon published work in *Zephyrus* and *Lavender Bluegrass*, worked as an editorial intern with the literary magazine *Creative Nonfiction*, and currently teaches composition at WKU.

Professor Keith Epley Retires

Long-time English Instructor **Keith Epley** announced his impending retirement in the fall of 2017 and taught his last class at WKU this June. Epley began as a student at WKU in 1979 and earned his BA in 1984 and MA in 1989. He taught part-time for the department from 1986-2000 and transitioned to full-time in 2000. As a student and teacher, he has been part of the English Department for over 35 years.

One recurring word that students have used to describe Epley over the years is *memorable*. He regularly left an indelible mark on them and they consistently characterized him as passionate, knowledgeable, funny, and demanding. He has always had very high expectations for students and held them accountable. To earn an A from Epley, while not impossible, was a sign of true excellence.

One student comment captures the feelings of many: "Mr. Epley's teaching style is engaging and entertaining, he always finds a way to make writing entertaining. In addition, he answers questions as fully as he is able and listens to you, which is invaluable in any course. English 300, although not my favorite class this semester, has been an intellectually exciting one, reading and writing about great thinkers and writers such as Thoreau, Lao Tzu, and Machiavelli, offering great insight into how society works from both Eastern and Western viewpoints."



After the passing of Pat Taylor in recent years, Epley took the reins of the Social Committee and resurrected the December, end-of-term pot-luck celebration, welcoming retired colleagues back to Cherry Hall for a visit and giving current colleagues a respite from grading exams. He has been the consummate host and an embodiment of hospitality.

Dr. Rob Hale commented, "Keith has been an outstanding teacher and a wonderful colleague. I'll miss my early-morning chance encounters with him the most. As everyone knows, he is a walking Bartlett's Quotations, making adroit allusions, referencing literary texts with

precision, and rattling off poignant passages. Experiencing Keith's verve was a wonderful way for me to start my day, to awaken my curiosity, and to stimulate my imagination."

From left to right: Keith Epley, Dr. Rob Hale, and Fabian Alvarez

Elizabeth Thompson Oakes (1943-2017)

Dr. Libby Oakes earned her BA in Creative Writing from the University of Iowa and her PhD from Vanderbilt University. She began working in the English Department in 1987, where she taught courses and regularly published and presented work on Shakespeare and was also a long-serving graduate advisor. Dr. Oakes wrote poetry throughout her career, and after winning the Pearl Poetry Prize in 2004, she devoted her energy to publishing four volumes in her sixties. Dr. Oakes retired in 2009 and moved to Sedona, Arizona where she was active in University Women of Sedona, PEO, and the local arts community. Professor Mary Ellen Miller wrote a beautiful essay on Dr. Oakes that is available on the English Department web site at: https://www.wku.edu/english/pdf_files/mem_1_elizabeth_oakes.pdf



Mary Ellen Miller (1935-2018)

Professor Mary Ellen Miller earned her BA in English from Berea College and her MA from the University of Kentucky. She began working at WKU in 1963, teaching creative writing and American literature courses throughout her career. In 2011, her collection of poems *The Poet's Wife Speaks* won the Old Seventy Creek Press Poetry Prize. In 2014 she and collaborator Morris Allen Grubbs edited *Every Leaf A Mirror: A Jim Wayne Miller Reader*, which won a Weatherford Award as one of the best books on Appalachian culture for 2014. During her career, Professor Miller made too many contributions to WKU to count, including two terms as a Faculty Regent, co-founder of the Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies, and founder of the Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing. In 2017, President Gary Ransdell named Miller the first WKU Poet Laureate. Dr. David LeNoir has written tribute to Professor Miller on p. 10 of this issue.



In MEMorium

By Dr. David LeNoir

The loss of Mary Ellen Miller this year marks the end of an era. This is no hyperbole. In fact, hyperbole would be hard to achieve in describing Mary Ellen's tenure at WKU. Aside from her several-year reign as the university's longest-serving faculty member, she was the last to succeed in rising to the rank of full professor without a terminal degree. She served under eight university presidents—and had the ear of most of them. She twice served as faculty regent, received awards for her teaching, was recognized with the coveted Spirit of Western Award, and was named as our institution's first poet laureate, that post being created specifically in recognition of her value to this university. Her influence in the department—among our students, among our programs, and among our faculty—is incalculable. She was, in essence, the *grande dame* of the English Department, and we are not liable to see her like again.

Consider the range of archetypal roles: Matriarch, Crusader, Conjuror, Wise Woman, Nurturer, Free Spirit, Trickster, and, when necessary, even Terrible Mother. I regret some of our younger faculty may not have witnessed her full range. She was absolutely indefatigable in her work with and for students, within her classes and without, and she moved fluidly among her roles to their advantage. When the Terrible Mother manifested itself, you can be sure that the quality of a program or the welfare of our students or faculty was the focus of her attention, and you could be sure, as well,

that persona would be packed away immediately thereafter in favor of a more collegial one.

Most of us probably did the math once or twice during commencement ceremonies when we were reminded of Mary Ellen's years of service by the president as she was recognized as the bearer of the university's mace: Given the manner in which retirement benefits are calculated, retiring several years earlier would have actually netted Mary Ellen a raise. Of

course, money—and even retirement itself—is not necessarily everyone's primary goal in professional life. Certainly, that was not Mary Ellen's.

Over the years, Mary Ellen told many of us she wanted to die teaching, that she wanted to be carted away by gurney from her classroom. I don't think any of us doubted

her sincerity. However, if we dismissed that as metaphor, only a sentiment of her devotion to her work and to her students, we might overlook another aspect of her intent. I think Mary Ellen would have enjoyed thinking that her death in the classroom would have left her students with an indelible memory, a topic rife with shock, awe, admiration, and even some nervous mirth, a topic which demanded they take up pen and paper to explore in writing. While she missed a direct bull's-eye on that goal, I think we are safe in saying that she has long succeeded otherwise in offering students indelible memories and inspired them in other ways to take up pen and paper. Her presence will long be felt in the lives of her students and of her colleagues.



The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing

As a tribute to the long and dedicated career of Professor Mary Ellen Miller, the English Department will rename *The Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing* as *The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing*. In 1997 Professor Miller founded the Celebration of Writing in memory of her husband, the influential poet and Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame member. This annual event has brought significant writers including Sally Bingham, Silas House, Robert Morgan and Frederick Smock to WKU to present their own writing and to workshop with our students.

This year's event will commemorate the life and work of Professor Miller, and we plan to have special guests read her poetry and speak about her influence. We will hold the event on Sunday, October 28, at 2 p.m. in the Kentucky Museum.

If you would like to support the event financially, please send gifts to The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of



Writing Fund in the WKU Foundation at Western Kentucky University, 292 Alumni Ave., Bowling Green, KY 42101, or contribute electronically by visiting <https://www.wku.edu/makeagift> and entering Mary Ellen & Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing in the search box.

We hope that many of our alumni and retired colleagues will attend this special homecoming event to celebrate the life and work of an outstanding teacher, excellent poet, and wonderful human being. For updates, please visit <https://www.wku.edu/english/>.



Alumni Updates

The following are snippets from recent alumni profiles that we published within the last academic year. For more, please visit <https://www.wku.edu/english/profiles/alumni/alumni/home.php>.



While pursuing a degree in English Literature, **Laura Long** had numerous accomplishments including President's Scholar, Honors College participant, an *Ashen Egg* publication, Study Abroad Ambassador, and the Thomas G. Jones Scholarship. In May 2013, Laura graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts, English Language and Literature. She is responsible for developing and executing all online communications, as the Digital Marketing Manager for the Nashville Rescue Mission. She explained how her role is to manage search engine optimization (SEO), web design, digital content, social media content, email marketing, analytics and reporting, digital campaigns, digital media buy execution, crowd-funding campaigns, digital marketing trend research, and all promotional materials.

Rachel Hoge graduated from the WKU English Department in 2014 with a concentration in creative writing and graduated from the Arkansas Writers MFA Program in Conway, Arkansas, in 2017. She started her own website that showcases some of the articles and more creative pieces she has written that were featured in high profile journals and papers such as *The Washington Post*, *Self*, and *Bustle*. She often writes about her personal struggle with stuttering, and credits receiving the courage to write about it to classes with Dr. Poole and Dr. Winkler, which opened her eyes to the concept of "language acquisition." She enjoyed freelancing and is now employed full-time as a production editor at Post Hill Press in Nashville.

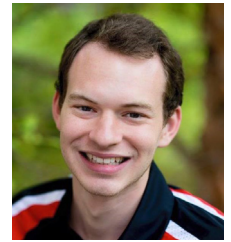


Teresa Witcher graduated from the WKU Graduate School with her Masters in English in December 2014. With a concentration in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), she currently works as an international academic advisor at Iowa State University. While she loves being able to work with a number of government agencies to advise students, she is still looking to grow, learn, and one day have a position in a government agency that she now cooperates with. Her degree coupled with vital personal experience helps push her forward in a direction that goes far beyond the common English major career paths. Teresa's personal experiences both in and outside the classroom have allowed her many opportunities to utilize her own skills as an English major and be a part of something that she truly loves.



Adriana Funke graduate with a professional writing concentration and served as the Advising and Outreach Chairperson for the Student Representatives of the Office of Study Abroad & Global Learning at WKU, and was asked to speak about her experience in studying in Europe at the Study Abroad graduation reception. After her graduation in 2016, Adriana applied to the Columbia Publishing Course and was accepted into the CPC United Kingdom session in 2017. During the month-long course, she lived at Exeter College on the campus of Oxford University in England. As a foreign rights assistant at JABberwocky Literary Agency Inc., she works with many international publishing houses to sell scripts in other countries. Her most recent project was working to update the foreign rights catalog for the London Book Fair.

Cole McDowell ('16) recently graduated from the University of Notre Dame with an MA in Early Christian Studies. This program is jointly sponsored by the Department of Classics and the Department of Theology, requiring him to take courses in history, ancient languages, and theology. Cole's degree from WKU in English Literature allowed him to transition studying the theology and history of late antiquity, and excel at analyzing ancient Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian texts in their original languages. The ability to critically analyze any text is a direct reflection of his study of literature at WKU. Cole begins seminary study at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. this fall.



Gilman/Fulbright Scholarship Winners



Dr. Deborah Logan received her second Fulbright Award to research abroad in India. She will be continuing research for her current book project, *The Women's Press in India, 1860-1940: Imperial Imports and*

Nationalist Activism. Her project focuses on women writers in India and how they found and developed their literary voice.



MFA student **Elizabeth Upshur** received the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to travel abroad in Benin, West Africa. She will work on a genealogical project that combines creative

nonfiction, poetry, and photography. Her project will center on her maternal genealogy from West Africa to the American continent.



Lillian Golden received the Gilman Scholarship to study abroad in Costa Rica during the summer of 2018. She is a freshman English for Secondary Teaching major.



Jeremy McFarland received the Gilman Scholarship to study and intern abroad in China, during the summer of 2018. He recently earned his BA in English, with a concentration in professional writing, and Chinese.

Departmental Expansion

The 2017-18 academic year has brought significant changes to the English Department. As has been widely reported in the media, WKU experienced a \$28 million budget cut which resulted in the closure of University College, elimination of over 100 positions (mostly staff), and a reduction of operating budgets across the Hill. A portion of this cut is because the Kentucky legislature



Dr. Alex Poole and Joe Austin

diminished appropriations to higher education by 6.25% for the 2018-20 biennial budget. Between 2008 and 2017, the legislature had cut support to higher education in Kentucky by 26.4%.

As a result, the English Department operating budget was reduced and two open positions (retirements) were eliminated. While the reductions are significant, other units fared even worse. The most immediate effect on the English Department is the absorption of faculty from programs in University College: **Tim Brotherton, Dawn Hall, Trish Jagers, Megan Miller, and Rick Thompson** from the School of University Studies; **Chris Keller** from the Mahurin Honors College; and **Merrall Price** from University College. Faculty from the School of University Studies have been mostly teaching general education and supplemental writing courses for underprepared students; they will continue in these roles in the English Department. Honors faculty have been teaching honors-only classes and English classes; the Mahurin Honors College will continue to thrive, but our new faculty will become members of our faculty and likely teach more English classes. Merrall Price had been an associate dean at UC and will join Potter College as associate dean; she will also serve as a special assistant to the Provost for at least one semester.

The addition of these colleagues brings our total number of full-time faculty to 41, making us the largest department on campus. Even though the circumstances of their arrival have been difficult, each of these new colleagues brings significant experience, intellectual girth, and pedagogical prowess to our department, and their presence will make our department even stronger.



Trish Jagers



New English Department Faculty



Tim Brotherton served for twenty-four years as a U.S. Army Infantry officer, including three tours in Asia. He taught at West Point and The University of Guam before WKU. Although he teaches full-time now, he has worked at different levels in four separate colleges at WKU. He and his wife, Susan, have two grown children and three grandchildren.



Trish Jagers is a “sucker” for words—written or spoken, eloquent or sworn. She is an award-winning poet and an incurable hoarder of books. She’s taught creative writing, introduction to lit, freshman composition, and developmental comp courses, in addition to mentoring a flock of student writer peeps. In 2017, she received the UC Faculty Award for Research and Creativity.



Megan Miller earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Southern Illinois University. Her favorite class to teach is Introduction to Literature, and when she doesn’t have her nose in a book, she enjoys spending time with her two dogs and two cats – and occasionally, she enjoys the company of human friends.



Rick Thompson graduated from the MFA program from the University of Montana. This led him to teach developmental comp, intro comp, research writing, creative writing, and introduction to literature. He is a native of Muhlenberg County, KY, and his personal interests include karaoke, travel, craft beer, concerts, Texas Hold’em, grilling, sauteing, braising, roasting, searing, and frying.



Dr. Dawn Hall is finishing her seventeenth year at WKU, ranging from a pedagogical consultant at the CITL to teaching English in Academic Support/SUS with two directorships (GWS/SUS). In 2007, she received the University Faculty Award for student advising. She teaches film, English, popular culture studies, and gender at WKU and has co-created/taught Sundance Study Away, and Gender and Media Study Abroad courses.



Dr. Chris Keller earned his BA in English from the University of Texas and a PhD in English from the University of Florida. His research is split among composition studies, honors pedagogy, and American literature since 1945. He enjoys partnering and doing work with animal shelters, as well as watching college football, running, mountain biking, and scuba diving.



Dr. Merrall Price is originally from West Wales. She has a PhD in English from the University of Rochester with an emphasis in medieval literature. She was Associate Dean of University College for seven years; before that, she was in the English Department at Oklahoma State in Stillwater. She has two dogs who are spoiled rotten, and she is a member of Fountain Square Players.

Upcoming Events

- 9-7 Second Annual English Major Convocation
- 9-7 Recent Professional Writing Alumni Panel:
Jessica Barksdale, Lauren Bunch, David Hormell, Jeremy McFarland, and Jennifer Troth
- 9-24 Reading by Poet Curtis Crisler
- 10-19 Experienced PW Alumni Panel:
Seth Dukes, Katie Embry, Whitney Grider, Jacky Killian, Kellie McDermott, Abby Ponder, and Skylar Wooden
- 10-28 Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing



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Flight of the Phoenix

