

The Reavis Newsletter

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Department of English

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From the Interim Chair

It is my pleasure and privilege to step into the chair's office for Spring 2016. My return to department administration will be brief but not leisurely. As you will see below, we are a department with much to do and many things to tell you about!

Phil Eubanks



From the Outgoing Chair

Writing this column is one of my last acts as chair of NIU's English Department—my first day of retirement will be January 1, 2016. Retirement came upon me unexpectedly, due to changes in Illinois pension regulations, but I am content. I have had the good fortune to be part of an extraordinary unit in a student-centered university, as well as to meet many enthusiastic alumni and emeriti.

For the university, this has been a challenging year, with low enrollments and budget troubles exacerbated by the lack of a state budget. Yet we in the English Department reflect on many successes in 2015. Employment rates for our graduate students are up. Undergraduates continue to describe their courses in English as among the best they have taken in the university, and new curricular options, such as the writing track in the major, are blossoming. Our faculty is in the top ten percent nationally for book publications, and professors also serve national professional organizations, provide outreach to local schools, or simply and humbly spend extra hours ensuring that every student has the best possible chance of succeeding. This fall, we were honored to receive the university's award for significant contributions to a more global NIU.



We celebrate our partner organization, Sigma Tau Delta, the National English Honor Society, which is housed at NIU—the only such association housed at any university in the state. Retiree Bil (William) Johnson makes us proud as the executive director of the association. If you are or were a member, please let us know. Students participating in Sigma Tau Delta enjoy professionalization activities, heated discussions of literature, and bad poetry nights! This year, we look forward to initiating fund-raising for a new recruitment scholarship for top high school and transfer students who have participated in Sigma Tau Delta's affiliates. We “kick off” two other new scholarships this year as well—the Mike and Anne

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Malone Award for short fiction and the Marjorie Winters fund for incoming students. Robert Self is bringing a new fund to endowment. Our donors have indeed been generous with us, in these funds and others, and for that we are grateful.

Philip Eubanks will be resuming his role as chair on an interim basis this spring while we conduct a search for a new chair. I hope you will welcome my successor, whoever he or she may be, as well as you welcomed me. Thank you again for your support in my four years as chair.

Amy Levin

First Schriber Scholars Awarded

In 2014 **Professor Emerita Mary Suzanne Schriber** established the Schriber Scholar Award to honor her mother while funding graduate student and faculty research on women's literature and language. This spring the department announced the first award recipients: **Assistant Professor Melissa Adams-Campbell** and **Ph.D. candidate Ashley Heiberger**. Adams-Campbell will use the funds to begin work on her second book, "Reclaiming History: Native American Women and Historical Fiction," the first survey of representations of American Indian women in nineteenth and twentieth-century American historical novels by both Native and non-Native women authors. As part of the award she will offer a graduate seminar on women's historical fiction and lead a book club for DeKalb community members and interested undergraduates. Heiberger will use Schriber funds to complete her dissertation on Saudi Arabian women's English Language Learning. By examining linguistic, sociocultural, and feminist issues for Saudi women in the US, Heiberger will focus on the intersection of many important ESL issues and advocate for a more positive learning environment for this particular population of ELL. Winner of the 2014 ESL Tutor Award, Heiberger also has an M.A. in Women's Literature from the University of Tulsa.



Melissa Adams-Campbell and Ashley Heiberger

English Faculty and Alumni Honored



Gulsat Aygen, Rita Dragonette, Thomas McCann, Jessica Reyman, and Lynne Waldeland

Several English department faculty and alumni received special recognition in 2015.

Professor Gulsat Aygen won the highly competitive Presidential Teaching Professorship for her outstanding teaching and student mentoring. Since her arrival in 2004, Aygen has taught numerous graduate and undergraduate courses, perhaps none as important as the large, engaging sections of her required grammar class, a hallmark of her teaching.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, Aygen receives praise for providing students with opportunities to think about linguistics and grammar in informa-

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tive, life-changing ways. Aygen humbly observes, “teaching is a privilege. It is my privilege to grow intellectually along with my students, to become the best that I can be.”

Associate Professor Jessica Reyman received two awards this year: the David W. Raymond Grant for the Use of Technology in Teaching and the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women’s Outstanding Mentor Award. Reyman teaches and researches about the continually changing legal issues surrounding technical communications and digital writing, but she also serves as advisor to the department’s Society for Technical Communication and as Job Placement Advisor for all of the department’s graduate students.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences honored **English Professor Emerita Lynne Waldeland** with its Distinguished Faculty and Staff Award, while awards for Distinguished Alumni went to **Professor Tom McCann** (Class of 1973) and **Rita Dragonette** (Class of 1972). Waldeland introduced NIU students to feminist theory and film and literature studies. She later served as assistant provost for Academic Planning and Development, then as interim executive vice president and provost from 1999 until her retirement in 2001. Many English majors have benefitted from Waldeland’s generosity through the endowed scholarship fund she established for student recruiting. As a first-generation student from a working-class family on Chicago’s South side, Dr. McCann describes his NIU English degree as transformative. McCann has published fourteen books and dozens of articles as well as significantly contributed to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE). For the past six years, McCann has taught undergraduates, honors students, students pursuing teacher licensure, and graduate students.

Last but not least, after graduating from NIU, Rita Dragonette took her passion for words and launched a multi-million-dollar career in consulting, working her way up from copy editor to CEO of her own internationally recognized PR firm. Dragonette currently runs Dragonette Career Strategies, serves on the board of various arts organizations in Chicago, and is currently at work on a novel based partly on her experiences as a student at Northern. We are proud to celebrate our department’s many accolades.

Department Turns over New Administrative Leaf

This year the department wished a happy retirement to staff members **Jan Vander Meer** (Office Administrator), **Lori Hall** (Undergraduate Studies), **Diane Smith** (First Year Writing Program), and **Susan Edwards** (Graduate Studies). Jan Vander Meer began her career at Northern in 1982. She managed day-to-day operations in the department, assisting students, faculty, and staff with courtesy and extraordinary professionalism. Winner of the Patricia S. Siebrasse Administrative Professional Award in 2015, Vander Meer was “the person on whom we relied most.” Lori Hall was the point person for most undergraduate majors and minors from 2003 until her retirement this spring. She always had a smile and was particularly welcoming to NIU’s many student veterans. As administrative secretary for the First Year Writing program, Diane Smith’s work touched nearly every first year student at Northern since her hiring in 2005; she warmly welcomed everyone



*Jan Vander Meer
and Angie Dybas*

entering the office. Although Susan Edwards only came to English in 2013, she had a long career at NIU. Her confident kindness cheered many graduate students and faculty member. The department is pleased to welcome new staff members **Angie Dybas** (Office Administrator and former English Graduate Secretary from 2008-2012), **Jodi Long** (Undergraduate Studies), and **Walter Howard** (First Year Writing/Graduate Studies).

İpek Yıldız, Visiting Scholar

İpek Yıldız is a research assistant and a PhD candidate at Mersin University, Turkey. She spent the spring semester at NIU in 2014 as a visiting scholar. She worked on her research project under the supervision of Prof. Aygen and attended linguistics courses, including syntax, grammar, pragmatics, and language in America. After she returned to Turkey, she defended her dissertation proposal. Her experience at NIU helped her in many ways: she accessed all the literature she needed at the library; she benefited from joining academic discussions in classes, and she learned from faculty as well as her fellow students in the department. Because of her very productive semester in the English Department at NIU, she and her dissertation advisor in Turkey decided that she should continue working with Prof. Aygen and spend a year at NIU as a visiting scholar again. Since August 2015, she has been working with Prof. Aygen on her research topic: the grammatical, syntactic, and discourse functions of usages in academic writing and scientific texts. She is thrilled to be back on NIU campus and will be around until August 2016.

Promotion and Tenure Decisions

In Fall 2015, **Lara Crowley** and **Scott Balcerzak** returned to us as associate professors with tenure. The former is a specialist in Donne and digital humanities, the latter our film and literature scholar. **Thomas McCann**, who was already tenured, was promoted to full professor. He continues his research on teaching and mentorship. Congratulations to all three!



*Scott Balcerzak
and Lara Crowley*

PhD and MA Graduates, Now on the Job

Zac Wendler, Assistant Professor of Technical and Professional Communication, Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI (PhD, 2015)

Jay Marinan, Assistant Professor of English, Georgia Gwinnett College, Lawrenceville, GA (PhD, 2015)

Mary Pritchard, Digital Content Specialist at American Medical Association, Chicago, IL (MA, 2015)

Jane Denison-Furness, Assistant Professor of Developmental Literacy, Central Oregon Community College, Bend, OR (MA, 2014)

Retirements



Katie Andraski, Susan Dorbeck, and Loren Hecht

Four members of the department retired in January 2016: instructors **Katie Andraski, Susan Dorbeck, and Loren Hecht**, and **Professor Amy Levin**.

Andraski joined the department in 1994. She taught English composition, including in the CHANCE Program, while maintaining an active writing career, publishing poetry and, most recently, a novel, *The River Caught Sunlight*.

Dorbeck joined the department in 1985. During her long stay at NIU, she taught English composition and English as a Second Language. She also taught in and managed both the ESL lab and the Writers' Workshop. Hecht joined the department in 1999. She taught English composition, including in the CHANCE program. In addition to her teaching, Hecht is also a story teller, writer, and comedian. She has performed in elementary and secondary schools as well as in clubs and other venues.

Professor Levin came to NIU in 1995 as director of the Women's Studies Program, a position she held until 2012, when she became chair of the English department. During her academic career Levin has authored four books, and in 2013 she was the first US academic to teach in Myanmar in thirty years.

Honors and Awards

John C. and Judith M. Gurley Endowed English Scholarship
Scott Glavac

Orville Baker Essay Award
Christina Rapacchietta – 1st place
Sarah Beth Kiliman – 2nd place
Angela Copelan – 3rd place

S. Orville and Adra Baker English Scholarship
Britney Young

Rosalie Hewitt Scholarship in English
Amy Bayliss

Lynne Waldeland Scholarship in English
Alexis Enriquez

Richard H. Howland Award for Poetry Writing
Tonya Sauer

David and Linda Nelson Endowed English Scholarship
Megan McDaniel (SP 2015) | Emily Silver (FA 2015)

Jeannie A. Hains Award for Teacher Certification in English
June Hockison | Monica Komperda v Myung You

Robert T. Self Award in Literature and Film
Garret Hall

Robert T. Self Scholarship for Study in Ireland
Scott Glavac | Erica Lauer

Russell and Jeanne Durning Family Fund Scholarship
Stefani Krautstrunk

Charles W. Hagelman, Jr. Scholarship for Study in Oxford
Hayley Montalvo

Liberal Arts and Sciences Deans' Award
Sarah Beth Kiliman

Honors and Awards (continued)

NIU Phi Beta Kappa Award
Garret Hall

Outstanding Graduate Student
Mackenzie Kerby (MA) | Zachary Wendler (PhD)

Dissertation Completion Fellowship
Tracy Stephens

Arnold B. Fox Graduate Research Writing Award
Kelsey Williams (Fall 2014)
Zachary Killebrew (Honorable Mention Fall 2014)
Joseph Donaldson (Spring 2015)
Amanda Roberts (Honorable Mention Spring 2015)

Graduate Director's Award for Exemplary Contribution to the Program
Michelle Johnson

Harlan R. Teller Dissertation Award in English
James Baltrum

James M. Mellard Scholarship
Jesse Conrad

Junior Schriber Scholar Award
Ashley Heiberger

Schriber Scholar Award
Melissa Adams-Campbell

Patricia L. Francis Award for Outstanding Service to the Department of English
Phil Eubanks

We are also pleased to announce that two of our student teachers, Andrew Bero and Jeffrey Piszczek, are the 2014-2015 recipients of the Exemplary Award in English Language Arts.

In Memoriam

Charles C. Bowie, III, English Department Ph.D. student from 1990-95, passed away at his home in Carrollton, GA, on 17 April 2015. During his time at NIU, Chuck was instrumental in shaping the graduate student body. In 1992, he co-founded MCLLM (Midwestern Conference on Literature, Language, and Media) to help give graduate students a voice in the academic community; in 1993 he served as president of EGSA and was chief architect of its newsletter at the time, the EGSA Stencil.

By 1994, he was running several computer labs on campus, an interest that led him shortly to his career as a consultant in healthcare IT project management. Chuck was also essential in initiating the end-of-year annual grad student picnic and softball game as well as the Thursday Night Social Club, where grad students and faculty met weekly to share lives over darts and a few beers. His unfinished dissertation compiled the works and letters of his great-grandfather—author, dramatist, and playwright Elmer Blaney Harris.

On 24 March, 2001, Chuck married his life partner, Emily Hipchen, in Gloucester, VA. Following a stint in Tampa/St. Pete, Chuck, Emily, and their menagerie settled in Carrollton, filling their personal fiefdom with unparalleled bliss, puns, “dancing,” and references to Star Trek.

Alumni News

Robert Leland, B.A. 1966, Presque Isle, Maine, retired after 31 years as a missionary. He taught for 19 years at the Erikson-Tritt Theological College in Manokwari, Indonesia. He also translated the Greek lexicon from English to Indonesian for Indonesian-speaking students.

Michael Black, B.A. 1971, Blue Island, Illinois, is the author of *Desert Falcon* (Golden 2015) and other thrillers.

Margaret Christopher Salyer, B.A. 1971, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, taught high school English before earning an M.A. in counseling psychology. She is now in private practice. She serves as Program Director in Clinical Psychology at Benedictine University.

Dave Oliphant, PhD 1975, published **Generations of Texas Poets** (Wings Press 2015). He is a native Texan poet. For 18 years, he was the editor of *The Library Chronicle* at the University of Texas at Austin, where he retired in 2006 as a senior lecturer in Writing and Rhetoric.

William B. Covey, B.A. 1983, M.A. 1987, was promoted in 2015 to Professor of English at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. He directs the Film and Media Studies Minor program at SRE. His most recent academic articles include an essay on Alfred Hitchcock's Mr. and Mrs. Smith in *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, a biographical and historical essay on John Huston in *Film Noir: The Directors*, and an essay on dangerous father figures of noir in *Quarterly Reviews of Film and Video*.

Todd Fleming Davis, PhD 1995, published his fifth book of poetry, *Winterkill* (Michigan State University Press). He teaches environmental studies, creative writing, and American literature at Pennsylvania State University, Altoona.

Drew Banghart, M.A. 2010, after completing his Ph.D. at Case Western Reserve University, is currently a full-time lecturer at California Polytechnic State University.

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Return to Department of English, Northern Illinois University,
DeKalb, IL 60115-2828 (or e-mail askEnglish@niu.edu).

