Contents

Greetings from the Chair ........................................ 3
Student News .................................................. 4
Recent Graduates ............................................... 5
Interdisciplinary Conference in 18th Century Studies ... 6
Composition Program News .................................. 7, 8
Composition Program
Graduate Program
Technical and Professional Communication
Teaching English as a Second Language
Learn By Doing .............................................. 9
Faculty News .................................................. 10
Support ......................................................... 11
Greetings from San Luis Obispo! The 2014-2015 academic year was a busy one in the department: we premiered a new senior project requirement; began our program review process; and launched our first-ever fundraising campaign.

As many of you no doubt remember, for the past 15 years our senior project has been a one-unit course taken in conjunction with a 400-level seminar. Starting last fall, however, we began offering a four-unit course that allows students to design and create their own projects. Students have already impressed us with their efforts. Last year’s projects include an exploration of the “miniature” in literature, complete with the production of several miniature books (Elise Candelaria); a “real-world” blogging experience for a local cycling shop (Briana Mommer); the writing and staging of several short scenes and monologues (Gage Greenspan); and the creation of promotional materials for the department, including a brochure for prospective students and a new video. These latter projects were created by Katie Crilley and Eleni Misthos; as part of their project they also contributed articles to this newsletter (see below). We look forward to sharing more of our students’ outstanding work on our department webpage.

Last year also saw the beginning of our two-year program review process, and this summer we completed our self study report. As part of program review, we administered an alumni survey that 139 of you completed—thank you! The results corroborated what we already believe — our department does an excellent job of educating students.

For instance, nearly every respondent agreed or strongly agreed that the major enabled them to think critically and creatively and to write clearly and effectively. Alumni also made clear that the English major prepared them for a rich and fulfilling personal and civic life, writing such comments as: “It’s really a great program that teaches not just a love of books, but a love of learning and how to lead a fulfilling life;” and, “[the program] made me a better human being.” We were so gratified to hear that our alumni believe we are accomplishing our mission.

Finally, last year marked the initial phase of our department’s first-ever fundraising campaign. Called 200 for 200, this campaign aims to get 200 donors to contribute $200 over a two-year period (either all at once or in yearly or monthly pledges). These funds will support students and faculty in Learn by Doing experiences including study abroad, extended field trips, and faculty research. It is learning experiences like these that make our program so successful and that contribute to our loyal alumni following. We hope that you will support our program and students in whatever way you can.

I hope you enjoy our annual newsletter, filling you in on other happenings in the department. Let us know what you think by posting to our Alumni Facebook page. And please keep in touch — nothing pleases us more than to hear from former students!

- Kathryn A. Rummell
Student News

Student Awards

Every spring, the College of Liberal Arts recognizes an Outstanding Senior and Outstanding Graduate student in each department. This year’s students were recognized at a ceremony hosted by the CLA on Friday, June 12. Each student recognized a faculty mentor in the department and was invited to say a few words.

The English Department was pleased to name Madeline (Maddy) Gorrell as this year’s Outstanding Senior. An excellent student who takes risks in her thinking and writing, Maddy recognized Sophia Forster as her faculty mentor. Upon graduation Maddy joined the Peace Corps.

The department was equally pleased to name Sarah Horne as the CLA Outstanding Graduate Student. Sarah’s excellent performance in the graduate program earned her this award, and she recognized Writing Director Brenda Helmbrecht as her faculty mentor. Following graduation Sarah is working as a preliminary thesis editor in the Graduate Programs Office on campus.

Our graduate program continued its tradition of bestowing its own awards for excellence in the program. This year’s Outstanding Achievement Awards were given to Sarah Horne and Megan O’Reilly. Additionally, Marin Smith and Gareth Reese-White shared the English Department’s Graduate Teaching Associate Award for Excellence in Teaching.

The American Scholar Prize

This award, created by former English Department Chair and College of Liberal Arts Dean Linda Halisky, recognizes an English major whose passion for literature is palpable. The $500 prize is awarded to an English major who exhibits an interest in literature and language – someone who is “lit up” by literature. This year’s recipient is Abigail Johnson, a third-year student from Valley Center, California. In Abigail’s winning essay she writes that literature is “the dead coming back to life with their voices guiding us in a democracy from the grave, and it is equality rising as we choose to accept the voices of those who have too often gone without a voice.” Her essay demonstrates that she understands the timelessness of literature and its ability to help us understand the human condition.
Encouraging professors and Cal Poly’s publication opportunities helped Kelsy along her path to Columbia. She explained that Cal Poly’s writing contests and Byzantium, the university’s annual literary magazine, gave her confidence as a writer. After submitting poems to the Al Landwehr Creative Writing Contest, Kelsy now submits her work to national contests.

Currently, Kelsy enjoys writing very minimalist poetry, but she’s looking forward to learning about other types of poetry in Columbia’s program. While she was visiting the university last spring, she found that “their classes seek to expose you to lots of different styles because maybe there’s a style you’re missing because you’re not open to it. . . . I’m interested in other styles and forms that I haven’t been open to . . . I’m really excited to keep developing my voice, to keep growing and adding different elements to my poetry.” Kelsy is also excited to be involved with a community of poets. Coming from a polytechnic school, she’s looking forward to a school environment where the arts are more appreciated.

Madeline (Maddy) Gorrell, from Shingle Springs, Calif. took a different path through the English program by earning her Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certification. With certification in hand, Maddy moved to Tanzania in July to teach secondary school with the Peace Corps, an organization she admired because of a high school teacher whose passion sparked Maddy’s interest. While trying to decide on a path in college she could use to help her work for the Peace Corps, she said, “English was always what I was best at. . . . And I love analyzing books,” which naturally led her to a major in English.

Maddy was first introduced to the TESL program while enrolled in a linguistics class her sophomore year. When her professor mentioned that in addition to being helpful for teaching, TESL certification impressed Peace Corps recruiters, Maddy was hooked. As a sophomore who hadn’t yet decided on a minor or concentration, Maddy found her niche.

Maddy’s experience in the TESL program has proved invaluable. Guest speakers who have taught overseas helped reassure Maddy about her desire to work for the Peace Corps and have provided insight into the cultural challenges presented by such work. Perhaps most crucial in preparing Maddy for her upcoming role was taking the TESL practicum class (ENGL 499). As part of that course, Maddy guest-taught an ESL class at Cuesta College. After this experience Maddy said, “I feel better approaching a class and talking about different subjects.” The knowledge and skills she has gained in the English major and TESL program are sure to help her succeed in Tanzania.

Briana Mommer, from Fresno, will be working for Specialized Bicycle Company in San Jose, Calif. doing inside market development. Briana has been cycling since she was ten years old and describes her upcoming position as her dream job at a company she’s been a “fan-girl” of for years. Over the last four years, Briana has worked at Art’s Cyclery in San Luis Obispo, where she has gained experience in the industry, and heightened her love for the sport.

Briana believes the English department has specifically prepared her for this position in multiple ways. The first is in her communication skills. Contacting dealers and outside retailers will be a large part of her position, and the written and verbal skills the English program has helped develop will prove vital in her success with the company. The range of literature courses throughout her time at Cal Poly has helped Briana to empathize with people from different situations and walks of life. Briana says each of her courses has made her a more well-rounded person, helping to shape her perspective of culture, people, and life.

Also helping her land the job was Briana’s senior project, for which she wrote blog posts for her former employer, Art’s Cyclery. Briana says the “whole idea was finding an authentic women’s voice, and at the beginning of my project I didn’t really know why that was important, but I knew it was.” Through Briana’s blogs, she exposed the cycling industry’s lack of marketing towards women, despite the fact that women’s cycling is a growing market. This caught the attention of the marketing director of Art’s Cyclery, spurring the idea of doing more photo shoots of women and relating to women more overall. Reflecting back, Briana said she “came to the realization that writing really does change the world. I’ve experienced writing as a conversation starter leading to change in my own life.”

Each of these graduates is applying the knowledge and skills gleaned as an English major to something she is passionate about. Perhaps that’s the best part of being an English major—you can use what you know to do something that inspires you.
For more information about the conference, please visit the conference website.

Thanks to the hard work of Dr. Regulus Allen, Cal Poly hosted this year’s conference for the Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (WSECS). The conference theme of “Race, Gender, and Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century” provided a wonderful opportunity for our professors and graduate students to showcase their work with academics from across the nation. Out of the numerous applicants who submitted papers, eleven presenters came from Cal Poly’s English Department, which is a tremendous achievement. English professor Dr. Chelsea Milbourne presented her paper, “Spectacular Vision and the Practice of Eighteenth-Century Domestic Science,” and Dr. Allen, on top of being this year’s WSECS president and co-organizer, also presented a paper on representations of slave mothers in Aphra Behn’s “Oroonoko.” Both Dr. Milbourne and Dr. Kathryn Rummell also chaired panels.

Nine English graduate students presented papers as well: Katherine Beglin, Anthony Breakspear, Crystal Herrera, Sarah Horne, Gisele Olson, Sholeh Prochello, Marin Smith, Justin Swanson, and Sarah Wishnewsky. These nine students also chaired panels, as did English graduate students Stacy Neely and Phillip Schierer.

This winter was the first time Cal Poly hosted the annual conference, and the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) was honored to join the list of past hosts, which includes institutions like UC Berkeley, UC Davis, CSU Long Beach, University of Nevada Las Vegas, and the Huntington Library. The event was incredibly successful, drawing almost 100 delegates, one third of whom came from locations outside western states – a rare achievement for a regional conference. Some travelled all the way from Europe to attend the event, including the plenary speaker, internationally renowned slavery studies scholar Brycchan Carey.

The conference was also a great interdisciplinary experience for Cal Poly students and faculty, as the event was co-organized by this year’s WSECS Vice President, Dr. Kate Murphy from the History Department. The Department of Art and Design and the University Art Gallery provided the site for the conference reception. Overall, Cal Poly delegates represented a total of seven different disciplines. Even CLA undergraduate students contributed to the event, as the posters and flyers for the conference were designed by some of Cal Poly’s own Graphic Communication majors.

The entire conference was a testament to the strength of the CLA and the English department, and especially to the expert leadership of Regulus Allen. The hard work of the students and faculty who ran the conference was crucial to its overall success. Additionally, the conference was made possible by generous funding from CLA Dean Douglas Epperson; Director of Cal Poly’s Graduate Education Richard Savage; Dean of the Office of Research and Economic Development Dean Wendt; and Provost Kathleen Enz Finken. This funding made this incredible learning experience possible for the participating faculty and students, and the overwhelming success of the event has set the stage for future CLA conferences and events.
Learn by Writing

The Composition Program continues to support students and faculty by developing progressive approaches to teaching writing. In addition, Professor Brenda Helmbrecht, who directs the writing program, collaborates with faculty across campus to ensure that students receive consistent messages about the importance of writing effectively while at Cal Poly. Writing is a challenging task for even the most gifted writers, and students learn that learning to communicate effectively requires patience and commitment.

Just a few highlights from the program...

“Fresh Voices: Composition at Cal Poly”

In fall 2015, the Composition Program published its ninth edition of “Fresh Voices: Composition at Cal Poly,” a collection of student writing that showcases the effort, commitment, and talent of Cal Poly’s first-year student writers. Students enrolled in last year’s English 133 and 134 classes submitted nearly 300 essays for possible publication consideration. “Fresh Voices” is used in nearly every section of English 133 and 134, Cal Poly’s required first-year writing classes. It’s an innovative text that provides new Cal Poly students with models of effective and compelling college-level essays written by their own peers.

Last fall, the composition program held its first ever Fresh Voices Award Reception to honor those students whose essays were selected for the publication. Students arrived with friends and family to be awarded with a certificate of achievement and a copy of “Fresh Voices,” both of which were handed out by the same instructors who worked with the students. The celebration was truly a wonderful way to kick off the new academic year. The composition program hopes to make the reception an annual event. Additional images from the event can be seen here.

This year’s selection committee, chaired by Brenda Helmbrecht, was comprised of David Hennessy, Dawn Janke, Sadie Johann, Morgan Livingston, Erin Martin-Elston, and Steven Ruszczycky. Proceeds from the collection support the composition program throughout the year. If you would like to purchase a copy, please contact the University Bookstore or Brenda Helmbrecht (bhelmbre@calpoly.edu).

TAs

In fall 2014, the Composition Program invited five new graduate teaching associates (TAs) to teach first-year writing classes: Justin Swanson, Anthony Breakspear, Sholeh Prochello, Kat Beglin and Marin Smith.

In March, the TAs, collaborating with Brenda Helmbrecht and Dawn Janke (Director of the Writing and Rhetoric Center), co-presented a paper, “Dual(ing) Positions: The Extended Presence of the Tutor/TA,” at the Northern California Writing Center Association Conference in Fresno, CA.

In spring quarter, the composition program awarded both Marin Smith and Gareth Reese-White with the English Department’s Graduate Teaching Associate Award for Excellence in Teaching. Both TAs received $200 and a certificate of achievement at the English Department’s spring commencement ceremony.

Guest Speaker

In June, the composition program invited Dan Melzer, writing director from CSU Sacramento, to discuss the connection between critical thinking and writing. Dan worked with the graduate TAs, dozens of faculty from across campus, and tutors in the writing center. Dan’s two-day visit left everyone with new ways to think about student writing as they headed into summer break.

To learn more about the Composition Program, please visit the website: http://english.calpoly.edu/content/composition-and-rhetoric-cal-poly
Technical and Professional Communications Program Revamp

This year the English Department began its redesign of the Technical and Professional Communication Program. We are updating the curriculum of existing courses to ensure that they meet with current best practices in the field. We are also in the early planning phases of developing new courses on topics like grant writing, usability, and writing for public audiences. During the 2015-2016 academic year, our new program director, Chelsea Milbourne, will offer three technical and professional communication courses: Information Design (Engl 319), Technical Editing and Style (Engl 317), and Scientific Controversies in the Public Sphere (Engl 470).

Teaching English as a Second Language Program

A total of nineteen students will complete the TESL Certificate Program and graduate in spring and fall 2015. Students who have earned the TESL Certificate are teaching in Tanzania through the Peace Corps, in Washington D.C. through the Urban Teaching Center, and at various English language institutes in California. Other students are pursuing MA degrees at Lesley University, Pepperdine University, UCSB and Cal Poly. Cal Poly TESL Certificate students continue to benefit from practical experiences in English language teaching through classroom observations, tutoring projects and practicum opportunities. The Mustang News recently featured the TESL Certificate Program and certain students in an article “Cal Poly’s TESL Program: Teaching English, Changing Lives.” Interest and enrollment in the TESL Certificate continue to increase. Students pursuing this program have various unique career opportunities.

Graduate Program

Change is coming! In 2014-15, the department engaged in serious, extended deliberations about the future of our English M.A. program, discussions that concluded with the decision to dramatically overhaul our capstone experience. Within 2-3 years, a portfolio project will have replaced the comprehensive exam, which has so effectively challenged our students for decades and implemented corresponding changes in our curriculum.

In the interim, we celebrate those students who continue to tackle, and best, the comprehensive exam, including the five who just completed their degree requirements this spring: Marin Smith, Justin Swanson, Anthony Breakspear, Sholeh Prochello, and Cait Emma Smith. Kudos also go to Sarah Horne and Meagan O’Reilly, both of whom received Graduate Student Excellence Awards at our spring department ceremony.

Look for more news, alumni updates, and interviews with new English faculty in the third issue of the department’s fledgling graduate magazine, The Medial Caesura is now available on our program website. Students Justin Swanson and Michael Galvan have worked tirelessly this year generating and polishing the content for this issue, weaving its many articles and interviews around the theme of place.
Learn by Doing

Whitman Archive Video Series

Last year in these pages we brought you the story of Catherine Waitinas’s innovative Circle of Giving Grant project. One of the most exciting parts of the project is the student-produced Walt Whitman Archive Video Series. Graduate students Katherine Beglin and Sarah Horne, along with senior Kaitlyn Morley, wrote and produced several videos based on materials from the Whitman Archive. The first of several videos, Whitman and Place, is found here.

Be sure to check back often for new videos from this project!

Student Field Trips

As part of our Learn by Doing pedagogy, faculty often take students on field trips near and far. The photos here document two such trips led by Dr. Brad Campbell as part of his English 449 course, Literature and Landscape of the American West.

Having just finished reading Steinbeck’s celebrated 1945 novel, “Cannery Row,” the class headed north with books in hand to inhabit the very landscapes that animated Mack and the Boys, Dora and the Girls, Lee Chong, and, of course, the beloved Doc – whose lab they are standing outside (Careful readers may note a small discrepancy here between Doc’s “Western Biological Laboratories” in the novel and the “Pacific Biological Laboratories” in the picture. Doc is a thinly veiled tribute to Ed Ricketts, an important marine biologist, one of Steinbeck’s dearest friends, and the owner of the lab figured in the book and pictured here.

In a separate field trip, students traveled to Big Sur to study Robinson Jeffers’ “November Surf” (1930), one of his most indelible poetic statements. Written as he observed the wintry waves of the Pacific crash against our own central coast, the text presents an apocalyptic vision of the natural power of the West. Rather serendipitously, the seminar was a fall-quarter class, and so students were able to witness this union of natural and poetic power firsthand, traveling up the Big Sur coastline in the month of November and, as we see in this photo, preparing a plein air recitation of “November Surf” – in the shadow of November surf.

Student Field Trips

Top - in ascending order: Gage Greenspan, Emily Anderson, Ian Fetters, Brad Campbell, Josiah Loomis, and Elise Candelaria
Bottom - clockwise from center: Sarah Horne, Hanna Bovberg, and Kara Erickson
New Faculty - Jason Peters

Jason completed his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Rhode Island in 2015. His research focuses on Elphège-J. Daignault, an attorney and newspaper publisher from New England who was excommunicated by the Catholic Church in 1928 for advocating French-English bilingual education in Catholic parochial schools. This project is part of a broader research and teaching interest in translational composition practices, the history of multilingual literacy instruction in the United States, and the uneasy settlement of English in North America. In 2011, Jason won a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship — a competitive, four-year fellowship sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education — to pursue this work. This year he was awarded a grant to conduct archival research on Daignault’s personal papers, held at the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (BAnQ) at Laval University. Prior to studying at URI, he completed an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at Emerson College in Boston. His scholarship is published in College English and The Writing Lab Newsletter, and his creative work has appeared in the Hawai‘i Review and Midwest Quarterly. Born and raised in New England, Jason is looking forward to exploring the central coast with his wife, Amy, and their two sons, Elliot and Phineas.
What makes our programs so special? Small class sizes; one-on-one help in office hours; faculty who know not just students’ names, but also their stories; meaningful interaction between faculty and students; Learn by Doing projects that allow students to engage critically and creatively with literature and language; faculty who produce nationally-recognized scholarly and creative work; these qualities are more often found at a private liberal arts college than at a public state university. And yet they represent the very philosophy and practice of our program.

We want to continue our legacy of success through increased support of our students and faculty. We strive to sustain the excellence our alumni experienced at Cal Poly, and we want to provide even more for our current and future students. To provide this additional layer of exceptional hands-on education, the English Department and our Alumni Advisory Board are launching a 200 for 200 initiative. Within two years, we aim to have 200 donors commit to our students, and the future of the department, through a gift of $200. Please help us continue our strong legacy of student success.

How Your Gifts Help

“Dr. Campbell’s Literature and Landscape of the American West was the epitome of what a college literature class should aspire to. Class trips to the Steinbeck Museum, Cannery Row, and the Tor House benefitted students immensely. We study literature, in my opinion, to better understand the human experience. You read a man like Steinbeck to experience the Cannery Row — to feel the poverty and the freedom — of the 1930s. What better way to do that than standing knee deep in Doc’s tide pools, with a belly full of excellent seafood, watching as a storm rolls in? These moments ground us in the reality of what it means to be human. We’re here to better understand each other and to better understand ourselves. Every student should have access to these kinds of experiences because, simply put, they make you a better person. You can’t stand atop the bluffs of Big Sur looking down at the crashing surf and not more fully understand what Robinson Jeffers felt in writing ‘November Surf.’”

Emily Anderson (ENGL ’15)

- Emily Anderson (2015)