

SIGNATURES

 | UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

Department of English Newsletter
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Making the Transition From Classroom to Workplace

Almost every student who has majored in English or pursued an advanced degree in the field has, at one point or another, been asked the question, “What are you going to do with that?” Despite all the misinformation circulating in the media, the correct answer is of course, “Almost anything!” The first step to making a degree in English work for any individual is disregarding the disparaging remarks and gaining confidence about how marketable his or her degree actually is. In recent years the UNO Department of English has taken concrete steps to help students go even further on this path by teaching its students how to take the incredibly valuable skills they learn in our program – critical thinking, plus the ability to communicate well – and use them to obtain interesting, fulfilling, and remunerative employment once they complete their degrees.

One of the most important elements of these efforts is the dual-level course English 4970 / 8796: English Career Preparation. Established by Dr. Tracy Bridgeford and now taught every semester by Dr. Kristin Girten, the Director of the English Internship Program, this course, according to Girten, “Provides a supportive framework for possibilities.” Students are first asked to reflect about themselves



Intern Heather Hannaford flanked by her supervisors (Tim Jensen on the left and Dr. John Nielsen on the right) at the Danish American Archive in Blair.

and their interests; after that, they research careers that promise to match those interests. They are then expected to find out what kinds of skills and other qualifications are necessary to pursue such careers, as well as learn which organizations – both locally and elsewhere – offer this type of employment. In addition, each student must contact and interview someone in that career field to learn more about it, including details of what it takes to get one’s foot in the door and be successful once one is “inside.” This assignment culminates in a 7-12 page “Career Report” that the stu-

dent can use as a guide to his or her future.

The final weeks of the semester are devoted chiefly to learning how to successfully market one’s skills. As the old joke goes, it’s quite rare to find a job listing asking for people who know how to analyze novels, write literary analyses, or pen memoirs. Yet in fact English majors and those with graduate degrees in English are highly sought-after in the work world not only for their ability to think critically and independently but also for their excellent oral

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and written communication skills. The key to getting jobs in which one can use these skills, Girten shows, is learning how to read job postings with the same critical acumen one might use to discern the deeper meanings of a Mary Shelley novel or a poem by John Keats, discerning what the employers are *actually* looking for, underneath the fancy and often intimidating job titles. Girten then teaches students how to craft effective cover letters and resumés to meet these desires, as well as how to prepare for and conduct themselves in interviews. In addition to providing lots of practical information about the job search, this course, Girten states, “Helps students appreciate the value of their own skills and potential, plus gives them confidence.”

Also helping bridge the gap between classroom and workplace is the Department of English’s very successful internship program. Offered each semester as a course, English 4800 / 8806 can be taken for one, two, or three credits depending on the amount of time the student can devote to the internship. Girten encourages students to take the English Career Preparation course before pursuing an internship, but this is not required.

After the student signs up for the course and submits an application indicating his or her interests, Girten begins the very time-consuming task of matching the 10-15 enrolled students with non-profit partner organizations. Typically, Girten says, there are about 25 possibilities to choose from; participating organizations include Legal Aid of Nebraska,

The Reader, the University of Nebraska Press, Omaha Healthy Kids, the Yates Community Center, the Danish American Archive in Blair, Planned Parenthood, the Domestic Violence Council, and Omaha Publications. Students can also, if they wish, locate their own internship, subject to approval.

Once Girten matches a student with an organization, she puts him or her in contact with someone at that workplace and an interview is arranged. If all parties find the situation suitable, the student and the on-site supervisor sign a contract that stipulates how many hours the student will spend at the workplace during the semester (this varies depending on how many credits the student is earning), as well as the obligations of each party during the course of the internship.

In these semester-long internships, students are closely supervised by someone at the worksite, as well as by Dr. Girten. The work carried out by the students must be substantial and help them build their own skill sets. As Girten explains, this experience “gives students the opportunity to transfer their learning in college to professional environments” and “enhances their chances for success.”

Students who participate in the internship program unanimously endorse it. Heather Hannaford, who is currently interning at the Danish American Archives in Blair, has been cataloguing a major acquisition of papers from Elna Smith Melvin, who corresponded with such prominent people as Eleanor Roosevelt and Aldous Huxley. She comments enthusiastically, “I had no idea how much I

would grow to love the work!” Emily Von Dollen has interned with *Fine Lines*, a locally-produced creative writing magazine, under the supervision of chief editor David Martin. Von Dollen says that Martin “taught me to see the beauty and patience in the art of editing and an appreciation of many different styles of writing,” and that through this internship, “I was able to refine and greatly improve my editing abilities.” Erin Burkett, an intern at Legal Aid of Nebraska, says her internship “has truly changed my trajectory as a student. . . I am now strongly considering a career in public interest or elder law.”

Very important for the students, of course, is that the internship gives them a “real world” work experience to list on their resumés, demonstrating to potential employers they have what it takes to succeed outside the classroom as well as inside. In many cases, too, the students come away from their internships with valuable contacts in their fields of interest and references for their future job search.

Clearly, the “gap” between what English majors and graduate students are learning in the classroom and what they need to be successful in their careers is not as wide as one might think – and these two initiatives of the Department of English are serving to narrow it even more.

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If your organization would be interested in participating in the UNO Department of English’s Internship Program, please contact Dr. Kristin Girten <kgirten@unomaha.edu>

Department Welcomes New Writing Center Director

When Travis Adams first entered graduate school as an M.A. student at Boise State University, he envisioned becoming a Joseph Conrad scholar. After only five weeks as a teaching assistant for a Composition course, however, he became fascinated with how people learn to write – and his career path was thereby permanently altered.

After graduating from Boise State in 2004, Adams taught there as an adjunct instructor for a few years, worked simultaneously for the University of Phoenix, and all the while continued to be interested in learning more about rhetoric and composition studies. He subsequently enrolled at UNL, where he pursued a Ph.D. in English with a specialization in Composition and Rhetoric, graduating in 2012. While still finishing his dissertation, Adams moved in August 2011 to Auburn University in Alabama, where for two years he served as the Coordi-

nator of Student Services in the Office of University Writing. In this capacity he was responsible for all the writing services provided to students and, in his second year there, he had the opportunity to teach a course on Writing Center Theory and Practice.

Fortunately for Adams, the position of Writing Center Director at UNO became open at this time, and he was hired to begin here last August. As an assistant professor of English, he teaches three courses per academic year, serves as the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) director for the entire UNO campus (developing and offering programs to support writing in all the colleges), and, possibly most important, oversees the activities of the Writing Center. As Director, Adams not only is responsible for man-



Travis Adams in his office

aging the budget and promotion of the Center but also for hiring staff members and providing them with training and professional development opportunities. The 22 consultants who meet with clients – not only in the Writing Center itself (located in Arts & Sciences Hall room 150) but also in satellite locations in Mammel Hall room 131 and at the Criss Library – include two professional employees, a number of full-time instructors from the Department of English, a group of highly-trained, carefully-selected graduate students, and starting in January 2014 a cohort of

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Inaugural Baker Lecture a Resounding Success

Established by long-time UNO Department of English Professor Bruce Baker and his wife Karen with a gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation, the Bruce and Karen Baker Lecture Series is intended to bring a scholar or writer to campus each year for a presentation that will add to the intellectual vitality of the community.

On November 7, the first of what is hoped to be a long line of such speakers was Dr. Andy Jewell, associate professor at UNL. Jewell, the co-editor of the much-acclaimed *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* (2013), recently named one of the most important non-fiction books of 2013 by *Time* magazine, gave a presentation entitled “‘The time is very dark’: Willa Cather’s Last Decade.” In his talk, Jewell drew on Cather’s personal correspondence

and other materials to show how Cather’s troubled last decade of life influenced the stipulation in her will that her letters not be published.

It was only fitting that Jewell – one of the rising stars in Cather scholarship – was chosen to deliver the inaugural lecture in the series. After all, Bruce Baker not only for many years taught a very popular seminar on Willa Cather at UNO but was also himself one of the pioneers in scholarly work on Cather, publishing a great number of articles about her life and works.

Jewell greatly enjoyed the opportunity to address the more than 70 students, faculty, and community members



Bruce Baker, Andy Jewell, and Karen Baker

who gathered to hear him talk. He later commented approvingly on how impressed he was by the audience’s insightful questions. A short reception followed the presentation.

New Writing Center Director, continued

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undergraduate peer consultants.

Since its establishment in 2005, UNO's Writing Center has proven fabulously successful, clearly meeting what was a dire need on campus for a place where UNO students, staff members, and faculty could find help with their various writing projects. Students, of course, most often need assistance with papers for their classes. Staff members come for a variety of reasons, from needing help looking over a particular report with an extra set of sharp eyes to making sure the grammar on a particular website is correct. Faculty members seek out the Writing Center consultants for an equally wide range of reasons, ranging from needing help properly citing sources in a citation format unfamiliar to them to putting together a persuasive, error-free grant proposal.

Under the leadership of previous Directors Connie Eberhart, Dorianne Richards, Marsha Kruger, and Nora Bacon, the Writing Center has grown considerably over the years. To give some idea of how useful it has proven, one can point to the fact that during the fall semester of 2013, from August 26 to the beginning of

December, the Writing Center staff conducted 1,688 consultations – and that was before the crush of the last few weeks of the semester! Significantly, too, approximately 40% of all these consultations were with writers whose first language is not English, a reflection of the university's rapidly increasing international student population.

As Adams points out, currently the Writing Center is doing an excellent job accommodating the demand for its services. However, the physical space in Arts and Sciences 150 is at capacity, and with the growing number of courses being delivered online, it is expected that many more students will want to have consultations from remote locations. To help meet the great demand, the Center has extended its hours during the spring 2014 semester to a closing time of 8:00 p.m., but Adams is already actively planning other measures to assist the ever-growing number of students, staff members, and faculty who need writing help.

Adams has thrown himself completely into this very demanding position since day one last summer. The position at UNO is one that, if he had

been able to envision it way back as a graduate student at Boise State, he would have dreamed of. The Writing Center space itself, he says, is wonderfully conducive to productive consultations. And he is especially thankful for the great support he has received from staff, students, and administrators at UNO. As he emphasizes, too, "the staff is very dedicated, with very diverse skill sets."

In his time away from his duties in the Department of English and at the Writing Center, Adams is greatly enjoying settling in to Omaha. He and his wife, Charise Alexander Adams, who works in communications and marketing at Creighton, have participated in organized runs, biking activities, and even brewery and brew pub events. This fall they especially enjoyed long bike rides and shorter jogs on the Big Papio Trail, accompanied by their dog Pickle. The cold of Omaha's winter has unfortunately curtailed these trips for now, but with any luck, they'll be hitting the trails again before too long!

For those who wish to learn more about the Writing Center, please visit <<http://www.unomaha.edu/writingcenter/index.php>>

Another Presidential Fellowship Winner

Graduate student Zach Jacobs was named as one of a handful of the University of Nebraska system's Presidential Fellows for the 2013-2014 academic year. Jacobs is the latest in a line of distinguished UNO Department of English students who have won this prestigious award, which pays for all of a graduate student's tuition for one year and provides a \$12,000 stipend. Since 1993, no fewer than nine UNO graduate students have won this award, with Scott Aichinger being the most recent (2012-2013).

Jacobs, who double-majored in English and History at UNO as an undergraduate, received his B. A. degree in 2010. He is using the time afforded by his fellowship to work on a collection of essays dealing with personal depression and alcoholism, tentatively entitled "Revelations of a Dying Man: A Dual Diagnosis Memoir." He plans to graduate with his Master's degree in May and possibly enter an M. F. A. program next fall. Jacobs says of his future, "Whatever I do, I know I'm going to be writing."



Two Renowned Writers Visit UNO⁵

This past fall, the UNO community had the pleasure of hearing from, and meeting with, two very well-known creative writers: Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Janet McAdams. Their visits and participation in the UNO Writers' Workshop Series were sponsored in part by the Department of English and its English Dual Enrollment Program. In charge of making these arrangements were Department of English faculty members Lisabeth Buchelt (for Ní Dhomhnaill) and Barbara Robins (for McAdams).

On October 23, Ní Dhomhnaill gave a public reading of her poetry. One of the most highly respected contemporary Irish poets, Ní Dhomhnaill has received the O'Shaughnessy Award for Poetry (1988) as well as the American Ireland Fund Literary Award (1991); she was also named Ireland Professor of Poetry at University College Dublin from 2002-2004 and was given an honorary Doctorate of Literature by that same institution in 2011. Her works are written in Gaelic but have been widely translated into English. Some of the best known of these are *The Water Horse* (2000) and *The Fifty-Minute Mermaid* (2007).

Those at Ní Dhomhnaill's reading on the 23rd were enthralled by her poetry. Attending were not only many UNO students but also numerous community members from the

local Ancient Order of the Hibernians and the Omaha Irish Cultural Center. The following day, too, Ní Dhomhnaill met with interested area high school teachers who are part of UNO's Dual Enrollment Program.

Omahans weren't the only ones pleased with Ní Dhomhnaill's visit here; she herself was "delighted with the warm welcome" and hopes to have the opportunity to come again in the future.

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Just a few weeks later, on November 6 and 7, Janet McAdams came to UNO for a public reading and subsequent meeting with Dual Enrollment teachers.

McAdams, of mixed Scottish, Irish, and Creek ancestry, is the author of two collections of poetry, *Feral* (2007) and *The Island of Lost Luggage* (2000). The latter earned widespread acclaim, being recognized with the Diane Decorah First Book Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas, as well as with an American Book Award. More recently she co-edited an anthology entitled *The People Who Stayed: Southeastern Indian Writing After Removal* (2010) and published her first novel, *Red Weather* (2012). She currently holds the position of Robert P. Hubbard Professor of Poetry at Kenyon College in Ohio.

During her evening presentation, McAdams read not



only from her own poetry but also from selections in the anthology she co-edited. In addition, she shared with the audience numerous insights about the creative process she went through to create her novel, *Red Weather*. The audience included not only UNO community members but also many people from the Omaha metro, including members of the Native Book Club (who also hosted her for dinner before the reading). On the following day McAdams met with a diverse mix of students, faculty, and interested community members and generously shared information about her work as a writer.

Janet McAdams speaks at UNO.

FACULTY NEWS

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Integral to any excellent university program is an active, highly-engaged group of faculty members. Conference presentations, publications, and other professional activities are a strong indication of faculty who keep current with the latest developments in their field and who are constantly learning more about their content areas and new teaching methods. The knowledge that faculty from UNO's English Department gain from their activities quite naturally informs their high-quality courses.

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Nora Bacon this past summer, as she has for the past three, traveled to North Carolina to participate in a research seminar with forty colleagues from five different countries, representing 25 different institutions of higher education. This highly collaborative seminar, "Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer," is intended to encourage research into how skills and knowledge about writing acquired in one context (say, a classroom) are remembered, forgotten, used, disregarded, or transformed when the writer has to function in a new context (i.e. a workplace). Bacon also recently published an essay entitled, "Style in Academic Writing," in a new book entitled *The Centrality of Style*.

Frank Bramlett is currently in his second year of teaching linguistics at Stockholm University, with plans to return to UNO for the fall 2014 semester. One of his major projects for this year is planning and carrying out a two-day conference at Stockholm University on the comics and graphic novels of Grant Morrison, one of the English-speaking world's most famous comic creators. See elsewhere in this issue for news of his ongoing work in Nicaragua.

Tracy Bridgeford served as interim Department Chair last spring and continues to act as the Department of English's Graduate Program Committee Chair. She also co-edits the journal *Programmatic Perspectives*. Bridgeford presented her paper, "Techne as Competency in Technical Communication" at the annual

conference of the Council for Programs in Scientific Communication, last October in Cincinnati. She is pleased to be teaching a brand-new course during the summer of 2014 on the topic of "Teaching Technical Writing," which should prove popular among area writing teachers. Her biggest news, though, is that her co-edited book, *Sharing Our Intellectual Traces: Narrative Reflections from Administrators of Professional, Technical, and Scientific Communication Programs*, will be published this spring by Baywood Publishing.

Lisabeth Buchelt has had an especially busy and productive year. First, she published book reviews in the prestigious journals *The Medieval Review* and *Religion and the Arts*. Second, she learned that her essay, "'Delicate Fantasy' and 'Vulgar Reality': Undermining Romance and Complicating Identity in Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*," published in *New Hibernia Review*, was awarded that journal's Roger McHugh Award. This award is given each year by the journal's editors to the article they "believe is the most likely to be consulted by future scholars" and which in their judgement "makes a signal and indispensable contribution to scholarship on its topic." Third, Buchelt presented her paper, "Reading Readers Reading: *Immrama* as Exemplars for Productive Monastic Reading Practices," at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. In addition, in recognition of her outstanding teaching, Buchelt was awarded a College of Arts and Sciences Excellence in Teaching Award for 2013, as well as a UNO Alumni

Association Outstanding Teaching Award for 2013. Finally, she was awarded a prestigious Moore Institute Fellowship to spend three weeks this coming summer at the National University of Ireland - Galway, conducting research for her new book project, *Speech and Silence in Early Irish Literature*.

Bob Darcy led a seminar on "Literature as Protest" at the Shakespeare Association of America's annual meeting this past March in Toronto. Just recently, his essay on "The Anticipatory Premise of History in the Reception of Shakespeare's Sonnets" was published in the selected proceedings of the World Shakespeare Congress. Doing his part to make the bard relevant in the modern age, Darcy during the fall semester taught a dual-level Shakespeare course online for the first time.

Tanushree Ghosh is the new Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society adviser. She also presented a paper entitled "Witnessing Famine: The Visual Representation of the 1870s and 1940s Famines in India" at the North American Victorian Studies Conference in Pasadena last October and published her poem "Untitled" in *Cerebrations*, an online journal of global literature.

Kristin Girten started off 2013 with a well-attended presentation at the Millard Branch of the Omaha Public Library on "Jane Austen, Then and Now: Wit that Bites as It Charms." Further afield, in May she presented her paper, "Materializing Kinship," at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment

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conference in Lawrence, Kansas, and in August she traveled to Boston to deliver “The Nothingness of All: Epicurean Void and Plenitude in Charlotte Smith’s *Beachy Head*” at the annual conference of the North American Society for Studies in Romanticism. She also published a book review in *Aphra Behn Online: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts* and an article, “Charlotte Smith’s Tactile Poetics,” in the prestigious journal *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*.

Ramón Guerra was a much sought-after speaker in 2013. In Nebraska he gave an invited reading of his creative nonfiction work “There’s a Picture” at El Museo Latino in Omaha, spoke on the topic of “Careers and Diversity: What an Ethnic Studies Major or Minor Can Do For You” at an event sponsored by the University of Nebraska - Lincoln’s Institute for Ethnic Studies, and served as the commentator for a panel on “Precarious Rights and Access to Education: Testimonios from Two Generations of Latino Youth,” at the *Cumbre* of the Great Plains in Omaha. Further afield, he delivered two papers in March at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies in San Antonio: “*Nuestra* American Dream? Chicanos and Literary Negotiation with the ‘American Dream’ Ethos” and “*Testimonio* in Action: Scholarship of Engagement among the Border Migrant Labor Community.” He also published his essay, “Mexican Americans Encounter the American Dream: *George Washington Gomez*” in the collection, *Critical Insights: The American Dream*.

Eve Hermanson was honored by the publication of her poem, “Sonnet on Craving,” in the anthology *Untidy Seasons: An Anthology of Nebraska Women Poets*, published by Backwater Press.

Chuck Johanningsmeier served as coordinator of the Nebraska Book Festival last April, the first time this event has ever been held at UNO. He also was the co-guest editor of, and co-wrote the introduction to, a special issue of the journal *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* dedicated to the topic of “Fans and Their Idols: Critical Examinations.” In addition to publishing a number of book reviews, Johanningsmeier also published “Where the Masses Met the Classes: Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century American Newspapers and Their Significance to Literary Scholars” in an essay collection entitled *Literature and Journalism: Inspirations, Intersections, and Inventions from Ben Franklin to Stephen Colbert*. He was especially active in Cather studies, publishing both “Of Nazis, False-bottomed Suitcases, and Paperback Reprints: *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* [Death Comes for the Archbishop] in Germany, 1936-1952” in the *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* and “The Making of *Der Tochter der Prärie* [Daughter of the Prairie]: Willa Cather’s Fictions in Germany, 1926-1952” in *Studies in the Novel*. He also was an invited speaker at the 14th Annual International Willa Cather Seminar in Flagstaff last June, giving a plenary presentation on “Willa Cather and the Periodical World”; in November he gave a talk at UNO’s Criss Library entitled “Willa Cather, Germany, and the Nazis: A Complicated Relationship,” to complement a National Holocaust Museum traveling exhibition on Nazi book burnings. Finally, in September he gave his paper, “Who Actually Read Regionalist Fiction – and Why It Matters,” at the Reception Studies Society biennial conference in Milwaukee.

Jodie Keisner published a number of pieces this past year. These include “The Evergreens” in *Literary Mama*; “The Earth Home” in *NEBRASKA-land*; “One Hot Mama” in *Sasee*; and “Interview with Kelly Daniels” in *Isthmus Review*. She also won the UNO College of Arts and Sciences Full-time Lecturer / Instructor Excellence in Teaching Award.

Tammie Kennedy is now the sole Editor and Director of the Women’s Archive Project at UNO, a student-produced digital archive highlighting the experiences and contributions of women affiliated with the University of Nebraska at Omaha (as well as with its predecessor, the University of Omaha). At the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference at Stanford University last fall Kennedy presented a paper about the archive, which has led to many inquiries from other institutions about how to bring such an ambitious project to fruition. She also greatly enjoyed teaching a new course entitled “Writing Graphic Memoirs.” Further demonstrating her wide range of interests and skills, Kennedy published a second edition of the first-year writing textbook, *From the Heartland: Critical Writing and Reading at UNO*; the essay “Smaller Boxes” in *Emrys Journal*; and “Mary Magdalene and the Politics of Public Memory: Interrogating *The Da Vinci Code*” in the journal *Feminist Formations*.

Lisa Knopp’s list of achievements for the past year could be mistaken for the *curriculum vitae* of some writers’ entire careers. She gave four invited readings from her works, at the Kaneko Library in Omaha, at the Abrahams Branch of the Omaha Public Library, at the Bennett Martin Branch of the Lincoln Public Library, and at the Nebraska Book Festival in Omaha. She also

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published an impressive list of creative essays, including “The Renoir” in *Still Points Art Quarterly*; “Balancing Act” in *Brevity: A Concise Journal of Literary Nonfiction*; “On Solstalgia” in *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment)*; “Still Life with Peaches” in *Georgia Review*; and “On the High Line” and “The Year of the Rabbit,” both in *NEBRASKAland*. Four other previously-published essays were chosen for inclusion in various anthologies during the past year. And finally, her most recent book, *What the River Carries*, has earned widespread recognition for its excellence; not only did it win Honorable Mention for Environmental Creative Writing from ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment), but it also won first place in the Nonfiction Essay category of the Nebraska Book Awards.

Joan Latchaw has been actively involved in extending the Department of English’s international reach. In addition to her ongoing collaboration with colleagues at the UNAN-León in Nicaragua (see elsewhere in this issue for further details), Latchaw gave a paper entitled “Building Bridges from Nebraska to Nicaragua” at the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference at Stanford University in September, participated in a workshop entitled “Diverse Disciplines, ‘New’ Publics: The Work of International Higher Education Writing Research” at the CCCC Conference in Las Vegas in March, and attended the Language and Society Conference at Tel Aviv University in June. Much closer to home, in November Latchaw gave a presentation on “The Jewish Graphic Novel” at the Omaha Jewish Community Center.

Elizabeth Mack and **Kim Schwab** co-facilitated a “Mindful Writing Retreat” at Platte River State Park in May, during which participants experienced a full day of writing and yoga.

Matthew Marx is pleased to announce the arrival of his first child, Alexander James Marx, on January 31, 2013. As if that weren’t enough to keep him and his wife busy, Marx has created two innovative Honors courses for the spring and fall 2014 semesters. One of those courses, “The Nature of Truth,” examines what the concept of “truth” means to practitioners of a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, religion, history, spirituality, international conflict resolution, psychology, mathematics, and physics.

Owen Mordaunt published his article, “Individualized Instruction with Implications for Teaching English as an International or Global Language” in *International Journal of Science, Commerce, and the Humanities*. His book chapter, “Conflict and Resolution in ‘Grazing in Good Pastures’: An Intracultural Perspective,” appeared in *Civil Strife in a Complex and Changing World: Perspectives Far and Near*.

David Peterson stepped in and served as interim Graduate Program Chair last spring. He also found time in February to present a plenary paper on “Neoliberal Homophobia” at the 21st Annual Lavender Languages & Linguistics conference in Washington, D. C. Last July he was very involved, too, with organizing the Joslyn Castle’s 2013 literary festival, whose theme was “The Jazz Age at the Castle.” He was especially pleased at the turnout of over 150 people for the program he put together on “Jazz Age Cinema: An Evening of Silent Movies, 1918-1926,” which included the screening of a number of film shorts and his own talk about silent films.

John Price’s memoir, *Daddy Long Legs: The Natural Education of a Father*, was published in May, and since that time it has garnered very positive reviews across the country.

In connection with this publication he has given numerous media interviews, book club talks, and bookstore readings in Omaha, St. Louis, Denver, Iowa City, and St. Paul. He also made presentations at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference in Boston, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment Conference at Kansas University, and the Western Literature Association Conference in Berkeley. In September he was very pleased to be invited to speak at the dedication of the new Learning Center at UNO’s Glacier Creek / Allwine Prairie. See elsewhere in this issue for information about Price’s forthcoming *The Tallgrass Prairie Reader*.

Barbara Robins has been an active blogger of late on the site *Wellbound Storytellers*. At the Native American Literature Symposium in Minneapolis in March, she participated in a panel discussion entitled “Wellbound Storytellers: Narrating a Commitment to Health & Wellness in Indian Country.” In addition, in October Robins presented her paper, “Osama Ken Barbie: Gendered Notions of Revenge,” at the 19th Biennial Native American Art Studies Association in Denver.

Mike Skau, professor emeritus, has been incredibly productive in his “retirement.” His poem “Pinballs” was published in *Paddlefish* and was named the winner of the 2013 William Kloefkorn Award for Excellence in Poetry. He also gave an invited presentation, “Jack Kerouac’s Rubáiyát: The Influence of Omar Khayyám,” at the Second Annual European Beat Studies Network Conference in Aalborg, Denmark. And finally, he received word that his manuscript collection of poems entitled *Me and God* has been accepted for publication by Wayne State College Press this spring.

GOING INTERNATIONAL

Forging New Ties in Nicaragua

When Mildred Reyes, a faculty member at UNAN-León, UNO's Sister Institution in Nicaragua, visited Omaha in 2007 and sat in on a number of English classes, nobody knew where this might lead – if anywhere at all.

Not long afterwards, though, the UNAN English Department invited Department of English faculty members Joan Latchaw and Frank Bramlett to participate in an international conference at UNAN focused on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Latchaw gave a keynote address entitled “Teaching with Your Head in the Clouds,” about teaching foreign language through critical thinking, to a packed lecture hall full of receptive and enthusiastic teachers. Bramlett gave well-attended workshops on an error analysis approach to assessing writing. “Error Analysis,” as Bramlett explains, “is a tool in the second language acquisition tool kit which helps teachers and researchers understand the extent to which a learner has acquired certain linguistic features.” Latchaw, too, gave a presentation; hers was on how to use drama in



the EFL classroom. In a separate trip, Marvel Maring, formerly UNO's Humanities and Fine Arts Reference Librarian and now Branch Manager of the Omaha Public Library's Milton Abrahams Branch, traveled to UNAN in 2008 and gave a week-long series of lessons on using UNO databases, a trip made possible with the help of Steve Shorb, Dean of UNO's Criss Library.

UNO professors visit León, Nicaragua. Back row, left to right: Jonathan Scherling, Education; Frank Bramlett, English; front row, left to right: Julie Delkamiller, Education; Joan Latchaw, English; Ann Coyne, CPACS-Social Work; Marvel Maring, Criss Library

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Kathy Radosta, UNO's Ambassador to Russia

In October, Kathy Radosta traveled to Russia as part of UNO's effort to establish an academic relationship with Perm National Research Polytechnic University (PNRPU). This relationship began last year, when UNO hosted a Fulbright scholar from PNRPU named Anna Novikova, and Radosta had a number of conversations with her about teaching English to speakers of other languages, among other topics. As a result of these contacts – and also because of Radosta's previous experience studying in Russia and her ability to speak Russian – she was the ideal person to travel to Perm and serve as UNO's ambassador.

PNRPU's interest in collaborating with UNO, both at the student level and the faculty level, is part of an effort on PNRPU's part to

reach out to the larger international community, something that was not allowed during the Soviet period, when Perm was a closed city due to the highly sensitive military operations housed within the city limits. In fact, foreigners were not allowed to visit Perm until fifteen years ago. The desire to overcome this forced isolation from the world, according to Radosta, was apparent in all of her interactions with the students and staff at PNRPU.

Radosta's impressions of her visit to Russia were inevitably juxtaposed with her memories of the Soviet Union circa 1988, when she was an exchange student in Moscow. The differences between then and now, she notes, are vast and remarkable. As she states, “I was overwhelmed by the modern,



Western feel of Perm, something that I completely did not expect, given the difficult day-to-day circumstances of my time in Moscow 25 years ago.”

While in Perm, Radosta gave multiple presentations about UNO, her work in the Writing Center, and her ESL curriculum. In addition, she met with PNRPU

Kathy Radosta joins Radha Balasubramanian, Associate Professor of Russian at UNL, and Anna Novikova, a linguistics professor at PNRPU, for dinner at a traditionally-themed restaurant in Perm.

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Nicaragua, continued

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In the years after that, the colleagues from UNO and UNAN naturally stayed in touch, engaging in professional conversations about various topics, including curriculum development.

In 2012, the relationship took a big step forward when Latchaw, Bramlett, and Maring secured a UNO Faculty Research International grant to study the UNAN teachers' experience with writing and information literacy. They subsequently spent ten days in July of that year in Nicaragua collecting data from written surveys, interviews, and focus groups. After analyzing the data, the research team returned to UNAN in February 2013 in order not only to report the results of their research, but also to offer a five-day workshop on composition pedagogy, applied linguistics, and information literacy. Over the past summer they continued to work together on analyzing their experiences and findings; they are now preparing an article manuscript about their research.

The UNO participants in this work find it extremely important and gratifying, for many people in Nicaragua believe their best hope for escaping poverty is through learning English. Indeed, many of the best jobs in the country – including working at the American Embassy, in the tourism industry, and for multi-national businesses – require a knowledge of English. The UNO educators have especially appreciated how gracious, hard-working, and collaborative their colleagues in León have been. Doing their part to fulfill UNO's mission to connect Nebraska more fully with the world, Latchaw, Bramlett, and Maring are looking forward to continued collaboration with their hosts and hope in the future to host more Nicaraguan faculty and students here in Omaha.

Kathy Radosta, continued

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administrators, faculty, and students to discuss the possibilities of future academic exchanges and collaborations. She also found time for a little sightseeing, as her hosts proudly showed her around the cultural gems of their region, including the Belogorsky Monastery, the Khokhlovka open-air architectural museum, the Perm State Art Gallery, and the Opera.

A partnership with PNRPU is being actively pursued by UNO, and a

visit from a group of administrators from PNRPU is tentatively scheduled for spring 2014. At that time, it is hoped Chancellor Christiansen and the Rector of PNRPU will sign a cooperation agreement that will facilitate student and faculty exchanges between our two universities. If all works smoothly, sometime soon *Sig-natures* may be reporting on the arrival of Russian students and faculty at UNO and about UNO students and faculty traveling to Perm to pursue their studies or teach there.

Sigma Tau Delta News

The UNO chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society has been revitalized this year in a number of ways. Not only does it have a new faculty adviser, Dr. Tanushree Ghosh, but also a group of enthusiastic chapter officers have been elected and numerous new members have been recruited. Zoe Yohn, a junior English major, has taken up the role of President of the UNO chapter. She, Dr. Ghosh, and the new cohort of chapter officers hope to keep up the momentum they have generated recently.

One of the fun activities chapter members engaged in during the fall was a Halloween pumpkin painting event: students were invited to paint on small pumpkins the names of their favorite literary character or a quotation befitting the Halloween theme. In 2014 the chapter plans to organize more cultural events, including a trip to the Joslyn Museum and presentations by invited speakers; they also hope to create film and book clubs. Along with the chance to interact with peers interested in the written word, Sigma Tau Delta membership also gives students the opportunity to apply for scholarships and awards from the national organization, as well as submit proposals for presentations at regional and national conferences.

Student Achievements

Zach Jacobs received a UNO Graduate Research and Creative Activity grant of \$5,000 for the summer of 2013 that allowed him to participate in an archaeological excavation on the southern Mediterranean coast of Turkey. He hopes “playing archaeologist” for two months will result in a book-length travel narrative. In the meantime, he says he will always have wonderful memories of working with a great group of people and becoming “an honorary Turk.”

Linda (Pawlenty) Rogge published her essay, “When I See Trucks,” in the spring 2013 issue of *Oyez Review*.

Patrick Mainelli was recently named one of two recipients of a Helen Hanson Outstanding Graduate Student Award for 2013-2014. He will be honored for this achievement at UNO's Commencement ceremonies in May.

Erica Trabold had two lyric essays published this past year: “Five Plots” in *Seneca Review* and “Burning Out” in *Penumbra*. She also presented her paper, “Borders Between Academic Writing and Creative Nonfiction: Dangerous Definitions,” at the “Border(less) Identities” conference held at Kansas State University.

Alumni News

Zan Bockes (B.A. 1985, B.F.A. 1987) earned her M.F.A. from the University of Montana and now makes Missoula her home. She recently published her first collection of poetry, *Caught in Passing*, which is available through amazon.com and Barnes and Noble.

Jason Brown (B.A. 2006, M.A. 2013) was very honored to have his original illustration grace the cover of the UNO Alumni Magazine's fall 2013 issue.

Erin Burkett (B.A. 2013) was informed recently that she has been accepted to UNL Law School; possibly even better news is that her outstanding academic record at UNO earned her a scholarship that will pay all her tuition and fees.

Gary Johnson (B.A. 1967) received the UNO Alumni Association's Citation for Alumni Achievement at the spring 2013 Commencement ceremonies. A standout student at UNO (he was editor of the literary magazine *Grains of Sand*), Johnson went on to an illustrious career writing for television. He is best known for his tenure as head writer and supervising producer for *Jeopardy!* from 1997 to 2011, winning eight Emmy awards for his outstanding work on that show. More recently he has focused on writing poetry; his book, *Head Trauma: Sonnets and Other Poems*, was published in 2006, and he is currently preparing

Wretched Refuse: New and Collected Poems for publication. He and his wife, fellow UNO grad **Michele (Vaughn) Johnson** – who has also had a very successful career as a writer for television and print media – have three grown children and live in Topanga, California. Further information about them can be found at unoalumni.org/citation-spring13

Kelsey (Noore) Tooley (B.A. 2008, ADWR 2010) got married in July 2013 and the same week started a new position as Content Copywriter at Trozolo Communications Group of Kansas City. Talk about fitting a lot into a week!

Todd Richardson (B.G.S. 2000, M.A. 2003) earned his Ph.D. in Folklore and American Literature from the University of Missouri - Columbia in 2011 and is currently an assistant professor in UNO's Goodrich Program. Last spring he and the Director of the Goodrich Program, Imafedia Okhamafe, led a group of fifteen UNO students on a service learning project in Red Cloud, Nebraska, where they prepared the Nebraska State Historical Society's Pavelka Farmstead for a much-needed new coat of paint.

Mary Kay Stillwell (M.A. 1998) published not one, but *two* books in 2013. *The Life & Poetry of Ted Kooser*, the first full-length treatment of Nebras-

ka's most famous poet and someone who recently served two terms as the nation's Poet Laureate, was published in the spring by the University of Nebraska Press. In the fall her chapbook of poetry, *Fallen Angels*, was published by Finishing Line Press. The latter is available not only on amazon.com but also at www.finishinglinepress.com

Ashley Stuenzi (B.A. 2011) began her graduate degree work last fall in England at the University of Portsmouth. She plans to study twentieth-century and contemporary literature.

Sarah Vollmer (B.A. 2009) recently moved from New York to San Francisco and is thoroughly enjoying the easier access to nature that the Bay Area affords, spending much of her weekend time surfing, rock climbing, and mountain biking. She works at a small literary agency called Solow Literary, where her duties run the gamut from making sure clients get the royalties due them, to hunting for the next bestselling author and editing book proposals. She sees fellow UNO grad **Hannah Starkel** (B.A. 2009), another Bay Area resident, quite frequently.

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We welcome all news of our alums! Please send info about what you are doing now to *Signatures* editor Chuck Johanningsmeier <jmeier@unomaha.edu>

Forthcoming Book of Interest

Many UNO Department of English alums will be pleased to know about the forthcoming publication this spring of *The Tallgrass Prairie Reader*, edited by John Price and published by the University of Iowa Press. For the past five years Price has assiduously collected and solicited a wide variety of pieces describing the vanished tallgrass prairie that existed early in the nineteenth century, lamenting its loss, and envisioning its (at least partial) restitution. Author Diane D. Quantic asserts this anthology "will transport the reader back to the days of buffalo and immense prairies of history and forward into present-day writings that emphasize the continuing importance of the prairies in our lives." It is certain to be of interest to a great number of readers, both from the Great Plains region and elsewhere.

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Eighth Annual Honoring Reception

On April 19, a large crowd of students, faculty, and proud parents and family members gathered in the Milo Bail Student Center to celebrate the achievements of a number of highly-talented English majors and Master's Degree students. In addition to watching the presentation of various awards, those in attendance had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Kristin Girten speak on the topic, "Doors and Windows of the English Major."

The awards for 2013-2014 presented at the Honoring Ceremony were as follows:

JAMES C. HOREJS SCHOLARSHIP FOR DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

Timothy Brown, Andrew Camp, Shawn Collins, Sarah Larson, Paula Sweeney, Jordan Swett, Suriel Vazquez, Dominique Worthing, Zoe Yohn

MARIAN BASLER SCHOLARSHIP FOR OUTSTANDING WRITING IN THE MAJOR

Evan Kenkel

HELEN BASLER ANDERSON SCHOLARSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE MAJOR

Luke Taylor

J. J. MCKENNA UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP IN CREATIVE NONFICTION

Melana Rinehart

J. J. MCKENNA GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP IN CREATIVE NONFICTION

Holly Wilson

HELEN HANSON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT (UNO)

Scott Aichinger



Tracy Bridgeford, acting Chair, with Niki Holzapfel, Outstanding English Major in Creative Nonfiction Concentration



Left to right: Holly Wilson, Leda Frost, John McKenna, Melana Rinehart



Bridgeford with Heather Hanford, Outstanding English Major in British/Irish/Anglophone Concentration