

The Flight of the Phoenix

Western Kentucky University English Department Alumni Newsletter

Message From The Department Head

Dear Alumni,

What a strange, unprecedented year this has been! Despite the challenges, the English Department students, faculty, and staff rose to the occasion. In this 2021 edition of *Flight of the Phoenix*, I'm delighted to share with you stories about the great work our faculty did adapting their courses to new virtual and hybrid formats, some of the fantastic achievements of our students and faculty, several new alumni profiles, and a bit about the various events we held this year. Six of our colleagues in English—Terry Elliott, Deb Logan, Jane Olmsted, Lee Spears, Judith Szerdahelyi, and Eli Winkler—will be turning the page to a new chapter this June as they retire from WKU; you will find brief bios within. We will miss them all sorely!



Photo by Megan McCormick

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

All best,
Alison Langdon
Department Head of English
alison.langdon@wku.edu



Highlights In This Issue

Annual Mary Ellen Miller & Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing.....	4
2020-21 Scholarships and Awards.....	5
6 English Department Faculty Retire....	6
Reoccurring Events.....	11

Dr. Alison Langdon Becomes New Head of Department

by Abbie Booty

As of January 2020, Dr. Alison Langdon took over Dr. Rob Hale's position as the WKU Department of English Head. Dr. Langdon's commitment to the department over the last 14 years is undeniable.

Dr. Langdon not only teaches courses that most all English students encounter such as Introduction to College Writing, Introduction to Literature, and Introduction to English Studies, but she also teaches courses in her specialized focus of study such as Medieval Literature, Chaucer, and Dante's Divine Comedy and Its Influences. In addition, Dr. Langdon has also served as the Undergraduate Literature Advisor and Managing Editor of the *Ashen Egg* (which she co-founded in 2012).

We are all excited to see Dr. Langdon further her commitment to the WKU's English Department as she steps up to fill Dr. Hale's position.

WKU Department of English Hosts 4th Annual English Majors Convocation over Zoom

by Emily Davis



Attendees of the 2020 convocation

On Friday, Sept. 4, 2020, the WKU Department of English held its 4th annual English Convocation via Zoom. The convocation welcomed both new and returning students and highlighted new and exciting opportunities in the English, Film, and Gender & Women's Studies programs.

The convocation had a total of 55 students and faculty in attendance. Some of the topics covered included opportunities for academic

development such as studying abroad, internships, and scholarships and ways to be involved in the department such as publications, offered clubs, and upcoming events.

The convocation concluded with a socially distant meet-and-greet on the FAC lawn where students and faculty could get to know each other and share more information about all of the wonderful opportunities in the WKU English department.

"It was definitely odd seeing everyone in tiny boxes on my laptop screen instead of enjoying popsicles outside of the faculty house," said senior Fallon Russell. "But I'm glad that the event still got to happen so that we could share information about opportunities within the department."

The convocation was recorded for students who were unable to attend.

WKU English Rises to the Top Even in Extraordinary Times

by Emily Davis

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for WKU, especially in the English Department. Classes were initially shifted entirely online and have since been given in a hybrid or online-only format. These classes are typically centered around productive, intellectual, and engaging exchanges through classroom participation, discussions, and workshops.

Many English faculty had already been enhancing their virtual teaching methods in recent years; however, many WKU English classes previously relied on face-to-face interactions in the classroom, where English students thrive. The limitations set by the pandemic could have been a difficult obstacle for the English Department, but despite the extraordinary times, the faculty have made an effort to rise to the occasion. Faculty members are still delivering quality instruction after transitioning to virtual learning formats and continue to provide support for students who are also adjusting to changes in their own lives.

Praise from all levels of English students for their instructors includes:

- “My professor’s top priority is his students’ well-being.”
- “My professor has provided the same quality of instruction, and I still feel like I am learning as much as I did in the in-person class.”
- “My professor always goes above and beyond for her students and shows her compassion through her actions.”

English faculty have also found ways to support each other including virtual meetings to share tips on a variety of online teaching tools, as well as a Blackboard site created by English instructors to hold discussions, share resources, and maintain a sense of community. WKU English will come out of the pandemic stronger than ever and will maintain its status as one of the best departments at WKU.

Dr. Rob Hale Takes Position as Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence

by Abbie Booty



Dr. Rob Hale, former English Department Head, has taken a position as WKU’s Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence. He began this position on January 1, 2020.

Dr. Hale has demonstrated strong dedication to the department since he first joined as a professor, which led to him stepping up as the motivated head of the department in 2013. It is exciting to see this dedication expand across WKU with his newest position as the Associate Provost.

English Department Hosts 24th Annual Mary Ellen Miller & Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing

by Mo Stevens (adapted from event coverage by Joseph Shoulders on the English Department website)

The Department of English and the African American Studies Program hosted the 24th Annual Mary Ellen & Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing via Zoom. As usual, the event featured a writing contest and guest reading to honor the legacies of cherished WKU professors Mary Ellen Miller and Jim Wayne Miller.

This year's guest poet was Joy Priest, who judged the contest and announced its winners:

- First place: "Self-Conscious Dante: In the Middle of the Journey of Our Life, I Came to Myself in a Dark Wood," by Ella Corder



The celebration and workshop this year took place via Zoom's video conference feature.

"Joy Priest was brilliant. She cracked us open like pistachios. She saw things in our poems that I couldn't have dreamed."

- Second place: "I Have My Mother's Handwriting," by Eli Edens
- Third place: "Red Bird," by Nia Queen Douglas

and other finalists: Summer Gary, Faith Harris, Kelly Lingen, Abigail Raley, Chloe Skeese, Kayla Spears, and Gabby Wilson. The finalists reported how enjoyable they found the workshop; in fact, Ella Corder said, "Joy Priest was brilliant. She cracked us open like pistachios. [She] saw things in our poems that I couldn't have dreamed."

Priest herself is a Louisville, Ky., native who has written and published several award-winning poems and essays. During the celebration she read a selection of poetry from her debut book *Horsepower*, which reflects on her experiences growing up by Churchill Downs in her racially divided hometown.

Student Achievement: Scholarships & Awards

Despite the challenges of the year, English students continued to dedicate themselves to their studies. One indicator of the students' achievements is the scholarships and awards presented to them, which are listed below.

Addie Hochstrasser Estate Fund for the Jim Wayne Miller Scholarship in Creative Writing: Elizabeth Roth

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship:

2020 Winners: Bethel Aklilu, Dylan Anderson, Felicia McCrosky, and Fallon Russell (Alternate: Catherine Sheffield)

2021 Winners: Bobbi Coffee, Makayla Davis, Eli Edens, Kiah Grier, and Hope Wells (Alternate: Olivia Allen)

Betty Jean and Doug Mosley Scholarship: Olivia Alsup

Col. Edgar Bryant and Edith R. Stansbury Scholarship: Julianna Lowe and Sarah Stevens

Critical Language Scholarship: Autumn Eichhorn, Lily Hamm, Ryan Richardson, Mac Williams, Jessica Williams

Department of English Scholarship for Racial Equality: Nia Douglas

Dr. Karen Pelz Scholarship: Abbie Booty

Dr. Nancy Hightower Davis Scholarship: Jenna Woodard

Earl A. Moore Scholarship: Marshall Dees

Eva Rush Lee Scholarship: Bailey Alexander and Sheridan Rosser

Frank L. Atkinson Scholarship: Brianna Hamilton

Gladly Award: Delaney Holt

Jim & Lana Flynn Student Abroad Scholarship: Kayla Spears

Jim Wayne Miller Scholarship: Emra Mehmedovic

Mary Lucille Scott Scholarship: Aimee Scott

Noma Dunn Scholarship: Catherine Sheffield

Outstanding Graduating English Major: Adrianna Waters

Outstanding Graduating MA Student: Will Williford

Outstanding Graduating MFA Student: Megan Hutchinson

Outstanding Graduating Student in Creative Writing: Ella Corder

Outstanding Graduating Student in English for Secondary Teachers: Carder Venable

Outstanding Graduating Student in Literature: Emily Snyder

Outstanding Graduating Student in Professional Writing: Max Chambers

Outstanding Graduating Student in TESOL: Lillian Golden

Outstanding Graduating Student in the Film Studies Minor: Cameron Fontes

Outstanding Graduating Student in the GWS Minor: Abigail Raley

Continued on page 5...



Select scholarship winners. From left to right: (First row) Abbie Booty, Jolie Finley, Kayla Spears (Second row) Catherine Sheffield, Joseph Shoulders, Sandie Merena (Third row) Emra Mehmedovic, Julianna Lowe, Sarah Stevens

Pat and Wallace Nave Scholarship: Jolie Finley

Patricia Minton Taylor Scholarship: Joseph Shoulders

Totals: 22 scholarships totaling \$17,750 (2020), 20 scholarships totaling \$17,150 (2021)

Student Achievement: Scholarships & Awards (continued)

Paul Bush Memorial Scholarship: Jean Bosco Tuyisenge and Stephanie A. Affield

Spirit of the Phoenix Award: Bailey Cooke

The Earl A. and Cleo B. Moore and Terrence E. and Sarah D. Kelsey Student Aid Fund: Sandie Merena

Thomas G. Jones Scholarship: Summer Gary

Wanda Gatlin Essay Award: Kayla Spears

Wood Award: Mo Stevens

Zephyrus Art Award: Kendall Gott

Six Department of English Faculty Members Retiring after Spring 2021

by Megan McCormick, Emily Davis, and Abbie Booty

This June, six faculty members from the Department of English will be retiring through the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP). These individuals—Professor Terry Elliott, Dr. Deborah Logan, Dr. Jane Olmsted, Dr. Lee Spears, Dr. Judith Szerdahelyi, and Dr. Elizabeth Winkler—will be sorely missed around Cherry Hall’s classrooms after their dedicated service to WKU over the years. Read more about each of them below:

Professor Terry Elliott:

Professor Elliott has been at WKU since 2004. He has taught English Gen Ed courses, or “liberal education,” including Introduction to College Writing, Introduction to Literature, and Writing in the Disciplines. In addition to his experience teaching at university level, Professor Elliott also has experience teaching at the middle/high school level.



Continued on page 6...

Six Department of English Faculty Members Retiring after Spring 2021 (continued)

Dr. Deborah Logan:

Dr. Logan completed her English and Asian Studies undergraduate degree in Hamilton College. She then received her English MA and Victorian Literature Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Logan has been a professor at WKU since 1997. She has taught literature courses for the English program such as Introduction to Literature, British Survey II, World Literature, and others.



Dr. Jane Olmsted:

Dr. Olmsted received her Ph.D. in English with a minor in feminist studies at the University of Minnesota. She has been a faculty member at WKU since 1996. Not only has she taught courses for the English program, but she also taught courses for the Gender and Women's Studies program, Diversity & Community Studies, and for the MA in Social Responsibility & Sustainable Communities.

Dr. Lee Spears:

Dr. Spears has chaired the English Department Scholarships and Awards (undergraduate) Committee for more than 10 years. She has taught classes in Business Writing, Technical Writing, and Writing in the Disciplines at WKU. She has been published in the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *Business Communication Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*.



Dr. Judith Szerdahelyi:

Dr. Szerdahelyi earned her Ph.D. from The University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Her teaching and research interests include composition theory and pedagogy, computers and writing, multimodal technology in higher education, creative nonfiction, and non-native English-speaking writing instructors. In addition to a co-authored textbook, her publications include book chapters and academic articles for IGI Global, Cambria Press, and *Computers and Composition Online*. She is also the editor of the *Kentucky English Bulletin*.

Dr. Elizabeth Winkler:

Dr. Winkler has over 20 years of linguistics experience. After earning degrees at Ohio University and Indiana University, she taught English as a second language at several universities in the U.S. and in Monterrey, Mexico. She has also authored several texts and articles on linguistics. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys exploring caves across the country, including Mammoth Cave here in Kentucky.



Alumni Achievements

by Abbie Booty

plethora of alumni accomplishments often. It is impossible to share all of your achievements as there are so many, but here a few of them that we know about which demonstrate part of the diverse set of paths the department has lead you on.

The English Department delights in the success and ambition of its alumni, and the faculty tries to showcase the

English Alumna Alayna Milby Named Founding Member for WKU Alumni Association Diversity & Inclusion Council



Alayna Milby from Franklin, Ky., graduated from WKU in 2014. She majored in English literature and minored in Gender & Women's Studies and Sexuality Studies. She now serves as Director of Community Engagement at Hope Harbor, Inc.

On July 1, 2020, Milby began her service for the Alumni Association Diversity & Inclusion Council. She will serve a renewable two-year term working to support diversity and inclusion initiatives and programs on WKU's campus.

Alumna Hannah Good Accepts Position at *The Washington Post*

Hannah Good graduated from WKU with an English degree in 2019.

On March 22, Good began her job as *The Post's* multimedia editor for *The Lily*. *The Lily* is a sector of *The Post* that explores topics relevant to millennial women. Good will also contribute to *The Lily's* Sunday comics feature as an illustrator/comic artist.



Alumna Emily Falica Accepts Teaching Position in South Korea

Emily Falica was recently accepted to the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) to teach in South Korea.

Emily is a 2020 WKU graduate with a major in Asian Religions and Cultures and minors in Professional Writing and Political Science.



For more information on what our English Department alumni have been up to, read our alumni profiles at <https://www.wku.edu/english/alumni-profiles/home.php>.

If you would like to share your post-graduation activities with the department, please fill out our alumni survey at https://wku.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9tYnUwpVYYv1a7j.

English Department Faculty News

by Mo Stevens and Abbie Booty

Meet Dr. Nancy Dinan

The English Department welcomed Dr. Nancy Dinan to the fold in 2020 as an assistant professor. Dr. Dinan earned her B.B.A. in Management Information Systems from the University of Texas at Austin in 2001 and later attended Ohio State University where she earned her MFA in Creative Writing in 2013. In May 2020, she earned her Ph.D. in English Literature with a creative dissertation from Texas Tech University.

Dr. Dinan's work has appeared in the *Paris Review Daily*, *Arts & Letters*, *Texas Observer*, *The Cincinnati Review*, and other publications. She is also the former editor for the *Iron Horse Literary Review*.



Dr. Cheryl Hopson is Guest Poet for Human Condition Podcast

Dr. Cheryl Hopson is an associate professor in the English Department. She teaches poetry courses and an African American Experience course. On January 18, Lisa Gregory aired an episode of her podcast, *The Human Condition*, that featured Dr. Hopson as a guest speaker. In this episode, Dr. Hopson discusses her own life experience being a feminist and a queer black woman as well as her writing.

WKU English Professor Dr. Tom Hunley Awarded the Prestigious Rattle Chapbook Prize

Dr. Tom Hunley is an English professor at WKU. He teaches a variety of creative writing / poetry classes for the university. Dr. Hunley has written seven chapbooks. His most recent, *Adjusting To The Lights*, has won the 2020 Rattle Chapbook Prize. Out of 1,885 submissions, his manuscript was one of the three that was accepted.



Recent English Faculty Books and Publications

- *Kill All Your Darlings* by David Bell
- *The Request* by David Bell
- *Learning a Foreign Language: Understanding the Fundamentals of Linguistics* by Alex Poole
- *Things You Would Know If You Grew Up Around Here* by Nancy Wayson Dinan
- *Learning from the Talk of Persons with Dementia: A Practical Guide to Interaction and Interactional Research* edited by Trini Stickle

Student Achievements

by Mo Stevens

English students had many accomplishments this year outside of the classroom such as beginning independent projects, winning contests, and publishing their work. There were also several successful graduate school searches. Below is a list of some of the students' achievements

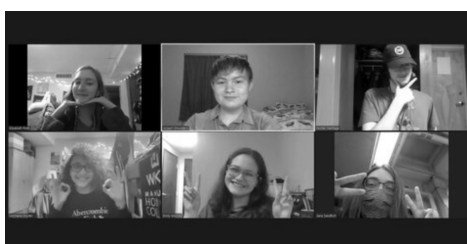
- Abigail Raley accepted into MFA program at the University of Montana
- Ethan Williams begins project with WKU Office of Sustainability
- Julianna Lowe undertook internship with Bowling Green Daily News
- Ella Corder's poem, "Waiting Three Years for My Avocado Tree to Bear Fruit" (*Flo Gault Student Poetry Contest*)
- Katie Hamblen's poem, "Prenatal" (*Rockvale Review*)
- Jon Meyers' creative nonfiction essay, "Oily Ducks are Her Side Hustle" (*Schuylkill Valley Online Journal*)
- Abigail Raley's essay, "'Get the Tables': A Metatheatrical Analysis of Professional Wrestling" (*The Macksey Journal*)
- Mo Stevens' short story, "The Bornean Uprising" (*Scarlet Leaf Review*)
- Maddie Grider named Baker Scholar in Horticulture
- WKU welcomed its sixth class of MFA students, pictured below. They are (from left to right): Caroline Galdi, Ericka Russell, Chandler Moore, Sarah Olive, and Prince Bush.
- Goldenrod Poetry Festival Winners: Kayla Spears (First Place), Noah Powers (Second Place), Adam Woodward (Third Place)
- MJ Mayo co-authors grant "Feed the Need: Addressing Food Insecurity at WKU"



Reoccurring English Department Events

Open Mic Nights Return, Held Via Zoom:

Open Mic Nights have returned to WKU English, and are being held via Zoom. English students of all concentrations are encouraged to attend to both read and listen. The most recent gathering was held on March 24. Be sure to check the Open Mic Nights page on the English Department website for more information on the next opportunity to participate.



English Department "Salon" Zoom Events:

New to the English Department for the 2020-21 school year, English Salon events allow students to discuss books, movies, TV shows, songs, paintings, video games, or any other media forms. On Thursday, March 11, students met via Zoom for the third English Salon hosted by the department. Keep an eye out for the date and time of the next English Salon, which is to be announced for the Fall 2021 semester.

Professional Writing Club Meetings:

The Professional Writing Club hosts meetings and events every semester that are open to all. It is dedicated to providing opportunities to listen to and meet with individuals and businesses that can be a great next-step after or even before graduation. For those who have a concentration in professional writing, or even those who don't, this is a great place to learn more about possible careers, as well as how to better prepare for and handle job-searching. See the English Department events calendar for the next PW Club meeting.



Annual Awards Ceremony & Senior Celebration:

Please join us in recognizing the 2020-2021 Department of English Awards and Scholarship winners and graduating students on **Friday, April 23 at 4:00 p.m.** Winners and graduates are invited to join us in person at the FAC Tent, while friends and family are invited to watch via Zoom. We hope to see you there!

WKU English Department End-of-Year-Celebration:

Please help us celebrate the end of another great year for the Department of English on **Friday, April 30 at 12:00 p.m.** on FAC Lawn!

Where We're Located

We welcome all readers to visit us on the first floor of Cherry Hall! You can also get in touch with us via mail or email. Stay updated on recent news by following us on social media.

<https://www.wku.edu/english/>

WKU Department of English
1906 College Heights Blvd.
#11086
Bowling Green, KY 42101

english.office@wku.edu

Facebook: @WKUDepartmentofEnglish

Instagram: @wkuenglish

Twitter: @wkuenglish