NEW ALUMNI HEADED FOR FURTHER STUDY

BY Abigail Morris and Erin Frost

One measure of a successful graduate program is student success in applying and being accepted into next-level graduate programs. The Department of English is proud to announce that eight of our thirty-two May 2015 MA program graduates have been admitted to various graduate programs around the country, and will embark on the next steps of their educations between the summer and fall semesters of this year.

Pictured above in the front row are:
D. Shane Combs, will pursue a PhD in English Studies at Illinois State University; Kristi Wiley, will pursue a PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Michigan State University; and Abigail Morris, who will pursue a PhD in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication here at East Carolina University.

Pictured above in the back row are:
Tim Buchanan, who will pursue an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Christina Rowell, who will pursue a PhD in Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice at Kent State University; and Chris Urban, who will pursue a PhD in Literature at West Virginia University.

Not pictured is Bryan McMillan, who will pursue a PhD in Literature at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

As a department, we congratulate these and all our May 2015 graduates, and look forward to hearing about where their degrees will lead them over the years. To learn more about our latest class of ECU English graduates, including details about their theses and comprehensive assessment projects, please visit the Department of English News Blog at:
http://blog.ecu.edu/sites/englishnews/

Congratulations to Dr. Guyla Evans
The department would like to congratulate Guyla Evans on her Spring 2015 completion of the PhD in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication. Dr. Guyla’s dissertation is entitled “Comparison of Documentation Models Used by Emergency Physicians in a Community Hospital Setting.” Her committee members were Donna Kain (director), Michael Albers, Michelle Eble, and Robert Kulesher (Health Services and Information Management).

Alumni Spotlights

Where Has Your Degree Taken You?

We want to know! ECU’s Department of English is now hosting a new Spotlight Series about our department alumni. If you would like to be considered for an Alumni Spotlight, please contact Dr. Erin Frost, FrostE@ecu.edu. See Page 2 for more.
Christina Eftekhar Mayr

Alumnus Christina Eftekhar Mayr is the President of a local chapter of Society for Technical Communication (STC) for the 2015-2016 term. She also recently won an Award of Distinguished (and candidate for Best of Show) in the STC Carolina technical communication competition and an Award of Merit at the STC International Summit. Her current success in the field of technical communication is the product of years of hard work, determination, education and experience, many years of which came from her time in undergraduate and graduate programs at East Carolina.

Christina chose East Carolina because, out of all the colleges she visited, ECU “was the only one that felt like home.” Though she initially had some trouble during her freshman year deciding on a major, with some well-placed guidance from her friend and mentor, Dawn Keller, Christina quickly found that English was something she both enjoyed and excelled at. She graduated with her BA in 2006, and continued into the English MA program the following fall, where professors in the Technical Communications program helped her discover the greater potential of a degree in English.

Not surprisingly, Christina cites interactions with the English department’s passionate professors as the best part of her ECU experience, and time spent in the study abroad in England program and late-night discussions of Foucault rank high on her list of favorite ECU memories. She also highlights the importance of developing professional communication skills regardless of where you believe your degree may take you, those are the skills that will always be in high demand. For that reason, Christina recommends taking any available introductory courses in business and technical communication.

After graduating with her MA in English with a concentration in Technical and Professional Communication in 2008, Christina worked as a technical writer, developing her knowledge base by accepting a variety of positions across multiple fields. She believes it was majoring in English that taught her the many necessary skills to further her career. In her own words, “majoring in English taught me how to research properly, read for understanding, and think critically and logically, all of which have helped me learn and master new technologies quickly, a necessity as a technical writer.” Now she works as a technical editor, using DITA, an “XML-based open-source structured authoring architecture” for content management. She uses her knowledge and ability with DITA to enhance user experience and increase content availability as needed. Her recent award from the STC International Summit competition was for a book she wrote on DITA, called the DITA Dictionary.

Christina is grateful for the time she had at ECU, and invites recent graduates of the TPC program here to contact her at president@stc-carolina.org for more information about the Society for Technical Communication, for job search assistance, resume help, or for information about mentoring opportunities.
Laura Wright

ECU Alumnus, Dr. Laura Wright, is the Department Head of English at Western Carolina University, where she currently supervises around 200 students and 30 faculty while teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in World Literature in English, gender studies, environmental literature, and postcolonial theory.

After receiving her undergraduate degree from Appalachian State University, Laura came to East Carolina University to pursue her MA in Literature. After graduating, she continued into the PhD program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Since arriving at Western Carolina University, Dr. Wright has been the recipient of several WCU awards, including the Arts and Sciences Teaching Award, the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, and this year’s University Scholar Award. She is also a long distance runner and an ethical vegan with two amazing dogs and two lovely cats.

What drew you to English as your Major?

I became an English major because I loved to read — and I was good at writing about literature. I also chose English because that major gave me an immense amount of freedom to take courses that were interesting to me. I had been a psychology major first and then a biology major, but I loved literature, and I made the decision to study it because it was the thing that I was the most passionate about.

What was the best part of the program?

Being in graduate school at ECU was one of the best experiences of my life. At ASU, I had tried to carve out a niche for myself as a student who was focused on women’s literatures and minority literatures. When I came to ECU, Dr. Gay Wilentz had just established the Multicultural Literature concentration in the MA. I knew immediately that this was the focus that I wanted to pursue, so I studied with her, and she directed my thesis, which was on three works of African literature by women authors (Tsitsi Dangarembga, Flora Nwapa, and Buchi Emecheta). I also got my first opportunity to teach at ECU, and I worked as an assistant editor for the student newspaper. All of these experiences were incredibly valuable in terms of my future career.

How has your major benefited you since graduation?

Well, my MA and teaching experience at ECU helped me land a job at NCSU after graduation. I taught as a lecturer there for four years prior to moving to Massachusetts to pursue at Ph.D. At the University of Massachusetts, I focused on African literature and wrote a dissertation on South African author J. M. Coetzee. My dissertation later became a book. My experience at ECU gave me the foundation to do this work, and the faculty at ECU — particularly Gay and Dr. Roberta Martin — were amazing advocates for me in terms of my getting into graduate school and getting a teaching assistantship while I was there.
Jamie Johnson

Jamie is a recent MA graduate who started ECU as an undergrad pursuing a major in nursing. Despite the seeming practicality of choosing such a major, Jamie soon discovered that her real passion was in English. After earning her BA, Jamie decided to further her education here at ECU, and enrolled in the English MA program. With so many years of experience to draw from, we decided to ask Jamie a few questions about her time at ECU.

Why did you choose ECU?
I completed my undergraduate career at ECU. I applied for several different schools for grad, but staying at ECU just felt right. I had such a great experience with my undergrad career that I couldn’t imagine going anywhere else!

What is the best part of the program?
The best part of the program is the support. I truly felt like everyone was on my side and wanted to help. The faculty was always encouraging and allowed me to explore areas of interest. The PhD students were like older siblings (the good kind) and could relate to my struggles and offer valuable advice. My classmates evolved into great companions; someone was always there to help me brainstorm, vent, or review one of my papers. Finally, the administrators and office assistants were always quick to assist me with making copies for my classes and answer any questions I had. I consider myself lucky; not many programs have such a great support system.

How has your major benefited you since graduation?
After I tell my story of starting as a nursing major and eventually getting my MA in English, sometimes people will assume that it wasn’t practical; but the opposite is true. The graduate program challenged me to think in different ways and apply my thinking to every situation. It has also given me the comfort of knowing I have lots of options; I could apply for PhD, I could teach at the college level, I could teach high school, or I could have any type of writing/communications job.

Is there any advice you’d give other students in the program?
I want current students to know that they deserve to be there. Sometimes when I was surrounded by extraordinarily bright people, I felt like I wasn’t good enough. But that wasn’t true for me, and it’s not true for anyone in the program. If you’re graduating soon, you have the right to feel incredibly proud of yourself and it is okay to be afraid of the next step. You’re never alone!

Jamie Johnson graduated in 2014 and has been working hard to build up her resume with teaching experience since then. Last semester, Jamie taught eight sections of English through four different schools, and though she would not recommend teaching more than six sections if possible, she appreciates the fact that teaching so many sections allowed her to work with a wider variety of students than she otherwise might have. She is also grateful for the early teaching experience she gained while in the graduate program.
The East Carolina University Department of English is pleased to announce:

Dr. Jeffrey S. Johnson, professor and former chair of the Department of English, has been appointed as the Director of the Voyages of Discovery lecture series, taking over for Dr. John Tucker, who guided the series since its inception in 2007.

For More Info: http://www.ecu.edu/cas/.

Gabrielle Freeman, a Department of English Teaching Instructor, is the winner of the 2015 Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition for her poem, “Failure to Obliterate.” She will receive $200 and publication in a special supplement of storySouth.

Dr. Marame Gueye, has published a short story entitled “Welcome to the Big Apple” in issue 117 of Transition Magazine.

Transition is a publication of the Hutchins Center at Harvard University and is published three times annually by Indiana University Press.

Dr. Kirk St. Amant, a full professor with the Department of English, was awarded the Society for Technical Communication’s 2015 Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research.

Dr. Marianne Montgomery, was the recipient of a Centennial Award for Excellence in Service at during the 2015 Founder’s Day.


The Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ) announced the North Carolina Literary Review (NCLR) is the winner of the 2014 Phoenix Award for Significant Editorial Achievement at the Modern Language Association conference in Vancouver on January 8. This is the journal’s fifth award from this allied organization of the Modern Language Association.
More Recent Publications . . .

Margaret D. Bauer - Harriot College of Arts and Science Distinguished Professor and Rives Chair of Southern Literature Editor, North Carolina Literary Review

A Study of Scarlets: Scarlett O’Hara and Her Literary Daughters (University of South Carolina Press, 2014)

Luke Whisnant – Creative Writing Professor


Helena Feder - Associate Professor of Literature and Environment


Su-ching Huang – Associate Professor, Literature


Solveig Bosse – Assistant Professor, Linguistics


Matthew Cox – Assistant Professor, Technical & Professional Communication


Erin A. Frost – Assistant Professor, Technical & Professional Communication


Guiseppe Getto – Assistant Professor, Technical & Professional Communication

Mark D. Johnson – Assistant Professor, Linguistics

Leanne Smith – Teaching Assistant Professor

Upcoming!

The Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series 2015
The lecture series advances the spirit of exploration and discovery that is the hallmark of the liberal arts and has become the premier intellectual event for students and faculty of ECU, the citizens of eastern North Carolina, and a showcase for the quality of academic life at ECU. Each year, the series features thought-provoking and accomplished leaders from a variety of disciplines who provide insight into important issues in today’s society, and who share their experiences and perspectives.

September 29
The Premiere Lecture
Peter Bergen

October 27
The Lecture on Religion & Culture
Raymond Moody, Ph.D., M.

January 26
The Brewster Forum
Derek Alderman & Alfred Brophy

March 23
The Thomas Harriot Lecture
Zonnie Gorman