An old proverb teasingly wishes (and warns), “May you live in interesting times.” These are certainly interesting times at the University of Wyoming and in the middle of it all, UW English is thriving. We’re teaching exciting classes; our faculty are producing stimulating scholarship; our students are excelling in the classroom and the workplace; and, collectively, we are finding ways to take advantage of the present moment and position UW English for a vibrant future.

Take a look at this newsletter to see what I mean. Superb new hires, which you can read about in the profiles of Scott Henkel and Kelly Kinney, are strengthening our faculty. Major research projects (see updates by Caroline McCracken-Flesher, Julia Obert, and Arielle Zibrak) fulfill our mission of creating new modes of understanding even as they shape our classroom teaching. The leadership work of our faculty, profiled in “English at Home and Abroad,” helps make UW a better institution, more responsive to our students’ needs.

What is “interesting” about the times in which UW English currently lives? Well, we welcome a new president and provost this summer and we’re all excited to contribute to their initiatives. We’re also excited to leave our temporary digs in Crane Hall and return to a newly renovated Hoyt Hall, our historic home. We’re confronting challenges, too — the epic downturn in the Wyoming economy means that UW faces significant budget cuts for the foreseeable future. Figuring out how to absorb the cuts while maintaining our excellence is a task that will, over the coming years, occupy everyone who cares about this university.

It is a privilege to chair a department as expansive in its activities and outlook as UW English. My daily conversations with colleagues and students keep me engaged and intellectually limber. They also instill in me a sense of obligation to keep the English department strong – to ensure that we’re productive, innovative, focused on students, sustainably funded, and welcoming to all.

I feel this obligation both to my faculty colleagues and to our students, past, present, and future. The young people of Wyoming deserve the kind of training they can get in a stellar English department: the training to read intelligently, to write effectively, and to grapple with the big questions of our time (and any time) -- what makes a good society and how do we achieve it; how do we know ourselves and others; who do we want to be in this world; what kind of difference can we make; and how is language, that beautiful yet impossible tool, essential to every one of our questions.

Dear friends, thank you for reading this newsletter and for supporting UW English. I wish you the most rewarding adventures possible in language and in life.

My very best wishes to you,

Peter Parolin
NEW FACULTY

Welcoming Scott Henkel
by Robert Perea

Dr. Scott Henkel, a new assistant professor in the UW English department, characterizes his new home in Laramie as “beautiful… with so many nice people and so many things to do here!” Henkel notes, “Neither of my parents had college degrees, so they would be very proud that I am teaching at a university that has such a high percentage of first-generation college attendees. I’m very happy about that.”

Henkel and his spouse Dr. Kelly Kinney are enjoying their new home in the UW English department. This semester, Henkel is teaching the Literature of Equality (in order to learn about the Equality State) and Slavery and Resistance in the Americas. In the class on slavery, he returns to a text that is at the center of his research interests and the passions that led him to a career in academia. C.L.R. James’ The Black Jacobins awaits Henkel’s students when they return from spring break. This text was key in expanding Henkel’s understanding of literature in a transnational context.

“When I was transitioning from being a fairly traditional American literature scholar to someone who looked at the Americas more broadly, I read The Black Jacobins. It’s the classic history of the Haitian Revolution and it is one of my favorite books.”

This and related texts continue to form Henkel’s research interests. He is currently in the process of finalizing his own book called There are 2,000 Leaders: Direct Democracy, the Swarm, and the Literatures of the Americas. Henkel begins with a focus on the success of the Haitian Revolution, tracking the development of the slave rebellion as it evolved into a revolution and resulted in national independence. In subsequent chapters, his book examines the concepts of democracy, labor, and slavery in a comparative set of texts written during the long 19th century. Look for this book late this year or early next year.

Apart from research, Henkel enjoys a wide variety of leisure activities including gardening, canning the fruits of gardening, and triathlons (he is currently training for a half marathon). Coming from a musical family, Henkel also plays guitar. Proving that Henkel is preternaturally suited to the long winters of Wyoming, his social media contacts can see him, along with the heartier members of the UW English department faculty, touring Laramie’s surrounding recreation areas with his dog sled pulled by his stalwart Siberian Husky.

When asked to review his first few months in Laramie, Henkel says, “I love Laramie. I hope that everyone who comes here is given as warm a welcome as I’ve been given. It has been really tremendous.”

Henkel seems like he will be right at home here.

Welcoming Kelly Kinney
by J.D. Wagner

Associate Professor Kelly Kinney joined the ranks of our outstanding English faculty this past Fall 2015 semester as the incoming Director of Writing Programs. Professor Kinney received her undergraduate degree in English and Political Science from Purdue University. Her interest in Composition and Rhetoric was sparked during her graduate studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and Ohio University when she realized that Comp/Rhet embraces the political potential of English studies. Her graduate studies focused on the labor and political conditions of writing programs, an interest that defines her research to this day. Professor Kinney’s current work...

Continued on page 6
FACULTY AND STUDENT MILESTONES

2016 Awards

Faculty Awards

George Duke Humphrey Award for distinction in research, teaching, and service, across a faculty career: Caroline McCracken-Flesher

John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award for excellence in teaching: Caskey Russell

College of A&S Top Ten Teacher: Peter Parolin

PIE Award for Promoting Intellectual Engagement in First-Year classes (university-wide): James Creel, Michael Edson, Bethann Merkle

Governor of Wyoming’s Arts Awards for Contributions to the Arts in Wyoming: Cedric Reverand

Student Awards

College of A&S Board of Visitors Student Service Award: Rachael Colbert

College of A&S Outstanding Graduates List (aka A&S Top Twenty): Kacey Brown

2015 Awards

Faculty Awards

John P. Ellbogen Lifetime Teaching Award for excellence in teaching across a faculty career: Bruce Richardson

College of A&S Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award: Rick Fisher

Fred Slater Award for excellence in lower-division teaching in the English department: Carolyn Anderson and Ryan Croft

PIE Award for Promoting Intellectual Engagement in First-Year Classes (university-wide): Paul Bergsträsser, Pam Galbreath, Jason Kirkmeyer

Student Awards

College of A&S Board of Visitors Student Service Award: Jay Gentry

College of A&S Outstanding Graduates List (aka A&S Top Twenty): Alex Rickert

Robert Torry Award for Top English Honors Thesis: Alex Rickert

Continued on page 11
ENGLISH AT HOME AND ABROAD

English faculty are currently playing significant roles all around the University and the state. In this section of the newsletter, we offer you a glimpse into some of their important contributions.

The Synergy Program: Bolstering Student Success Through Literacy & Community
April Heaney, English Dept. & LeaRN Program Director
Launched as a partnership between the English department and Academic Affairs, the Synergy Program has been working for over a decade to help UW’s at-risk freshmen succeed in college and gain important literacy skills. Students who enter UW with low high-school GPA or ACT scores participate in Synergy during their first semester and take English 1010 (First-Year Composition) and a First-Year Seminar class focused on critical research and reading skills. Instructors from the English department administer the program and teach most of the program’s courses, meeting throughout the summer and fall to develop creative approaches to courses.

Students who participate in Synergy (currently nearly 400 each fall) represent higher numbers of under-represented and first-generation college students, so the program works to engage students in many ways through the courses, peer mentors, and faculty-led extra curricular activities.

Next year, under the support of Kelly Kinney, Writing Program director, and Peter Parolin, English department chair, Synergy will offer students a two-semester, first-year writing sequence that will allow them to remain with the same peer cohort and instructor for a full year. This full-year pilot has the potential to help more students persist into their sophomore year and deepen their connection with a supportive community.

Students who participate in Synergy show markedly higher freshman-to-sophomore persistence and academic success rates than students before the program began at UW, and some go on to prominent leadership roles on campus. For more information about Synergy (and to read about the program’s recent scholarship winners), please visit our website: http://uwyo.edu/synergy.

English in the Writing Center
Rick Fisher, Interim Writing Center Director
This year in the Writing Center, English department faculty, graduate assistants, and undergraduate consultants help us in providing nearly 150 appointment slots each week. Additionally, this spring, several of the faculty and graduate consultants are facilitating a new workshop series, based on their expertise and interests, to reach out to new groups of student writers. (For our pilot series, topics include “Grammar for the Bewildered,” “From Assignment Prompt to Thesis Statement,” and “Tightening up your Resume and Cover Letter.”)

The contribution of English department faculty and graduate-level students is especially valuable, since over half (53%) of writing center consultations are with senior- or graduate-level writers. In a different but equally valuable way, English majors Leah Byrnes, Bria Frame, and Kacey Brown serve as undergraduate interns who can sit alongside writers to help them understand the types of questioning, strategizing, and revising that leads to real improvement.

Additionally, the presence of English department faculty and graduate assistant consultants helps the Center maintain a commitment to supporting Outreach Program students around the state. Since many of these consultants have strong teaching experience in online courses (including for the English Outreach MA), they bring skills and an understanding of online/distance students that transitions well to the Writing Center’s online feedback process. While many other writing centers across the country rely primarily on undergraduate peer tutors from across the disciplines, UW’s Writing Center continues to benefit from the broad knowledge and experiences of English department faculty and graduate consultants.

Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning
Meg Van Baalen-Wood, ECTL Coordinator
I was not born a teacher. Rather, I spent the first decade of my career working as a writer, editor, and consultant for a variety of hardware and software companies. So, when I joined the English department in 2004, I viewed the faculty’s steadfast commitment to teaching excellence as both a challenge and an opportunity: I was determined to learn as much about teaching and learning as I possibly could. Fortunately, the English faculty and administration were eager to help.

Early on, I assembled a group of mentors, both in English and, since I taught many of my classes online, in the Outreach School. I could not have asked for better teachers. As I grew more comfortable in classrooms, both virtual and physical, I began to view virtual spaces and instructional technologies as pedagogical assets, not impediments. With the help of my wonderful mentors, I worked to integrate the best of online and classroom teaching strategies into a blended pedagogy. As a result, in Fall 2010, I was invited to join the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (ECTL), UW’s faculty development center, as a ¼-time faculty associate. My charge was to help...
research focuses on the administration of independent writing programs, and the triumphs and downfalls of teaching writing outside of the English department. Her forthcoming book, After Emancipation: Labor Reform, Teacher Satisfaction, and Studies of Independent First-Year Writing, is under contract with Utah State University Press.

Professor Kinney entered her first academic job at Grand Valley State University before moving to positions at Notre Dame and the State University of New York at Binghamton. After working as a writing program administrator at Binghamton—where her program was awarded the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s Writing Program Excellence Award—Professor Kinney accepted the position as Director of Writing Programs at UW. As the incoming Director, Professor Kinney is restructuring the writing program curriculum with other faculty members to meet the needs of the university’s new standards on multimodal instruction. Significant features of Professor Kinney’s new curriculum include a portfolio grading system and the creation of an undergraduate web journal featuring exceptional student writing from the English 1010 curriculum.

Professor Kinney is the Book Review Editor of Composition Studies and the recipient of the Council of Writing Program Administrators Research Grant Award and the State University of New York Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Service. When asked to describe her hobbies, Professor Kinney states that writing program administration is her hobby. That and watching her husband do his own hobbies. We are honored to welcome Kelly Kinney, and her passion for composition studies, to the University of Wyoming.

English in the Honors Program
Susan Aronstein, Director of UW Honors

For over fifty years, the English department has played an active role in the Honors Program. Retired professors Duncan and Janice Harris helped design the current curriculum, including the two-semester Freshmen Colloquium sequence, which introduces students to key literary works while helping them become better critical writers and thinkers. And, over the years, department faculty have taught the Colloquium, instructing students from all majors—Agricultural Economy to Zoology—to the joys of literary study, showing them that works written 2000 years ago can indeed have relevance in the modern world. For many English faculty who joined the Department in the 1980s and 1990s (myself, Susan Frye, Bob Torry, Cliff Marks, Carolyn Anderson, and Peter Parolin), teaching in the Colloquium provided us with superb mentoring.

Continued on page 8
SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Caroline McCracken-Flesher: Scotland and Tomorrow’s Humanities?
In 2015, Caroline McCracken-Flesher was honored to give the annual talk on Scottish Literature at the Scottish Parliament. Her theme? The Humanities in a Posthuman Future. Do you wonder where we’re going? Does STEM need some STEAM? Caroline stirred things up by suggesting that if there weren’t any humanities—the symptom of being human, by the way—sentient machines would have to invent “humanities” for themselves. Otherwise, where is the meaning? And what is the fun of life?

Caroline spent the fall in Scotland researching how we place ourselves in the world through literature. She has been researching at Walter Scott’s home, Abbotsford, in the Scottish Borders. With Abbotsford curators, archivists, and landscape historians, Caroline is now working to establish a “UW at Abbotsford” program. A summer course taught by faculty from across UW would allow students to study at the intersection of past and present, humanities, and a whole range of subjects. Scott was a polymath: a lawyer, poet, antiquarian, agricultural improver, publisher—even an oil and gas man! His house is full of art and artifacts. At Abbotsford, UW students from all disciplines would research, study, and exchange knowledge and ideas to understand the richness of a moment in time.

If you are interested in the Abbotsford project, contact Caroline. We are fundraising this year in the hope of establishing our faculty in 2017 and starting students at Abbotsford in 2018.

Julia Obert: Postcolonial Cities
In May-June of 2015, I spent a month conducting research in Windhoek, Namibia—research that was generously funded by the English department, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the Wyoming Institute for the Humanities. The research was crucial to the development of the second chapter of my second book project, which is tentatively entitled Postcolonial Psychogeographies: Walking the Imperial City. The book examines the built environments of four different postcolonial cities, investigating their histories of building and urban planning under colonial rule and linking those histories to their contemporary shape and scope. It then reads local literature and other historical documents to better understand the lingering impact of colonial building practices on individuals living in postcolonial cities today. I am interested both in the potential difficulties of moving through a city that can never feel comfortably one’s own, given legacies of racial segregation, buildings that disregard indigenous resources, street names that encode histories of oppression, and so on, and in the possible ways in which personal spatial practices—trespassing in forbidden places; diverting spaces from their intended uses—can contest ‘official’ topography. While in Windhoek, I had the opportunity to locate urban planning documents in the National Archives that were produced under both German colonial and South African apartheid-era rule in Namibia, as well as during the post-independence period, and I was also able to visit and photograph a number of important buildings and memorial sites in the city. An article based on my trip to Windhoek—an article that would not have been possible were it not for the gracious research support I received to undertake my fieldwork—is forthcoming in the Spring 2016 issue of the journal Postmodern Culture.

Continued on page 9
English at Home & Abroad, continued from page 6

(thank you, Duncan and Janice!), a vibrant faculty community, and engaged students. Some of these students started out as English majors; some decided over the course of that first year that Engineering (or pre-Med, or Accounting) wasn’t really for them and became English majors. Others stayed engineers and chemists, but were able to continue studying the humanities in upper-level Honors seminars, taught by English faculty, on literature, drama, and film.

I am now serving as the English department’s third Director of the Honors Program, and am delighted to report that the collaboration between English and Honors continues to flourish. This year, Carolyn Anderson, Michael Edson, Paul Bergstraesser, and Cliff Marks have all taught Freshmen Colloquium, and Jason Thompson is teaching a 4000-level class in Digital Surveillance. Here’s to the next 50 years!

English at UW - Casper

Arielle Zibrak, Assistant Professor of English

The heart of the English Program at UWC is a small, dedicated group of students who bring their all to the classroom and beyond. Students at UWC take a range of English classes on the ground, through video conferencing, and online. Many work at the Casper College Writing Center, tutoring Casper College students in writing. They have a diverse range of scholarly interests—from medieval and viking literature to science fiction novels to western history to avant garde theatre. This Fall, students in Professor Arielle Zibrak’s Modern Poetry class planned and executed a poetry festival in partnership with ART321, a community art space housed in a converted warehouse that showcases the works of local artists. Over fifty attendees from the university, the college, and the community gathered to enjoy refreshments, browse art and student research posters, and hear student poetry presentations and recitations. This was just one of many UWC English events that combined student work with community building and arts programming. Each Fall, English majors at UWC also put on an Undergraduate English Conference. Previous themes include “The Theory of Power and the Power of Theory” and “Art & Society.” These conferences give English majors the opportunity to showcase their semester-long research projects and other students and community members a chance to benefit from their learning and expose themselves to new ideas. Some students go on to present their research at undergraduate conferences in Laramie, and some at professional academic conferences across the country.

When they’re not researching or event planning, UWC English students also know how to have a good time! In Spring 2015, faculty and students from UWC and CC English formed the UWC/CC Culture Club—a student group dedicated to providing fun opportunities for gathering together to celebrate the humanities. Events have included themed potluck dinners and film screenings, bonfire poetry readings, word game nights, and community service outings. The Culture Club also benefits from the visiting scholars and artists sponsored by the UW English department and the Outreach School. This year, the first University of Wyoming at Casper Lecture in the Humanities, a new lecture series that will bring distinguished speakers to Casper and Laramie each Fall, was given by Professor James Longenbach—an award-winning poet and critic whose writing has appeared in The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Nation, and Poetry.

The program in English at UW Casper serves as a hub for university involvement in arts and culture across the state and offers the students who study there the only opportunity to pursue a university-level education in the humanities in Central Wyoming.

American Indian Studies at UW

Caskey Russell, Director of American Indian Studies

The American Indian Studies Program (AIST) at the University of Wyoming has been around since 1993. AIST offers major, minor, and graduate minor degrees, and provides support services to American Indian students, and outreach to the larger UW, Laramie, and Wyoming communities. AIST’s broader aims include supporting tribal sovereignty, helping students and the general public to understand the development of modern tribal governments and their functions and significance in contemporary society, and making clear the roles of history, culture, and politics in the development of modern indigenous nations. In May of 2014, Dr. Caskey Russell became the Director of AIST after the retirement of long-time Director Judith Antell. Though it’s a small program, the events, speakers, and symposia that AIST sponsors make the program highly visible on campus, in Wyoming, and across the Rocky Mountain Region. Some AIST accomplishments in past year include: A study abroad in New Zealand course; an American Indian Music Festival; a screening of an American Indian film, Winter In The Blood, including a discussion afterwards with the directors and two main actors; an Honoring of American Indian Graduates Ceremony; the hosting of Colin Samon, Professor of Sociology from the University of Essex, England, to teach two courses last Fall semester; and the hosting of a summer intern from an Australian tribal nation. AIST faculty are active across campus and on the Wind River Reservation and have been working, over the past decade, toward the creation of an American Indian Center building here on UW’s campus.

Continued on page 10
Arielle Zibrak: Politics and Aesthetics in the 19th Century

The period that I work in—the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—is best known as the Progressive Era, a time when social movements like women’s suffrage, the race “question,” and temperance were hotly debated at rallies and social gatherings and in newspapers, magazines, and literature. While literary scholars usually align the popular novels of this period with the causes they championed or deplored, I’m interested in looking at novels (and novelists) that objected to the notion of the political novel altogether. This question is of interest to me not only because it allows us to understand a new story about the role of fiction in this tumultuous time, but also because it raises bigger issues of relevance to us today: What is the point of literature? Why do we study it? What is its role in helping us sort out our most pressing social dilemmas?

This past summer I was able to further my research with visits to archives at Yale University, Harvard University, and Penn State University made possible by grants from The Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research, The University of Wyoming College of Arts and Sciences, and The Helen F. Faust Women Writers award from Penn State. At Harvard and Yale, I examined the personal papers of James Weldon Johnson and Edith Wharton—two writers who are central to my study. Seeing Johnson’s early drafts of works I knew well alongside notes, letters, and journal entries I’d never seen before fleshed out a portrait of a man torn between his work for the NAACP and his belief in creative expression free from allegiances to political affiliations. While his work for the NAACP is well known, this struggle to reconcile two competing ideologies has never before been addressed in the criticism and history of his work and life.

Likewise, little has been written about Edith Wharton’s extensive charitable works in France during WWI. In poring over these documents, records, and photographs, I was able to get a picture of Wharton as a writer deeply invested in causes left out of her work, suggesting that she too saw the divide between social action and fiction as important to maintain. After a month in Boston and New Haven, I travelled to Harrisburg where I benefitted from the Eberly Family Library’s extensive collection of reform ephemera. These rare postcards, advertisements, fliers, and buttons reflect the nuances of “reform” positions that have been so long lost in our vision of collective movements.

This research provided me with great material for upcoming lectures I will present in Boston, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia, and for my forthcoming book on reform and anti-reform literature. It also brought new life to the way I present these texts in the classroom, allowing me to share insights, images, and information with my students.
Wyoming in London
Eric Nye, Faculty member in London, Spring 2016
In a world where we all sometimes feel ourselves to be strangers and pilgrims, a term of study abroad seems indispensable for any college student of literature. My first visit to Cambridge came decades ago in the summer after my freshman year, and I returned for two terms there in the second half of my junior year. It transformed my intellectual life.

When we are removed from the comforts and consolations of the place we consider home, we discover deeper truths about our own identity. It’s especially important for Americans today to understand this, because we are so often misunderstood by the rest of the world. It’s liberating to leave behind the crass connections that circumscribe us in our normal daily life. Like Wordsworth or Joyce we hear the summons of the open road and set out to forge the uncreated conscience of our race, or at least of our poor selves.

There’s nothing like packing a suitcase and going abroad to learn who you truly are. What few books will you select to carry? How simple a wardrobe satisfies you? How many creature comforts can you do without? How will you prepare for the unexpected? You may disappoint yourself, but even so, you’ll realize new possibilities, more complex callings. Time, too, will acquire a new dimension in which these possibilities might unfold, as they said long ago, “time for amendment of life.”

I’ve spent the first part of 2016 living in Cambridge and commuting to London through the magical portal known to Harry Potter fans as King’s Cross station. My students, some from UW, some from other universities, meet me in a classroom at the London University student center where we’re reading Jane Austen, the English Bible (as literature), or British life and culture. I hope for them these months will open new possibilities as they did for me long ago.

DISTANCE MA COHORT
by Victoria Haight

In a perfect world, we would all work full time jobs and still have the time to continue to be learners and have stimulating intellectual conversations about books, language, and teaching—without suffering from extreme mental exhaustion.

Well that perfect world exists, in the form of an outreach Master’s in English. Well, except the exhaustion part— that’s just wishful thinking! The work is hard, demanding, and, yes, exhausting. It is everything a graduate program should be, yet slowed down just enough to be manageable for the average working adult. The distance cohort was everything I wanted in a master’s program. Having a weekly class meeting pushes the rigor beyond a typical “online” degree program, and the real-time video aspect of the class keeps the program flexible for participants from Laramie, Cheyenne, Riverton, Casper, Powell, Rock Springs, and Wheatland. Summer weeks spent together in class in Laramie have bonded our small cohort, and created a truly unique support system. Additionally, the program included familiar and exciting teachers from my undergrad days, who are some of the most dedicated, interesting, and entertaining English professors at the University of Wyoming.

The program has been equal parts intellectually fulfilling and challenging, and because of that, there is no doubt that the moment that the degree is finally in my hand, it will be one of the sweetest accomplishments I’ve ever known.
Faculty & Student Milestones, continued from page 4

2015 Grants
UW Faculty Grant-in-Aid Award: Vanessa Fonseca

College of A&S Basic Research Grants: Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Arielle Zibrak

Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (WIHR) Summer Research Fellowship: Julia Obert

Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (WIHR) Individual Research Award: Arielle Zibrak

2015 Tenure and Promotion
Promotion to Full Professor: Eric Nye

Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor: Andy Fitch and Jason Thompson

Promotion to Senior Lecturer: April Heaney and Meg Van Baalen-Wood

Extended-Term Status and Promotion to Associate Lecturer: Rick Fisher

Retirements: Margaret Garner, Colin Keeney, Bruce Richardson, Christine Stebbins

2016 Departure
Vanessa Fonseca will leave UW English after three productive years to take up an assistant professor in multiethnic literature at Arizona State University, Polytechnic, in the School of Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication. We thank Vanessa for her many important contributions and we wish her well in her flourishing career!

Faculty Books

Caroline McCracken-Flesher, ed., *Mary Paterson or, The Fatal Error* (Glasgow: ASLS, 2015)


Danielle Pafunda, *The Dead Girls Speak in Unison* (Coconut Books, 2014)


Alumni Books

IN MEMORIAM

Mark Booth, by Susan Frye
How sad to hear of the death of dear Mark Booth. Mark was hired as an outside chair when the department was unsure of itself going forward. His was a gentle, considerate, and scholarly voice -- all we had hoped from a man with his considerable administrative experience, his Harvard Ph.D., and his articulate expression of the value of the humanities in general, and of song in particular as simultaneous medium and genre.

As gracious as he was, Mark had a backbone of steel when it came to advocating for the department as our head and later for the College of A&S as an associate dean. He was a man of deeply held ethical principles who acted on them with thoughtful care. As head, he helped English create the idea of the Senior Seminar as the capstone course in the major, and taught the first of many Senior Seminars with the combination of conviction and complexity that characterized the way he thought.

Mark also loved music -- especially song -- and I am grateful for my memories of making song with him, his friends, and his family on many happy occasions, while Mark beamed his lovely smile at all of us at once.

Lewis Dabney, by Duncan Harris
In the summer of 1973, Lewis Dabney arrived in Laramie with his wife Sarah and children Elizabeth and Lewis in tow. They made their way around the south side of our house to the backyard for a bar-b-que. The long drive from the east coast with two small children had not dampened his characteristic ebullience, and anecdotes, both personal and literary, filled the air.

Lewis had completed his Ph.D. at Columbia and taught at Smith, Vassar, and the University of Goteborg in Sweden. His book on William Faulkner’s Native American characters was behind him, and ahead lay his life-long commitment to telling the story of Edmund Wilson, one of the twentieth century’s greatest cultural critics. Lewis wrote about Wilson, edited his works, collected the essays of other Wilson scholars, and published in 2005 the definitive literary biography of Wilson.

Lewis taught as he wrote. His vast knowledge of American, English, and European literature was always on call. The focus, however, was always on the human story and human motive found in a novel or play or poem or diary. He loved the beauty of what he studied with his students, and he strove to bring that beauty into their lives, often reciting extended passages to help convey the passion and intelligence that characterized his favorite authors. Scholars will consult his books for many years to come, and, at least as important, his students will suddenly remember an apposite passage or work discussed in his classes at significant moments in their lives.
ALUMNI WEEKEND
By Peyton Lunzer, MA Student in English

The English MA program hosted a successful Alumni Weekend on March 4-5, welcoming visiting scholars and MA alums Lindsey Grubbs and Heather Ackerman back to campus. Grubbs, who graduated from the Master’s Program in 2013 with a certificate in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, spoke of her current research at the doctoral program in English at Emory University. Through a close reading of Winifred Howells’ “A Wasted Sympathy,” Grubbs discussed the literary and cultural histories of malingering and suspicious illness in 19th century America. Ackerman (2006) presented on her dissertation, submitted to Arizona State University, which tracked the evolution of “accommodation” from a term meaning religious and charitable action to a term approvable for financial gain in an increasingly capitalist economy.

Grubbs and Ackerman’s research presentations were followed by a Q&A with Harry Whitlock (MA’14) and Eric Krszjanek (MA’14). Current MA students attended to glean wisdom and insight into life for an English MA post-graduation. Discussion revolved around PhD programs and tenure-track positions, the wonders of the library and working for Research and Instruction, and how to translate an English degree to another field, be it Marketing or Environment and Natural Resources. The conclusion: the future is bright for UW’s English MA’s. Thanks to Grubbs, Ackerman, and all the MA alums for sharing your experiences and being a source of inspiration.

Support the English Department

Faculty, alums, and those who care about English know that students thrive on opportunity. Students who have never left Wyoming will blossom on the London Semester; students who must hold down jobs will flourish when they can study full time; anxious students will shine when recognized by a merit scholarship. Faculty will open new and greater opportunities for students when they themselves are supported to research and teach at the cutting edge. UW’s English faculty and students are tremendously grateful to our donors for their generosity. It lifts our hearts to know that you value the discipline, our work, and our students’ future.

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