Writing courses are in demand

A growing demand for courses that teach writing has transformed the Department of English in recent years. In addition to preparing first-year students throughout the University to write academic papers, the Department has implemented a range of advanced writing courses to meet the demand for other writing and editing skills. English majors can specialize in professional writing or creative writing, and graduate students can major in technical communication or creative writing. The Department also continues to offer undergraduate majors in literature and teaching, and a graduate major in literature.

Improving writing across the campus

Because expository writing has practical value in the classroom and on the job, Texas State requires students to take two semesters of first-year composition, in which they learn to write clearly and objectively as they explain and defend ideas. Each year, nearly all English faculty teach the course, and class sizes are kept small, averaging approximately 20 students per class. This year, as part of the College of Liberal Arts’ University-wide emphasis on writing, Lower Division Studies Director Sue Beebe sentdeans and chairs a copy of the English Department’s writing handbook along with training, materials, and strategies for incorporating writing in classes and teaching writing effectively.

Our effort to ensure the quality of student writing across the curriculum builds on the strengths of our Department of English, highlighted in this issue of Mosaic. By almost every measure, English is the largest academic department at Texas State, and its active faculty are among the University’s most accomplished. In the Fall and Spring semesters, English faculty teach some 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students in 450 different classes. In the past seven years, English faculty have won 17 major teaching awards and 14 prestigious literary prizes, and published or presented hundreds of scholarly and creative works.

State-of-the-art help with writing

Whether they’re composing an essay, a research paper, or a résumé, students can get help at the Writing Center from counselors who tutor at every stage of the composition process. Tutors, who see some 3,000 students per semester, focus on teaching long-term writing skills. Students can meet with tutors in the Writing Center or online in a “synchronous chat” that Writing Center Director Nancy Wilson says is particularly convenient for students who commute or work odd hours. Called “Bobcat Chat,” the online tutoring service is so successful that Writing Center tutors have made presentations about it at professional conferences.

Creative writing and a crab that attends college

Two years ago, English professor and author Tom Grimes was asked by the state’s College for Texans Campaign to write a book aimed at fourth- and fifth-graders that would persuade them to plan for college. His response was to involve 12 local high school students in writing and illustrating the book because they were
Improving writing across the campus

Because expository writing has practical value in the classroom and on the job, Texas State requires students to take two semesters of first-year composition, in which they learn to write clearly and objectively as well as learn and defend ideas.

Each year, nearly all English faculty teach the course, and class sizes are kept small, averaging approximately 20 students per class. This year, as part of the College of Liberal Arts’ University-wide emphasis on writing, Lower Division Studies Director Sue Beebe sent deans and chairs a copy of the English Department’s writing handbook along with a set of guidelines for strengthening student writing. “The goal is to encourage faculty across campus to make writing an important part of their courses,” Ms. Beebe said.

Testing usability in technical communication

Technical writers often conduct “usability tests” in controlled environments to find out how well a set of instructions or an explanation of a scientific process or a software program is working for the user. If the information or contains errors or if a software program is too difficult for the user, testing is likely to reveal the problem. Beginning in Fall 2005, students in the M.A. program in Technical Communication will be able to conduct usability studies in a state-of-the-art usability lab at Texas State.

"The goal is to encourage faculty across campus to make writing an important part of their courses," Ms. Beebe said.

Faculty honored for teaching, creativity, service

Since 1997, English faculty have won prestigious State and University awards for teaching, scholarly activity, and service. Dr. Paul Cohen (left) and Dr. Mike Hennessy are two of the Department’s four Piper Professors, honored for their teaching excellence by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation. Director Nancy Wilson says is particularly convenient for students who commute or work odd hours. Called “Bobcat Chat,” the online tutoring service is so successful that Writing Center tutors have made presentations about it at professional conferences.

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Two years ago, English professor and author Tom Grimes was asked by the state’s College for Texans Campaign to write a book aimed at fourth- and fifth-graders that would persuade them to plan for college. His response was to involve 12 local high school students in writing and illustrating the book because they were already part of the Young Writers Program at the Katherine Anne Porter House in Kyle.

Grimes directs The KAP Young Writers Program, sponsored by the Burdine Johnson Foundation. In September, the students published their book, called *Wiley’s Way*. Written in both English and Spanish, the book tells the story of a crab that goes to college. Fourth- and fifth-graders who have read the book say it not only encouraged them to go to college but taught them about such things as scholarships and the college application process. The 12 authors also say that working on the book convinced them to attend college. One of the authors, María Mendoza of Kyle, enrolled at Texas State this Fall and hopes to become a doctor. The authors attended book signings at all Austin Barnes and Noble stores, and theirs was the first book authored by children to be featured at the Texas Book Festival this Fall. More information about Wiley’s Way is available at www.wileyway.net, where you can see video and hear music written to accompany the book. A children’s play and puppets are also in the works. *Wiley*’s Way is available from *The University of Texas Press*, www.utexas.edu/utpress/, and Barnes and Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com.

Proposal for M.A. in Composition Studies

The English Department has gained an outstanding reputation for its English Studies program, which includes first-year composition, creative writing, and technical and professional writing. To complete its offerings in English Studies, the Department is developing a proposal for an exciting new Master of Arts degree program in Composition Studies, a field concerned broadly with the study and teaching of writing.

Courses can range, for example, from the study of minority rhetorics to current composition theories and practices, said Dr. Rebecca Jackson, MA/CS proposal coordinator. Graduates of rhetoric and composition will be qualified to teach writing at the college level and to enter Ph.D. programs in rhetoric and composition.

Faculty win prizes for publications

Since 2000, the prolific English faculty have published 34 books and 270 book...
Among other recent accomplishments, the Department has developed a substantial endowment supporting scholarships, fellowships, and distinguished lecture series. It has established the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, now designated as a National Historic Landmark. The Department became the home of the prestigious Mitte Chair in Creative Writing, enabling us to hire some of the nation’s best authors as teachers. Author Barry Hannah, winner of the PEN/Malamud Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Short Story, is the 2004-2005 Mitte Chair. In addition, the MFA Program in Creative Writing has been featured in national publications such as The New York Times.

All of these accomplishments have been made under the leadership of Dr. Blanchard who, after 12 years as Department chair, has requested to return to the faculty. Under her leadership, the Department of English has achieved stellar accomplishments in the last decade, and it is poised for more success. I hope you will enjoy reading about the Department and its programs in this issue of Mosaic. You can always learn more about the Department by visiting their web site, www.english.txstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Ann Marie Ellis, Ph.D.
Dean

Faculty honored for teaching, creativity, service

Since 1997, English faculty have won prestigious State and University awards for teaching, scholarly activity, and service. Dr. Paul Cohen (left) and Dr. Mike Hennessy are two of the Department’s four Piper Professors, honored for teaching excellence by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation (Piper Professors Dr. Thomas L. Brashear and Dr. Robert W. Waltz are deceased). Faculty winning University-level awards for excellence include (clockwise from top left) Dr. June Hankins (mentoring); Ms. Nancy Wilson (teaching); Dr. Jaime Mejia (service); Ms. Patty Pohl (service); Dr. Rebecca Bell-Meteraru (teaching); and Ms. Sue Beebe (service). Faculty have also won lectureships, fellowships, and teaching honors from the Fulbright Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and four have given Presidential Seminars. Poets Cyrus Cassells and Kathleen Peirce, both members of the Creative Writing faculty, recently won poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts to support their writing.

Faculty win prizes for publications

Since 2000, the prolific English faculty have published 34 books and 270 book chapters, refereed articles, poems, and short stories, and they’ve presented 200 scholarly papers, presentations and readings at national and regional conferences. Faculty books have also won numerous national awards and recognitions, including The Drue Heinz Literature Prize, The John Simmons Short Fiction Award, The William Carlos Williams Prize, The Iowa Poetry Prize, The Flannery O’Connor Prize, The PEN/Hemingway Award, and the National Book Award. Faculty books have been recognized as Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, The New York Times Notable Book of the Year, New and Noteworthy Paperback, Barnes and Noble Discover Series, and Choice Book of the Year.
English students study in Germany, Ireland, and England

English students can take courses in writing and literature and explore famous landmarks in three study-abroad programs.

In Hannover, Germany, students see how historic and literary developments on the European continent have affected English literature, and they get to know German students of English and American literature. In Cork, Ireland, students study authors like Yeats and Joyce, who come alive when the students meet the people, the landscape, and the musicality of the language that fueled their work.

English students can also study literature and writing in England through the Texas State in Canterbury program, which offers courses in Shakespeare, Renaissance literature, and British literature before 1785, as well as world history, English history, anthropology, psychology, government, and philosophy.

More information on these study abroad programs is available on the following web sites: www.english.txstate.edu:16080/hannover/; www.english.txstate.edu/ireland/index.html; and www.ideal.txstate.edu/extension/study_abroad/sites/england.html.

Alumnus gains international post

Chris Blanton, a 2001 graduate of the Department of English, will help to prosecute former Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic in 2005. Mr. Blanton, now a law student at The University of Texas-Austin, will serve as a law clerk in the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as it tries Milosevic for genocide. Mr. Blanton was the College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Undergraduate Student at Texas State in 2000-2001 and held the Robert D. Walts Scholarship in English.

M.A. in Literature draws international attention

The Master of Arts in Literature program is thriving. More than 40 new students enter the program each year, and the average student’s GPA has climbed to 3.6. Students come from all over the world to study in the program. Rachna Tyagi of India graduated in May 2004, along with Tiwi Retnamingdyah of Indonesia, the program’s first student to be named a Fulbright Scholar. Tina Zigon of Slovenia, a teaching assistant in first-year English, will graduate in 2005. Ms. Zigon entered the program after meeting Texas State English Professor Steve Wilson during his recent Fulbright Lectureship in Slovenia at the University of Maribor.

Graduate literature majors also present research papers at prestigious regional and national academic conferences. Topics have ranged from Spenser’s Faerie Queene and Boswell’s London Journal to the Beat Generation and writing pedagogy. Dr. Susan Morrison, who teaches courses on Anglo Saxon and Middle English literature, regularly organizes student panels at the annual meetings of the Texas Medieval Association, where her students have presented papers on topics such as medieval pilgrimage, gender in Anglo-Saxon texts, Beowulf, and Dante’s Divine Comedy.

Graduates in literature have gone on to many of the nation’s finest doctoral programs. Misty Schieberle (BA 1999 and MA 2001 English) obtained the highest fellowship in the University of Notre Dame’s Medieval Studies program and serves as managing editor of the respected journal Religion and Literature. Bill Salmon (BA Anthropology 1996; MA English 1998) is at Yale University on a University Fellowship. Increasing numbers of graduates have completed Ph.D. programs and taken faculty positions at schools including Ohio State, the University of Nebraska, and The University of Texas-Austin.
Scholarship honors student’s memory

Chuck and Nancy McKeen of Liberty, Kansas, have established a scholarship in memory of their son William F. McKeen III, one of the first students to enter Texas State’s master’s degree program in technical communication. The scholarship is awarded in alternating years to graduate students in technical communication, in literature, and in creative writing. William, who died in a hiking accident two months before his graduation in 2000, was awarded a degree posthumously. He was a member of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and wrote poetry, a volume of which will be published by Texas State’s Center for the Study of the Southwest.

Rewarding an outstanding scholar

The need for scholarships is growing

Alumni and friends of the Department of English have established endowments totaling $3 million that have enabled the Department to offer nationally recognized programs, to endow faculty chairs, and to offer competitive scholarships and fellowships. But the number of scholarships hasn’t kept pace with the number of outstanding English majors who need them. So, the Department is working to increase its endowment to $5 million by 2009, by increasing the number of scholarships it offers and the amount of each.

Patsy Pohl, a Texas State alumna (BA English 1964, MA English 1967) and a lecturer in English, is visiting alumni throughout Texas to tell them about the Department’s outstanding students and programs and its need for scholarships. Ms. Pohl describes English majors’ excellent writing ability, evident from the numbers of scholarly papers they present and the poems and books they publish. She explains that English majors are being accepted into the nation’s top graduate schools and are finding well-paying jobs in a wide range of fields. And she describes programs that have brought national attention to the Department of English—including the Roy F. and Joann Cole Mitre Chair in Creative Writing, the Therese Kayser Lindsey Chair in Literature, the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, and the W. Morgan and Lou Claire Rose Fellowships and Scholarships—made possible by gifts from alumni and friends.

The Department offers 16 scholarships altogether, but these aren’t enough to meet the financial need of a rapidly growing number of outstanding students. This Fall, 698 undergraduate and graduate students are majoring in English, an

GIVING

Wiley’s Way, the story of a spunky crab who overcomes obstacles and goes to college, was the project of the Creative Writing Program and was featured at the 2004 Texas Book Festival. Read more about the book on page 1.
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Among the Department’s outstanding scholarship recipients is Moira Muldoon, who received the Ralph and Francys Houston Scholarship for 2004-2005. The scholarship is named after two former professors and honors outstanding students in the College of Liberal Arts. The scholarship is awarded to an outstanding undergraduate or graduate student in the Department of English. Moira Muldoon is a senior majoring in English and is currently working towards a master’s degree in creative writing. She has published poetry in several journals, including *Elixir* and *Gargoyle*, and is currently working on a novel. Muldoon is also a regular contributor to *The Austin American-Statesman*.

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The Department offers 16 scholarships altogether, but these aren’t enough to meet the financial need of a rapidly growing number of outstanding students. This Fall, 698 undergraduate and graduate students are majoring in English, an increase of 36 percent since 1999. "A scholarship that provides $500 per year used to go much farther than it does now," Ms. Pohl said. "We need to increase the dollar amounts of our existing scholarships, in addition to their number, because the costs of attending a university have grown."

Ms. Pohl welcomes calls from alumni and friends who would like more information about establishing a scholarship in English. Ms. Pohl also has information on establishing charitable annuities—gifts made now that earn the donor a reliable income return as high as 8 percent for life. Ms. Pohl can be reached by phone, (512) 245-7698, or by e-mail, ppl6@txstate.edu, or by writing Ms. Patsy Pohl, Department of English, Texas State University-San Marcos, 601 University Dr., San Marcos, TX 78666.