Arts & Letters, The Magazine of Potter College at Western Kentucky University

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A bit to my surprise, I realized this spring that I’m completing 20 years as the Dean of Potter College. Somewhat like Rip Van Winkle—who had the good fortune to take a 20 year nap before waking up to a very different world—I’ve found myself thinking more and more about how my job in 2012 compares with the job I accepted in 1992. Some of those changes are very apparent indeed! Most obvious is the tremendous change in information technology. As a new dean in 1992, I was delighted to find that I had access to an electric typewriter, and I communicated mostly through memos and telephone calls. To the extent that I had a communication strategy, it centered on typing and talking. I had been a dean for almost two years before the future arrived in the form of my first desktop computer, a rather clunky contraption that stored information on something called a floppy disk that was 5.25 inches across.

But two decades of change are pretty apparent in lots of other places around Potter College as well. Our facilities are much better than they were in 1992. Journalism & Broadcasting programs moved into Mass Media & Technology Hall, and Music expanded into the just completed Music Rehearsal Hall. Our students’ performing arts programs are thrilling audiences in Van Meter Hall, the University’s oldest building, now made state-of-the-art. And venerable Cherry Hall came back strong after a devastating fire a few years ago.

Our curriculum also looks much different than it did 20 years ago. The College has moved aggressively to meet the educational challenges posed by life in a global society. As Asia rises in influence on the world stage, we’ve recruited more faculty members with expertise in Asian topics. We’re adding new majors in Arabic and Chinese, unthinkable initiatives 20 years ago, and starting majors in Asian Religions and Culture and International Affairs as well as Popular Culture, Dance, and Film. We have new MA programs in Criminology and Religion, and two of our MA programs—Criminology and History—are fully available online. Several of these programs are available nowhere else in Kentucky, and the two online MA programs are available to students anywhere in the world.

I’m very proud of the success the College has enjoyed in accreditation over the last 20 years. We’ve added accreditation in three new areas—Dance, Theatre, and Public Administration—and all of our programs that can be accredited are accredited. Perhaps most strikingly, we are one of only thirty universities nation-wide to be accredited in Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre, a remarkable testimony to our commitment to the arts.

The funding mechanism for public universities has changed dramatically during the last 20 years, and those changes too are apparent in Potter College as the College has built support from private sources. Most notably, thanks to the generosity of Jerry Baker, Richard Frockt, and Margaret and Cal Turner, the College has endowed professorships in Music, History, and Journalism. During the current year, earnings from our endowed gifts added about a quarter-million dollars to Potter College programs, valuable income at a time of limited state support. The creation of the University’s Division of Extended Learning and Outreach has given us other opportunities to generate revenue, and our work with DELO currently brings nearly $200,000 a year for the College.

Change is pretty apparent around Potter College these days, but I’m probably more impressed by the things that haven’t changed over the last 20 years. The faculty and staff of Potter College are as committed as ever to making our programs an avenue of opportunity for students, and we have more ways than ever to make that happen. Focusing on academic excellence, we are finding new ways to challenge students and to support them as they work toward their degree. Increasing numbers of students are joining us in research and in creative projects, and more of them are studying abroad. Beyond the classrooms and studios here on the Hill, we are daily making a difference in the lives of Kentuckians through our work in the schools, our cultural programming, our commitment to economic development, and our efforts to preserve the heritage of the Commonwealth.

As it has been since Potter College was established nearly 50 years ago, we remain a college committed to preserving the past, shaping the present, and building the future.

DAVID D. LEE, Dean
Potter College of Arts & Letters
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Made to Last
Mike Nichols’ Fresco for Van Meter Hall

BY GUY JORDAN
What do Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel, Raphael’s School of Athens, and Giotto’s Lamentation all have in common? They are all undoubtedly among the most famous and revered masterpieces of Renaissance art. But they are also examples of an ancient and largely forgotten painting technique called fresco. In 2007, armed with a Potter College of Arts & Letters New Faculty Grant, Mike Nichols—now an Associate Professor of Painting—set out on a journey to learn the secrets of this lost art. Although he didn’t know it at the time, what Nichols learned during his trip to California and New Mexico would lead him to create an extraordinary work of art that will impress and inspire the WKU community for generations to come: a monumental fresco in the atrium of the newly-renovated Van Meter Hall.

A true fresco consists of water-based pigment applied directly on wet plaster that has been affixed to a wall. As the plaster dries, a chemical reaction takes place that fuses the pigments into a crystalline matrix on the surface of the work. A fresco is no ordinary painting—it is made to last a very, very long time. A true fresco consists of water-based pigment applied directly on wet plaster that has been affixed to a wall. As the plaster dries, a chemical reaction takes place that fuses the pigments into a crystalline matrix on the surface of the work. In a manner of speaking, an artist that works in this medium doesn’t paint onto a wall, but into it. Because of its permanence, fresco is a notoriously unforgiving technique. Mistakes cannot simply be wiped away and repainted. Once dry, corrections require more drastic measures: a hammer and a chisel.
The unwanted section must be removed from the wall, and a fresh coat of plaster must be applied and repainted before it dries. Fresco is—to put it mildly—a slow and laborious process. It requires discipline, patience, and a remarkable degree of technical skill. Needless to say, it also requires specialized training.

Impressed by a visit to Diego Rivera’s *Detroit Industry* fresco at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Nichols set out to read all he could about the technique; but it wasn’t until his trip to The Fresco School in Los Angeles, California in 2007 to study with the renowned fresco artist iLia Anossov that he was able to understand the intricacies of the medium. “I constantly read about formulas for plaster that involved lime,” Nichols recalls, “but it wasn’t until I studied with iLia that I learned that there are many types of lime, and that one type of lime versus another type of lime makes a huge difference when preparing a fresco.” The method of mixing the ingredients for fresco is time-consuming and labor intensive. Bags of materials weigh up to one-hundred pounds and are mixed in large twenty-gallon containers. “The first fresco course I taught after returning from The Fresco School took place when the elevator in the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center was being renovated. My students and I got quite a workout hauling twenty one-hundred pound bags of sand and lime putty up the stairs. At first, we tried mixing everything by hand, but our arms nearly fell off, so we used an industrial-strength drill instead.”

Fortuitously, the conditions of Nichols’ New Faculty Grant also required him to exhibit his work. When WKU President Gary Ransdell saw some small-scale frescos by Nichols on exhibit at the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center Gallery, he was impressed enough to offer him a commission for Van Meter Hall. “The President was really generous. He allowed me to choose any wall I liked, so I chose the wall in the center of the atrium on the second floor so that visitors will get a glimpse of the work as they walk in the front entryway. My hope is that this glimpse will draw them up the stairs to have a closer look.” Before he commenced work, Nichols was able to study first-hand many important examples of fresco in the United States and in Europe. After his studies at The Fresco School in Los Angeles were complete, Nichols drove north and visited San Francisco where he saw another important work by Diego Rivera called *Making a Fresco*. This fresco shows the famed Mexican artist and his assistants doing exactly what the title suggests, and provided an appropriate preview of what Nichols himself would be doing with much of his time in the years to come. Later, in 2009, after a semester of teaching at Harlaxton College in England, Nichols extended his stay in Europe and traveled to Italy to see some of the best examples of fresco from the Italian Renaissance.

Interestingly, while there, it wasn’t a fresco that made the biggest impression on Nichols. “While in Florence, I made an obligatory trip to see Michelangelo’s *David* and the scale of the statue blew me away. It was made to be installed high up in a niche on Florence Cathedral, but when you see it at the museum, it is right there looming over you. Its scale is overwhelming.” The
sensation of standing face to face with something large and impressive is something that Nichols sought to bring out in his fresco for Van Meter Hall. The subject consists of four gigantic heads, each modeled by a WKU student. They all glance off in a similar direction, their thoughts aroused by a common thought or an unseen event. Each member of the ensemble—in his or her own way—looks to the future. In places, faces blur into ghostly after-images that suggest the flow and flux of time. By choosing the central wall in front of the second floor railing, Nichols doesn’t allow his viewers to back away from the surface far enough to take it all in at once. Instead, the work requires visitors to walk back and forth to size up the fresco while they themselves are in motion through time and space. Remarkably, Nichols’ fresco manages to intertwine opposing notions of monumentality and transience, and the effect—one that imparts the awesome size of the figures with a delicate and vulnerable

Each member of the ensemble—in his or her own way—looks to the future. In places, faces blur into ghostly after-images that suggest the flow and flux of time.

poignancy—is striking. During one of many late nights working at Van Meter, the artist noticed something else that may inadvertently add to the intensity of the fresco’s imagery. “When I measured the head of the second figure from the left, I realized that if the rest of her body were depicted on the same scale on a surface extending down through the floor, her feet would almost exactly touch the ground.”

After nine months and over a thousand hours of work (including more than a few twenty-hour work sessions), Mike Nichols’ fresco is complete. Although the finished painting is a remarkable achievement, Nichols’ real enjoyment lies in teaching fresco to the next generation of artists. He speaks glowingly of his student assistants, who worked with him throughout the project: Teresa Christmas, DePaul Dowell, Nick Jones, Julie Schuck, Pamela Tingle and Nathan Underwood. WKU is now fortunate to be one of only a handful of places in the United States where students can learn the art of fresco. So, the next time you visit Van Meter Hall to attend a musical, a concert, or a dance recital, arrive early and climb the stairs to the second floor of the atrium to experience a rare treat—a true fresco executed in the same technique used by the master painters of the Italian Renaissance.

Guy Jordan is an Assistant Professor of Art History in the Art Department at WKU. In the fall of 2010, he taught a seminar on the history of fresco. He is currently working to secure funding for a planned documentary film about Nichols’ work and how it relates to this bigger story.
When University of Kentucky officials wanted a signature art installation for the upper lobby of their new $532 million hospital addition, they went looking for a professor in Western Kentucky University’s Potter College of Arts & Letters. But not an art professor. They wanted Tim Broekema, associate professor of photojournalism and new media in the School of Journalism and Broadcasting.

The Chandler Medical Center’s extensive Arts in Health Care project includes more than 300 original works of art displayed throughout the 1.2 million-square-foot hospital addition. The project is based on research showing that exposure to art helps patients feel better, get well quicker — and reduce health-care costs. Dozens of artists from throughout Kentucky and around the world are represented with paintings and sculptures.

But for the second floor of the main lobby, officials wanted something different — and uniquely Kentucky.

Jacqueline Hamilton, who directs UK’s Arts in Health Care project, said that a staff member from Danville remembered when WKU’s...
Mountain Workshops came to her town in 2007. The 36-year-old documentary photojournalism workshop visits a different small town in Kentucky or Tennessee for a week each fall, and students capture life there in photographs, written stories and, in recent years, video and sound.

Hamilton said she went to the workshops’ website, www.mountainworkshops.org, and was impressed. So, in May 2008, she contacted Broekema, a 26-year workshop veteran who over the past decade has led its evolution into multimedia storytelling. “We needed someone with those kinds of skills and vision,” Hamilton said.

Their discussions inspired Broekema, 45, and a team of collaborators to create Celebrate Kentucky, a 90-foot by 10-foot wall of constantly changing images and videos showing everyday life across Kentucky. On pillars framing the three walls of images are excerpts from Jesse Stuart’s evocative poem, Kentucky is My Land.
The $1 million installation is the hospital’s largest artwork — and its most popular, said Dr. Michael Karpf, UK’s executive vice president for health affairs. Patients, families and staff who walk by often stop and stare, attracted by the images, motion and light. Benches have been added by popular demand. “People absolutely love it,” Karpf said.

Broekema’s vision for Celebrate Kentucky evolved as he added collaborators and reflected on what hospital officials were trying to achieve. They wanted something that would reflect Kentucky life and emphasize health, family and community. About 40 percent of the hospital’s patients come from small towns and rural areas more than 50 miles from Lexington. So Karpf wanted this installation to make them and their families during a time of stress to feel comfortable — and at home.

“They wanted me to shoot for the skies,” said Broekema, who created the wall with help from a team of more than 100 photographers, videographers, fabricators and technical experts. “Without all of these players, this project wouldn’t have happened.”

Key collaborators included Cynthia Torp, Jonathan Noffke and Ben Jett of Solid Light Inc., a museum and exhibit design firm; Al Kirby of PSG Systems Inc., which oversaw audio-visual hardware integration, engineering and installation; David Crites of Glyph Corp., who edited video; and Mike McCarthy of fabricator Trinity Designs.

The wall’s three panels include 425 photographs and cuts of video that change with the seasons. Most video shows soothing panoramas of Kentucky’s scenic beauty. The still photographs are candid shots of real Kentuckians at work and play.

Broekema collected the images by putting out a call for submissions on Facebook and the project’s website, www.celebratekentucky.com. He made pitches at the Kentucky News Photographers Association and at the Mountain Workshops in 2009 and 2010. “I knew Kentucky’s photographers would step up,” he said. “And, boy, did they ever.”
In addition to the Celebrate Kentucky wall, Broekema worked with photographers and hospital officials to select scenic images for use as murals in the hospital’s intensive care and acute care rooms. “They wanted the place to feel like you’re in Kentucky when you’re there,” he said. “You’re not just in some room anywhere.”

Broekema worked closely with Karpf, Hamilton and members of UK’s Arts in Health Care committee during the picture-editing process. “We were all speaking the same language on this project, which made it a joy to do,” he said. “Each suggestion made it a little better.”

Potter College Dean David Lee also was an important player. He allowed Broekema to use his faculty computer and software for the project and gave him four days a month to work on it.

“Broekema said he found business aspects, which included managing a $1 million budget, to be the most difficult part of the project. The most rewarding part has been the reactions of viewers since the hospital addition opened last May.

“Every time I’m there, I watch people spend a lot of time looking at it,” he said. “They point, they laugh, they wipe away tears. I never expected that. But it’s the definition of what arts and health is. It’s the definition of what photojournalism is.”

Tom Eblen, a 1980 WKU alumnus, is a columnist for The Lexington Herald-Leader.
The ten-year dream has become a reality. The new Music Rehearsal Hall (MRH), started in July 2010, was completed in January 2012, and has been erected behind the existing Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center, within yards of the site of the original 1937 Music Hall. The old Music Hall was a three-story building, approximately 81' x 120’, with auditoriums on both the first and second floors. The first floor was used for band and orchestra, the second floor for choral activities and the third floor for classes. After an initial cost of $50,000 and another $30,000 for renovations twenty years later, in 1975 the old Music Hall was declared economically unsustainable and so was finally razed.

The new MRH is a three-story building, with the second floor mezzanine housing mechanical equipment. Ross Tarrant Architects, Inc., of Lexington, KY, were the designers for this 26,000 sq. ft., $9 million building project that includes two multi-story rehearsal spaces, 5 faculty offices, 3 graduate assistant offices, 3 performance music libraries (orchestra, band, choir), a conference suite and supporting storage facilities for instruments and uniforms. There is an entry into the top floor of the new Music Hall from the back of the Fine Arts Center, and a front door entry into the bottom floor facing Normal Street and the side of Grise Hall. The three-story rehearsal halls were constructed to have exquisite acoustics that are unique to either choral or instrumental needs. Both areas have curtains that can be used for tuning the spaces for optimum sound for each group, and state-of-the-art audio/visual systems. The welcoming Commons Area between the two rehearsal halls has already become a familiar space for music majors and community members alike, to be used between classes and during recital and rehearsal breaks.

A great deal of planning and design occurred over the past three years, in hopes of achieving the platinum level of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, including these sustainable highlights: a 40,000 gallon aquifer (cistern) beneath the building’s front driveway that will collect and treat the storm water, resulting in water-efficient landscape; low-flow plumbing fixtures; no ozone-depleting materials in construction components; between 50-75% of construction debris diverted to landfills or recycled;
a shower to encourage bicycle transportation by faculty/staff; windows in all occupied areas; low odor/low volatile organic compounds used on interior finishes; site development that restored original habitat; and a white roof to reflect urban heat.

The old rehearsal hall in the Fine Arts Center is being repurposed during Spring 2012 into a percussion suite, including one faculty office, 5 percussion practice rooms and a percussion ensemble rehearsal space. Included in this FAC renovation is a new set of doors that will provide a sound lock entry into the Recital Hall on the Amphitheatre side, as well as a new sound abatement wall between the percussion suite and the Recital Hall.

The MRH building dedication is scheduled for May 4, 2012, at 2:00 p.m., and will feature several large faculty-conducted ensembles and student-managed chamber ensembles from the Department of Music. The MRH is developing a spirit of its own, one that is inspiring to the musicians, “in tune” to the faculty who teach in the new space, and acoustically compelling to the community folks who come to hear the product of its practice. As promised by the architects, the new Music Rehearsal Hall has become the “jewel in the hillside.”

**Dr. Mitzi Groom is Head of the Department of Music.**

A new Steinway 7-foot grand piano will soon take up residence in the Fine Arts Center Recital Hall. As a result of the latest new rehearsal hall construction and the pending FAC renovation, the recital hall stage is empty for now. The move to the new rehearsal hall involved taking the two 7-foot Steinway grand pianos from the Bandroom and the Recital Hall to the new space, emptying the Recital Hall of its professional caliber instrument. Three music faculty members and a freshman music major traveled to the New York City suburb of Queens, NY, to visit the rambling 90-building Steinway Factory to select the new piano. The factory was moved to this location in the latter half of the 19th century, even establishing a community for its workers, called Steinway Village, and Steinway Avenue remains the main thoroughfare in this part of the city.

The selection committee members were Dr. Mitzi Groom, Department Head, Dr. Donald Speer, Professor of Piano, Ms. Alesia Speer, adjunct instructor of piano, and student Lindsey Byrd. Byrd, a freshman piano major from Princeton, KY, and a Governor’s School for the Arts alum, was selected to make this trip literally by having her name pulled out of a hat. This was her first time in New York City, and it was the first time for all members of the selection committee to visit the Steinway Factory. Prior to the two-hour selection process, the committee toured the factory, visiting all areas of the craft, seeing the entire process of creating a piano, from the raw wood, to the veneer, to the rim-bending process, the piano action, string dampers, sound board and pedal lyre installation, to the finishing room final tuning. It was a surprise to see mostly women piecing together the piano action, which involves manipulating small, intricate components.

Pianos are placed throughout the world and are maintained to concert standards by an exclusive network of Steinway dealers. The piano was purchased through the Kentucky Steinway dealer, Gist Music, of Louisville, and is being housed there until the renovations in FAC are completed. Until that time, the new Choral Rehearsal Hall is being used as a recital hall for the current semester. When recitals begin again in August 2012, the audience will be treated not only to new sound lock entry doors in the FAC Recital Hall, but also to a fabulous, hand-picked Steinway in residence.
Deborah Anna Logan
PCAL Award for Excellence in Research/Creativity

In her letter nominating Dr. Deborah Logan for the Potter College 2011 Award for Excellence in Research/Creativity, Dr. Karen Schneider, Head of the English Department, half apologizes for supporting recognition for a faculty member who has already won the Award two times. But facts must be faced. Since her earlier research awards in 2001 and 2006, Dr. Logan continues to produce exceptional quantities of scholarship conducted at world-class levels of expertise. Her “productivity,” as we like to say of researchers, is astounding in its breadth and depth, and the recognition she brings to PCAL and WKU from the community of Victorian scholars around the world is extraordinary.

Dr. Logan, a Professor of English who came to WKU in 1997, traces her interest in Victorian women writers to her numerous re-readings in her childhood of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, a book that had “an enormous impact on my thinking.” It is not difficult to see how she was influenced by the character Jo in that novel, the sister with “literary ambitions” who emerged from her garret, “ink-stained, with bulky manuscripts tied up in string.”

Much of Dr. Logan’s research has concerned the Victorian writer and reformer, Harriet Martineau. In fact, it is largely through the prodigious scholarly efforts of Dr. Logan that this neglected female intellectual and social activist has been rediscovered for the impactful figure she was not only in her native England but in America, Ireland and other locations across the globe.

Since her 2006 PCAL Research/Creativity Award, Dr. Logan has published the *Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau* (five volumes appearing thus far, with another two on the way). The *Letters* were nominated for the Modern Language Association Best Letters Edition in 2010, a prestigious recognition in the field, and they were identified by the editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “a significant contribution to literary history from which generations of scholars will benefit.” In addition, she has written *Harriet Martineau, Victorian Imperialism, and the Civilizing Mission* (2010) and edited a collection of essays on Florence Nightingale. She has also published five book chapters and has presented her research at numerous professional conferences, nine of them international. On at least four occasions, she served as invited keynote speaker at the conference, including a major one at the University of London. She has also recently revamped the former *Victorian Newsletter*, which she has edited since 2007, into a full-fledged academic journal, now titled *Victorians: a Journal of Culture and Literature*.

Dr. Logan is committed to her scholarly work, but is careful to place that work within the larger contexts of WKU’s teaching mission and global aspirations. As she writes, “I reject the idea that research is separate from and unrelated to teaching; on the contrary, one informs the other intimately….” In fact, she comments that she herself constantly learns from her students and her own assignments. Furthermore, her research and its public recognition on several different continents help to expand WKU’s global reach and reputation for scholarly excellence.
Fabíán Álvarez
PCAL Award for Excellence in Teaching
College and University Award Winner

Fabíán Álvarez’s selection as the PCAL award winner for Excellence in Teaching reflects the range and distribution of faculty excellence throughout the ranks of Potter College. As the first Instructor to win the Excellence in Teaching Award in the College, Álvarez offers testimony to the PCAL’s commitment to high-quality teaching from general education to graduate classes. More, that Álvarez went on to win the University Teaching Award speaks highly of the caliber of teaching throughout the college.

Since arriving as an Instructor of English at WKU in January 2007, Álvarez has carried heavy teaching loads in composition courses, especially English 100 and English 300, but has managed to do so with flair, seemingly boundless energy, and success. Dr. Karen Schneider, Head of the English Department, calls him “hands down the most effective composition teacher I have ever seen (and I’ve seen many).” Composition, particularly general education composition, is notoriously difficult to teach—in part because the grading load is back-breaking and in part because many students, particularly those who have struggled with English in the past, can be “reluctant learners.” Álvarez’s commitment to his subject and to his students has enabled him to overcome these barriers to a remarkable degree.

Former students and colleagues alike pinpoint Álvarez’s tireless efforts to engage his students, to make them, as he puts it, “self-sufficient learners who think critically so that they can become their own teachers.” In this way, he says, “I try to instill in my students the notion that they should become good, informed citizens during their time at WKU and beyond.” A recent WKU graduate, Emina Herovic, who took one of Álvarez’s English 300 classes, explains that he “has a way of captivating his students and engaging them in the learning process by incorporating stories, music, memorable analogies, and even YouTube videos in his teaching.”

Connecting the students’ experiences and concerns with the content of the course is central to Álvarez’s method of student engagement. To drive that point home, Álvarez’s commitment to helping raise funds for cancer research, prompted in part by the death of one his brothers from the disease, led him to form a Relay for Life team. He told his students about his community engagement as a way to challenge them to become involved in a community service they cared about. As an additional challenge, he promised his students that they could shave his head if his team hit its fund-raising target. It did, and Álvarez received the promised buzz-cut, a lesson in social commitment his students will never forget.

Opening student access to the range of learning opportunities is central to Álvarez’s approach to teaching. For example, he has particularly invested in the use of technology in various forms in his classes as one way to multiply students’ access to the content and processes of his classes. The result is a rich interplay of communication and ideas flowing throughout the entire learning context of the courses, connecting students, the teacher, and many other resources as well, all making for students who are better writers, thinkers, and disciplined individuals prepared to succeed in college and beyond.
For Dr. Holli Drummond, Associate Professor in the Sociology Department, the link between her academic study of sociology, in particular various aspects of the criminal justice system, and her involvement in the surrounding community is direct and intimate. She explains that “as an observer and participant in my community, I believe my academic work both informs and is informed by my activities in the community. In other words, when I ‘practice’ my discipline I discover new applications and illustrations to theoretical constructs and explanations learned in the ‘academic tower’.”

Calling herself a practitioner of “liberation sociology,” Dr. Drummond is committed to engaging actively in strengthening community programs in order to help the disadvantaged and those caught up in the justice system to improve their lives and thus society as a whole. Her career since coming to WKU in 2004 is a testimony to her dedication to these high professional and civic ideals.

The most remarkable program Dr. Drummond has taken the lead in locally is the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program based at Temple University, which she began to establish in 2006. Inside Out’s core mission is to establish a college course within a jail or prison, with the course’s population to include both college students (outside) and those incarcerated (inside). She taught the first courses in this program in 2007 and 2008 at the Barren County Jail in Glasgow.

Developing courses to be taught in a jail, with college students enrolled alongside inmates, poses considerable logistical planning, or as Dr. Drummond puts it, “much preparation, thoughtful implementation, and consistent management.”

Dr. Drummond’s commitment to breaking down the barriers between the “academic tower” and the real world of the criminal justice system was an eye-opening experience to both sets of students. As one “outside” Criminology student put it, “The Women and Crime course has been an opportunity to take what I have studied about for 3 ½ years into the environment and with the individuals I have been studying. It has been an invaluable experience.” An “inside” student commented that “This class has really made me think and feel better and know that I can change my life when I am out. How not to re-offend—how to live right. Also how the criminal mind thinks, and this class has made me think not like a criminal.”

Dr. Drummond has also shared her expertise with other appropriate community groups, organizing with the Better Business Bureau and the Warren County Attorney’s Stop-Shoplifting Intervention in 2005. Linda Chambers, Manager of the BBB Bowling Green branch, praises Dr. Drummond’s expertise and professionalism in this program, and points out that she both assists and participates fully in its work. Dr. Drummond also serves on several area Citizens Advisory councils for juvenile correctional institutions. Eric Sexton, of Metcalfe County School Support Services, underscores Dr. Drummond’s many contributions to the Warren County Citizen Foster Care Review Board, and comments on her “genuine desire to advocate for children and families across the Commonwealth.”

More recently, Dr. Drummond is involved in Reentry Councils, groups whose main goal is to help former prisoners reintegrate into society and thus to cut the rates of recidivism. In all of her service work, Dr. Drummond amply displays what Dr. Douglas Clayton Smith, Head of Sociology, identifies as her dedication to “improving the lives of the Commonwealth’s citizens by providing exemplary service both in and outside the university.” In her relatively short career at WKU, Dr. Drummond has touched many individuals and made Kentucky a better place to live and succeed.
Timothy David Straubel
PCAL Award for Excellence in Student Advising

Advising awards at WKU often go to faculty members who have regular assignments for carrying out departmental advising in the traditional sense, but Timothy David Straubel’s PCAL Award for Advising Excellence has resulted almost entirely from his tireless and successful efforts to work with student groups beyond the normal academic setting.

Straubel, an Instructor in the German program within PCAL’s Department of Modern Languages since 2002, explains that his extracurricular work in advising and mentoring students is an unanticipated reward of teaching at WKU. His generous involvement with students and student organizations beyond the classroom began in 2007 when he was approached by the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity to become its academic advisor, in large part because the fraternity was experiencing academic difficulties at the time. By his own admission, Straubel had little direct knowledge of fraternities, nor was he particularly well-versed in detailed knowledge of what students did and did not know about how to improve their academic success rates. But all that changed in a hurry. For example, in coaching a couple of fraternity members on how to write papers, he walked them directly to the library to show them how to find sources and to use the services available there. As he puts it, “I always assumed that every student knew how to do these things. I never questioned it.” His experience also made him realize how much he did not know about WKU’s student support programs, so in the summer of 2007, he applied himself to learn about the variety of “services the university offers students and where they can get help for various personal and professional problems.”

Straubel’s work with Pi Kappa Alpha has helped to raise the academic standards of the fraternity, especially through his efforts to meet individually with members experiencing academic difficulties and through the institution of a mandatory study hall program and other interventions, such as partnering academically weak and strong members to provide internal support. All of this takes a great deal of time, but as Lance Coulter, former PKA President points out, “Professor Straubel is committed to the ‘open door’ policy” and is always “completely accessible to the group.” For his part, Straubel says he came to appreciate the work PKA members do in service engagement on campus and in the community: “This really changed my outlook on fraternity life in general,” he notes.

Two additional opportunities for student advising and mentoring came Straubel’s way in 2007: He became Faculty Advisor to the German Club and advisor to a newly-formed German sports club, the Schleuderball Club. What is noticeable about Straubel’s involvement with these organizations is not only how involved he is with both but how he allows the students to take the lead, to exercise their fertile imaginations and energies in pursuit of projects to which they are truly committed. In other words, he is a great listener and encourager but makes sure the students take on active roles and display responsibility within their clubs.

Straubel’s story of becoming an award-winning advisor and mentor is a story of his own growth as a faculty member. He points out that “advising made me question myself and the most basic suppositions of what my job at Western Kentucky University really is. These three opportunities that started in 2007 truly changed my role as a faculty member at WKU.” Dr. Laura McGee, Head of the Modern Languages Department, explains that “for Tim, there is not a strict and artificial division between learning in and outside the classroom. Tim acknowledges the whole person ‘student’ in the student’s social and cultural context.”
Potter College’s 2011 University Distinguished Professor:

Dr. Robyn Swanson

BY JAMES FLYNN
The Potter College of Arts & Letters continues to gain recognition for its outstanding faculty named as University Distinguished Professors (UDP). The most recent recipient of this prestigious academic honor is Dr. Robyn Swanson, Professor of Music.

Dr. Swanson is the consummate academic practitioner, excelling in the three major areas of faculty responsibility—teaching, research, and service. As Dr. Mitzi Groom, Head of the Music Department points out, the "professional package that Dr. Swanson models is a rare commodity." Her career reflects a remarkable talent for integrating all of the elements of faculty work, so that her teaching leads seamlessly to research, which develops into service work, which draws on her teaching and research. As Dr. Swanson modestly comments, the “blending of research with teaching practice has become a trademark of my professional activities.” The key to this thorough-going integration of her professional work seems to stem from her passion for what she does, her tireless commitment to improving music education wherever she can—in Kentucky, the U.S., or internationally. For Dr. Swanson, this work is clearly not about filling up a professional resume but about fulfilling a lifelong mission.

Dr. Swanson is recognized as a master teacher in her field. She has won the Potter College Award for Excellence in Teaching and in 2008 was named the Kentucky Music Education Association College/University Teacher of the Year. About her teaching, former students and colleagues reiterate her passion for music and her unstinting encouragement of her students. A former student praises Dr. Swanson for her help in and beyond the classroom, and goes on to say that Dr. Swanson continued to guide and support her as she pursued her career as a music educator. Continuing relationships with her former students, who account for about 70 percent of Kentucky’s music educators, is another hallmark of Dr. Swanson’s professional dedication.

Dr. Swanson’s teaching is not limited to the university classroom. She continues to bridge the gap between P-12 and college instruction by teaching classes of younger students, particularly those with special learning needs, a research interest of her hers for many years. Dr. Swanson underscores her commitment to her P-12 teaching: “As a veteran music educator, I remain involved in teaching elementary and middle school students, because if one is going to talk the talk, I believe one must be able to walk the walk.”

Dr. Swanson’s research comes directly out of her desire to improve music education for all students and her belief that an “effective educator is a life-long learner.” Her success in this area is highlighted by the invitations she has been extended to share her research and new methods with national and international audiences. For example, from her experiences and research in teaching a Creative Arts Curriculum for two years to about eighty pre-school children with developmental delays, in 2008 she was asked to present her research to the International Society of Music Education Symposium in Bologna, Italy. She was also invited to submit a program for the Very Special Arts Festival held in Washington, D.C. in 2009. Much of her research has been published as articles or as part of conference proceedings.

Because of her widely recognized expertise and her amazing stamina and work ethic, it is no surprise that Dr. Swanson is a mainstay in many professional organizations and has accrued an incredible list of service projects. She has served on national boards of professional music education groups and has apparently filled every conceivable role, including president, of the Kentucky Music Educators Association. She also has leadership roles in the Very Special Arts organization both at the national and state levels. She has contributed untold hours working on projects relating to music education for the Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Educational Television (KET), among others. She continues to conduct numerous workshops for teachers. She has been recognized for her exemplary service work with the Potter College Award for Excellence in Service, and in 2008, she was presented a citation from the Kentucky House of Representatives for “Recognition for Service to Music Education.”

Dr. Robyn Swanson is an excellent addition to Potter College’s roster of University Distinguished Professors. Reflecting on her successful career, she says that “I love what I do every day.” That is real success.
Dr. Deborah Logan, Professor of English at WKU, and Dr. Anthony Harkins, Associate Professor of History at WKU, have joined an exclusive but growing club of Potter College faculty members who have received appointments to the highly selective Fulbright Scholar program, which they will participate in during the spring semester, 2012.

Dr. Deborah Logan, who has taught Victorian and World Literature at WKU since her arrival in 1997, received a Fulbright research award to India, where she is currently conducting archival research in New Delhi, Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. Dr. Logan, whose voluminous research has once more earned her the PCAL Award for Excellence in Research and Creativity (2011), draws on her expertise as a specialist in Victorian literature to examine the roles of Indian women writing in English during the Colonial period, particularly as their writing speaks to issues of caste, gender, cultural marginalization, and nascent Indian independence movements. As she points out, her previous scholarship has emphasized “the emerging empire from the perspectives of the colonizers; this project emphasizes the perspective of the colonized.”

With a goal of producing a literary history of Indian women’s writing in English during the Colonial period and an anthology of representative writings for the college classroom, Dr. Logan hopes to illuminate a neglected part of India’s complex social history through this literary study.

Dr. Logan reports that her hosts at Jadavpur University are extremely “helpful, supportive, and encouraging, setting me up with all kinds of professional opportunities and connections with libraries and scholars.” Building cultural bridges is much in evidence in the Fulbright Program, and Dr. Logan will reciprocate by giving lectures and conducting workshops at several Indian universities as well as for the U.S.-India Educational Foundation.
Finally, Dr. Logan’s accounts of some of her experiences in negotiating India on her own reflect just how much learning is going on. She comments that “India for me is like being sensorially tasered 24/7. I can’t look away; I’m like a sponge…. It’s very challenging, stimulating, boundary-crashing.” The learning will extend as well to some lucky students in Dr. Logan’s classes who will share in this culturally rich experience of international reach.

Dr. Anthony Harkins received a Fulbright teaching and research award and is currently a Visiting Professor in Cultural Studies at Karl Franzens University of Graz in Austria. Dr. Harkins, who came to WKU in 2003, teaches American Studies and American History classes, and is the Director of the new Popular Culture Studies major in Potter College, only the second program of its kind in the U.S.

At Karl Franzens University, Dr. Harkins will teach two general surveys, “U.S. History and Society” and “Introduction to Cultural Studies,” as well as a seminar on “The American Dream.” Dr. Harkins comments that he sees the instructional part of his assignment as a way to “reenergize my teaching a bit by considering alternative approaches and by better understanding international perspectives of American history and culture.”

Dr. Harkins is also dedicated to extending the global reach of WKU and its students. As the child of a career foreign service diplomat, he has lived in different parts of the world, and sees the Fulbright experience as an opportunity to rekindle the unique global view he developed as a young person and to share that experience with his students, not to mention with his own family, including his two children, a seventh grader and a tenth grader, who will attend school in Austria.

Dr. Harkins, an accomplished researcher with an award-winning book about the hillbilly as an American cultural icon to his credit, will also use the Fulbright as an opportunity to advance his current research on how air travel, interstate highways, maps, and popular images of America’s geography have essentially “re-mapped” the basic conception of the cultural shape of the U.S. He is eager to discuss these ideas while in Europe and receive international feedback on them, which he will do formally while giving lectures in Graz and also in Salzburg and Klagenfurt, Austria, and Zlin, Czech Republic.

Potter College Dean David Lee is justly proud of the significant number of Potter College faculty who have received Fulbright Awards in the past and of the impressive fact that “both Dr. Harkins and Dr. Logan received Fulbright grants in the same year, as it is a highly competitive and rigorous process.” These faculty members, consistent with the Fulbright mission of promoting understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries, are the latest Potter College bridge builders of WKU’s international reach.

Dr. James Flynn is Professor Emeritus in the English Department.
New Faculty Profiles

BY KAREN SCHNEIDER

A Pennsylvania native, Dr. Jennifer Adam received bachelors degrees in music education and violin performance from Wilkes University (Wilkes-Barre, PA), Kodály Certification from West Chester University (West Chester, PA), and masters degrees in voice performance and choral conducting from Temple University (Philadelphia, PA). After completing this varied education, she taught music in Pennsylvania public schools for eight years and finally focused on a single major for her doctorate—choral conducting—which she completed at the University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC) in May 2010. At WKU, Dr. Adam teaches music theory, music education, choral methods and materials, and directs the WKU Women’s Chorus. Additionally, she has founded and is now directing the SOKY Children’s Chorus. Aside from being a big music geek, Dr. Adam and her husband enjoy cooking, hiking and humoring children… whether their friends’ kids or her nieces and nephews.

Dr. Audrey L. Anton earned a Ph.D. and M.A. degree in Philosophy at the Ohio State University as well as an M.A. degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Prior to living in Ohio, Dr. Anton spent three years in snowy upstate Buffalo, NY—a bit of a shock to her system as she had just recently completed a year of research in the Republic of Ecuador on a Fulbright. In Ecuador, Dr. Anton researched intergenerational perspectives on the meaning of age and adopted the most perfect dog, Sophie, who now supports her research with encouraging tail-wagging. Dr. Anton moved to Bowling Green this summer with her husband, Dr. Stephen Kershner, who also teaches at WKU. So far, Dr. Anton has taught courses in Ancient Philosophy, Hellenistic Philosophy, Ethics, and The Good and the Beautiful, an introductory level course focusing on the intersection of Ethics and Aesthetics. She looks forward to teaching new courses she is developing on Moral Responsibility and Free Will, and Medieval Philosophy. Dr. Anton has research interests in Ancient Philosophy, Moral Psychology, Ethics, and a burgeoning field she affectionately refers to as Philosophical Gerontology. In addition, she occasionally indulges in her passion for Philosophy in Pop Culture, working on articles such as “The Nietzschean Influences in The Incredibles and the Sidekick Revolt.” This passion for mixing Philosophy and Superhero studies inspired her alter ego, Wondergirl, who encourages students to do the same by reinventing themselves with alternative identification (new wonder-name and all) so that they can fight for truth, justice, and the philosophical way!

“I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky,” Dr. Nicole Breazeale reports, “where my father was a philosophy professor and my mother was a foreign language instructor. In 1984 we spent a year in Munich, where I attended
German public school. My time spent overseas as a child fostered in me an international perspective and encouraged me to live abroad later in life in Holland, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina. After completing my undergraduate degree at Swarthmore College, I returned to Kentucky where I worked for a non-profit organization helping low-income families find affordable housing in Appalachia. This experience led me to pursue a Master’s degree in Rural Sociology at the University of Kentucky. I then went on to pursue a Ph.D. in Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I studied the effects of globalization on rural development. At WKU, I teach a range of classes, including Social Problems, Poverty & Inequality, Marriage & Family, Sociology of Community, Environment & Development, and Sociology of Agriculture & Food. I appreciate the opportunity for small class sizes and the interdisciplinary community we have at Glasgow. Currently, I am Co-Principal Investigator for a Local Foods project, an effort to map organizations that strengthen a regional food system that fosters food security and sustainable development. In time away from my career, I enjoy cooking, gardening, quilting, photography, fly-fishing, backpacking and spending time with my friends, family, fiancé, and our goofy dog, Ellie.”

An assistant professor of Political Science, Dr. Jeffrey Budziak originally hails from Brecksville, Ohio, a suburb outside of Cleveland. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from The Ohio State University, where he worked as an instructor before coming to WKU. His teaching interests include Constitutional Law, Civil Liberties and Judicial Politics, and American Government, and his current research focuses on Supreme Court and Court of Appeals decision-making, as well as the development of legal policy in the federal judiciary. For pleasure and relaxation, Jeff reads and writes about the statistical analysis of baseball. Accustomed to the frigid and snowy winters of northern Ohio, Jeff comments, “I am still waiting to see if winter ever actually comes here. Our move to Bowling Green was relatively painless, except for the air conditioner dying within a week of moving into our house. Experiencing 10 days of +90 degree temperatures was not the ideal way to begin our time in Kentucky.” Things have only improved from there, and Jeff and his wife have since “enjoyed their time in Bowling Green, the virtually snowless winter, and well regulated room temperatures.”

Although Dr. Michelle Dvoskin grew up in Maryland, she earned both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Theatre History and Criticism / Performance as Public Practice from University of Texas, Austin. Now that she’s in Kentucky, she admits to “looking forward to summer lasting less than 6 months!” Dr. Dvoskin’s scholarly focus is musical theatre, in particular, “musicals that look to the past – the writing of the Declaration of Independence (1776), for example, or the life of failed vaudeville and successful burlesque performer Gypsy Rose Lee (Gypsy) – in order to analyze the historiographical work these musicals do. Rather than writing off musical theatre, one of the most popular and most ‘American’ of forms, as nostalgic entertainment, I consider how musicals can encourage us to think critically about history while also allowing us to engage emotionally (and physically, as we sing and dance along) with the pasts represented in so many shows.” At WKU, she has taught theatre history, the history of drama, and playwriting. Dr. Dvoskin has other research interests as well, including queer theory and performance, gender in performance, reception theory, and U.S. popular culture. In fact, her M.A. thesis focused on the musical theatre episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena: Warrior Princess. Even after
watching the musical episode of Buffy at least 20 times, Michelle confesses that “it’s still one of my favorite hours of television.”

Dr. Ann Ferrell earned her Ph.D. in English/Folklore from the Ohio State University. Prior to coming to WKU, she taught courses at Ohio State University, Middlebury College, and Champlain College (Burlington, Vermont). Since coming to WKU, Dr. Ferrell has taught both Introduction to Folk Studies and Urban Folklore and graduate courses in Folklore Genres, Women’s Folklife, Folk Narrative, and Foodways. Dr. Ferrell reports, “My research interests include narrative, rhetorics of tradition and heritage, and gendered knowledge. My recent and ongoing fieldwork has been with Kentucky burley tobacco farmers and farmers who are transitioning from tobacco to other crops.” She is completing a book tentatively titled “Replacing” Burley Tobacco in Kentucky. Other research interests include the Kentucky Bourbon trail and the creation of tourism narratives. Dr. Ferrell also has experience in public folklore and with non-profit and governmental women’s organizations. Ann received her M.A. in Folk Studies in PCAL’s program and comments that “returning to WKU is something of a homecoming for me. I am proud to be a part of a renowned folklore department with colleagues who are so respected in my field, and I am thrilled to return to WKU and see the wonderful growth that has taken place.”

Dr. Paul Fischer teaches an introductory course on World Religions, mid-level courses on the Eastern traditions of Confucianism and Daoism, and upper-level courses on Religious Syncretism and how Excavated Texts and other textual discoveries influence received religious narratives. He sees religion as a central component of the cultural histories of the world’s civilizations and is interested in understanding the cosmological paradigms and ethical implications of its various manifestations. Increasing global awareness and encouraging an objective analysis of the religious imagination motivate his teaching. Dr. Fischer’s research agenda is currently focused on early Chinese philosophical syncretism. He is investigating how disparate ideologies such as Yin-Yang and Mohism were brought together to form coherent philosophies. Dr. Fischer studied Philosophy of Religion and East Asian Intellectual History in the Divinity School and the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations (respectively) at the University of Chicago. He graduated in 2007 and since then has taught at Indiana University and the American University in Cairo before coming to WKU in 2011. His involvement with the Asian Religions and Cultures major in the Philosophy and Religion department allows him to work with students from the Chinese Flagship program as well as with the burgeoning Confucius Institute community. “When not in the classroom, at my desk, or gazing at the sky awaiting the impending apocalypse,” Paul claims he “can be found furiously subsisting on eagle’s blood, in a cave off the stormy coast of Tibet.”

Dr. Jean-Luc Houle is an anthropological archaeologist whose research interests focus on the study of early complex societies with a particular emphasis on East Asia and the Eurasian steppe region. He earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh and received his M.Sc. in Anthropology from the University of Montreal (Canada), during which time he researched the development of societal complexity in northern China. Since 2001, Dr. Houle has been conducting multidisciplinary field research
in Mongolia, where he is studying the development of societal complexity among early mobile pastoralists of the Bronze and Iron Ages. Every year he takes student volunteers with him to conduct archaeological fieldwork in the amazing steppes of Mongolia, a region of the world which continues today to be inhabited by horse-riding nomadic pastoralists who have maintained many of their traditional lifeways. Volunteers also get to indulge in local delicacies such as fermented mare’s milk, salty goat-milk tea and marmot meat!

Dr. Loup Langton, Director of the School of Journalism and Broadcasting, comes to us from the University of Miami, where he was the Director of the Visual Journalism Sequence. He completed his Ph.D. in 1995 at the University of Texas and has taught at the University of Missouri’s School of Journalism and worked widely as a professional photojournalist in multiple capacities including editor. His interest in international journalism has taken him around the world; he’s variously made his home in Chicago, Cairo, Sevilla, and Quito, where he served as photo director at Ecuador’s largest newspaper, El Universo. Loup describes one of his more recent international projects: “Last year my good friend, Pablo Corral, and I created the POYi-LatAm (Pictures of the Year International-Latin America) contest for Latin American photojournalists and editors. It quickly became the largest and most prestigious photojournalism contest in Latin America. There were more than 800 entrants with some 11,000 images. The judges included top professionals and educators from Germany, Spain, Argentina, Mexico, the U.S. and Brazil. The winning images can be viewed on the nuestramirada.org site. We plan to hold the contest once every two years, and have overtures from Brazil to do the judging next March in Rio de Janeiro.”

Dr. Peggy Otto, a Composition specialist, reports, “I grew up on a farm, fished in ponds, played in tobacco barns, bottle-fed baby pigs, and showed Hereford steers at the county fair. My grandparents were storytellers and gospel singers. Saturday afternoon trips to town included getting dropped off at the public library while my mother did her shopping. That library smell—books and floor polish and Miss Nannie’s, the librarian, lilac talcum powder—induced a lovely kind of euphoria that I still associate with books, and it probably played a large part in my choosing to become an English major. I earned my B.A. in Secondary Education and M.A. in English at Western Kentucky University and my Ph.D. in Rhetoric & Composition at the University of Louisville. My research field is literacy studies. I am especially interested in non-traditional and working-class literacies. Currently, I am engaged in ethnographic research that explores the effects of home demonstration clubs on the literacy practices of mid-twentieth century rural women. This research includes interviewing long-time homemakers’ club members and examining archival texts in county museums. Before completing my Ph.D., I taught high school English and French in Kentucky and Tennessee. I taught in the English Education program at Western Illinois University from 2008-2011 before coming to WKU. In addition to teaching in the composition program at WKU, I direct the WKU Writing Project.”

Dr. Ke Peng earned her Ph.D. from the University of Arizona with a major in East Asian Studies and a minor in linguistics. She holds a Master of Science degree in Foreign Language Education from Indiana University, Bloomington. She came from Shenzhen China, a major city situated immediately north of Hong Kong. At WKU, she is charged with the challenging but exciting task of building a Chinese major and minor. Her passion is teaching Chinese language and culture to foreigners. She also serves as an academic liaison for the Dual Credit Program, through which she works closely with the Hanban teachers and Confucius Institute, helping to develop a sustainable, quality, and proficiency-based Chinese language program in the region’s secondary schools. Her research interests include second language acquisition, computer-assisted language learning, assessment, curriculum development and teacher training. In her leisure time, Ke enjoys hiking, gardening, practicing calligraphy and performing tea ceremony.
Brad Pfranger comes to Western Kentucky University from the Nashville FOX affiliate, WZTV, after covering news and sports in the area for the past five years. He began his professional videography career in Shreveport, Louisiana at the local CBS affiliate, KSLA, in 1999. His covered stories include Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath, the Columbia Shuttle crash in east Texas, the events of Sept. 11, 2001 in Louisiana and New York City, training with the Marines at Parris Island, surveying troop activity along the Mexican border in Arizona, both heartfelt and tragic human interest stories, and any type of breaking news of which one can think. Brad has received multiple AP awards, both in Louisiana and Tennessee, and also obtained eight Emmy award nominations, with one win for his part in covering the trials of children and their families battling cancer at St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital in Memphis. Brad’s academic accomplishments include a B.A. from the University of Mississippi in both Broadcast Journalism and German, and most recently he received his Masters in Liberal Arts and Science from Vanderbilt University.

Teaching Professional Writing in the Department of English, Dr. Jeffrey (J.A.) Rice hails from Columbus, Ohio. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Florida, where he taught in the University Writing Program. As is ideal, Jeff’s teaching and research interests overlap, including Professional and Technical Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, Rhetorical Theory, and New Media Studies. According to Jeff, “During my brief time at WKU, I have found some interesting, driven, and incredibly inspiring students. Their writing has made me laugh out loud, given me pause, and lurked in my thoughts for days on end. More importantly, they have challenged my pedagogical philosophy and given me the courage to teach writing in radically different ways. In many ways, I consider my students my colleagues, and their influence my research... I am currently working on a new business writing textbook and an article that rethinks what the rhetorical concept of logos means in contemporary digital writing environments. On a more personal note, I am somewhat of a ‘foodie,’ and love to travel to new places and partake in new gastronomic adventures. These interests culminated this past summer when I spent time in the Florida Keys snorkeling, diving, and eating all kinds of new food. Unfortunately, these hobbies can also have repercussions. After I told another Ohioan that I thought ‘Skyline Chili was overrated,’ I was promptly asked never to return to the state.”

Originally from just down the road—Nashville, TN—Dr. Selena Sanderfer Ph.D. earned her B.A. from Fisk University and her M.A. and Ph.D from Vanderbilt (2005 and 2010 respectively). Dr. Sanderfer specializes in the African Diaspora and is especially interested in issues of nationalism and social movement. Aside from survey courses in Western Civilization, American, African American, and African history, Dr. Sanderfer reports, “I also enjoy teaching courses on the Atlantic World and comparative slave systems. My research centers on the characteristics of black separatism in the South. I am currently working on revising my dissertation, ‘For Land and Liberty: Territorial Separatism in the Black South, 1776-1904’ into a book manuscript. In it I examine the emergence and structure of black emigration movements to Kansas, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.” Dr. Sanderfer is “amazed by the amount of support shown to new faculty members at WKU. Tenured faculty are not only my colleagues, but have also become my mentors, offering helpful advice on...”
how to adjust to the new demands of teaching and research after graduate school.” Selena also reports that her two dogs, Cutie and Tiny, “are both really enjoying all the new smells and critters they encounter on the long country walks in their new home of Smiths Grove.”

Dr. Ian Schnee earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from UC, Berkeley, in 2010. He spent last year teaching at the University of Puget Sound, in Tacoma, WA. His primary area of research is the theory of knowledge and reasons for belief. For example, “Are reasons for belief states of the world around us or states of ourselves? Say the streets are wet and you form a belief that it rained last night: is your reason for thinking that it rained the fact that the streets are wet (the world) or is your reason your belief that the streets are wet (yourself)? Both? Are the world and our own minds two primitive sources of normativity, or can one be reduced to the other?” Ian grew up in Montana, so if you want him to feel at home say “Howdy” when you see him around campus. He moved to Bowling Green with his wife and two kids over the summer. According to Ian, “Everything survived the trip except the sourdough starter.” While in Berkeley the most important thing Ian learned was “not philosophy but wine tasting.” He founded the Berkeley Wine Society and was co-captain of its 6-person blind tasting team, which won three international blind tasting competitions in Napa Valley. Now that he’s in Kentucky, he proposes, “Maybe bourbon will be next.”

Dr. Helen Sterk, new Department Head in Communication, earned an M.A. at WKU before completing her Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. Born and raised in Waupun, Wisconsin, Helen came to us from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she taught for fourteen years. Before Calvin, Helen served on the faculty at Marquette University (Milwaukee). Her research interest is rhetoric by and about women, including mother/daughter communication, physicality and gender, birthing and its meaning, and Marilyn Monroe as an object of veneration. Having joined two choirs in Bowling Green, Helen is happily “rediscovering my long dormant singing voice while meeting new people.” When asked to disclose something interesting about herself, she admitted to getting a tattoo at age 58, “at my daughter’s urging.” Dr. Sterk highly values her relationship with students: “I love students. They connect me with life, music, trends, events. Whenever they send me a link to a movie clip, a new song, their favorite artist, a shocking blog, a new person or group to follow on Twitter, I take a look. Through them, I’ve been introduced to Adele, competitive cheer as a feminist act, tattooing as a gendered body art, and blogs that teach men how to enact responsibility and style. I honor my students by paying attention to the fabric of their lives.”

“I was born in the warm and welcoming Atlantic-coast city of Barranquilla, Colombia in South America,” reports Michaelangelo Zapata, “but have spent the majority of my life in the U.S. My family has always been dedicated to teaching languages, and I wanted to keep the tradition alive by earning two separate B.A.s, French and Spanish, at the University of Southern Indiana.” Professor Zapata credits his graduate experience at Indiana University for landing his full time instructor position in Modern Languages. Having taught five classes a semester at WKU for two years, he says, “I absolutely adore teaching and I honestly don’t believe that I’ll ever get tired of it, even at the current pace. I also work closely with St. Joseph’s After School program, volunteering as an interpreter during Parent/Teacher conferences. Last year I was selected to teach specialized courses for the WKU Wind Ensembles to prepare them for their trip to Costa Rica last summer, and to travel with them. The students were trained to teach Costa Rican students their respective instruments—to use Spanish to teach the language of music. Currently, I am preparing to help Susann Davis as the second Modern Language instructor/ advisor. I know it is a huge load, but I am eager to help students negotiate their wide variety of academic interests, as I already do in my classroom. I look forward to the rewards of advising: seeing my advisees’ academic and life goals achieved as they graduate and find jobs.”
Few cities around the world provoke the kind of negative emotional response as does Medellin, Colombia. Its image as a dangerous, narco-controlled, guerilla-infested urban environment has been built over many decades. Yet over the past ten years, Medellin has experienced a remarkable turnaround. Owing to a combination of various initiatives, local and foreign investment, and the determination of its people, Medellin has returned from the brink of anarchy to emerge as a potential model for how to resolve urban development conflicts. Perhaps nowhere in Medellin has this pattern of decline and rebirth been more apparent than in the considerably disadvantaged district of “Comuna 13.”

In 2009, Dr. Holli Drummond of the Sociology Department joined a project begun by Dr. David Keeling, department head of Geography & Geology, and Dr. John Dizgun, Latin American historian and assistant director of the Kentucky Institute of International Studies (KIIS), by constructing and disseminating an adolescent survey to approximately 1,450 residents of Comuna 13. The survey aims to evaluate the continued involvement in violence and other risky behavior among neighborhood youth, by examining such factors as neighborhood tenure, religiosity, parenting, concerns about safety, victimization, and “hopelessness.” In the absence of protective factors, Dr. Drummond finds that negative life events lead to vulnerable emotional states, making adoption of deviant beliefs and participation in risky behavior more likely. Moreover, results suggest considerable variation in the experiences of Medellin’s disadvantaged youth.

Professor Yager also has projects linking the thought of selected British thinkers, such as Hume and Locke, with selected American statesmen, such as Madison, on the issues of faction and religious toleration. He anticipates that this work will not only result in journal article publications, but will also enhance his teaching of American Political Thought (PS 435), a course that he teaches periodically. Professor Yager has also been invited to speak to faculty and students at the University of Exeter. His topic for presentation, “Locke, Toleration, and Political Leadership,” explores the relevance of Locke’s arguments in his Essay and Letter to political leadership today. The Centre for Leadership Studies at Exeter extended the invitation.

Professor Edward Yager, in the Department of Political Science, is a Visiting Fellow at Harlaxton College for the 2011-12 academic year. His work takes him to the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he is undertaking several research projects on modern political thought. The largest project examines Sir Isaiah Berlin’s framework of negative and positive liberty and its application to modern political leadership. This work will establish the foundation for a book length manuscript tentatively entitled Liberty and Leadership.
ARTS & LETTERS

During the Spring/Summer 2011, Dr. Inma Pertusa, associate professor of Spanish in the Modern Languages Department, spent seven months in Spain, working on a book-length research project entitled Writing from Memory: Spanish Female Authors from the Spanish “Transición.” Her study focuses on fiction published by women who as young adults “witnessed the many political, social and cultural changes in Spain during the years following dictator Francisco Franco’s death in 1975 until the beginning of the first Socialist party in 1982—a period known as the Transición.” While on sabbatical, Dr. Pertusa conducted personal interviews with women from Segovia, Madrid, Barcelona and Albacete, and visited the Biblioteca National and the Hemeroteca archives in Madrid to collect data on the social and cultural representation of women in Spain, and on the women’s writing that emerged from this period. She continues to study the connections between fictional narratives set up during the Transición by the selected authors and the first-hand accounts of other Spanish women who have shared their memories of this time. Dr. Pertusa plans to return to Spain this summer to continue her research.

Dr. Ingrid E. Lilly, assistant professor in Religious Studies, recently traveled to Kingston, Jamaica to conduct research on the prophetic rhetoric of Reggae music (roots, conscious, and dancehall Reggae as well as dub poetry). In the late 1960s, Reggae emerged as a new musical genre in the slums of Kingston, Jamaica not long after Jamaica’s emancipation from British rule (1962). Often at the convergence of the political and the religious, Reggae’s aesthetic rhythms and lyrics gave voice to Rastafari, Afro-Caribbean articulations of hope and frustration in Jamaica’s new, post-colonial existence.

Focusing especially on Bob Marley and the Wailers, Dr. Lilly explores the religious nature of their musical production—that is, the features of charisma that characterize their lyrics, music, and performances. Indeed, Marley’s music engaged in social critique and salvation-speak in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. He gave voice to the violent yet voiceless ghetto of impoverished ‘rude boys’ in Trench Town, Kingston with an authenticity that would catapult him onto the international stage as a ‘prophet to the nations.’

As Marley once said of his own craft, “Reggae carry the truth; suffering leads to eye-opening... you must know you were dancing to Jah music.” (Jah is the Rastafari term for the Hebrew Tetragrammaton as found in Hallelu-jah).
This summer Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of Religious Studies, will spend three months in Singapore as a Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. He will be working on a book-length manuscript on the social history of Buddhism in Malaysia. In his research, Samuels is particularly interested in examining how Buddhists in Malaysia negotiate their sense of identity and citizenship within the larger Malay-Muslim nation-state. According to Samuels, Buddhists represent about 30% of the Malaysian population and are “disadvantaged with regard to the government’s economic, educational, and ideological policies that favor Malay Muslims over Buddhists and Hindus.” Samuels’ project will also consider how Buddhist identities function as strategies of legitimization for minorities experiencing marginalization, as well as how Buddhist institutions respond to demographical changes and complex social needs. In addition to support from the National University of Singapore, Dr. Samuels received a highly competitive research grant from the American Academy of Religion for his project.

Since 2006, Dr. Jerry Daday, associate professor in Sociology, has worked on an interdisciplinary and collaborative research project that examines the intersection of human-wildlife conflict, extreme poverty, community-based conservation, and sustainable development in Kasigau, Kenya. Kasigau is situated between two of Kenya’s largest wildlife national parks, Tsavo East and Tsavo West, and human-wildlife conflict is a persistent issue for these communities. Subsistence-based farming provides food and economic resources for the majority of households, and wildlife intrusions can destroy the small number of crops they can grow with limited water, no irrigation, and poor soil. Many farmers are forced to hunt wildlife (1) to protect their crops, (2) to obtain food, or (3) to sell the poached meat on the black-market. Due to extreme poverty and the lack of basic infrastructure, the residents of Kasigau face numerous challenges each day. Daday’s interdisciplinary research project measures the extent of human-wildlife conflict and works with the community to find ways of mitigating conflict and to promote sustainable economic development that employs community-based conservation. Additionally, Daday and his colleagues have collected data on 120 small businesses in the Kasigau area. This research was an attempt to understand the factors promoting and hindering the creation and expansion of these small businesses with the hope that community leaders could use the data to promote economic development in the area.
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Monday, March 4, 2013

October 15, 2012 – The Birdland Big Band directed by Tommy Igoe
March 26, 2013 – Storyteller and author, Garrison Keillor
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