Application for the Mildred Dahne Award – Spring 2009
Department of English

The English Department plays a major role in the intellectual life of The College of New Jersey and the surrounding community. A group of teacher-scholars that encompasses many disciplines and areas of expertise, the department exhibits the highest standards for teaching and the support of teaching. English faculty are campus leaders and engage in a wide range of activities that have had a far-reaching impact on the college, the profession, and the state. The department has created a vibrant academic culture in which students are not only involved in professional and scholarly activities, they see themselves as leaders. Indeed, our students have been recognized nationally for the intellectual environment they have helped us build at TCNJ.

I. Excellence in teaching and support of teaching

At a time of shrinking enrollments in the humanities, the English Department at The College of New Jersey continues to thrive. Offering programs in English Liberal Arts (English A), English Teaching (English T), Journalism and Professional Writing (JWP), and Creative Writing (CWR), the department has 555 majors and 43 minors. Since 2004, 37 students have graduated from the department's MA program, and we have 38 students currently working towards their degree.

In addition to serving our wide range of majors and leading about 15 first year seminars each fall, English faculty play a key role in such interdisciplinary programs as Classical Studies, African-American Studies, Interactive Multi-Media, Comparative Literature, Linguistics, U.S. Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Theater and Drama. One of the department's greatest strengths is its intellectual diversity. English faculty range from journalists, linguists, and poets to biographers, theorists, and literary critics. What binds this diverse group together is a shared commitment to excellent, student-centered teaching.

The English Department takes the mentoring of new teachers seriously. Junior faculty are observed three times each academic year. Observations include a review of course materials, a classroom visit, a follow-up conversation, and the writing of a one-two page report. Members of the Departmental Personnel Committee meet regularly with junior faculty to discuss course development and teaching strategies.

Since transformation, the department has worked hard to ensure excellence across its different programs. The literature track (English A and T) is supported by designated "focus groups" in which faculty meet to discuss different components of the curriculum. These meetings have helped promote a set of common learning goals and been invaluable in sharing teaching tips and ideas. The focus groups have also been the site of curriculum assessment and, in this regard, have helped us ensure consistency across course content and exams. Our assessments have already led us to make changes in the transformed literature curriculum.

Students are passionate about the various tracks within the English Department. They praise an environment in which faculty are open, accessible, and eager to help. Students in the English T Teaching program not only receive personal mentoring, they are also invited to participate in a wide range of workshops and study groups. Our journalism and professional writing students develop an especially close relationship with faculty as they prepare for internships. In recent years, JWP students have interned at such places as the Philadelphia Inquirer, the New York Times, NBC
News, Bloomberg LLP, CNN, Glamour, Reuters, and the White House. Boosted by the innovative Writing Communities course (in which students plan and promote a whole slate of campus literary events), Creative Writing students have recently interned at Simon and Schuster and Random House.

Perhaps the best evidence of our teaching excellence is the success our students enjoy after they graduate. Students in the English T program, for example, are among the most highly-sought new teachers in the state and have a 98.9% passing rate on the New Jersey Praxis test.

Recent graduates of the JPW program have found jobs with Bloomberg LLP, Fox Business News, MAD magazine, ABC News, and Seventeen magazine. Four TCNJ graduates are currently working for the Wall Street Journal, three as reporters, one as a copyeditor. The Creative Writing program's attention to the business of publishing, as well as the craft of writing, has resulted in a number of successful placements including positions with the Academy of American Poets, the National Endowment for the Arts, Princeton University Press, Holtzbrinck Publishers, McGraw-Hill, and Simon and Schuster.

Students in all tracks have developed a keen interest in attending graduate school. English alumni have attended such law schools as Yale, Georgetown, William and Mary, North Carolina, and Rutgers. Other students have earned advanced degrees in language and literature at the Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, Chicago, Princeton, NYU, and Iowa. Since the creation of the Creative Writing minor in 2003, we have seen many students enter graduate programs at Texas, Massachusetts, Sarah Lawrence, and the prestigious Iowa Writers Workshop. Our English Teaching graduates have also found graduate study increasingly important to their lives. They have earned advanced degrees at Montclair, TCNJ, and Columbia.

During the transformation, the English Department instituted two capstone seminars in literary theory and research. In this new curriculum, faculty teach students sophisticated research skills, giving them experience working with everything from census rolls to manuscripts and archives. A happy consequence of this new emphasis on research skills has been that some of our brightest students have decided to pursue graduate work in Information and Library Sciences including programs at Rutgers, Drexel, Indiana, and Illinois.

Because educators beyond our immediate campus community took notice of our successful transformation, our chair was asked to serve as an external reviewer for the SUNY-New Paltz English Department's Middle States review. SUNY considered TCNJ an aspirant peer and its English Department was particularly interested in emulating of our best practices in curricular development and pedagogy.

2. Departmental Impact

The vibrancy of the department extends well-beyond Bliss Hall, and English faculty regularly assume leadership positions on campus and in the world beyond. As teacher-scholars, we have eagerly sought ways to expand our intellectual community by engaging in public outreach.

English faculty presently hold a number of campus leadership positions. The president of the Faculty Senate, the founder and president of TCNJ's Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the director of the First Seminar program, and the previous and current chair of Women's and Gender Studies are all
English professors. Department members have played a formative role in creating interdisciplinary programs in Interactive Multimedia, US Studies, Classical Studies, Comparative Literature, and Theater and Drama. From 2005-2007, the Faculty Advisor to Academic Computing was not a professor of mathematics or computer science. She was an English professor.

The English Department has been especially active in sponsoring intellectual programming. Linked to our Writing Communities course, the Visiting Writers Series organizes four to five campus visits by leading fiction writers and poets. The Close Readings lecture series offers five lunchtime presentations by faculty members on passages from great literary works. Drawing anywhere from 70-100 people at each event, both series offer important supplements to our curriculum at the same time that they help foster a broader sense of intellectual community.

Department members are highly active in publishing their scholarship and creative writing in competitive, peer-reviewed journals. We have collected this information in an appendix, but in this application, we want to focus on the ways we have extended the teacher-scholar model beyond colleges and universities. In recent years, department members have spoken about their work to non-academic audiences in Bristol, England, Portland, Maine, and Conroe, Texas. We have colleagues who have interviewed Bill Clinton, blogged about the Obama and McCain campaigns, and defied a Justice Department order to submit confidential documents on contaminated blood supplies. Others have written articles for Slate.com, the Huffington Post, the New York Times Book Review, and Ms. magazine. Our colleagues have given invited talks at the NY Public Library and at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

Department members have warmly embraced Robert Bartoletti's invitation to participate in his Teachers as Scholars seminars (TAS), a program designed by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to bring New Jersey teachers into college classrooms where they can study topics of intellectual interest. Since TAS's inception in 2005, English faculty have taught nearly half of these seminars. In the same spirit, Kim Pearson helped secure a $600,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to create a weeklong Interactive Journalism Institute for under-represented students from local middle schools.

In 2005 David Blake and Michael Robertson organized the Walt Whitman Symposium at TCNJ, a three-day event that drew over 700 visitors to campus for poetry readings, a jazz show, a show in the college art gallery, a theater performance, workshops for high school teachers, and academic panels. Funded in part by a $10,000 grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the symposium was a major event in Whitman studies, and at the same time, it seamlessly incorporated the interdisciplinary contributions of both students and colleagues. The University of Iowa press published a collection of essays delivered at the conference, edited by Blake and Robertson.

In 2005, Lincoln Konkle became the executive director of the Thornton Wilder Society, bringing the society and its resources to TCNJ. In March 2006, the Wilder Society sponsored a program that featured the director Emily Mann, the actress Marian Seldes, the novelist Joyce Carol Oates, and the playwright Edward Albee. In September 2008, TCNJ hosted the first international conference of the Wilder Society, a three day event that drew scholars from as far away as Poland, China, and Japan. Supported in part by a $10,000 grant from the NJ Council for the Humanities and a $1000 grant from the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission, the program brought the world of Wilder not only to our students, staff, and faculty, but to dozens of high school teachers, actors, directors and theater enthusiasts.
One of the most enduring outreach efforts sponsored by English Department is the Inkarcerated program led by Michele Tarter. For eight years, Tarter has led workshops on autobiography in New Jersey's maximum security prisons. Tarter is a well-known as a scholar of Early American literature, and in May 2009, she will be leading a conference on prisons in Early America at the University of Pennsylvania's McNiel Center. Like many in the department, however, Tarter has never been content to address only experts, and thus over many years, she has developed a curriculum to encourage the kind of self-reflection that can dramatically reduce recidivism in the country's prisons. What is perhaps most significant is the way Tarter has involved students in this project, training them to accompany her to these prisons and eventually conduct workshops of her own. The program demonstrates how teaching and scholarship can combine with social activism.

The English Department includes delegates to professional organizations (Modern Language Association), referees for university presses (Stanford, Iowa, North Carolina), and editors and contributing editors of professional journals (The Scriblerian, ECCB: The Eighteenth Century, American Journalism Review). But we think it is equally important that we have actively sought ways to combine our service to the profession with service to the larger community. As teacher-scholars, we are unusually aware of ways in which our academic training can help our students and our fellow citizens better understand the world.

3. Student Involvement

Students in the English Department are an accomplished and energetic group. The department's emphasis on professional mentoring, and its commitment to public outreach, has helped create an environment in which students continually take charge of their education and seek ways to contribute to the community and achieve.

The English Department takes student advising seriously; in addition to a non-credit pro-seminar the chair and assistant chair offer entering students each fall, students attend one-to-one meetings with their advisors before each registration period. They use this time to talk not only about course selection but plans for study abroad and career goals. Some of our upper-level students contribute to the advising effort by helping out during first-year registration and planning information sessions through the English honor society.

Across its many programs, the English Department encourages students to develop professional ties with its faculty. Students in the English Teaching program work closely with Emily Meixner organizing workshops, roundtables, and study groups to highlight items of interest. In recent years Meixner has led informal discussion groups on urban teaching and Gay and Lesbian themes in young adult literature. With the help of students, she has brought back alumni for a lecture series about the first years of teaching.

Literary scholars rarely engage in collaborative work, but faculty have been unusually successful in involving students in literary scholarship. In 2005, one student found a previously unknown interview with Walt Whitman in the archives of the Signal. With a lot of mentoring from department faculty, she was able to publish her findings in the Walt Whitman Quarterly Review and was even invited to be part of a panel discussion with the US poet laureate Billy Collins. Five members of the English Department sponsored MUSE projects in the summer 2008 on such projects as African-American identity, photography and the African-American body, and the aesthetic challenges of 9/11.
In addition to the *TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship*, the department sponsors four student publications: the *Signal* (the student newspaper), *Unbound* (an online news magazine), the *Siren* (a literary and graphic arts journal), and the *Lion's Eye* (a literary journal). While each of these publications requires mentorship, they are ultimately a testament to our students’ independence and initiative.

Student organizations in the English Department are especially active and successful. In 2005, students in the Journalism and Professional Writing program founded Ed@TCNJ, an organization meant to help young journalists establish careers in magazine writing. Since then, Ed@TCNJ has sponsored a variety of professional panels, bringing representatives from *Mad* magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to campus for discussion and networking. In 2008, the national organization, Ed2010, named Ed@TCNJ the best college chapter in the nation, an honor that placed them above such journalism powerhouses as Syracuse, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Students in the Creative Writing program are equally as active in promoting literary events on campus. With the help of the creative writing faculty, students founded INK in 2003. INK organizes student readings and has sponsored visits from such authors as Jonathan Lethem and Dean Young. Once a semester, INK orchestrates an all-day campus arts festival called THE GOODS. Incorporating poetry and fiction readings, one-act plays, and performances by campus bands, THE GOODS has done much to integrate the literary and performing arts into campus life.

Sigma Tau Delta (STD) is the largest student organization associated with the English Department, and it has been an indispensable partner in encouraging a sense of intellectual community. With approximately 75 members, the honor society has organized a blizzard of workshops and activities over the past five years. STD initiated and continues to maintain a series of Faculty Research talks each semester. It sponsors workshops on applying to graduate school, writing an honors thesis, and beginning your first year of teaching. It has created a Jane Austen film series and shown films that faculty are teaching in their classrooms. The English Department has a tradition of organizing marathon readings of such famous literary works as *Joyce's Ulysses* and *Milton's Paradise Lost*. The faculty organizing these events have gratefully relied on the members of STD to continue these readings through the late-night (and early-morning) hours.

Sigma Tau Delta members have been equally active in presenting their own research at the national society's annual convention. Each spring, over a dozen English honors students present their literary criticism and original fiction and poetry to their peers at other institutions. (In March 2009, the department will be sending 20 students to the convention, eight of whom will be giving two presentations.) STD's many successes are too numerous to name individually. Since 2005, however, six students have had their work published in the nationally-competitive *Sigma Tau Delta Review*, and several have received commendations and cash awards for their achievements. In 2008, two students won awards for best literary scholarship and one won the $3000 study abroad scholarship. With these numbers, it was no surprise that out of more than 700 chapters, the national organization gave TCNJ one of its three Outstanding Chapter Awards.

English departments are often thought to epitomize life in the ivory tower, but the English faculty at TCNJ challenges that assumption. As teachers, scholars, mentors, and role models, we encourage our students to expand their horizons beyond the library and Bliss Hall.
TCNJ Department of English
Selected Scholarship, 2004-2009

Bennett, Judy
Books

Articles

Poetry in Periodicals
“Dancing at the Monster” American Poetry Journal (Spring 2007)
“On Being Notorious” Court Green (2007)
“All Night His Hand in My Pocket” Puerto Del Sol (Spring 2006)
“My Gravitational Pull” Puerto Del Sol (Spring 2006)
“Baby Gay” DMQ Review (February 2005)
“Creation Song for the Lockdown Women” in Penwood Review (Spring 2005)
“Two Gentlemen of the Holding Cup” in Wisconsin Review, Vol. 39, Number 1 (Fall 2004)
“Confessions” in Wisconsin Review, Vol. 39, Number 1 (Fall 2004)

Blake, David
Books
Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)

Articles
“When Readers Become Fans: Extreme Responses to 19th-Century American Poetry,” A Poeties Primer, ed. Mike Chasar and Heidi Bean (essay accepted; book publisher pending)
“A Prophetic Face in the Crowd,” TomPaine.com, November 1, 2007

Carney, Jo.
Books

Articles
Friedman, Ellen

Articles

Graham, Jean

Articles

Hustis, Harriet

Articles
"Hyding Nietzsche in Robert Louis Stevenson's Gothic of Philosophy." Forthcoming in SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 49.4, Autumn 2009
"Falling for Dante: The /Inferno/ in Albert Canus' La Chute." Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, 40.4, December 2007, 1-16
"Time Will Tell: (Re)Reading the Seductive Simulacra of Nabokov's Lolita." Studies in American Fiction, 35.1, Spring 2007, 89-111
"Responsible Creativity and the 'Modernity' of Mary Shelley's Prometheus." SEL: Studies in English Literature, 43.4, Autumn 2003, 845-858

Jackson, Cassandra

Books

Articles

Konkle, Lincoln

Books
Articles


Meixner, Emily
Articles
“Teacher Agency and Access to LGTBQ Young Adult Literature.” Radical Teacher, (76), p. 13-19 (Fall 2006).


Pearson, Kim
Articles


Media

Rao, Nagesh
Articles


Robertson, Michael

Books

Articles

Reviews

Rosemurgy, Catie

Books

Poetry in Anthologies

Poetry in Periodicals
"Summary, with Wintergreen." Lit. (forthcoming in Spring 2009)
“Peach” and “All Objects Reveal Something About the Body.” *American Poetry Review.* 38:1 (2009).
http://www.kenyonreview.org/kro/roseurgy.php
“Miss Peach Considers #8: Reproduce” and “Miss Peach Imagines Herself an Aging British Rock Star and Considers the Human Condition While Responding to a Beautiful Woman Who Has Just Said, ‘I Love You.’” *New Ohio Review.* 3 (2008).
“Miss Peach Is a Doll inside a Doll,” “Miss Peach, Female Impersonator” and “Miss Peach, American,” and “Miss Peach, the War Years.” *Pleiades.* 27:1 (2007).
“Miss Peach by the Sea.” *Barrelhouse.* 3 (2006).
“Miss Peach is a Cross Between” and “Miss Peach, Carly Simon, and the Problem of Human Beauty.” *Ploughshares.* 32:1 (2006).
“A Rose is a Rose is a Rose is Miss Peach.” *American Letters and Commentary.* 17 (2005).
“Miss Peach and the Twilight Sale,” “Miss Peach Imagines Herself an Aging British Rock Star and Explains What Honesty Is,” and “Miss Peach Explains Promiscuity to a Toddler.” *The Southern Review.* 41:3 (2005).

**Row, Jess**

**Books**


**Fiction in periodicals**

“The White Room” (novel excerpt), *failbetter,* Spring 2009
“Lives of the Saints,” *Ploughshares,* Spring 2009
“Sheep May Safely Graze,” *Threepenny Review,* Spring 2009
“Nobody Ever Gets Lost,” *American Short Fiction,* Fall 2006
“The Train to Lo Wu,” *Ploughshares,* Winter 2004
“For You,” *Kyoto Journal,* Fall 2004

**Fiction in Anthologies**


Nonfiction in periodicals
“Paradise Lost” (review of Cees Nooteboom’s Lost Paradise), Slate, October 31, 2007
“No Problem,” Primary Point, Summer 2007
“It Would Have Been Enough” (review of The Stories of Mary Gordon), Threepenny Review, Spring 2007
“The Woman Warrior at Thirty: Maxine Hong Kingston’s Secrets and Lies,” Slate, March 27, 2007
“Many Happy Returns, Your Holiness: Where Will Buddhism Be Without the Dalai Lama?” Slate, July 6, 2006
“Tlisting Happiness: A Buddhist’s Ambivalence About Christmas,” Slate, December 20, 2005
“Marcus vs. Franzen: The Latest Literary Wrangling in Harpers’ Leaves Everyone Confused.” Slate, October 21, 2005
“Unguided Tour: Susan Sontag Casts a Shadow Over the American Short Story.” Slate, February 1, 2005

Shaw, Donna
Articles

Steele, Felicia
Articles

Steinberg, Glenna
Articles

Tarter, Michele
Articles

Venturo, David
Articles