Greetings, and welcome to the first-ever issue of English Accents, a newsletter for alumni of the English Department at the University of Kansas. The mission of this newsletter is to help keep alumni informed and engaged with the various goings-on of KU English.

In this publication you’ll find features about what English majors are doing out in the world - like our cover story about comedian Nikki Glaser. You’ll also read about how the English Department relates to the broader community (“Faculty Outreach,” page 3).

Of course, there’s also plenty of material about the Department and its students. Inside you’ll find updates on what’s been going on in Wescoe Hall over the last year, student memories of studying abroad, and a review of notable student awards and accomplishments.

Whether you’re a recent graduate or left Lawrence years ago, we hope English Accents takes you back to fond days atop Mt. Oread.
This has been a landmark year for the English Department as we’ve adjusted to change at the University level, initiated some exciting changes of our own, and continued to build a wonderful community of faculty, students, visitors, and supporters. I’ve been blown away by the tremendous success of our current students (who have brought in awards hand over fist) and by stories of our alumni who have left the halls of Wescoe to make real differences, large and small, across the state, nation, and world.

Many of you will have heard about the new University Core Curriculum, scheduled to take effect this fall. While we will continue to teach most of the writing courses on campus, we’ve also taken this opportunity to start planning a whole new set of courses that will make students in fields remote from ours prick up their ears and think about English, including possible topics like “Writing for Social Change,” “Historical Villains,” “Performing Diversity,” and “Popular Music as Poetry.” Even more significantly perhaps, we’ve been working on a huge change to our major. The result is an exciting new program that combines flexibility with rigor and that will help students better realize the goals we believe essential to all English graduates. Thanks go especially to all of the undergraduates who offered their insights and opinions during this process.

In the graduate program, we have initiated a new recruitment visit for underrepresented students and continued to seek and secure funding to help recruit the strongest candidates, including many from our own undergraduate major. MFA and PhD Creative Writing students edited the 3rd issue of their national, innovative writing journal Beecher’s, and raised the profile of the programs with a table, brochure, and site reading at the annual Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference. Like our undergraduates, grad students earned numerous prestigious awards this year, including a Chancellor’s teaching award and three highly-competitive, University-wide fellowships. No wonder our ranking in US News and World Report has climbed!

Faculty book publications and honors are too numerous to list here, but let me mention that newly-appointed fiction writer Kij Johnson has done our department proud already in her first year. In addition to publishing a much-praised collection of stories, At the Mouth of the River of Bees, she won a Hugo Award, the most prestigious award in the field of fantasy literature. Faculty, graduate and undergraduate students are also very excited that Megan Kaminski, whose work promises to become a major voice in ecopoetics, has been appointed as a tenure-track professor in our department beginning this fall. Among the many ways that Megan mentors young writers in our programs is her overseeing of a brand-new online journal for undergraduate writing: Siren.

Speaking of environmental matters, as I write KU is hosting the biggest international conference in its history for the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE). This tremendous event, whose theme is “Changing Nature: Migrations, Energies, Limits,” positions KU English in discussions about one of the most urgent topics of our time. Nicely dovetailing with this, the department is also co-hosting the fifth biennial Rhetoric Society of America’s Summer Institute in the first week of June.

As Chair, but also as a teacher in our department, I’m thrilled to witness so much innovation, energy, and success. We look ahead to another great year in 2013/14.
English Faculty Gives Back to the Community

FROM ACADEMICS TO ACTIVISM

Professor Marta Caminero-Santangelo focuses on US Latino/a literature and issues of race, ethnicity, citizenship and human rights. This spring she finished a book manuscript entitled Documenting the Undocumented, which examines narratives – in the form of fiction, narrative journalism, oral histories, and more – that tell the stories of undocumented Latin American immigrants in the United States. While conducting research for the book on a Smithsonian Fellowship in 2010, Dr. Caminero-Santangelo discovered that Dream Activists, a migrant youth-led effort to pass the DREAM Act, would be staging a major demonstration at the Capitol Building at the same time she was in Washington. At the demonstration, Dr. Camine-

ro-Santangelo took the opportunity to record oral histories of several activists, and developed a new chapter for the book.

These oral histories highlighted the overlap between narrative and activism, a theme reflected in other areas where Dr. Caminero-Santangelo’s research coincides with issues of social activism. She has been involved with the humanitarian aid group No More Deaths, which has provided assistance to undocumented migrants on both sides of the US-Mexico border, since 2008. She spent a week volunteering at No More Deaths camps in both Arizona and Mexico in the summers of 2008, 2009, and

“Nikki & Sara Live” airs Tuesday nights at 11 p.m./10 p.m. CST. The new season begins this summer.

"It is also important to raise awareness about these issues."

Marta Caminero-Santangelo

Materials brought by representatives of No More Deaths during their February visit to KU.

Looking back at her time in Lawrence, Nikki is quick to acknowledge the value of her English degree. In addition to personal high points – such as an American Literature class with Professor James Carothers she mentioned being particularly fond of – she reaped pragmatic benefits from her studies. “I learned how to write at KU,” she says.

For her, this foundation has direct payoffs for her comedy, in terms of concision (“Comedy is all about the economy of words. Writing essays for English class helped me develop that”), writing with purpose (“Your thesis is essentially your point of view as a comedian and you have to prove that with jokes”), and the basics of audience appeal (“Tone, style, word choice, not using clichés—it’s all part of comedy”).

So was an English degree instrumental in Nikki’s success? Perhaps that’s an overly ambitious claim, but with “Nikki & Sara Live” being renewed for a second season, those of us back in Lawrence have plenty to be proud of. Not only is the show a great success story, but it’s also a unique addition to late night. Nikki and Sara offer fast-paced pop culture commentary and interviews that might be the first true “age of Twitter” late night talk show. Add to this that it’s exceedingly rare – if not unprecedented – to see a team of female hosts in the male-dominated world of late night and you start to get a real appreciation for the accomplishments of this English major from St Louis.

Would it be too cliché to suggest she’s not in Kansas anymore?

“Nikki & Sara Live” airs Tuesday nights at 11 p.m./10 p.m. CST. The new season begins this summer.
A No More Deaths representative presents slides to the audience at their KU visit in February.

A Talk About Literature in Kansas lecture in action.

Professor Marta Caminero-Santangelo is a Kemper Teaching Award-winning professor in the KU English Department. Her research explores the conjunction between literature, group identity and social change, particularly in respect to US Latino/a literature.

Professor John Edgar Tidwell teaches and researches African and African American Literatures, and is currently at work on a biography of poet Sterling A. Brown. He has served as a resident scholar for the Kansas Humanities Council and as Langston Hughes Visiting Professor.

Faculty Outreach, continued

2012. At these camps, volunteers provide food, water, humanitarian aid and relocation assistance to undocumented migrants — both those crossing into the United States and those who have been repatriated back to Mexico.

The group also works to spread awareness about migrant issues, releasing numerous reports about abuses and humanitarian concerns on the border. This February representatives of No More Deaths visited KU as part of a nationwide speaking tour presenting first-hand accounts of border issues. Dr. Caminero-Santangelo led the effort to bring No More Deaths to Lawrence. The material assistance provided by NMD and similar groups are vital, but only one step in addressing a “larger humanitarian situation,” she commented. “They recognize that it is also important to raise awareness about these issues … and the speaking tour is part of that larger concern. And that’s a long term No More Deaths project.”

Dr. John Edgar Tidwell is another English professor who has shown a commitment to community service. He is a long-standing participant in the Speakers Bureau of the Kansas Humanities Council. This program provides free presentations and discussions that explore Kansas and the meaning of the humanities for Kansans. In 2008, Prof. Tidwell became involved in another KHC program — Talk About Literature in Kansas or TALK, for short. TALK facilitates book discussions for interested groups of readers in communities throughout the state. Such individuals can approach KHC to discuss a specific text or a series of thematically-related books. KHC then assigns a humanities professional — like Prof. Tidwell — to lead discussions of the books that fall within his or her areas of interest or expertise. To encourage the formation of discussion groups, these books are made available to participants free-of-charge.

An incentive for Prof. Tidwell to get involved with KHC was the opportunity, as he said, “to increase my understanding of parts of the state that I did not know as I grew up in Southeast Kansas.” Lectures such as “Against the Odds: Writers Growing Up Black in Kansas” enabled him to travel the state and introduce Gordon Parks, Langston Hughes, and Frank Marshall Davis as nationally renowned writers with Kansas roots. The book discussions did more than let him tour the state; they also enabled him to contribute to a broader engagement with the importance of the humanities. Many of the books he discusses come from the “African American Perspectives” series — including works like Hughes’s Not without Laughter and Parks’s The Learning Tree. As “novels of becoming,” these two works are especially appropriate for participants seeking a better understanding of the transformational experiences in their own lives and how they relate to a sense of place, culture, class, gender, and race.

An engagement with community, from Prof. Tidwell’s perspective, is a crucial function of KHC. Audiences for these programs are typically organized by public libraries and retirement centers. Through their interactions, participants seek to determine connections between each other, their lives in Kansas, and the world in general. Thus they come to see more clearly what it means to be a Kansan and a citizen of the wider world. Exploring these interrelationships, according to Prof. Tidwell, leads to another reward: the opportunity to offer an academic experience to a broader audience. “By affording non-students a brief glimpse of campus life,” he enthusiastically asserts, “KHC programs build and form more meaningful ‘town-gown’ relations. Simply put, they create a stronger feeling of community.”

“It enables me to participate in a form of distance learning and deconstruct the idea of KU as a shining but unattainable institution on the hill.”

—Edgar Tidwell

A CLOSER LOOK...

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Every December the Department puts on a Holiday Party at the Union Pacific Depot, complete with food, a live band and silent auction. Jeff Tigchelaar, Lawrence writer and husband of PhD candidate Jana Tigchelaar, recorded his impressions from this year’s gathering.

The party was in full swing; The chair had made the opening speech, thanking absolutely everyone for positively everything; the Midday Ramblers were jamming in the corner; and the child-gang had formed and begun to dart, spin, flail, and flop. The weather had even gotten into the spirit, dropping to freezing, seemingly just in time for the occasion.

It was not long before Charlotte, 6, led a small entourage right up to me and announced that she’d be headed to the food table for another plateful of hamballs. I followed her there and offered my assistance. After piling spherical meat onto Charlotte’s plate, I asked Juliet, 4, if I could do the same for her.

“I don’t eat meatballs,” Juliet noted. “I am a vegetarian. I’ll stick with the cream-puffs, please.” So I piled spherical pastries onto Juliet’s plate — and the gang, with that, dashed off on its merry little way.

I learned that Juliet is the daughter of Paul Outka. I learned this when she approached Paul Outka with her creampuffs and said, “Daddy, could you please hold these? I don’t want them. You may have them.” She then scampered off with the child-gang, leaving Paul Outka standing with a plateful of creampuffs.

I don’t know Paul Outka. But I know a little about what he does in his free time, because I’d spotted him earlier that day on a racing bicycle, in full spandex — very serious, official-looking spandex. He may even have sponsors, or something! Which is, of course, to say: this was probably not a man who would idly eat a plate of creampuffs just because they’d been handed to him — or even care to be seen holding one, for that matter.

Thus, he looked to his left, to see if anyone was watching. He looked to his right, to make sure no one was watching. Then he quickly stuffed the puffs into the trash bin behind him, and made the universal brushing-off motion with his hands.

Rewind, now, to about ten minutes prior, when my daughter handed me the plate of meatballs she no longer desired. (It is difficult, after all, to effectively scamper whilst holding platefuls of food — especially round food.)

There I stood, then, with a plate of unsolicited ham. And what had I done? Why, consumed it, of course. Passively and idly. Consumed it all, God bless it — every one!

—

JEFF TIGCHELAAR

2012 Holiday Party

Snow days, fundraisers, and social affairs. This year offered plenty to keep us busy. In addition to the following stories from Jeff Tigchelaar, Stefanie Torres and Ashley Ortiz, what were some of this year’s highlights?

- Welcoming Nebula and World Fantasy Award winner Kij Johnson to our faculty (and promptly congratulating her on her first Hugo Award!)
- Hosting special lectures by visiting professor David Holmes, author Cory Doctorow, and others
- A variety of social events from the Fall Picnic and the Holiday Party to late-night gatherings hosted by the Student Association of Graduates in English.

Watson Library during one of the several winter storms of 2013.

The Midday Ramblers perform to an enthusiastic crowd at the Holiday Party.
Three years ago English graduate students founded the literary journal Beecher’s. Editor Stefanie Torres and Assistant Managing Editor Ashley Ortiz report on Beecher’s landmark third year.

This was a big year for Beecher’s, the English Department’s graduate-run journal. In March we went to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Conference held in Boston. The conference is the largest of its kind in the world and Beecher’s was fortunate enough to host an on-site reading for the first time ever, which took place on the ground floor of the bookfair—home to hundreds of publishers, university presses, and other up-and-coming journals like Beecher’s. Readers included Jenny Gropp-Hess, one of the Best New Poets of 2012; current and past KU students, Louise Krug (author of the memoir, Louise: Amended) and Abayo Animashaun (author of the poetry collection, The Giving of Pears), whose debut books are skyrocketing in readership; and past KU professor, Deb Olin Unferth, who has a following of her own after her widely popular book, Revolution: The Year I Fell in Love and Went to Join the War. The reading was well-attended and generated lots of interest not only in the journal itself, but also in our annual writing contest.

This year, Beecher’s held a contest in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, where winners received a cash prize and publication in our third issue, which is due out in June. This year’s contest garnered four times as many entries as last year. Judges included Lyn Hejinian (poetry), professor at UC Berkeley and the author of numerous books, including most recently The Book of a Thousand Eyes and The Wide Road with Carla Harryman; Dinty W. Moore (nonfiction), editor of the online journal, Brevity, and author of many books, including The Mindful Writer: Noble Truths of the Writing Life and the award-winning memoir, Between Panic & Desire; and Kevin Moffett (fiction), a Pushcart Prize winner and author of Permanent Visitors, Further Interpretations of Real-Life Events, and The Silent History, a collaborative multipart narrative co-written with Matt Derby and Eli Horowitz, which was released as an app for mobile devices in fall 2012.

Beecher’s continues to build its reputation - the magazine has been featured on several popular literary review sites. We are looking forward to another successful trip to AWP 2014, which will be in Seattle.

To purchase Beecher’s third issue, available in June 2013, or to make a donation, visit our website www.beechersmag.com.
Every year the Department offers a number of intersession study abroad programs. This year, students travelled to Costa Rica over winter break, and to London for spring break, where they had the opportunity to study English while experiencing the culture and lifestyle of another country.

In this section we present the experiences of three students involved with study abroad, who share their impressions of time spent in a new place.

This was doctoral student Ann Martinez’ second time working as a teaching assistant for the Costa Rica program. Undergraduates Meaghan Moody and Alaine Caudle got a new experience with the spring break London trip. Each of them gives us a unique glimpse of their time overseas.

For some of the students it happens in the cloud forest of Monteverde, as they trek through vegetation that is hundreds of feet tall. For others, it is while they sit quietly at the foot of the active Arenal volcano. But by the time they arrive at Manuel Antonio, on the coast, and see capuchin monkeys crossing the street, or toucans outside their window, or are woken in the morning not by their alarm clock but by the call of howler monkeys, their expressions have changed. Amazed comprehension is one way to describe it.

In the months leading up to the trip, which takes place the first week of January, students begin preparing by reading various pieces about Costa Rica that touch on the country’s history, culture, and people. And while they are eager and engaged for the trip to begin, it is once they are immersed, experiencing the Costa Rican environment first hand, that their levels of amazement and comprehension come together.

Some of the students are experienced world travelers, some have never traveled abroad before, and some have never been on a plane, but none of them have had a class quite like this before. Wherever they turn, there is something new to experience. They are immersed in a culture that welcomes them and urges them to learn as much as they can about the country before they fly away. And always the students take this challenge wholeheartedly. Always inquisitive of their surroundings, they spend the first half of the journey asking questions, and the second half putting everything together.

And all along the way Mary Klayder is right there, urging them to ask, to think, to wonder, to connect, and then to think some more – about the country they’re visiting and the country they call home, about the people they meet in Costa Rica and the people they know back in Kansas, about the person they are when they travel and the person they will become at the end of the journey. In Costa Rica, the locals, or Ticos, have an all-purpose saying: “Pura vida.” Literally, it translates as “pure life” or “only life,” but it means much more to Ticos who use it as a greeting and a goodbye, as an expression of surprise, as a way to show things are going well, and as a way to say thank you. By the end of those eleven days, the students have adopted the phrase and imbued it with meaning.

I’ve had the opportunity to work with Mary as her TA in two different Costa Rica Study Abroad trips. Each group of students has been very different from the other at the start of the trip, but by the end they all seem to feel like they have journeyed for far longer than just eleven days, and as they land back in Kansas you can see they have not only gotten a lot of sun, but they’ve gotten a lot to think about as well – and they will have even more to write about in their final travel writing project.

In the summer of 2013, Mary will be leading her 33rd study abroad group – this time to the UK. She always seems to know when to push, when to prod, when to leave her students alone to think, and when to utter her trademark encouragement, “It’ll be fine” – only in Costa Rica, she should probably change that to “It’ll be Pura Vida!”

Originally from the border community of Calexico, CA/Mexicali, Mexico, Ann Martinez is completing her dissertation, “The Green Ages: The Medieval Evidence for Environmental Awareness in England.” Her interest in working on study abroad stems from her wish to someday lead her own students on similar journeys.
For Emily Brontë, the English moors were a source of power—a place she could go to create freely and simply be. As I started researching for my thesis on *Wuthering Heights* last summer, I wondered about Emily’s curious relationship to the moors and how a young woman—so secluded from society—could craft such an intensely dark masterpiece. I was told repeatedly that I just needed to visit the moors to understand, so skeptical though I was, I planned a two-day trip up to Haworth to see them for myself.

I woke early to catch my train at King’s Cross station to ride two hours north to Leeds, where I made a transfer to the Shipley line and disembarked at Keighley. From there I caught the bus that would take me to Haworth. Since they do not announce the stops on the bus, I was a little flustered trying to reorient myself. I accepted directions from a man with coke-bottle glasses and several plastic garbage bags who dramatically disclosed, “I’m writing a novel on the Brontës’ madness.”

When I finally arrived at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, the staff greeted me warmly and assisted me with a map for a three-mile hike on the moors to Top Withens, the dwelling that supposedly inspired Emily’s creation of the Wuthering Heights house in the novel.

I started on a residential road and at first caught only momentary glimpses of the moors from in between the houses as I walked. Eventually, the path began to depart from the main road and soon it became a dirt trail. The further I walked, fewer and fewer vestiges of society obstructed my view of the moors. I suddenly felt engulfed.

Rolling hills of mossy green and rust surrounded me. Few trees were nearby, but the ones that were had a fragile and weathered, yet paradoxically robust and timeless look about them. The silence was also strange; it had a presence and demanded that you listen to it, if it is possible to listen to silence. Only the sheep and birds were permitted to penetrate its pall, and when they did, their cries had a startling, fragmentary effect. Their din melded with the silence, creating an eerie and yet natural symphony of sorts.

I hiked two miles or so until I reached the Brontë waterfall, unlike any I’ve ever seen. Waterfalls, in my mind, shoot up hesitating mists. Suicidal trees, leaning over just in case, usually surround them. In Haworth, however, the waterfall seems to cooperate with its surroundings like a slow graceful tear weaving its way down the cheek.

A crude stone bridge called Brontë Bridge connects the two banks, and I quickly traversed it. From there, I continued up a steep path toward a signpost for Top Withens, marking it about a mile away. As I climbed, I tried to imagine the Brontë sisters doing the same in their long dresses.

As I continued on the swiftly disappearing path, through mud and puddles of water, I kept my eye focused on a distant speck. Immediately upon seeing it, I knew it must be Top Withens. Its location, its desolation, and the way the moors seemed to clutch at it agreed completely with how I had originally visualized the novel’s setting.

As I walked the last yards to the ruins, I remembered a few lines from Charlotte’s Jane Eyre: “I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.” The isolation one engages on the moors renders these words all the more liberating, and when I finally reached Top Withens—placing my hand upon its cold stone wall—I realized that maybe it’s not the image of the moors, but rather the feelings of freedom and liberty they evoke from you when you give them some of your time, your energy, your self. It is returned to you ten-fold. Gradually I had a glimmer of understanding as to how Emily generated *Wuthering Heights.*
Rain, rain, go away, come again another day. That was my daily chant throughout our week in London. Unfortunately, on most days my wishes didn’t come true and the cold and rain persisted. But on Thursday morning, a bit of sunshine peeked through the clouds and I set out for a stroll in Hyde Park.

I started my walk on the western edge, in what is actually known as Kensington Gardens. On the way to my first stop, Kensington Palace, common sights were: cute babies in strollers being pushed by their athletic looking mothers, furiously pedalling bicyclists, and adorable old couples with the gleam of a forty-year-old love in their eyes. So pretty typical stuff I’d say. Upon arrival at Kensington Palace, I took a moment to gaze upon it in wonder. As I stood there, I contemplated which part of the palace William and Kate would be living in, and whether it was really a suitable home to raise a child. I soon decided it didn’t really matter what part they were living in because it’s all still a palace. And yes, indeed, it would be an excellent place to raise a child, but only if the child could be me. Unfortunately I won’t be getting the chance to live in Kensington Palace, but I was okay settling for my brief daydream as I stood in the rare London sunshine.

I departed from Kensington Palace and headed east hoping to come across something even better than the thought of living in a royal residence. So I continued down the sidewalk, enjoying the crisp breeze on my cheeks and every bit of the beautifully landscaped lawns. My intention all along had been to start at Kensington Palace, as I did, and then make my way to the Queen Elizabeth Gate at the east end of the park. This gate had caught my eye as our bus to Oxford whizzed by the morning prior. I immediately knew I had to go back and see it up close, because the image it contained was something that everyone should come to know and love. What was this remarkable image, you ask? The figure of one of the most majestic creatures to ever (theoretically) exist — the unicorn. I don’t know if the city of London is known for anything in particular, like Philadelphia is known for Brotherly Love, but if I had to declare it anything, I’d call it the City of Unicorns and Dreams. I’ve never seen a city with such an appreciation of unicorns. They were on buildings, in museums, cast in gold, and even struck on £1 coins. I also noticed that each unicorn was usually accompanied by a lion, in an obvious crest-like layout. Curious as to what this symbol meant, I did a little research and found that the lions and unicorns I was seeing all over the city were actually symbols for the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom. The lion represents England while the unicorn represents Scotland. Naturally that means that I’m now a huge fan of Scotland. I mean, any country that prides itself on being represented by a powerful and prestigious white gleaming unicorn deserves respect in my book. And on Easter I even overheard a relative explaining that our family had ancestors from Scotland, so now I have even more reason to respect the Scots. Plus, unicorns are just cool.

My walk through Hyde Park turned out to be pretty amazing. I saw a palace, a sweet old couple, and a beautiful gate with the gigantic figure of a unicorn on it. It was worth the sore feet and grumbling stomach because my memories of Hyde Park will last me a lifetime. And I got some really good pictures of unicorns in case I ever do forget.
Honors Students win Langston Hughes Awards

This February, the English Department had the unprecedented honor of seeing two of its undergraduate students win the Langston Hughes Creative Writing Awards. Brendan Allen and Becky Mandelbaum are the first undergraduates ever to win the award, which is given yearly to two Douglas County writers in memory of African-American writer Langston Hughes, who grew up in Lawrence.

Mandelbaum won the fiction side of the contest with her short story “Snowman,” while Allen’s “Horizontal Inheritance” was the winning poetry entry. Each writer won $500 for their work and the two were honored in a ceremony at the Lawrence Art Center on February 1st – Hughes’s birthday. Both writers are honors students majoring in English with a creative writing emphasis.

A senior from Wichita, Becky Mandelbaum submitted a coming-of-age story about a 13-year-old Jewish girl preparing for her Bat Mitzvah. Mandelbaum began the story in the fall of 2011. “I haven’t written anything else like this, but I like writing with a younger narrator,” Mandelbaum said. “It’s easier to write about childhood because you have time to reflect on your own.”

Brendan Allen, a senior from Phillipsburg, turned in a collection of 15 poems. Much of his work has been influenced by ecology-minded poetry, and connections among people, language and the environment. Allen explained that his submissions represent a wide time period in his life. “Some poems I started years ago and just finished recently, and other work was finished a day or two before I submitted them.”

Both writers have graduate school in their eventual plans, and they cite their educations in the KU department of English as one of their major influences. “My writing has been influenced by being in college and being in an academic environment,” Mandelbaum said. “It’s a good community, and it’s a good place to be a young writer.” Winning the Hughes Awards can certainly seem to attest to that.

Sponsored by the Lawrence Arts Center and The Raven Bookstore, the Langston Hughes Awards seek to encourage writers who present their life experiences creatively, the way that Hughes drew on his experiences growing up in Lawrence throughout his writing career. The prizes have been won by KU English students in past years, but never by an undergraduate – let alone two – so the department has plenty of reason to be proud.
The annual pursuit of scholarships, fellowships and stipends is a hallowed tradition of higher education. Most of us probably remember the process as a major part of deciding what university to head to after finishing high school. For those who continue their studies past a bachelor’s degree, however, the task of paying for education continues. To that end, the University of Kansas offers a host of awards through a variety of outlets for graduate students. This year two students in the English Department were honored with awards from the Office of Graduate Studies and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to fund their continuing education in the 2013 school year.

Meghara Eichhorn-Hicks is an MA student graduating this semester, and re-entering the program as a PhD candidate in the fall. She was selected by the Office of Graduate Studies for the John H. Nelson Scholarship, which awards a research stipend for incoming students of high academic ability. Meghara plans to use the funds to finance a trip to Ireland, where she will further her study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish drama. In particular, she looks forward to accessing manuscripts at the Abbey Theatre Archive in Dublin and the Linen Hall Library in Belfast. Describing her research interests so far, she says she’s mainly focused on “the roles space, distance, and geography play in determining how nationalist theater groups create and disseminate competing definitions of Irishness.” She hopes to teach British and Irish literature after finishing her PhD.

Every year, the Nelson Scholarship is awarded to offset the costs of research for a new graduate student at KU – in this case Meghara was eligible because she’ll be new to the PhD program. Every department can nominate two students, who are then evaluated by the Office of Graduate Studies. For her the scholarship came as a bit of a surprise – she didn’t know she had been nominated until she received a letter telling her she’d won.

Clare Echterling, recipient of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Office of Graduate Affairs’ Kate Stephens Fellowship, is also finishing her MA before returning to KU for a PhD in literature. Her thesis examined themes of imperialist, pastoralism, and environmentalism in C.S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia. This project combined her research interests in imperial and environmental discourse in late-19th and 20th Century British literature, postcolonialism, and children’s literature. Clare has also been involved in the Department helping professors Paul Outka and Byron Caminero-Santangelo organize the 2013 biennial conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment which was hosted by the University of Kansas May 29th-June 1st. Over 700 participants attended the conference, making it one of the largest ever held at KU.

Named for the first female department chair at KU, the Kate Stephens Fellowship is awarded yearly to a talented student who is finishing a degree at KU – bachelor or Master’s – and is continuing on to an MA or PhD in literature, history or ethics. Clare also was happily surprised at her win, after being informed that she would be the English Department’s nominee. She sees her nomination as part of a long trend of faculty support for students in the department. “I have always felt incredibly supported by the faculty here--all, not just those who I work with the most--and this is a great honor.” Clare says the scholarship will help her devote “more time and energy” to her research, “which, as we all know, is a hot commodity in graduate school.” She hopes to stay in academia after graduating, and continue working in the fields of English and Environmental Humanities.

The Langston Hughes Awards...

- Awarded yearly to Douglas County writers
- Named for Langston Hughes, Lawrence native and Harlem Renaissance luminary
- Previous winners from KU English include Amy Ash, Callista Buchen, Iris Moulton (2012) and Mary Stone-Dockery (2011)
### Undergraduate

1. This September English majors Brendan Allen and Becky Mandelbaum founded *The Siren*, a literary journal devoted to creating an online space for undergraduate writers to publish fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Editor and cofounder Brendan Allen explains that *The Siren* seeks to fill a void in a world in which writers are constantly pressured to publish, but are often uncertain of where or how to do so. In a world in which hundreds of literary magazines compete for readers’ attention, *The Siren* provides a place for young writers to collaborate and build community.

![Bernadette Myers, Hall Center Scholar and Class of 1913 Award recipient](image1)

![Megan Watson, Rusty Leffel Concerned Student Award recipient and 2011-2012 Hall Center Scholar](image2)

2. Of the six Hall Center Scholars selected for 2012-2013, two were English majors. Becky Mandelbaum and Bernadette Myers (both of whom are featured elsewhere in this issue of English Accents) each received a $500 award and the opportunity to engage with speakers for the Hall Center’s Humanities Lecture Series. The Series brings well-known authors, scholars and public intellectuals to KU every year to promote the value of the humanities and initiate an interdisciplinary discussion on campus. This year’s speakers were Nikky Finney, Sarah Vowell, Robin Rowland, Stephen Greenblatt and Edwidge Danticat.

Hall Center Scholars are selected for strong academic credentials and a record of involvement in the university community, and get the opportunity to converse personally with the speakers. English student Megan Watson was one of the eight Scholars for 2011-12. Additionally, the list of 2013-2014 Hall Center Scholars includes six English Students: Jenny Curatola, Tasha Cerny, Heathyr Johnson, Ryan Smith, Joyce Bohling and Katherine Gwynn. This is an unprecedented number of English majors included in the program, and considering the small number of Hall Center Scholars each year, it’s a major honor for the department.

3. Senior Bernadette Myers received the *Class of 1913 Award*, which goes to one graduating senior man and one graduating senior woman, who “by his or her evidenced intelligence, devotion to studies, and personal character gives promise of usefulness to society.” Bernadette comes from Prairie Village, and plans to pursue a Ph.D. in early modern literature after graduation.

4. Senior Megan Watson received the *Rusty Leffel Concerned Student Award*, presented annually to a student of any class who has demonstrated “a real concern for furthering the ideals of the University and of higher education.” Megan is from Overland Park, and finishing a double-major in English-Creative Writing and Chemistry. She’ll be attending the KU School of Medicine to pursue an MD and a Masters in Public Health.

### Graduate

1. Amy Ash is the winner of the 2013 *Chancellor’s Teaching Assistant Award*, one of the University’s most prestigious teaching awards. Her nomination recognized her ability to create an engaging learning environment and foster student awareness and self-reliance. Amy is pursuing a Ph.D. in Poetry. Doctoral student Jana
Tigchelaar was also recognized with an honorable mention for graduate teaching.

2 Doctoral student Will Cunningham has been selected to participate in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute on African American History and Culture in the Georgia Low Country. The two-week seminar is sponsored by the Georgia Historical Society, and will give twenty-five college and university teachers the opportunity to explore African-American life and culture in Savannah and Georgia’s Coastal Islands. Will fills one of only three slots for graduate students at the institute, where he will continue his work examining the intersection of Southern and African-American literatures.

### Alumni

1 2009 KU English alum Feloniz Lovato-Winston was recognized twice this year for her short play “Emilia’s Lover”, which tells the story of an aging mother and her recollections of alover who may or may not exist. A 15-minute version of the play was performed as a staged reading in February as part of Pot Luck Productions’ First Friday Play Reading program in Kansas City. The program features emerging female playwrights from the greater KC area. In March, a shorter version of “Emilia’s Lover” was also featured as part of local EMU Theatre’s 10-Minute Play Festival.

The play’s life began in the halls of the KU English Department, in Professor Emeritus Paul Lim’s beginning playwriting class. Lovato-Wilson, who still resides in Lawrence, wrote her first draft as an assignment for the class. But the idea stuck with her.

2 Kristen Lillvis, who received her Ph.D. from KU in 2011, accepted a tenure-track assistant professorship at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. While at KU, Kristen studied representations of mothering in African American futurist fiction. She was also the 2010 AboutSF coordinator for the Center for the Study of Science Fiction. At Marshall she teaches courses in contemporary and African American literature.

3 Adam Long, who received a Ph.D. in American Literature in 2012, was named associate director and facilities manager of the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center at Arkansas State University. His tasks will involve overseeing the day-to-day management and educational programming at the museum, which features a family-home and barn-studio, where Ernest Hemingway wrote in the 1930s. At KU, Adam studied the work of William Faulkner and other Southern writers.
A NOTE ABOUT GIVING...

In the University of Kansas English Department, we believe that an education grounded in the humanities provides individuals with the intellectual tools and perspectives to engage successfully with a complex world. Students of English are trained to think critically, write effectively, and appreciate fully the ways that language, ideas, and stories reflect and shape our lives.

Whether through the study of literature, writing, or rhetoric, the English Department is dedicated to providing students with not just academic skills, but also life skills. We believe that what students learn in Wescoe Hall will serve them continually, whatever they do or wherever they go.

A gift to the Department of English can help us offer opportunities to students in a variety of ways:

- **RECRUITMENT FELLOWSHIPS** help us bring graduate students to KU by making sure their work and studies are supported.
- **RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS** for undergraduates provide students a way to get an early start putting their education to work.
- **INTERNSHIPS** provide real-world experience and help build career paths.
- **STUDY ABROAD** gives students a chance to experience new outlooks, and a broader perspective on their humanities studies.
- **GRADUATE TRAVEL FUNDING** lets MA and PhD students represent KU by presenting their research at campuses around the world.

Gifts to the English Department are tax-deductible. You can give to the Department as a whole, or target giving to specific programs, degrees, or areas of study. Gifts of all sizes help. If you can only contribute modestly, you could consider a monthly or quarterly donation.

To donate to the English Department online, visit the “Giving” section of the English Department homepage (http://www.english.ku.edu/giving/). There you can view different options for giving, which will take you to the site for the KU Endowment Association – the nonprofit organization that handles KU’s fundraising.

You may also send a contribution by mail to:

Brian Friedman, Development Director
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Kansas University Endowment Association
P.O. Box 928
Lawrence, KS 66044-0928.

Be sure to specify the gift is for the English Department, and thanks so much for helping us continue our mission to educate and develop young minds.