What Our Alumni Say and Do

In the fall of 2012, former English major Jennifer Hannigan, under the supervision of Dr. Terry Engel, designed and distributed a survey of English department alumni. Jennifer took on the task as part of her graduate study, and we are grateful for her central role in the first alumni survey since 2003.

She sent questionnaires to 535 of you, with 136 responding. Graduation dates of respondents range from 1968-2012. Here are highlights of what you are doing and what you told us about your time in our department.

Ninety-two responding alumni have gone on to earn master's degrees: 21 in English Education, 14 in English and others in a diverse array of fields, including Library Science, Divinity, Journalism, and Technical Writing.

Thirty-three respondents have earned or are working on Ph.D. degrees, five in English. Other doctoral areas of study include Applied Linguistics, Clinical Psychology, Forestry, Spanish, and Peace Studies/Political Science.

One-hundred-and-twenty of you told us what you do for a living. The results are consistent with past surveys in the dominance of teaching careers and in the variety of other jobs or careers. (See Table Page 2.)

We will use this list to help English majors assess their own career opportunities. Since so many factors influence where we end up professionally, we should resist generalizing too much about the role of an English degree in placing students in specific careers. Obviously our majors have had success in finding teaching jobs at both the secondary and college level, but as some of you pointed out in the survey, it is not always easy to land that job.

Several of you also commented on the need to be better prepared for an uncertain job market. We agree that we could do more and have taken some small steps to address the matter of career planning. Over the last two years we have incorporated a short unit on non-academic careers into our Introduction to English Studies course. Students now hear directly from alumni who work outside academia, and they do some preliminary research into and write a short paper on a possible alternative career for themselves.

We are also hoping to address your concerns about a limited curriculum. As you can read elsewhere in this newsletter, we have launched the first of what we hope will be several courses in publishing, and, in partnership with the communications department, we are building a film studies component. I agree with your comments about a need for more writing courses, including technical writing, or more courses in grammar or linguistics, but it will be a few years before we can add them.

As most of you realize, a small department cannot always muster the resources for a suitably diverse program. As a result, even though we want to expand course offerings, our core will continue to be the study of literature and the practice of critical writing. Thus we are encouraged that most of you felt well prepared in the areas of critical thinking and textual analysis. What any department really has to offer—even more than information—is a set of skills, and what we need to do best will remain the teaching of reading, writing, and thinking, which are the most enduring and transferrable of any skills. We share the opinion of some respondents that students need to learn more computer-based skills from us, and we are trying to upgrade our
From the Chair (Cont. from One)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Field*</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education (elementary/secondary)</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (college/university)</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editor</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer (technical, publications, etc.)</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative/performing arts</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (management)</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (associate)</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled profession (law, medical, etc.)</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-profit organization</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missions/minister</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed**</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some respondents listed more than one professional field; therefore both the total percentages and count will be larger than otherwise.

** If respondents labeled themselves as “self-employed” or working in an “other” category of employment, they were asked to specify job titles. Thus the list below is not made up of separate “professional fields” but rather specific jobs within some of the fields in the above answer options. We have included only those job titles that were mentioned more than once.

Adjunct English Instructor (3) Educator (2) Office Manager (2)
Associate Principle (2) Executive Director (2) Registered Nurse (3)
Copy Writer (2) Freelance Writer (4) Substitute Teacher (2)
Director of Communications (2) Graduate Assistant (2) Writer (2)

Turning to another category on the survey, most of you agreed or strongly agreed that you developed as a spiritual person while at Harding, but that doesn’t tell us specifically what role the English department may have played. Few comments addressed the issue, though some of you felt we needed to do a better job at presenting other worldviews. Another small group felt we needed to be more explicit in delineating a Christian worldview in our teaching of literature. Although the survey responses point to a generally successful attempt to infuse our work with Christian vision, we also hear your desire for more—a burden we gladly bear because if any discipline outside biblical study is ready-made to engender spiritual growth, it is ours, by making us confront those other worldviews honestly and by deepening our own understanding of how to apply Christian teaching to the simulated worlds of fiction.

No alumni survey is needed to tell me that the most crucial factor in what you end up doing and being is—you. And as a group over the years, English majors have brought a lot to our table. I’ll illustrate very briefly by this roll call of English alumni who have presented papers and/or moderated panels at the Christian Scholar’s Conference at Lipscomb University over the last two years:

- Joanna Benskin ('09)
- Nathan Dorris ('09)
- Nathan Dorris ('12)
- Jonathan Camp ('95)
- Jonathan McRay ('09)
- Victor McCracken ('95)
- Karie Cross ('09)
- Jon Singleton ('02)
- Nathan Shank ('08)
- Lauren Smelser White ('04)

Seven of these alumni are now teaching full time: Camp, Elliot, and McCracken at Abilene Christian; Madden at South Carolina; Reed at Northeast Alabama Community College; and Boone and Singleton at Harding. Benskin, Cross, Shank, and White are in graduate programs; McRay and Wright recently completed master’s. Thweatt-Bates, who has taught at various places, now works as an independent scholar, and Dorris works with the Open Door ministry in Atlanta.

An alumni survey or a list of scholarly presentations can reveal only so much. Success comes in too many forms and individual lives are too complicated to be wrapped in a nice PR bow. But when I see our alumni in action I am optimistic about our mission. The men and women I’ve named are among the best to emerge from our program, but they came to us already possessing a unique potential. In that respect, they represent the larger group of alumni, not only in intelligence and talent but also in an intensity of caring. Their passions range from ministry to traditional scholarship to environmentalism to theology to politics to performance.

The papers they have read these last two years are a tonic for any discouragement we may have as teachers. The greater tonic is that, exactly as we hoped, all of them have moved beyond an identity as “English majors,” defining themselves by what they are becoming as people and what they do as professionals. Selfishly, we wish all of you had a forum as convenient as a conference to display your talents. For those who remain here at your alma mater, it would be a pleasure to see.
In the words of Mallory Pratt, a Harding English major who wants to work in publishing after graduation, “The Harding English department took great strides toward strengthening its offerings by including an Introduction to Publishing course during Intersession of 2013.” The course was taught by Harding alumnus Jason Ashlock (‘02), founder and president of Moveable Type Management, a book publishing company located in New York City.

English Chair John Williams envisioned the course as a response to a growing student interest over the last five years. He then worked with Dr. Warren Casey, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, to win approval by the Academic Affairs Committee, a process which went smoothly. When approached by Williams about teaching the course, former Harding English major Ashlock was immediately excited by the prospect of helping his alma mater and educating Harding students about the rapidly evolving world of publishing. According to Pratt, she was exactly the kind of student Ashlock wanted to enlighten: she bought into the romantic vision of the “hardboiled NYC editor slaving among cigarette butts and reams of paper wads” and pounding on a Remington typewriter on a weathered wooden desk, trying to beat a deadline.

That stereotype and the technology that characterized print journalism are part of the history with which Ashlock’s course begins, but he soon showed how new technology has radically changed the book industry. With topics ranging from acquisition and rights management, editing and design, production and distribution, through sales, marketing and discoverability, students were provided with the tools and knowledge necessary to compete for internships and jobs in publishing.

Anonymously submitted student reviews were enthusiastic, especially regarding how the class could enhance career options:

“I wanted to get out of this course a road map of the publishing world so that I could get my own work published one day. This course not only gave me a guide for the publishing community, but it gave me ideas for how to better navigate it.”

“Many English majors fear they have no option other than teaching, but they are not passionate about that. Publishing is a realistic career choice with so many burgeoning opportunities.”

“I learned about tons of job opportunities that would have passed by my blind eye had I not taken this course, and if there is anything English majors need it’s job opportunities. I don’t know if I will go down any of these new roads that have opened up before me, but at least I can see them now.”

The class emphasized the changing role of technology in the publishing industry by requiring the students become familiar with and utilize the tools that are a part of the changing industry. The course not only provided “an overview of devices, platforms and tools for creating, designing, marketing, and reading e-books,” but in the words of the syllabus, “In keeping with the digital emphasis of this course, assignments will require you to engage with a variety of online social platforms and digital publishing platforms, and to do so with agility and speed. You will be required to set up individual accounts with various social platforms for content and data management.” Much of the post class discussion and assignments took place on Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook; required texts were accessed as e-books; and in a syllabus statement that would make most university professors cringe, students were told, “You are encouraged to bring to class and use during class your e-reading devices, laptops and (perhaps unlike any of your other courses) your smart phones.”

Ashlock is well-suited to a discussion on the revolution occurring in the publishing industry. Pratt explains how “Ashlock showed us the creative potential technology has gifted the industry players with. No longer is the author restricted to the traditional value chain (literary agent, editor, publisher, wholesaler, distributor, reader). He now can self-publish through online platforms. E-books can include audio and visual enhancements. Authors can publish books online in segments and receive feedback from their readers. Though the lines are definitely blurred, it is not necessarily a bad thing.”

English professor Katherine Dillion, who sat in on the course, concurs: “The content was relevant and informative about traditional publishing as well as about new directions in publishing technology,” she wrote. “This is the part I particularly found eye-opening—the huge world of digital publishing and all it entails—e-books, Web books, enhanced books, and not just the products but the ideas and philosophy behind it all. Ashlock conveyed well the sense of the game-changing approaches we should be aware of, and in the time-less sense he challenged us to deconstruct our pre-existing notions of what a book is. I thought he did a great job of balancing technical with practical and philosophical elements.”

Dillion was also appreciative of the class’s emphasis on ethical and spiritual considerations of the publishing industry. “Ashlock didn’t overtly call attention to religious themes or make scriptural references, but rather he showed the ways that Christians can conduct themselves in a competitive industry such as book publishing. In one presentation a student did a comparative study of publishing agents, Jason Ashlock and Andrew Wiley showing the different approaches, one being informed more by spiritual values with the other being a more worldly approach. I found it particularly affirming to see how Christians can be involved in the publishing industry while still maintaining core Christian values. Moreover, with Jason being a Harding graduate, he was aware of the spiritual emphasis here and was at ease with it in a way that one unfamiliar with Harding may not be.”

Ashlock felt good about the maiden voyage of Introduction to Publishing and is eager to return next summer for the second journey. He enjoyed his students, saying that “they were in many ways sharper than the students I’ve been teaching at the City University of New York.” According to Williams, Ashlock’s dedication to Harding is exemplary, and “if Harding does eventually develop a block of publishing courses, Jason Ashlock will deserve the lion’s share of credit for his sacrificial pioneering of this course.”
Making a Difference: Amanda Jean Partridge

Growing up, Amanda Jean Partridge ('11) saw that there were “so many things that people who didn’t know how to read couldn’t do,” and she knew that she wanted to reach out to those people and help them gain access to the world of print. Since October of 2012 she has been doing just that as the Executive Director of the Literacy Council of White County (LCWC).

The Literacy Council is a nonprofit working within a coalition of other councils located around the state. The council works to help English speakers learn how to read and write, teaches English to non-native speakers, and offers GED and citizenship tests tutoring.

As Executive Director, Partridge’s duties cover the gamut, from writing reports and grant requests, speaking to civic organizations, and managing the bookstore, to training tutors and supervising volunteers, and she is passionate about all those jobs. She rattles off the statistics: Thirteen percent of White County residents are functionally illiterate; 75 percent of people in state and federal institutions are functionally illiterate, while those who go through institutionalized programs have lower recidivism rates; risks of hospitalization increase by 50 percent due to being unable to read safety warnings labels; teenagers are twice as likely to become pregnant; mothers are less likely to get prenatal care and follow up on doctors’ visits. Reading to children is one of the main determining factor in the quality of children’s reading skills when they begin school.

Partridge is excited about the prospects for the literacy council. She is working on a new ESL curriculum, which will focus on working in groups as opposed to one on one tutoring. She hopes the new curriculum will shorten long waiting lists. She has also put in a lot of time on organizing Second Time Around, the used bookstore that shares space with the council. Located in downtown Searcy, Second Time Around is the only designated used book store in Searcy, and all funds go directly to the LCWC. Amidst a revitalized downtown, with new shops and restaurants opening, Partridge sees the possibility that the bookstore could fill a needed gap and tries to give the store a community feeling.

Of course the biggest challenge is finding volunteers and tutors, and fundraising, but Partridge is thankful for all the friends in community she has met through this job. When she took the job, the LCWC was on the verge of closing, but she hopes to help guide it into a more stable future. You can follow her progress on Facebook, at facebook.com/whitecountyliteracy, or on their blog at literacycouncilofwhitecounty.wordpress.com.

Faculty News

Nick Boone wrote the book chapter “Paterson as a Satirical Work: Epistemology of the Dance.” It was part of the book Levison and Twentieth-Century Literature: Ethics and the Reconstruction of Subjectivity, edited by Donald R. Wehrs for the University of Delaware Press. In addition the article “The Five Armageddons of Revelation” was published in Restoration Quarterly. The book review for The Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry was published in Southern Humanities Review. Boone also made two conference presentations: “The Problem of Olson’s Didacticism” at the conference “Re-Viewing Black Mountain College 4”, and “Exploring Form and Content: Epic Proportions” for the White County Creative Writer’s Conference. Boone attended the 2012 Christian Scholars’ Conference where he was respondent on a panel discussion of the movie Tree of Life.

Heath Carpenter published three poems in The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature. He was accepted to the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program at Arkansas State University. He published a review of a reading by fiction writer Jennifer Egan for the Arkansas Times in addition to other writings for the weekly newspaper. His nonfiction was presented at Tales from the South, which was broadcast locally on KULR public radio station and syndicated across the country, and he was nominated for a Burksy award for favorite professor.

Michael Claxton published an article titled “Adventures in Biography” in the fall 2012 Alpha Chi Recorder. His Bison column “Just the Clax” reached its100th entry in the fall of 2012. He continues to work on a biography of the lady magician Dell O’Dell.

Katherine Dillion published a review of How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935 by Susan Nance in the Journal of American Folklore. She presented a paper at American University of Beirut at the Humanities and Human Rights Conference and taught in the humanities program at Pepperdine University. In Fall of 2012 she served as faculty for the international program’s semester in England Iceland, Scotland, and Ireland.

Terry Engel presented the paper “The Need for Wilderness: Reading Wallace Stegner and Edward Abbey” at the Christian Scholars’ Conference. He oversaw a graduate independent study that surveyed English department alumni, and he did the layout for and wrote English News.

Kayla Haynie worked in a two-week reading program in Africa.


John Williams convened a panel discussion Scholars’ Conference: “Deferred Hope and Fulfilled Longing: Questions of Reconciliation in Terrence Malick’s film The Tree of Life.”

The department employed six adjunct teachers: Lisa Burley, Stephanie Eddelemann, Adria (Giles) English, Holly (Threm) Goslin, Anne Harrington, and Nekia Shelton.
1978
Beverly Nall Pace (B.A. 78, M.Ed. 79), associate professor at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, has written an e-book with her fellow colleagues at Faulkner. *I Write* is an English composition textbook written from the Christian perspective, and it can be found on iTunes. Pace retired May 2013.

1991

1993.
Kara Harland married Clay Harland (’01). They have two children, Kenneth (13) and Katherine (11). Kara homeschools and helps Clay with his law practice.

1994
Michael Carriger is English department chair at Lawrence High School in Lawrence, Kansas.

1999
Andy Dunham is a trial attorney practicing in Houston, Texas, with Jim Culpepper & Associates. He married the former Jennifer Fonville in 2007, and they welcomed their first child, Robert Geoffrey Dunham, September 18, 2012. They live in Rosenberg, Texas, and attend the Sugar Grove Church of Christ.

Julie (Osborne) McClure and Marcus were married on the evening of their college graduation. They have three children: Quentin (9), Marlie-Rose (3), and Jai (2). Marcus and Julie are licensed foster parents through the County of San Diego. They lead monthly support group/trainings for foster and adoptive parents. Julie works part-time for Grossmont Community College and teaches classes for families wishing to become licensed foster/adoptive families in San Diego County. Their family has been blessed through the gift of adoption, and they started and lead a ministry about the need for loving foster and adoptive families, “Rooted in Love,” at their church. Julie’s full-time job is Vice-President of C&C Glass, a glazing contractor.

Ted Dahlman along with Lisa (Paden, ’03), Teia, and Thor live in Augusta, Georgia, where Ted is stationed with the Army.

James Benge works as a software tester for a Tulsa-based company called eLynx Technologies, which serves clients in the oil and gas industry. He also writes a baseball blog titled *Chasing After Shadows*.

Erika (Saleido) Trejo and husband Juan announce the birth of daughter Eva Larynn Trejo January 26, 2012. They also have a 2-year-old son, Joaquin.

Katie Bond and husband Ryan (’04) welcomed third daughter, Lainey Nicole, in June 2012. Katie continues to stay home with their daughters.

2002

2004
Alicia (Bright) Moore and husband Josh welcomed daughter Lyra Noelle on December 11, 2012.

2005

Brandon Fox married Kari Kiser (’07) in May 2012. They live in Searcy and have both been serving on the worship team at a church in Cabot for several years now. Brandon worked at Capstone Treatment Center for the past three years and just recently left to start a burrito restaurant in downtown Searcy. They plan to serve Baja-style burritos made from locally grown/raised ingredients. Brandon continues to write and last year placed third in a Canadian poetry contest hosted by Utmost Christian Writers with a poem titled “A Wave.”

Jessica James graduated with his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law in 2013.

Everett Reed presented the paper “Land as Curse, Land as Gift: the Ecology of Tragedy in Faulkner and Berry” at the Christian Scholars’ Conference.

2006
Mary Cunningham married Harold Stein er on August 4, 2012.

Brian Harrison teaches English at Beijing Normal University in Zhuhai, Guangdong, China. He recently traveled to India.

2007

Emily (Stutzman) Jones is working on a Ph.D. in Forestry at Auburn University. She has a graduate teaching assistantship with the university writing center. She welcomed her son, Mark Clayton, February 9, 2013.

L. Elizabeth Lanius was appointed lead teacher for the Jacksonville High School Freshman Academy in 2012-13. The previous year she was awarded No. 1 Student Choice Teacher of the Year Shining Star award at Jacksonville High School. She graduated from the Arkansas Leadership Academy’s Deep Knowledge Leadership Team three-year program in May 2013, and she will be moving to Crete, Greece, with her husband on military assignment for the 2013 school year.

Erin (Cooley) Lowery is the Executive Director of Caterpillar Corner, a Christian daycare/preschool, in Snyder, Texas. She and husband Caleb welcomed son Walker Michael in May 2013.

Julie (Keller) Tigner and husband Daniel (’05) welcomed daughter Mabel Christine in December 23, 2012.

2008
Nicole (Dicken) Bochrig and husband Sean are missionaries in Swaziland, Africa.
Alumni News (cont.)

Rocky Hall coached football at Harding University while completing an MBA. Currently he is in the U.S. Army, completing Officer Candidacy School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and will begin training as a Combat Engineer at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, later this year.

Jonathan David McRay received an M.A. in Conflict Transformation at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. He lives with wife Rachelle and friends on a permaculture farm in the Shenandoah River watershed, where he also works with a sustainable living center committed to regenerative systems of food, transportation, and the built environment in partnership with marginalized neighbors. He convened two panels at the 2013 Christian Scholars Conference, one on anarchism and one on bioregionalism, and spoke on the latter.

Johnna Perceil is currently an education coordinator for Community Corrections Improvement Association, the non-profit foundation of Iowa’s 6th Judicial District Department of Correctional Services. She runs a tutoring program for students with parents involved in the criminal justice system. Additionally, she teaches classes to people on probation/parole for the Correctional Education Adult High School Completion program she pilots for the district. This fall she will begin a Master in Library Science specializing in information and diverse populations at the University of Maryland’s iSchool.

Brooklyne (Travis) Peters is the Director of Marketing and Senior Copywriter for VLG Advertising in Dallas and Vice President of Boston Terrier Rescue of North Texas.

Ike Peters is Interactive Marketing Specialist at Aristotle Inc.

Nathan Shank completed the coursework toward a Ph.D. in American literature at the University of Kentucky. His recent presentations include “The City and the Mind,” at the University of Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900 and “God of the Gaps: Reconciling Christianity with the Consciousness Impasse,” at the 2012 Christian Scholars’ Conference at Lipscomb University.

Johnathan Strasser married Deborah Bergsma. Their son Joshua is 20 months old. Jonathan completed an M.Div. at Harding School of Theology in 2012. Now, they serve as missionaries in Mbulu, Tanzania.

Grant White and Natalie welcomed a daughter, Roxy Layne White, on December 10, 2012.

Michael Wright works at Fuller Seminary at the Fuller Writing Center in Pasadena, California helping students with theological writing. He presented a paper at the 2013 Christian Scholars’ Conference with Stephanie Eddleman on faith and poetry. The session is titled “The Fire and The Dove: The Pursuit of God Through Poetry, Prose and Praise.”

2009

Amber Barnett has spent the past three years in Kochi, Japan, teaching English to elementary and junior high students.

Joanna Benskin is at Purdue University working on a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. She presented the paper, “Death and Sainthood in the Lovers’ Meeting Sonnet in Romeo and Juliet,” at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, and the paper “Reconciling the Conflicted Closing of ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’” at the Christian Scholars’ Conference. She teaches world literature and has an editorial assistantship with the academic journal Arthurianna.


Karie Cross presented the paper “Reconciling Opposing Views in the Feminist Legal Theory Debate” at the Christian Scholars’ Conference.

Tabitha (Goyne) Davidson began an M.A. in Jewish studies at The Hebrew University.

Emily Daw married Aaron Boyle on June 15, 2013. She teaches freshman and sophomore level English at Western Hills High School in Fort Worth, Texas.

Kristian (Carnagie) Decker works as a financial aid assistant at Freed-Hardeman University.

Chris McKeever is an instructor in English at Kansas State University.

Daniel Morrissey married Karen Castro. He works as a substitute school teacher and is working on a collection of stories.

Rachel (Melchers) Scholl and Ken welcomed daughter Avennah Joyce in May 2012. Rachel works freelance from home, specializing in copywriting, graphic design, and Web design. Her company is called Lampwood Studios, LLC.

2010

Michael Brooker received an M.F.A. in Writing for Film and Television at Pepperdine University.

Marisa Smith Lytle worked as a substitute teacher in the Springdale, Arkansas Public School system and worked as a nanny with The Nanny Connection. She has written a series of Bible lessons on the theme of producing fruit. The lessons are to be translated into Spanish for use by Honduran women in small group Bible studies and will also be used in the U.S.

Nelson Shake married Sally Tucker in December 2012. He received an M.A. in English from Georgia Southern University. He has presented at four conferences this year, most recently the ALA in Boston.

2011

Kathryn Arbuckle is working on an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, with a focus in fiction, from Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana. She spent summer 2013 at a fiction workshop in Chamonix, France, for three weeks. She works in Butler University’s writing lab.

Rebekah Craig studied at the University of Denver, Denver Publishing Institute in summer 2012.

Adria (Giles) English received an M.A. in literature from the University of Central Arkansas.

Jocelyn McClung is the Admissions Coun-
“[I’m] an overworked, out of shape, rapidly aging mom who made a bucket list... and that led to [a] novel. Voila. No need to make me sound like I am anyone special”: that’s how Julie Cantrell, our 2013 visiting writer, described herself. Her humility played well to the packed audience that gathered in Cone Chapel on April 12th to hear her discuss her work and all things related to the craft of writing.

A speech pathologist who teaches kindergarten and first-grade E.L.L. students in Oxford, Mississippi, Cantrell’s debut novel Into the Free became a three-week bestseller in March 2012; it has gone on to win Christy Awards for best debut novel and book of the year, among other accolades from Publisher’s Weekly and Kirkus Reviews. The novel incorporates elements of the Romani people, the Choctaw Nation, and rodeo culture. She explained that “the idea stemmed from reading about the real life adventures of Kellie Mitchell, the ‘Queen of the Gypsies,’ whose elaborate 1915 funeral in Meridian, Mississippi drew more than 20,000 Romani Travelers from North and Central America. The Travelers end up being a thread in a much larger tale—a fictional coming-of-age story of a girl named Millie Reynolds,” a girl with an abusive father and a “nothing mama.”

Regarding her writing process, she told the audience that she “wrote the story as it came to me. Then, I spent lots of time doing research to fill in the details of the tale.” She pointed out that “some people tell you to write what you know, but I enjoyed writing about things I knew nothing about. I write to learn, and I learned a lot.”

With characteristic humility, she said, “When it hit the NYT list and the USA TODAY list, I went completely numb. I think I’m still trying to absorb the numbers of readers who have entered Millie’s world. I count my blessings constantly and really believe this was never my story to keep in the first place. I feel lucky this story came to me, and I’m grateful I had the opportunity to share it with the world. When I hear from readers who have been impacted by Millie’s journey, I know it was worth every bit of work that went into this process. The emails I receive are incredibly powerful, and I’m very glad I got to play some small role in helping those readers heal old scars.”
2012
Jo Cleveland
Creative Writing Awards

Poetry:  
Ross Holmes  
Maddi Nelson  
Emily Owens

Non-Fiction:  
Abigail Anklam  
Sisan McNeil

Fiction:  
Barrett Smith  
Melissa Hite  
Laura Smith

Our Newest Alumni

B.A.
December 2012  
Ashley Dargai  
Monica Duncan  
Claire Moore  
Lisa Osborn  
Natalie White  
Aerial Whiting

May 2013  
*Jakob Bastin  
*Benjamin Borgelt  
Colt Cannon  
*Emily Chaffin  
David Dunnagan  
*Delaney Giles  
*Hannah Shelton Giles

*Joshua Goslowsky  
Kaitlyn Hasty  
*Emily Helton  
*James Norris  
*Victoria Randolph  
*Maggie Rothe  
Amanda Scott  
Barrett Smith  
Laura Smith  
Lauren Smith

* Teaching licensure

M.Ed.
Irene David  
Gerad Vandegrift  
Kristen Ragland  
Nekia Shelton

Updates

Please send news, including current email address to:

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Searcy, AR 72149

or email  
tengel@hardingl.edu

Website:  www.harding.edu/english

Facebook:  The English Department ~ Harding University

2012-13 Bobbie Coleman Student Teaching Award: Hannah Giles (L.)  
Outstanding Senior English Major: Aerial Whiting (R.)