

# In Writing

Winter 2011 - Vol 5.1 - Grand Valley Writing Department

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## Bon Voyage, Dr. Frerichs

*Ian McCaul*

As the semester comes to a close, with students and faculty preparing for a final rush of work, the Writing Department also prepares to say goodbye to Professor Catherine Frerichs, who will be retiring at the end of the school year.

Frerichs came to GVSU in 1997, when she began as an administrator for the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, now called the Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center. While at the Center, Frerichs researched the impact liberal education has on students and published her findings. Thanks to her work with the Center, GVSU students now have a clearer understanding of the importance of liberal education and take greater responsibility for their education than in previous years.

Though she began her time at GVSU as an administrator, teaching has always been important to Frerichs.

"I don't like to do the same thing too many times," she said.

She has taught classes in the School of Communication and in the English and Liberal Studies Departments. She has also taught in the Writing Department, where she has been for the past few years.

"I am so impressed by the quality of Writing majors we have here. I'm really happy to have had the chance to teach them," said Frerichs.

She counts teaching WRT 210: Writing with Style as one of her favorite experiences as

a professor. Another high point of her time with the Writing Department was teaching sections of WRT 305: Writing in the Disciplines to all majors, as she enjoys working with students from different disciplines and perspectives.

"At the end, I have learned as well. We have a better understanding of what we're talking about because we all have contributed," she said.

In addition to her work as a professor and administrator, Frerichs also found time to write a book, *Desires of the Heart*, about her experiences growing up as the daughter of a missionary in Papua New

*See FAREWELL on Page 10*



## Student Awards

In April 2011, the Writing Department honored the following students for their outstanding work and contributions at the annual award ceremony. Congratulations!

**Allison Oosta**  
Department of Writing  
Outstanding Student

**Allison Oosta**  
Glenn A. Niemeyer  
Award Nominee

**Lynn Dimick**  
Jurries Family  
Scholarship

**Madeleine Hart**  
**Kiera Wilson**  
**Brittney Schering**  
Internship Awards

**Kristina Pepelko**  
Writing Department  
Scholarship

**Emily Loftis**  
**Meghan McAfee**  
2nd Annual Poetry Prize

**Emily Loftis (1st)**  
**Daniel Cairns (2nd)**  
Ravines Art Prize

## GVSU Writing Center Produces Award-Winning Consultants at ECWCA

*Emily Hengstebeck*

Hundreds of university students and administrators filed into the halls of Western Michigan University for the 33rd *East Central Writing Centers Association Conference (ECWCA)*, but it was GVSU that held the spotlight. Led by GVSU's Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors (FMCWAMA) Associate Professor and Writing Center Director Ellen Schendel, GVSU writing consultants travelled to Kalamazoo to present and participate in a conference about writing center assessment and development.

Under Schendel's guidance, GVSU writing consultants showcased their hard work, with two consultants receiving prestigious awards reflecting both individual as well as writing center excellence. Jen Torreano, a third-year writing consultant and mentor, received the Tutor Leadership Award while Allie Oosta, a second-year writing consultant and mentor, received the Outstanding Tutor of the Year Award.

When asked what these awards meant to GVSU, Schendel replied, "It's exciting! Both Jen and Allie have done tremendous work for our center, and their awards demonstrate that the [FMCWAMA] is doing good work among our peers."

Schendel herself was also honored at the conference, acting as a keynote speaker on writing center assessment and development over the past year.

Besides being recognized, Schendel, Torreano, and Oosta were joined by other GVSU writing consultants in contributing to the conference with presentations of their own. Oosta commented on the overall presence of GVSU at the conference. She said, "People complimented GVSU and all of our presentations and professionalism left and right!"

Enthusiastic participants at the conference dedicated their time sitting in on 45-minute and 75-minute sessions, which varied in topics and themes. Besides assessment, sessions focused on the pedagogies of writing centers across the region.

Other GVSU presenters included Alex Jablonski, Dale Johnson, Sean Duffie, Kelsey Book, Carly Crookston, Rori Hoatlin, Maureen Di Virgillio, and Kiera Wilson, and Affiliate Professor Julie White. Using research gleaned from their work in classrooms and the FMCWAMA, GVSU writing consultants and presenters led informative discussions; the universal goal was to make a bigger impact on future university lifestyle and development. Their presentations ranged from addressing the role of self-efficacy in student writing to reimagining the relationship between writing centers and libraries. Although the presentations varied in focus, they all

*See ECWCA on Page 10*

*The Center "is a space unlike any other, and it encourages all of us to strive for excellence in everything we do," stated Torreano.*

## A Student Reading Series Update

*Meghan McAfee*

The 2010-2011 academic year brought a change of leadership for the Student Reading Series (SRS). Organized by seniors Claire Helakoski and Meghan McAfee, the duo strived to make each reading unique. Usually, at a reading, the audience sits—and hopefully listens—while the writer shares his or her work. At this year's SRS events, however, the coordinators tried to eliminate the disconnect between the reader and the listener by asking them to participate.

Every event had a reading theme: September, Poetry Night; October, a Facebook-themed reading called "Book of Face"; November, "Horribly Holidays"; February, the senior reading titled, "Momentum"; and March, "Played," which was inspired by March Madness.

"Coming up with original themes was both a fun and a challenging process," said McAfee. "We wanted to give the readings some structure, while allowing writers of all genres to participate."

The specific themes provided exciting opportunities for participation. At "Book of Face," audience members filled out surveys to describe their Facebook habits; they also shared funny, strange, or creepy stories of Facebook-related incidents. Right on the cusp of the holiday season, "Horrible Holidays" allowed readers to share their craziest holiday stories. The audience members completed a holiday-themed Mad-Lib in between readers.

"I really enjoyed 'Book of Face' and 'Horrible Holidays' because they were about things we can all relate to," said McAfee. "You can only sit and listen for so long, so having those short activities in between seemed like a good idea."

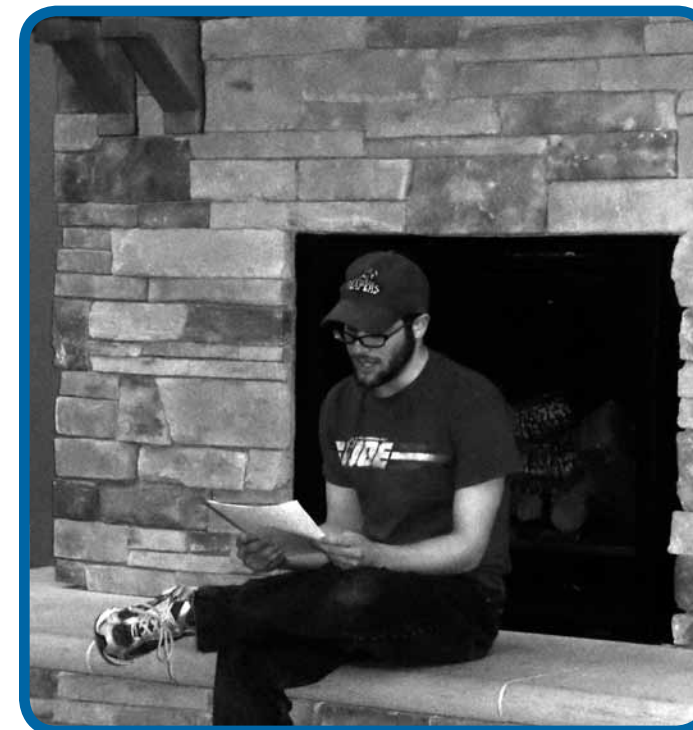
Both Helakoski and McAfee found the senior reading one of the more engaging readings of the year. "Momentum" featured four talented writers: Josh Hackler, fiction; Laura Hogg, nonfiction; Geoff Leskie, poetry; and Ryan McKernan, drama. Each reader was interviewed about their time at the Writing Department, and where they see their post-grad lives heading; the interview answers were revealed right before each reader's turn.

"Played" was the coordinators' favorite. To keep with the theme of March Madness, the two designed a free-throw game just like H-O-R-S-E, wherein the players had to avoid spelling P-L-A-Y-E-D.

"'Played' was so much fun," said Helakoski. "The reading itself was relaxed, but people's competitive sides came out during the game."

The event title was chosen deliberately, with an open-ended interpretation in mind—anything that could be played. Shaun Morton shared a piece of creative nonfiction about his love for video games; Megan McDougall, an essay on the art of fort-building; and even guest faculty reader, Associate Professor Chris Haven, read a sports poem.

"I don't like to think about the readings in regards to success because, in my mind, they were all successful," said Helakoski. "People came, people read, and everyone had a good time."



## Braving the Weather for Writing: 2011 AWP Conference Experiences

*Jennifer Carrigan &  
Kristina Pepelko*

February 2nd was dubbed “Snowpocalypse 2011” for the Midwest. For Gerald R. Ford International Airport, it meant planes were grounded. For GVSU, it meant that of the students expecting to attend the *Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Annual Conference and Bookfair*, only two managed to fly out of Grand Rapids.

The conference was held in Washington D.C. February 2-5. Teachers, authors, publishers, presses, and literary centers are represented through numerous panel discussions, readings, and formal/informal gatherings. There is also an enormous bookfair and a special keynote speaker on the opening day of the conference. Thanks to the “Snowpocalypse,” we missed the keynote speaker, writer Jhumpa Lahiri, and the panels on Thursday, but we still had enough time to gain valuable insight into the world of writing.

### Panels and Readings

The panels at *AWP* inform and educate writers of any genre through lectures and discussions with seasoned writers and professors. There were many panels to choose from, such as “What’s Normal in Nonfiction?,” “Fiction’s Future, Hired!: Landing the Elusive Tenure-Track Job,” “Collaboration—Love it or Leave it,” and over 300 others covering a wide array of writing topics. There were also readings by published authors with a discussion and book-signing afterwards.

Of the various panels offered, we especially enjoyed “What Are You Wearing?: Exploring the Emerging Genre of Fashion Writing” because it debunked our assumption that one can only write about fashion for fashion magazines. The session was comprised of fashion blog writers and product description writers from e-retailers such as Zappos.com and ModCloth. They discussed available jobs

in the fashion writing world from marketing writers to social networking writers. They also discussed that to become a good fashion writer, immersion in the genre and crafting a distinct voice are paramount.

We also attended quite a few readings, and two in particular were noteworthy. Junot Diaz read from a first draft, stating he lived in New Jersey. This sparked the audience to shout enthusiastically, especially if they were from New Jersey. We enjoyed this reading because Diaz discussed first drafts and how writers should not get discouraged even if they don’t like it much. We also liked that he talked about his life and how writing did not shape it, but instead how life shaped his writing.

*“Not writing poetry is like surrendering,” said Poet Alicia Ostriker*

As we both have an interest in political poetry, we also attended the session “Home Front: Women Poets and War.” This session included readings by poets Lorraine Healy, Maria Melendez, and Anne Waldman. The poems read ranged from verse about Argentina’s Dirty War to the extinction of species.

We loved that each poet also gave advice on how to approach crafting war poetry. Poet Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor suggested starting small, instead of thinking of the larger concept at hand. Poet Alicia Ostriker ended the session by beautifully weaving the session’s theme with the importance of poetry by saying, “Not writing poetry is like surrendering.”

### The Bookfair

The Bookfair was overwhelming when we first walked in, with its four hundred

tables and over one hundred booths. Professor Patricia Clark said, “The book exhibit alone is a fun place: for networking, resources to read about, and resources to teach.”

While we were eating the free chocolate chip cookies at the Grub Street table, we learned about opportunities in the field of manuscript consulting at the non-profit writing center. And while browsing books at Red Hen Press’ table, one of their representatives informed us they are always seeking work by unpublished writers and the press accepts almost any type of writing. By far the best time to attend the Bookfair is Saturday afternoon as the vendors are packing up. We managed to get numerous books, pamphlets, CDs, chapbooks, and fliers for free or at a discounted price.

### Next Year

We encourage all writing majors to consider attending next year’s conference in Chicago, February 29 to March 3.

Assistant Professor Caitlin Horrocks said attending the conference is beneficial to figuring out where to submit work and is a great place for “joining the hordes of likeminded people all crazy enough to want to be writers.”

The location of next year’s conference is key. Chicago is much easier to access than D.C. by car or train, which also makes the price much less. Moreover, if a student receives sponsorship from a professor, most expenses can be eliminated through a grant; however, all are welcome to attend. We hope the weather will not hinder any students’ opportunity to discover a little more about a writer’s life.

**AWP Intro Award  
Nominees**

**Nonfiction—Rori Hoatlin**

**Fiction—Hazel Foster**

**Poetry—Kristina Pepelko**

## Spreading the Writing Department’s Vision for the New Curriculum



*Heidi Stukkie*

What courses should a writing major contain? Four GVSU professors from the Writing Department answered this question and more when they presented at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)* in Atlanta, Georgia in April.

The 2011 conference was the 62nd annual convention and more than 3,000 higher education faculty from around the nation were in attendance. Each year, *CCCC* participants meet to network and share knowledge concerning the study of rhetoric and composition. This year’s conference theme, *All Our Relations: Contested Space, Contested Knowledge*, encouraged participants to focus on building an academic community where space and knowledge are always contested and nothing is ever taken for granted.

Professor Dan Royer, Chair of the Writing Department, presented, along with Associate Professors, Ellen Schendel and Chris Haven, and Assistant Professor, Christopher Toth. The Writing Department faculty has given presentations at

this conference on a variety of other topics in previous years as well.

The Writing Department’s session this year was titled “Beyond Rhetoric and Composition: The Liberal Arts Writing Major.” This roundtable session was proposed in response to recent articles about what classes a writing major should

*“There’s a growing body of scholarship about the curriculum of the writing major, and we wanted to be a part of that scholarly discussion,” said Schendel*

contain. Many colleges favor courses in composition studies and rhetorical theory, where GVSU favors a more liberal arts approach, offering students the opportu-

nity to make their own connections among the different kinds of writing such as academic, creative, and professional.

“Because GVSU is one of the few schools in the nation where there is an undergraduate writing major housed within an independent writing department, we have a lot of opportunity to be innovative and people are interested to hear what’s going on here,” said Schendel. “There’s a growing body of scholarship about the curriculum of the writing major, and we wanted to be a part of that professional and scholarly discussion, because we have a unique perspective to share.”

The panel gave a brief overview of GVSU’s current writing major program and how it has evolved over the last ten years. The Writing Department is presently in the process of revising its curriculum and discussed the new model.

“After ten years, it was time for us to revisit the kinds of courses we are offering students as well as the way we offer them. These proposed revisions are a great way to kick off another ten years of progressive

*See WRT MAJOR on Page 10*

# Forays into the New Curriculum

Consulting with Writers is an essential course for any writing major. Students were introduced to pedagogy from various fields of writing and focused on how to improve their feedback for other writers. The skills students learned are applicable to many fields in writing: publishing, editing, technical writing, higher education, writing tutoring, etc.

Writing majors often find themselves disillusioned or frustrated with workshops because no one is sure of how to respond. So, learning response techniques was a large part of this course.

Associate Professor Ellen Schendel taught the course from a writing consultant standpoint for the first half. She covered tutor pedagogy basics such as directive and in-directive tutoring and the global/local hierarchy of concerns within a paper. These theories work in variety of settings, not just in a writing center. Students could use “gross to close” method (starting with higher order concerns like organization and thesis and move to lower order concerns such as grammar and mechanics) to guide how they address their peers’ work in creative writing feedback letters or professional writing workshops. Addressing the most important concerns in a first or second draft saves students the need to correct grammar when that sentence may need to be cut. This method also gave students a guide for how to complete peer reviews on their final project.

Consulting with Writers wasn’t all theory and pedagogy. During the second half, students applied the concept of how writers respond in professional settings. Some of the topics covered included collaborative workplace writing; ethical implications of ghostwriting; various workshop methods in creative writing courses; and consulting techniques of

technical writers. Most readings came from scholarly academic articles that students responded to in weekly journals. Along with class discussions, students also completed a microethnography.

The microethnography project was the most engaging assignment for the course. Students applied their theory and knowledge of responding to writers and explored their own topics of interest. They conducted field research via observations, interviews, surveys, or focus groups. Along with a literature review, the final project included a report of their findings and a formal presentation.

“The really beneficial part of the ethnography was that we were able to explore a part of writing that we were personally interested in. We got to choose and craft the lens through which we could study our particular projects,” said Rori Hoatlin.

Some students like Allie Oosta and Rori Hoatlin explored whether or not current workshop methods in creative writing classes are effective. Their research influenced some of the

*Consulting with Writers: Kiera Wilson*

creative writing professors to rethink how they approach the tried and true workshop. Dale Johnson went on to present their research at the *East Central Writing Center Association Conference*.

In case you aren’t convinced, speak with any student who took the course and they will tell you that learning to become a better responder helps your own writing in the process.

*Advanced Document Design*

A professional writer is a “jack of many trades.” Because of the current technology trends in professional settings, a need exists for professional writers to understand the rhetoric of document design, communication theory, and quantitative displays. The Advanced Document Design course addressed these current industry needs.

The course was taught by Assistant Professor Christopher Toth. Since the class size was smaller than most, students received extra one-on-one attention from the professor. The course covered a wide range of topics such as cross-cultural visual conventions, information design, usability, and document design. Toth also touched on the history of visual rhetoric. Projects for the course ranged from designing a set of pictograms and illustrated instructions to working with data from the Writing Center to create data displays for their reporting needs. Weekly readings and reading responses helped align the theory to the practical applications of the projects. Each assignment also included a project analysis memo, where students reflected on their design choices in the project. These analyses also encouraged students to examine what could have been done differently or improved.

“Having the ability to design is not enough,” said Toth. “A good professional communicator, in addition to producing usable designs, needs to be able to articulate their design choices to a boss, printer, or client. The project design memos were a chance for students to tap into this meta-discourse.”

**All Writing majors will need 42 credits**  
**12 from the core + 18 from the modules + 6 from WRT Electives or Cognate + 6 from the capstones.**

**Core Requirements (12 credits)**  
 WRT 200 Introduction to Professional Writing  
 WRT 210 Writing with Style  
 WRT 219 Introduction to Creative Writing  
 WRT 253 Document Production and Design

**Modules**

*Take two courses from three of the following modules:*

<b>Poetry Workshops</b> WRT 320 Int. Poetry Workshop WRT 420 Adv. Poetry Workshop	<b>Fiction Workshops</b> WRT 330 Int. Fiction Workshop WRT 430 Adv. Fiction Workshop
<b>Drama Workshops</b> WRT 340 Int. Drama WRT 440 Adv. Drama	<b>Nonfiction Workshops</b> WRT 360 Int. Creative Nonfiction WRT 460 Adv. Creative N-Fiction
<b>Writing for the Web</b> WRT 351 Writing for the Web WRT 451 Adv. Writing for Web	<b>Magazine Writing</b> WRT 365 Int. Magazine Writing WRT 465 Adv. Magazine Writing
<b>Responding to Writers</b> WRT 307 Consulting with Writers WRT 308 Working with MS	<b>Creat and Technique</b> WRT 310 Authors in Depth WRT 410 Reading for Technique

**Writing with Technologies**  
 WRT 353 Adv. Document Design  
 WRT 455 Multimodal Composing

<b>Cognate Electives</b> Advisor Approved Course Advisor Approved Course	<b>OR</b>	<b>Writing Electives</b> Any WRT Course Any WRT Course
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**Capstones**  
 WRT 490 Internship  
 WRT 495 Genre and Writing

As the Writing Department begins to implement a new curriculum (see middle diagram), writing students will notice an increase in WRT 380 Special Topics courses offered next year. During Fall 2010, three pilot courses from the new curriculum were offered. Here are reviews of each from students who took the courses.

*Authors in Depth: Rori Hoatlin*

Authors in Depth, like its name implies, took a substantial look at authors John Updike and Margaret Atwood and their writing career.

One of the overarching goals of the course was to examine writing from a new perspective—not for the themes or social critiques of an author that would be emphasized in a traditional English course.

Some of the techniques studied in this course were characterization, word choice, point of view, the unreliable narrator, how the length of a work (from short story to novel) can change the way a story is presented to the audience, and even how these authors might be repeating themselves in the structure from book to book.

“Successful authors find something that works and they recycle,” said Allie Oosta. “They find ‘their thing’ in the writing world.” From this thought, Oosta pinpointed her advice to other writers. “I think student writers need to see which pieces have succeeded, why they succeeded, and then build on that foundation of progress,” she said.

The transition from archetypal English course to specialized writing course was indeed an interesting one. A pilot course is a huge opportunity, both for students and faculty alike. It’s never been done at GVSU before, so there are no boundaries, but that also means there’s no precedent or guide to look for answers. The course reading

*Michelle Thomas*

The final project for the course was the most comprehensive of the projects, requiring students to design a set of promotional documents for a given client’s needs. Some of the students used the mock organization provided for the assignment and were required to design within client constraints. Students created a new company logo and designed material such as direct mail campaigns, billboards, product FAQ sheets, and guidebooks.

Students also had the option of using an existing organization, such as an internship or volunteer position. They had to meet the requirements of the employer as well as the assignment, which presented a new set of challenges as well as opportunities.

“By using the company I was volunteering with for this assignment, I was not only able to help the company produce some promotional materials, but was also able to build a stronger relationship with them,” said Megan Smith. “This assignment gave me a window into what this career would be like, as well as helped me gain an internship.”

The course is offered again in Winter 2012 as a 380. With its combination of high quality reading materiel, well structured syllabus, and engaging projects, the Advanced Document Design course is invaluable to a any writing student’s development.

included five full-length works of both John Updike and Margaret Atwood. Ten texts gave an idea of how authors write in a variety of styles and lengths, from poetry to short story to novel.

“The exciting thing about this course is that no other university has a course that studies the careers of successful contemporary writers from the point of view of craft. The texts themselves truly can become the teachers, and hopefully students will be able to apply those lessons in workshops and ultimately in their own writing,” said Associate Professor Chris Haven, who taught the course.

Another major goal of the course was to help writing students become better writers. Many assignments were used to meet this goal. For example, a group project examined the author’s career and how social commentary of the time informed their writing. Another project asked students to comment on techniques used by the writer and the role of those techniques within the text. A final research paper allowed students to hone in on either Atwood or Updike and examine how that author’s work changed and/or matured. Meghan McAfee commented that she is “more consciously aware of the details I choose to include in my piece; not only am I aware of them, but I use them to my benefit.”

Authors in Depth created an amazing space where students not only learned from great writers, but also polished their craft. The course is offered again in the Fall 2011. It will be similar to the course offered last Fall, and it will be, once again, a wonderful opportunity for any writer looking to understand techniques of other authors and how they can improve their own skills.

## Breaking Constraints

Jamie deGraaf

Six dancers in black spandex leapt back and forth across the stage, careful to stay inside the lines marked by red masking tape on the wooden floor. Loose hair and strips of gauzy fabric trailed behind them as their limbs fluidly floated along to a mournful musical score. An anonymous hand raised in the audience and Assistant Professor Shawn Bible, skipped to the next track mid-song, the dancers' movements abruptly transitioning to match the up-tempo jazz now filling the Louis Armstrong Theatre.

This dance opened the evening for *Constraint* on Thursday, January 27. In this fusion performance, five arts faculty professors—Bible (Dance), Kurt Ellenberger (Music), Ben Cole (Theatre), Austin Bunn and Chris Haven (Writing)—aimed to reveal the impact constraints can have on artistic expression and creativity. Each performance piece had specific restrictions, forcing the artist to express their work in different ways; in the case of the

dance, it was the size of the stage and the audience's control over the music.

As the dancers filed off stage, Haven took his place at the spot lit podium; the stage around him lined with flickering electric tea-lights. Clearing his throat, he began to read his fiction piece, "Glow of the Wick." He wrote the piece as part of *7 Days, 7 Artists, 7 Rings*, an artistic collaboration put on by the *Huffington Post*, which required participants to create their pieces in under 24-hours. Deciding that time limit was not constraint enough for the nature of the performance, Haven was also mandated to add a theatrical element to his performance. A cloaked figure (Cole) crept in the shadows wearing a Scream mask, slowly extinguishing the light of the candles, bringing the imagery of the story to life.

Following Haven, Ellenberger took his seat at the piano situated in the shadowed corner of the stage. He asked audience members for five adjectives for which he would then create a composition to match. His creative process was constrained by the emotions that he would have to elicit

from the notes and the spontaneity of the composition. After only momentary hesitation, Ellenberger began exploring the keys of the piano, giving "terror," "excitement," and "expectation" an audible definition, one expression melting into the next, never apparent he was making it up on the spot.

The final performance was a reading of Bunn's fiction, "Griefer," performed by an eerily similarly looking Cole. Bunn's constraint was that he could not be the reader of his own work, but had to rely on another's voice to convey the meaning of his story. Cole's theatrical reading brought new elements to Bunn's fiction, the constraint fostering an alternative understanding and presentation.

*Constraint* offered audience members a unique experience, allowing them to be part of an interactive creative community for an hour. The performer's constraints enabled new avenues for creativity as they were forced to express themselves in challenging ways, demonstrating the contradiction that constraints can be liberating.

## Moore: A Writer, Artfully Arranged

Kathryn Phelan

Dinty Moore wanted to be an artist but didn't know where to start, so he moved to New York to pursue acting. And painting. And dancing. But even after all of these undertakings, his writing is why he was invited to GVSU on April 7. Moore, who turned thirty before he realized his affinity for creative nonfiction, said the intersection of art and writing was obvious after he read Joan Didion and Terry Tempest Williams. The work of those two writers helped him realize he could write nonfiction and succeed at it.

Moore visited GVSU to give a reading and to facilitate a craft talk. At the craft talk, he read the prologue from his new

book *Between Panic and Desire*, which he affectionately calls a "quirky memoir," named for two cities in his native Pennsylvania. Later that day, he read two essays, "Oxymoron" and "Twenty Reasons Why My Daughter Needs to Turn Twenty." While neither of these essays can be found in *Between Panic and Desire*, they epitomized his writing persona: simultaneously funny and insightful.

He also held—in unprecedented fashion—a public workshop for three students who volunteered their essays for feedback. Moore stressed the importance of discovery in these pieces, for both the writer and reader.

"Writing's tough. You don't want to wrap it up too neatly," he said. During

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## Winter 2011 *fishladder* Unveiling

Allison Oosta

"This is from a novel that I had to take a break from... because of college," said senior Joshua Hackler before he read an excerpt from his fiction essay, "Sylvester and Arturo" at the *fishladder* unveiling reception on Friday, April 15.

The unveiling, held in Lake Ontario Hall at 6pm, brought together fifty plus writing and art students, faculty members, and friends. Dressed in everything from hipster wool skirts and quirky tights to Super Mario t-shirts, the guests laughed heartily at Hackler's joke as they sat side-by-side with a community of people who could appreciate the sentiment behind how hard it is to find time to write, let alone get published. As the readings continued, the guests often glanced toward the magnetic force in the room—the unopened cardboard boxes that housed the much-anticipated Spring 2011 issue of *fishladder*, the journal where some of the best authors and artists from GVSU's campus finally had their work in print.

*Fishladder*, the student-run journal that publishes art and literature written and produced by GVSU students, celebrated its eighth unveiling with long tables of excellent catering, including a fancy carrot

cake with "Fishladder 2011" written in frosting on the top. (see right photo).

Once all the guests had full plates, they sat down to listen to the introduction by Caitlin Horrocks, the *fishladder* faculty advisor, and attempted to awkwardly eat the shot glasses full of fruit salad and chicken lettuce wraps that sunk low in the middle like wet awnings about to burst.

Katie Bajema, the art and layout editor, expertly created and coordinated a new event this year, named "artist talks." The evening kicked off with these talks, which included Lindsay Fisher, a GVSU artist, and Rosamaria Zamarron, a GVSU photographer, discussing the process, inspiration, and meaning behind each of the pieces that they had featured in this year's *fishladder*.

Later in the night, Kendel Goonis, a natural performer and comedic writer, read her piece "On Kanye and Pitchfork and Existentialism." Her hands, eyebrows, and voice all collaborated to form an excited emphasis on each sentence. Unlike some of the typical literature sometimes published in *fishladder*, Kendel's piece



combined non-fiction, drama, and wit into a savvy social commentary on music and our generation—and the crowd loved it.

The plethora of readings ranged from a funny poem, "Highway Romance" by Erin Terbrack to a more emotional reading of "Brother" by Brianna Eberspeaker. After an hour and a half of eating, socializing, and listening, everyone was invited come on down and grab a copy—or three!—of the new issue that has a riveting, colorful

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MOORE

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workshop, Moore also discussed his definition of creative nonfiction, reducing it to three words: "Truth, artfully arranged." He centers his work on this principle, which includes issues within his own family.

Moore discussed this shifty boundary between privacy and bravery, ending by saying, "I think the world's a better place if you just say it. Who cares if someone's feelings get hurt?"

But his audacity is coupled with insecur-

ity. Moore cites the fear that his own life is not interesting enough for readers as his biggest challenge.

"I was never kidnapped by dolphins," he says. "So what do I have to say?" Much of this awareness derives from his personal reading style. "I'm an impatient reader," he said. "Just because I bought a book doesn't mean I have to finish it. Life's too short."

Moore, who talks with his hands and used a metaphor to answer almost every

question during the Q and A following his craft talk, has never taken a creative nonfiction writing course. However, he took a fiction course in Pennsylvania, "fell in love with the process," and now teaches in the nonfiction MFA program at Ohio University, where he introduces writing to students as a type of art they don't have to move to New York to pursue. "You can do it anywhere," he said. "You just need curiosity."



## WRT MAJOR

...continued from Page 5

instruction in writing,” said Royer.

The Writing Department panel also described in more depth three of its new writing courses: Consulting with Writers, Multimodal Composing, and Authors in Depth. Each course focuses on a different discipline in content and concept, but each one connects to the other disciplines in important ways.

The goal of the presentation was to encourage other colleges to consider a more liberal arts offering and become inclusive and open-minded about what a Writing program should include. Offering rigid and narrow curriculum of only rhetoric and composition courses is often not the most appropriate for undergraduate students and, instead, the Writing Department believes it is far better to offer multiple writing-related disciplines so students will become capable of producing effective writing in any context.

“We’ve had the opportunity, over the years, to gather the feedback of graduates to learn about their experience with the curriculum. The changes we made incorporate the suggestions of alums, but also will better prepare students for the many career and grad school paths we’ve learned our alums take after graduation,” said Schendel.

## UNVEIL

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oil on canvas image by Annie Gerlofs on the cover. Lucky students were even offered leftover Writing Department “Top Ten Reasons to be a Writing Major” t-shirts that someone had brought down from the office. Excited and inspired guests left the event with their arms bundled full of *fishbladder* issues, t-shirts, and plates of leftover cake—their faces beaming with appreciation for the impressive glossy-edged journal that will forever represent the high caliber of writing and art students from 2011.

## FAREWELL

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Guinea. Since the book’s release last year, Frerichs has traveled extensively, speaking not only in Michigan, but also to other states. She gave a presentation during a celebration of missionary work at Wartburg Seminary in Iowa, where her father studied. She even had the opportunity to return to Australia and speak at the opening of an exhibit of photography by her father. *Desires of the Heart* is already rising to meet the average sales of a self-published book, but as Frerichs said, “I

hope to beat the average.”

While she will always keep writing, Frerichs is unsure if another book is in her immediate future, as such a project requires a large amount of time, effort, and isolation. What is in her future is a year-long stay at Divine Word University, a Catholic college in Papua New Guinea, where she will teach and do administrative work. She is especially excited to teach and lead discussion groups during her stay.

“Part of my motivation in getting to Papua New Guinea is to see young people and understand how the region has changed from their perspective,” she said.

Once she returns to the United States, Frerichs said she would like to spend her free time playing the piano, being with her grandchildren, and enjoying the outdoors through gardening, hiking, and kayaking.

“We have a phenomenal Writing Department, and I hope students recognize it,” Frerichs said with parting wisdom.

Students and faculty recognize and appreciate all Frerichs has done and hope years to come are rewarding and relaxing.

“She has given a great deal to the university and our department. She’s been a leader among teachers, and her steady advocacy of writing and teaching has guided many of us over that years,” said Writing Department Chair and Professor Daniel Royer. “We’ll miss her in the Writing Department. She’s a sure source of honest thinking about every topic—and her generous personal nature has been an inspiration.”

## Journey of the Junior Writing Requirement and WRT 305

Michelle Thomas

Universities are judged on the quality of their academic standards and the quality of their exiting graduates. That is why, many years ago, GVSU began its journey to bolster the writing skills of university students. To do this, however, meant defining what the university would consider acceptable writing standards as well as how, and who, would be assessing the students’ writing competency. Writing Professor and Chair of the General Education Committee, Roger Gillis, has been heavily involved in the development of the junior level writing requirement. In an interview on April 5th, Gillis told the story of this writing requirement from its roots to the most recent developments affecting all graduates after the summer of 2001.

Gillis began the story of GVSU’s evaluation of students’ writing in the early 90’s, where faculty from across departments would come together to assess students’ writing at the junior level. This process, however, was far from perfect. Aside from being a drain on the faculty’s time and resources, the faculty expressed a growing discomfort with their involvement in the evaluation of students’ writing. They felt that this evaluation would better fit in the Writing Department because of their faculty’s intimate knowledge of writing technique. After these concerns were expressed, the judgment of junior level writing was adopted by the Writing Department.

As the Writing Department and the writing assessment entered the turn of the millennium, Gillis explained, the department considered moving to online portfolio submissions instead of the paper portfolios submitted. Even though this online submission idea was rejected, the fact remained that the current method was not sustainable. The push then became, Gillis described, to move from portfolio submission to a test that would assess students’ writing abilities. To do this

assessment, the actual qualification and measurement of “good writing” was considered and incorporated into a two-hour test. This test would be administered and evaluated by the unit heads of each department. The change appeared to be a successful alternative to a portfolio submission until 2005 when it was discovered that the pass rate was widely divergent among different departments. The testing methods and evaluation varied depending on the department, which created different standards for “pass” and “fail.”

In 2006, with Gillis in charge of remedying this obvious issue, faculty from across departments gathered to standardize the test so that it would be administered and evaluated under the same criteria by that same group of faculty. The cooperative effort proved effective, and this system operated smoothly until the current change.

The recent and drastic changes came about from conversations started in 2008. Gillis and other faculty found that students who did not pass the junior level writing assessment and were automatically placed into WRT 305 became disgruntled. Students who opted to take WRT 305 by choice, on the other hand, were happy with their decision. Concerns were also expressed with the entire premise of having a junior level writing assessment. While there are basic skills that are required to graduate (Math 110, WRT 150, and two SWS classes), no other area of education was evaluated again at the junior level. In one sense, that students’ writing was assessed three times within the General Education program.

With the university re-assessing the entire General Education program beginning in 2010, the time was ripe for determining the value that the junior level writing assessment was bringing to the university standards and graduating students. And so, in February 2011, an announcement was made to all university students that the junior level writing requirement would be eliminated for those graduating after the Summer 2011. Those graduating before this date would still need to meet the requirement and could do so by having a B or better in one SWS course and in WRT 150 or by taking the WRT 305 course.

One question remains: where is this writing assessment being absorbed? The elimination, Gillis stated, is not a move from requiring high standards of writing in graduates. Instead, the change is a move toward embracing writing as an integral part of a general education class. The university curriculum will incorporate the requirements set in the old assessment tests and provide more opportunity for various departments to highlight the writing techniques needed to be successful in that particular field. WRT 305 will still be offered to those students looking to improve their writing within the disciplines.

The elimination of the junior level writing assessment is part of a broad spectrum change that will take place in the General Education program.

“I am looking forward to what these new changes will bring us, and I am confident that the changes will benefit the students as well as the faculty,” said Gillis.

## Best Wishes to the Writing Department’s Departing Visiting Writers:

Benjamin Drevlow

Matthew Frank

Christina Olson

Elena Passarello

## InWriting

Faculty Advisor:

Copy Editors:

Photo Contributions:

Printers:

Christopher Toth

Meghan McAfee; Heidi Stukkie

Heidi Stukkie (1, 8); Meghan McAfee (3);

Jacob Powers (5); Allie Oosta (9);

Customer Printers, Inc.

# Dream Internship Changes Future Plans

*Megan Smith*

I fell in love with Women At Risk, International (WAR, Int'l) two years ago when a WRT 350: Business Communication assignment required I interview someone employed in my dream career.

A staff member described the non-profit organization's heart for helping women around the world—a passion to rescue women from brothels and give them culturally sensitive job opportunities that re-instill their worth. This information ignited my own desire and ultimately my journey to securing my dream internship as a writing and communications intern with WAR, Int'l.

An internship, which is currently a required part of the professional writing emphasis and a requirement for all Writing majors following the new curriculum, is often harder to secure than it seems. So I began preparing myself with the professional skills I would need early by taking WRT 200: Professional Writing, WRT 251: Document Design, WRT 350: Business Communications, and particularly WRT 380: Advanced Document Design. During this latter class, taken Fall 2010, we were given the assignment of creating a suite of documents for a fictitious organization. My mind is always craving real rhetorical situations, so I altered the project to create documents for WAR, Int'l. I contacted the organization and asked if I could assist in any document creation processes. The project they gave me was a postcard to include in mailings (see top right), but it showcased my ability and eagerness to be part of the organization.

A week later I was approached by the volunteer coordinator and asked to work as an intern the following Winter 2011 semester. No stressful searches. No awkward interviews. I secured my dream internship without even submitting references. I waited with eager anticipation for the semester to start, and once it did, I dove in.

My tasks included creating brochures, booklets, and a magazine advertisement,



while also writing technical product descriptions and news stories for the website, and working with their content management system to update and re-organize web content. And yet, while I loved the mission of the organization, I found over the course of the semester that the work itself wasn't a good match for me. As I sat behind my desk, tucked away in a corner, I found myself wanting something with more human interaction. In reaction to this realization, I have begun looking at graduate schools, thinking that teaching might be closer to what I'm looking for in my future.

All this happened because I found something to get passionate about and got creative to make it happen. If you haven't completed your internship yet, I encourage you to not take the easy route by just finding a random internship to fill the requirement and "get it over with." Search until you find something inspiring. Even if you decide it's not for you, that realization may be the one that shapes the rest of your life. Plan early and get creative with working your way in. Who knows where it will take you!

*ECWCA*

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related back to the central conference idea of assessment: reflecting on the past to revise the future.

The inspiration behind these presentations came directly from experiences within GVSU's FMCWFAMA where writing consultants help student writers to the best of their abilities.

The Center itself "is a space unlike any other, and it encourages all of us to strive for excellence in everything we do," states Torreano.

This excellence was brought to the ECWCA. GVSU writing consultants contributed to the empowerment of students taking control of writing through communication and collaboration. Writing centers make connections between consultants and students. GVSU's FMCWFAMA has established, according to Torreano, "a culture of enthusiasm and camaraderie" united by these needs and wants of different kinds of writers across university campuses.