

IN WRITING

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Hannah Terry working on her laptop (photo: Hannah Terry)

The Internship Experience in a Virtual World

Katherine Arnold

As work and school have all moved into online spheres, it can be hard to remember how not too long ago we used to do everything in person. Some of our writing majors have experienced firsthand how different this transition can be when it comes to completing an internship. How has the virtual context affected students' encounters with internships over the past eight months? Let's take a look at the experiences of two writing majors who participated in virtual internships this past Summer semester, along with the observations of Professor Dauvan Mulally, the Internship Coordinator for the Writing Department.

Hannah Terry is a senior at GVSU who interned with Dzanc Books as an editorial intern over the Summer.

This position had previously been designed to be remote, so thankfully there was no restructuring necessary for Hannah to complete her internship successfully. Nonetheless, this was her first experience with a virtual position, and it was a challenge for her to adapt to working while living at home with her family.

Maintaining her motivation and self-discipline was important to preserving a work-life balance that was right for her. She said a big part of her positive experience was her attitude. "The attitude you have around your internship makes it great. Take the internship for what it is and don't hesitate to reach out to others if you

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Getting to Know New Professor Alisha Karabinus

Anna Evangelista



Assistant Professor Alisha Karabinus
(photo: Alisha Karabinus)

Assistant Professor Alisha Karabinus has brought a continued love for her work into her first semester teaching at GVSU in the Writing Department and for the Digital Studies minor. This first semester has also been filled with new connections, new challenges, and fun Zoom filters. She says she has been “extremely online” for most of her life, meaning she knows the ins and outs of being in a digital space. In her professional career before academia, Karabinus has worked in freelance writing and editing and has also written about and consulted for games and technology. She then went on to graduate school for creative writing, where she realized she wanted to study games and digital culture. Teaching professional writing while working towards her PhD in rhetoric, she dived into research of the digital world.

Karabinus has spent her life

appreciating the benefits of the connections and affordances of an open digital world while teaching about the pitfalls of technology so that better digital environments can be created. This is one of the topics that comes up in her classes at GVSU. She is currently teaching DS 201: Digital Identities and Communities along with WRT 200: Introduction to Professional Writing. Although they are very different, she says they both are connected through their concern with presentations of the self and of content.

“Assistant Professor Karabinus feels lucky that all of her colleagues and students have been so welcoming and positive, and wants for them to feel the same.”

One of the main themes she expresses as a professor is that “who you are impacts the way you experience everything in the world, from the physical to the digital, so we learn this as we learn to write, to study, to explore, to research.”

Despite the challenges that have been imposed on teaching and learning at GVSU due to COVID-19, Karabinus values what facilitates an encouraging environment. She empathizes especially with the first-year students in her classes, who are dealing with the same difficulties of trying to feel like they’re doing things correctly while also adjusting to a new institution during a pandemic.

Her interactions with students have been enriching due to their interest in her classes, but so much

of the experience is lost without the face-to-face classroom discussions. So, instead of in-person banter and facial expressions, Professor Karabinus has been sharing memes and articles using Discord and Slack for more personal connections, and applying fun filters on Zoom. Today’s climate is filled with worry, but she hopes to break the monotony in classes; teaching a class as an animated avatar is one of the ways she does this. Another way that she works on creating community is by helping out with the department’s social media at GVSU. She feels lucky that all of her colleagues and students have been so welcoming and positive, and wants for them to feel the same.

2020 AWP INTRO AWARD WINNERS

POETRY

Haley Tanis

“Butterfly”

Frankie Spring

“Samsara Road”

Alice Darling

“Oh the Wind
is Carrying Me
Home, Me Home,
Me Home Again”

Writing What We Don't Know

Jessica Barnard

“One of our adages in creative writing is ‘write what you know.’” This, at its essence, seems to be the foundation on which fiction writers are encouraged to craft their stories. Amina Gautier, the first African American woman to win the Pen/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story, restated this message over Zoom for GV Writers Series this Fall. She has currently written 122 stories and is determined to make it to 202—one more than Anton Chekhov, who is one of her major influences.

During her virtual writer’s visit to Associate Professor Mukherjee’s Zoom classroom, the twenty-five people on the same call longed to know how they too, could push themselves. Whether through elements of tone, setting, or character, they sought advice on how to write about situations and people they don’t know. One technique Gautier recommended was to take public transport as an opportunity to see others and their choices. “When I would go left, what would make another person go right?” she would wonder. “Remove it from yourself,” she added, pointing to the importance of distance in observation.

While she emphasized that it is fine for authors to infuse parts of themselves into their stories, she also suggested treating all characters as full, well-rounded people. In her short story “Bodega,” a portion of which she read aloud at the start of the meeting, the setting is based on a store she would visit as a child to buy candy. The creation of the story’s main character, Nelida, required Gautier to switch perspectives— she had been the customer in real life, so she challenged herself to write from the perspective of a shop owner.

While it is crucial that fictional stories demonstrate diversity and inclusion, many people wonder whether it is acceptable for white authors to write about characters of color. When this topic came up, it was collectively understood that the answer to such a broad, complex question could not be neatly wrapped up with a simple “yes” or “no.” Gautier began her answer by explaining her take on censorship in fiction. She believes authors should be able to write about anyone, but that they “have a duty and responsibility to do so with integrity.”

An example of writing irresponsibly is creating characters of color as two-dimensional, stereotypical archetypes.

Gautier also discussed the history of racism in writing as a problematic matter of whether or not someone is able to be their own representative, as well as how an author goes about representing and speaking for another demographic. For hundreds of years, white authors have written in the place of people of color, telling their stories for them and unsafely assuming that they will do so without biases. Even pure intentions do not excuse harmful representation. “We should do our homework,” Gautier



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When I would go left, what would make another person go right?

”

Amina Gautier (photo: Amina Gautier)

advised, warning us of the dangers of misusing genre, tone, and archetypes. “We should probably let someone from that group see that piece.”

As fiction writers, we long to explore worlds outside our own. We want to meet new people and get to know them. The writers of today and tomorrow alike share the responsibility of approaching unfamiliar topics and characters with caution. We are here to write real people, not flat mockeries. Ultimately, Gautier’s takeaway is simple: “Our characters need to be based on humans.”

2020 AWP INTRO
AWARD WINNERS

NONFICTION

Olivia Trappen

“At Risk of
Feeling Regret”

The Impact of COVID and Community on Student Writers

Chiara Nicholas

At GVSU, there is a strong sense of community in the Writing Department. This is shown through the various writing organizations on campus, such as the Organization for Professional Writers (OPW) and the Student Reading Series. Community is also created by forming bonds with students who happen to take the same modules together. This strong community creates stronger writers because writing builds off of the feedback and support of others.

The pandemic environment created by COVID-19 is one that has clearly thrown everyone off their routine. Without the ability to meet with other writers in writing workshops or clubs, a sense of isolation and stress has led to a lack of motivation among students. As senior Katie Gardella said, “I miss[ed] having poetry workshops because hearing what other people are writing for the same prompt really gets the creative juices flowing when seeing others creating!” The lack of being inspired by fellow student writers and a general lack of motivation has seeped into the writing habits of many students who say their ability to write has been lacking during the uncertainty of COVID times. Although some tried to go into quarantine back in March with the positive mindset of having more time to write, this mindset quickly changed as the effects of stress became more prevalent and noticeable.

Hannah Kelly, a senior in the writing major, also felt the direct impact of COVID on her writing habits. She said, “I didn’t realize how motivating it was to write in groups for me. . . on my own, it’s harder to find that motivation, and I think I’ve written way less because of that.” To tackle this challenge, Kelly formed a strong connection

with her Writing Center coworkers and worked alongside them to tackle the NaNoWriMo challenge in November. NaNoWriMo is an organization that provides community support for writers as they challenge themselves to write an entire novel in just one month. A fun fact, and the reason for this challenge, is that November is National Writing Month. Although it is now too late to get involved in this writing community for November, getting in touch with fellow writers and creating writing challenges with them could spark a boost of creativity and motivation to write.

“A sense of isolation and stress has led to a lack of motivation among students.”

Sarah Spencer, a junior, is living at home, and she also participates in the GVSU writing community through her online job at the Writing Center. Talking about her connection with her coworkers, she said, “Being able to interact with so many people who also have a passion for writing has really helped me with getting back in touch with my creativity.” For Sarah, the importance of building a peer community has become more evident than ever. She believes that writing is conversational, and sometimes it is crucial in the writing process to not only get your thoughts on a page, but to share them with fellow writers.

The stress of COVID-19 is still having a tremendous impact on students, and the motivation to write can be difficult to find in these circumstances. To battle this stress, writers can check out some of the writing clubs on campus or get

in touch with classmates from writing classes. There are some fantastic online opportunities such as working with InWriting or joining clubs such as OPW, In the Margins, and Anchored in Poetry. Through these opportunities, writers will not only stay motivated, but can develop personal connections with other writers that are needed now more than ever.

Student Perspectives



Katie Gardella
(photo: Katie Gardella)



Hannah Kelly
(photo: Hannah Kelly)



Sarah Spencer
(photo: Sarah Spencer)

How COVID-19 Challenged Writing Department Faculty

Sydney Trepeck

When classes were cancelled back in March, faculty were hurried to get their materials online while still maintaining the integrity of their courses. Even when the warning bells were sounded, everyone was in a state of disbelief. Shockwaves rolled through the university as the emotions were slowly setting in. Lots of changes were happening at a rapid pace, and professors were

sometimes not able to catch their breath during this unprecedented transition. Nobody ever imagined that a writing class would have to take place during a pandemic.

Eight months later, professors have had to continually adapt their courses to fit a specific delivery method, whether it was an online, hybrid, or traditional course. Before the Fall semester began, faculty were allowed to choose the delivery method for each of their classes based on what they thought would be safe for them and the students as well as what would fit their pedagogical needs. Even though writing is something that can be done anywhere at any time, it is difficult to recreate the same energy online that is generated by a robust in-person discussion or writing workshop. Although professors use Zoom, Blackboard, and other online tools to ensure engagement in online learning, in-person interactions are missed by faculty and students alike.

For Associate Professor and Director of First-Year Writing Amy Ferdinandt-Stolley, the change happened with unbelievable speed. Back in March, while her colleagues were glued to the news, Stolley was also bracing herself for that fateful report: announcements about the pandemic and the transition to online course delivery. In this process, not only was Stolley worried about her students, but she was also mindful of her courses and how they could be transferred so quickly to online learning. Reflecting on this process, Stolley said, “There are so many opportunities for miscommunication, technology fails or other complications in online classes that it takes a good deal of time to make a plan, a back-up plan, and a back-up for the back-up plan.”

According to Stolley, not only has the learning environment changed due to the pandemic, but things related to COVID-19, like mental health, have become common topics of interest for her Writing 120 students. She has been encouraged by students’ personal trust as they use their writing to reach out for support in this uncertain situation; she would love to see faculty and students to embrace this same level of trust beyond the pandemic.

“Nobody ever imagined that a writing class would have to take place during a pandemic.”

Visiting Professor Samantha Dine has also gone through the rapid transition from face-to-face to online classes. However, unlike Stolley’s students, students in Dine’s classes have not written about COVID-19 related topics. She mentioned that in her class in March, “Students did not want to write about COVID because it was still so fresh in their minds.” While the interest levels of COVID-19 related topics have been on the rise, there have also been students who did not want to explore these particular topics because COVID is already such a complicated subject matter.

Dine also teaches professional writing courses where personal thoughts and emotions about the pandemic can be difficult to fit into some commonly used genres, such as technical and business reports. As Dine summarized her switch to online teaching in March, she said her main goal in the process was to “really get everyone on the same page

SEE FACULTY ON PAGE 8

Faculty Perspectives



Professor Amy Ferdinandt-Stolley
(photo: Amy Ferdinandt-Stolley)



Professor Todd Kaneko
(photo: Todd Kaneko)



Professor Samantha Dine
(photo: Samantha Dine)

New Faculty Profile: Aubrey Crosby

Kailey Parkins

If there is one thing Affiliate Professor Aubrey Crosby learned throughout her childhood of travel, it was that there is a story in every place you visit. She immigrated from Canada in 2001 and lived out her teenage years in Michigan, then lived in Ohio and Massachusetts before deciding to come back to Michigan. Over the course of her travels, Crosby's experiences interacting with all different kinds of people taught her that everyone has a story to tell. Since the age of seven, her passion for reading and writing has influenced her to become a teacher; she has worked hard to achieve that goal ever since.

Crosby earned a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education with a concentration in English and a minor in History. When asked how she came across our university in her job search, she answered, "I didn't choose GVSU. It chose me. Other jobs had more research opportunities, but I didn't think any of them would have the same sense of community that I was looking for that GVSU's Writing Department seemed to have." She felt very welcomed by her new colleagues here; as she learned more about the Writing Department and their ideas for student growth, she quickly became attached to these ideas as she became part of the community.

The sense of community within the Writing Department wasn't the only thing that drew her to GVSU; Crosby felt that GVSU would give her opportunities to expand her writing expertise and to help others expand theirs as well. Throughout her life, Crosby kept her writing to herself; she used her school's newspaper as an example of this. She had the opportunity to write for the newspaper during her high school years, but in the end, chose not to. Even so, she knows how impactful writing can be. After thinking about what she loves most

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I would hope to bring an encouraging, helpful, and supportive face for students as they work on their writing projects and move into their careers.

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Aubrey Crosby (photo: Aubrey Crosby)

about writing, Crosby said, "There are so many things I love . . . it's hard to limit it." She began to describe how writing is like doing dishes. "You start with messy ideas, but through the process of writing, you transform them into something clean, crisp, and meaningful."

The same goes for what Crosby wants to bring to the Writing Department. She explained, "I would hope to bring an encouraging, helpful, and supportive face for students as they work on their writing projects and move into their careers." She hopes to join the rest of her colleagues in being a wonderfully giving person and to introduce more critical discourse-based methods of analysis to teaching. In explaining this, she used her research in the media representation of protests as an example, saying, "There's a lot to uncover in how protests are talked about

and framed. I think this kind of in-depth analysis is challenging but useful, and I'd love to bring that same kind of exploration and inquiry to my students and to the program."

"You start with messy ideas, but through the process of writing, you transform them into something crisp, clean, and meaningful."

Affiliate Professor Aubrey Crosby is a great addition to GVSU's Writing Department. She will provide her students many opportunities to experience transforming messy ideas into something meaningful.

INTERNSHIP

Continued from page 1



Elaina Smith at her computer for her internship (photo: Elaina Smith)

run into issues.” For students interested in pursuing a virtual internship in the future, Hannah stressed the importance of challenging yourself but also being realistic about your work. She urges students to “take up the opportunities and extra assignments, because what you put into the internship is what you will get out of it.”

“The attitude you have around your internship is what makes it great.”

Elaina Smith is also a senior at GVSU and worked for the company Alien Attorney as a content creation intern in charge of writing articles for their online magazines. This was her first experience with virtual work also, and she felt like communication was an important element. “With a regular job you can walk into someone’s office if you have a question, but [with a virtual job] there was always a delay,” she explained. Ultimately,

it was something that she learned and adjusted to, but it was certainly something that stood out to her during the transition phase.

While Elaina wasn’t originally looking for a virtual internship experience, she is glad that the pandemic encouraged her to do something she might not have done otherwise. “I think one of the good things that came out of this experience was how it pushed me to try something new. Now I can say that I have experience working in a virtual environment, which will definitely help me in my job search later,” she said.

While students navigate the challenges of virtual internships, Senior Affiliate Professor Mulally, the Writing Department’s Internship Coordinator, is there to assist students with this process. In her unique position, she has been able to observe how students have been handling the virtual transition. She has ultimately found that the organizations students intern for, despite new virtual formats, are still dedicated to creating positive work environments. So far, the student

success rate with internships has continued throughout the pandemic. “We’ve always had students show interest in virtual internships. But even with the recent changes, we still had a huge number of students intern this Summer successfully, and this Fall we had 11 students holding completely remote intern positions,” she said.

According to Professor Mulally, what most students seem to struggle with remotely is self-motivation and independence. With in-person experiences, supervisors directly oversee the work students are doing and are directly on hand if questions arise. With a remote internship, this dynamic changes, and much more responsibility is put onto the student to keep track of their schedule and not stray too far from what they are responsible for.

Perhaps it is this pressure that has contributed to some of the positive internship experiences over the Summer. Mulally explained that the students who completed

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**2020 AWP INTRO
AWARD WINNERS**

FICTION

Frankie Spring

**“Apartments Look
the Same for
Everybody”**

FACULTY*Continued from page 5*

and understanding students' reactions to the new format . . . [a format] which made announcements harder to communicate." In her teaching practice this semester, she continues to ensure that students and faculty are on the same page in online environments.

"Much of COVID-19 has forced a quick pivot while trying to navigate the current courses."

Associate Professor Todd Kaneko was in a completely different situation at the time of the March transition, as he was on his sabbatical when COVID-19 hit. While he was able to see his colleagues rise to the occasion, Kaneko stated, "I was lucky to have missed that crisis . . . it allowed me to consider what would be required of me as a teacher walking into online learning during a pandemic." While Kaneko is not surprised about the difficulties presented to both faculty and students regarding the pandemic, he has stated that much of COVID-19 has forced a quick pivot while trying to navigate the current courses. "Everything has had to change to meet the needs of our students in the pandemic. However, I would say that the disruption . . . has many teachers rethinking many of the classroom practices we normally have on the syllabus."

While the truth of the matter is that nobody knows when classes will get back to the way they once were, the common understanding across the department is that writing has been a very powerful outlet for students and

faculty as they navigate this uncharted territory. Camaraderie has been at an all time high, and typical faculty/student barriers have been overcome in order for everyone to be successful. Even though the new normal is yet to be discovered, the common consensus has been to keep calm and write on.

INTERNSHIP*Continued from page 7*

virtual internships gained valuable communication skills, "and they feel like they have become stronger communicators than they would have with a normal internship."

While the past few months have been anything but expected, many students have had new learning opportunities and have been able to experience an internship unlike anything they had planned for. There have been challenges but also striking positives, and both have contributed to the experiences that students will be able to confidently talk about in their upcoming transitions from academic life to new workplaces.

For students currently considering virtual internships, don't worry! Students can get help at this Career Center link: <https://www.gvsu.edu/careers/navigating-the-virtual-world-of-work-287.htm> Mullaly also suggests that students ask some of the following questions when searching for their internship: 1) Can this work be done remotely? 2) Can the employer support me remotely? 3) Will the employer provide the technology needed for the internship?

The opportunity for a successful internship is still out there, and it is only a matter of perseverance and motivation to find the one that is right for you.

INWRITING

Fall 2020

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