

IN WRITING

Grand Valley Writing Department | Winter 2020 | Vol. 14.1

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Assistant Professor Beth Peterson (photo: Beth Peterson)

Beth Peterson's New Book: *Dispatches from the End of Ice: Essays*

Jessica Sroczyński

Assistant Professor Beth Peterson is an essayist. For Peterson, this lifestyle consists of first-hand, boots-on-the-ground research. This means “go out, go places, talk to people, and see as much as I can myself.” She recommends paying attention and quite literally attending to the world around you. Along with getting out to experience things, Peterson is always reading as much as she can. From science articles to ancient historical documents, she consults scholars and everyday individuals alike. Peterson writes to combine her research with

her own experiences, and most recently, published the book of essays *Dispatches from the End of Ice: Essays* at the end of last year.

While writing this book, Peterson found herself traveling to Scandinavia, Italy, England, and back to visit a cryonics institute, an ice core lab, a Wunderkammer, Wittgenstein’s cabin, and other museums and libraries. Peterson’s work can be described as part science, part lyric essay, and part research-reportage.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Jennalyn Stull

Well Wishes to Retiring Professor Patricia Clark

Elaina Smith



“
The Writing
Department was a
brand new thing.
That was really
interesting for a
long time, and it is
still interesting.”

”

Professor Patricia Clark (photo: Elaina Smith)

Professor Patricia Clark will be retiring at the end of the Winter 2020 semester after a career she described as “interesting, rewarding, and filled with surprises.” She began teaching at GVSU in 1989, but her journey as a writer started in 1976 when she attended her first writer’s conference. Clark always knew she wanted to be a writer, and going to the conference gave her the opportunity to find her people. While there, she heard poet Philip Levine give a passionate reading that inspired her to pursue her dream.

Although Clark’s undergraduate degree is in economics, she decided to go to grad school and get a master’s degree in creative writing, and even though she did not get accepted the first time she applied, she worked hard to make her writing sample stronger. The next year, she got into the University of Montana, where she earned her MFA in Creative Writing. While in grad school, Clark worked as a teaching assistant, discovering her

passion for being an educator. This led to her getting her PhD from the University of Huston and ultimately ending up at GVSU.

Clark first taught in the English Department and played a role in bringing the Writing Department to life. The Writing Department was founded in 2001 when Clark and her colleagues, Roger Gilles and Dan Royer, wanted to bring a culture of writing to campus. At the time, there were 1,200 English majors at GVSU, a lot of whom were interested in creative writing and wanted to have their own community apart from the English Department.

Over the years, Clark has gotten to watch the Writing Department grow and evolve, even developing new programs like the Digital Studies minor. “Every year, there is new stuff,” Clark said as she explained how the Writing Department has continued to be an exciting environment to work in. “The Writing Department was

a brand new thing. That was really interesting for a long time, and it is still interesting.”

“Over the years, Clark has gotten to watch the Writing Department grow and evolve, even developing new programs like the Digital Studies minor.”

Clark has had many achievements in her time at GVSU. After President Lubbers decided he wanted to do more for the written arts, Clark was named the university’s Poet-in-Residence and became the spokesperson for poetry on campus. This honor gave her the opportunity to write poems for events and new buildings, as well as a piece to read

SEE RETIRING ON PAGE 9

AWP Tips and Tricks for Writing Majors

Kristie DeVlieger

For many creative writers, the Association of Writers and Writing Program's (AWP) annual conference is the event of the year. Many writers believe the experience can make or break your writing career. It is likely something you have been considering attending for a while—or going is something you have decided to do. I believe it is something worth attending at least once in your life. At the least, you will have a newfound appreciation for the writing field, and if you are lucky, you will find the connection that furthers your career. As a conference with an average attendance of around 10,000 people, the idea of attending can be overwhelming. So, here is a list of helpful tips and tricks to keep in mind for next year's AWP.



AWP conference entrance (photo: Kristie DeVlieger)

BEFORE AWP:

- Budget as early as you can! The average AWP attendance costs at least a thousand dollars between lodgings, food, and transportation. This is before books!
- Book your lodgings at least a month before the conference.
- Plan your AWP experience by considering your writing goals and selecting the panels you want to visit in advance. Look at the presenters and the authors doing signings and consider how their writing style and advice may help you reach your goals.
- Choose 2–5 panels a day to attend, but plan on attending 3. Any more and you will likely be exhausted before the end of the conference.
- Schedule time away from AWP for local sights and to be alone. Being in

so many crowded rooms in a place with so many other people everywhere can be exhausting.

- Reach out to your writing communities, like previous classmates, professors, and people in your writing groups. Let them know you are attending and schedule time to meet up at AWP.
- Follow AWP and other attendees on social media before the conference. AWP updates their social media platforms regularly, and journals, presses, and presenters will all be talking about their AWP plans.

AT AWP:

- Plan to visit the bookfair in a series of visits over the course of the conference. Not only is it far bigger than you think, it can be overwhelming to try to sell

yourself to the people in the booths that you are visiting.

- Bring a day bag: a small backpack or drawstring bag. You will want the day bag to be large enough for a notebook or laptop, a snack and essentials, and for any handouts, business cards, or freebies.
- Wear comfy shoes and dress in clothing that transitions easily. You may not have time to stop back at your lodgings between the conference and off-site readings.
- Intentionally make connections. Have an online presence or website ready before you go. Link to them on business cards.
- Attend off-site readings and events. These are usually informal, making them a great place to meet people.

SEE AWP ON PAGE 10

Who Got Into Us and Learning Through Failure

Emma Wikle



Jacob Guajardo and Associate Professor Mukherjee (photo: Emma Wikle)

“Young, queer people of color become adept at hiding, but it is hard to hide that you are in love.” Jacob Guajardo wrote this as part of his Contributor’s Note for Best American Short Stories, a collection of compelling short stories like his own, “What Got Into Us.” This collection was chosen by Roxane Gay to be a part of the larger collection that made up the 2018 edition of the diverse anthology. He discussed this “strange success” when he was invited to read “What Got Into Us” in Associate Professor Mukherjee’s class at the end of the Fall 2019 semester.

“What Got Into Us” is a story that has been called an “intimate portrait” of queer adolescence and a revelation of the “power of community” by the Los Angeles Review of Books. To readers, this Midwestern Gothic short story provides a poignantly tender tale of two boys that grew up together and taught each other about romantic love; about survival in a life filled with poverty, prejudice, and pain. Guajardo knows about these experiences

firsthand, and as a Mexican American man that is a part of the queer community, breaking free of a small-town in Michigan and using his experiences to shape his writing, he is a source of hope for young writers.

“You will fail and get rejected so many times, and when success happens, the rejection will have been so often that you do not believe the success.”

This hope was channeled when he and Associate Professor Mukherjee followed his reading with advice about graduate school and writing. They both encouraged students to fail—“fail spectacularly,” as Guajardo said. He encouraged students to submit to journals constantly, write as much as they can, and read as much as possible. “You will fail and get rejected so many times, and when

success happens,” Guajardo laughed, “the rejection will have been so often that you do not believe the success.” He himself did not tell anyone about “What Got Into Us” being published until he was sure. At the same time, however, Guajardo emphasized the importance of humility: “It is good to be competitive, but you will also be humbled by how good everyone else is. We all want to be Ash Ketchum with our writing—the very best like no one ever was—but it is not reality all the time.”

“We all want to be Ash Ketchum with our writing—the very best like no one ever was—but it is not reality all the time.”

In addition to learning from failure and humility, Guajardo advocates learning from unlikely sources. He spoke about his own experience at the University of Florida, where he took a random drama class that forever changed the way he thinks about character and voice when he writes. He also discussed a class he took in graduate school about Maurice Sendak, writer of *Where the Wild Things Are*, that taught him how to have a successful writing process.

In April, Guajardo will attend the MacDowell Residency, a prestigious writer’s colony, where he plans to make use of the time and listening ears of his fellow writers to develop a project he is passionate about. Agents “came-a-knocking,” as he put it, after his story was featured in *Best American*, and he plans to give them something to sink their teeth into.

How Lisa Knapp Can Help Find Your Story

Hannah Terry

Other GVSU writing students and I waited in nervous anticipation of the professionals soon to arrive for a night of networking. Lisa Knapp, Career Center Advisor and Associate Director, spoke to us about the importance of confidence and compassion while networking with new professionals. Memorably, Knapp expressed her immense confidence in us, claiming we should trust ourselves through this new experience as well. After a presentation about networking by Knapp, we were ready to gather insights, create friendly conversation, and establish strong, professional relationships that evening.

Writing students were introduced to several Writing Alums that night, including professionals who worked as technical writers, marketing directors, editors, travel writers, and professional writers. One year later, these interactions are still memorable, specifically when I met with someone from the publishing industry. Using Knapp's tips, we had talked about the ins and outs of publishing, leading me to become interested in the industry.

“Knapp calls the process of learning your story ‘holding a mirror up to oneself.’”

As the advisor for writing students, Knapp is experienced in a variety of career fields related to English and Writing and claims she is a “walking resume.” Before coming to Grand Valley, Knapp found herself as a news reporter, advisor at Hope College, newspaper editor, middle school English teacher, track coach, and internship coordinator. In these positions, Knapp experienced people

coming together to share their stories, which led to her current position at the GVSU Career Center. Here, she learns about the diverse stories of GVSU students. Whether a writing student is interested in editing, technical writing, creative writing, or communications, Knapp matches that student with personalized resources, tools, and connections to help them thrive in a writing career. When Knapp is working with students, she is able to pull on her own personal experiences and becomes an advisor for life—not just for careers.

“Using a student’s story as a base, Knapp dissects and discovers connections and opportunities that could best jump-start a student’s career.”

Knapp calls the process of learning your story “holding a mirror up to oneself.” By helping a student understand their interests and background, Knapp can then piece together information that allows them to move closer to their desired career.

A writing student can benefit from the Career Center in a variety of ways. One of the first steps in searching for career experience is creating a resume. Knapp walks students through the “story” a resume tells, as well as how to create one. Knowing the writing field well, Knapp draws out the student’s writing experiences that need to be highlighted. Knapp also offers networking expertise about how to reach out and establish genuine professional relationships by using tools such as LinkedIn. Using a student’s story as a base, Knapp dissects and discovers connections



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When Knapp is working with students, she is able to pull on her own personal experiences and becomes an advisor for life.

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Lisa Knapp (photo: Lisa Knapp)

and opportunities that could best jump-start a student’s career.

As a current writing student, I have personally experienced the incredible value of working with Knapp on a

SEE KNAPP ON PAGE 10

The Newcomer Experience

Katherine Arnold



“
*I am passionate
 about writing and
 reading, like most
 writing majors are.
 I cannot wait to
 learn even more!*
 ”

Audrey Kelly (photo: Audrey Kelly)

The first time I walked onto the third floor of Lake Ontario Hall, I got my first look into what would soon become my second home. Working with the Writing Department’s amazing faculty and students opened my eyes to a community that is centered around teamwork, great writing, and critically examining the world around us. In honor of everyone who has and will walk through its doors, let us explore three newcomers’ experiences about becoming writing majors at GVSU.

AUDREY KELLY:

Audrey is a freshman majoring in writing and minoring in French. Originally from Battle Creek, Audrey decided to come to GVSU after hearing about our unique writing program. “I have always loved writing and want to write my own book someday. I did not know a writing major existed at first, but as soon as I found out that it did, I knew immediately that was what I wanted

to pursue as a degree.”

She quickly realized that the program at GVSU was something she would not have been able to find everywhere. “The flexibility and variety of the classes, combined with the different types of writing being taught, allow students to follow their own writing interests.” The diverse courses offered in the writing program are not common for many other universities, which makes this curriculum special not only across Michigan, but the whole country.

One of her biggest projects on campus this year has been her involvement in creating instructions for how to find a book at GVSU’s library. Working together with Sarah LeFranc and Isaiah Park in Assistant Professor Jacobsen’s Intro to Professional Writing class, they created and tested a set of instructions for any student who needs help accessing a library resource. Their instructions have actually been published on the library website. “The final product that we put together was very professional,” Audrey said.

“It is something that I will be proud to have done well into the future.”

As a member of GVSU’s Book Club and a poetry reader for fishladder, she has been enjoying her time on campus to the fullest outside of class as well. “It is really fun to talk to people who are interested in the same things and understand my interests.” Finding people who reciprocate her passion for reading and writing has been a highlight for her this year.

In the future, she hopes to pursue her goal of becoming a novelist and publish a YA fantasy novel. “I am passionate about writing and reading, like most writing majors are. I cannot wait to learn even more!”

SAM KEESLING:

Sam is also a freshman at GVSU, who has traveled all the way from Florida to major in writing at GVSU. “I have always wanted to be an author and most other universities had degrees that were more English based. But then I found Grand Valley, which gives students a way to explore different types of writing and even publishing too.”

“Reading has been my biggest motivator to become an author. It was my way of living in another world for a while, like a coping mechanism for real life.”

So far, Sam has been enjoying her writing classes and the fellow students that she has been working

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DISPATCHES

Continued from page 1

Throughout the piece, as explained in the description of the work, Peterson explores “numerous terrains, orbiting the idea of vanishing and the taxonomies of loss, both in an unstable world and in our individual lives.”

Prior to the beginning of the book, Peterson’s adventures and desire for experience led her to a small village on the edge of the largest glacier in Europe. When she first moved to this little village on the edge of a glacier, Peterson reminisced about how imperceptible the glacier initially seemed. However, Peterson quickly experienced what it was really like to live on the edge of such a rapidly changing landscape.

“My advice to students is to give yourself permission to slow down and take your time writing something that matters to you.”

While living on this glacier, she lived through the tragic disappearances of both a professor and a friend. For Assistant Professor Peterson, writing this book was a way to make sense of these experiences. She had not planned on moving to Norway to write this book, but after what she had gone through, Peterson says that she made many subsequent research trips back to Norway after she began her writing process. During her process, Peterson’s writing led her on a journey across Europe, where she visited sites of frequent disappearances. From there, she explained how she followed a trail of research to see what it could teach her.

Her inspiration for this book, once

she officially began to pursue this project, came from many different sources. The most prominent contributors were natural history museums, where she would explore strange and curious collections that the museums had on display. The lyrical format of her book is an ode to the way museums often display their series of artifacts. As she explained, “Like those museums, I structured the book around a series of artifacts: maps, exhibits, a novel, a mathematical equation, lines of philosophy, etc.”

“During her process, Peterson’s writing led her on a journey across Europe, where she visited sites of frequent disappearances.”

One of the biggest obstacles that Peterson faced during the development of this book was the length of the process. “This book was about nine years in the making. That said, it took longer than I imagined,” she stated. She also spoke about the many research trips she took while writing her book and the primary and secondary research that sometimes led her down different paths than she first imagined. The key to making it through it was to stick with it. “Stick to writing, stick to research, stick to learning as much as [you] possibly [can]. Gradually, the right shape and right contents for the book begin to emerge.”

As Peterson approached the end of writing her book, she felt that it was easier to sift through all of the material she had collected and pick out what her book needed, versus what was interesting for someone else to write about or for her to write

about at another time.

Peterson’s words of advice for any undergraduates whose shoes she once was in are to “read and write as much as you can, and give yourself time and space to grow as a writer.” While writing this book, Peterson was able to give time to both her project and herself to develop and grow.

“My advice to students is to give yourself permission to slow down and take your time writing something that matters to you.” After all, “The publishers will still be there when the moment is right.”

Writing and Leadership Scholarship

Hannah Kelly

Department’s
Glenn A.
Niemeyer
Nominee

Brooke Fugate

NEWCOMER

Continued from page 6

alongside. The students and faculty around her have proved to be very encouraging and supportive. “As someone who has not really experienced sharing my work before, their help has really eased me into the atmosphere of college classes.”

She explains that her experience with college was different than what she had expected, in that she was not aware of the different ways she would learn about writing. “It’s exciting to see writing from a different point of view than I have seen in the past. Specifically, in my professional writing and style classes. I have just loved them so far.”

She described her passion for writing as an important part of her childhood. Her future writing dreams involve becoming a novelist, arising from her love of reading and the desire to escape real life. “Reading has been my biggest motivator to become an author. It was my way of living in another world for a while, like a coping mechanism for real life. I really want to be able to provide that for other people.”

Sam Keesling (photo: Katherine Arnold)



“

I think the professors here are great, and the community is really helpful. Everyone wants to see you succeed.

”



Olivia Trappen (photo: Olivia Trappen)

OLIVIA TRAPPEN:

Olivia is a junior at GVSU who just transferred from Western Michigan University at the beginning of the 2019 Fall semester. As a student who transferred here specifically for the writing program, she has loved her experiences on campus and within her writing classes. “At Western, it had gotten to the point where there

were simply no more classes for me to take. Rather than repeat classes in fiction and poetry over and over again, I wanted to expand my skills with writing into new areas like business writing and design.”

For Olivia, the variety of classes was intriguing and offered new experiences that she had not been able to pursue as a theater and creative writing major at Western. As a writing major, the inclusion of design courses was particularly unique. “I have not seen design incorporated into a writing program before, and I was really intrigued by that.”

“I also really like the Writing Center,” she commented, while being interviewed at the Writing Center’s main desk as a student worker. “I like how closely everyone works together. At Western, the departments did not really work together. It feels like more of a team effort and a community here at GVSU.”

Olivia’s positive experiences amongst classmates and professors stem from the support that she has received for her writing. “I think it is a safe space for writers, because

“

It’s exciting to see writing from a different point of view than I have seen in the past. Specifically, in my professional writing and style classes.

”

writing is something that can be really intimidating to share with others.” This is something that many of us can understand and relate to after experiencing our own first workshop. “I continue to receive wonderful feedback, and the professors are really good at giving you great tools to make your writing better.”

“I like how closely everyone [at GVSU] works together. At Western, the departments did not really work together. It feels like more of a team effort and a community here at GVSU.”

She has already taken a lot of writing classes and is thankful for the helpful people and community that she has been a part of. “I think the professors here are great, and the community is really helpful. Everyone wants to see you succeed.”

When Olivia finishes her writing degree, she hopes to start a non-profit publishing company one day. “I hope to run a non-profit publishing company that will increase literacy across all age groups in the community, and one that would advocate for everyone’s story.” For her, every story is worth being told. “Many major publishing companies only invest and publish stories that are ‘money-makers.’ Sometimes, the best stories and memoirs are the ones that come from a normal person. Those are often the most inspiring.”

Audrey, Olivia, and Sam have all come to GVSU in order to take part in what it means to be a member of the Writing Department. All of them strongly believe that making the transition was one of the best

decisions they have made and hope to get one step closer to their writing dreams in the process. As the Writing Department ends a great academic year for both teaching and learning, thank you to everyone who has made the decision to join our community. Let us continue to make the Writing Department a place for everyone to grow and write together!

RETIRING

Continued from page 2

at the university’s convocation ceremony. Additionally, Clark worked in the dean’s office and was the Interim Chair of the Art Department for a year and a half. She was also the Writing Department Chair for three years and coordinated the poetry portion of the Fall Arts Celebration for eighteen years. “You have to vary your job a little to keep it interesting,” she said after describing all the ways she has contributed to the university.

“Clark first taught in the English Department and played a role in bringing the Writing Department to life.”

As a poet, Professor Clark loves teaching the intermediate and advanced poetry classes, as well as WRT 219: Intro to Creative Writing. She enjoys getting the opportunity to teach students that writing is fun and can be more than academic essays. Clark is passionate about turning her students on to writing in new ways and loves seeing her WRT 219 students become writing majors after

taking the class. “If you are a good writer, you are going to be more of a success,” she says, emphasizing the importance of learning to write well.

Professor Clark is excited for retirement and will continue to pursue the fiction and poetry projects she has been working on. She looks forward to the release of her sixth book later this year and hopes to give readings at local venues and elsewhere. Outside of writing, Clark is passionate about nature, gardening, and travel, and looks forward to working in her garden, becoming involved with Grand Rapids’ Citizen Forester program, and traveling more with her husband. They are hoping to go to Greece next and see some of the Adriatic seacoast.

It takes skill, determination, and patience to get to where Professor Clark is today, and GVSU has been lucky to have had her as part of the English and Writing Departments for over thirty years.

**WRT Department
Outstanding
Student Award
2020**

Annie Cunningham

AWP

Continued from page 3

EXTRA TIPS:

- Do not forget to check out who will be at the bookfair so you can talk to the editors of the journals you are hoping to submit to.
- If you do not like a panel, get up and leave. You do not have to attend the whole panel. Feel free to try a different one!
- Bring an extra luggage bag for your bookfair swag and books.
- If you do not have a business card, try sharing contact information another way.

AWP can be overwhelming if you've never attended a conference or are worried about being in a big city. Following these tips can help take a lot of the stress out of the experience because you'll be prepared to enjoy it. The conference allows you to become connected with the creative writing community as a whole, an important experience for every writer.

KNAPP

Continued from page 5

regular basis. Every appointment with Lisa is educational, challenging, and a source of genuine encouragement. At Knapp's networking event last year, I was introduced to the editor of a well-established publishing company. With a desire to be an editor, I sought to learn how to maintain this important relationship, and Knapp assisted my journey of navigating it. Through these efforts, I was offered a position at this same publishing



AWP conference (photo: Kristie DeVlieger)

company one year later.

Most of Knapp's students say they wish they came sooner. Reaching out for help can seem daunting for some, but Knapp's intention to challenge, encourage, and support writing students proves effective in my own experience and many others'. Lisa wants students to know that they do not have to have it all together when they walk through the Career Center's doors; "we are all in this together."

"Lisa wants students to know that they do not have to have it all together when they walk through the Career Center's doors."

Knapp can be contacted through Handshake, or at knapplis@gvsu.edu. The Career Center is located on the Allendale and Grand Rapids campuses. Find more information at <https://www.gvsu.edu/careers/>.

WRT Major Scholarship

Amanda Pszczolkowski

Haley Tanis

Department's Kenneth R. VenderBush Nominee

Olivia Baker

Congratulations to the Class of 2020

A Note from Department Chair Toth



*GVSU Commencement
(photo: University Communications)*

University life as we know it at GVSU seemed to change overnight with the spread of COVID-19. I applaud our university's administration for making the tough call to move all courses to remote online learning and close campus. This decision has dramatically slowed the spread of the virus in West Michigan, and more importantly, it has saved lives.

With the change to remote learning to encourage social distancing practices, so much of our end-of-the-year gatherings for the Department of Writing required modifications. For instance, the remaining writers in the GVSU Writers Series no longer visited campus, retirement celebrations for Patricia Clark and Jim VanSickle were postponed, the 2020 fishladder unveiling event was canceled, and this newsletter will only be distributed electronically.

Although many of us will go through the academic cycle experiencing these engaging events again in the future, one group is affected more than the rest of us: The

Class of 2020. The end of the academic year should be a time of celebration for our graduating writing majors. While we are extremely proud of you, I know that watching episodes of *Tiger King* on Netflix or YouTube videos of how friends and family are coping with the quarantine does not compare with the public recognition you deserve.

So, I would like to use this space to congratulate graduating writing majors on a job well done. You deserve all the great things that the future has in store for you. I would also like to congratulate our writing seniors who maintained a GPA of 3.5 or higher. You can find their names listed on this page. Finally, I also want to recognize Annie Cunningham, whom the writing faculty have chosen as the Department's Outstanding Student in 2020 for all of her high caliber contributions both inside and outside of the classroom.

Normally, we celebrate our graduating seniors at the Department of Writing's Annual Awards Ceremony at the end of April. I know I speak for my writing colleagues when I say this is our favorite event of the entire year. It is our chance to celebrate writing majors who we have watched during their time in the major become strong storytellers.

I am confident our graduating writing seniors will go into the world when the isolation orders are lifted and use their storytelling skills in powerful ways, whether they will be working as social media specialists; writing novels, essays, or poems; creating grants for nonprofit organizations; shaping and designing documents as technical writers; or offering guidance as developmental editors.

Best wishes to the Class of 2020. Congratulations!

Graduating Seniors with GPA of 3.5 or Higher

Rachel Azure

Olivia Baker

Elizabeth Baranski

Annie Cunningham

Emily Driscoll

Brooke Fugate

Brianne Kerr

Megan Markel

Amy McNeel

Jordan Miller

Arie Nienhuis

Alaina Taylor

Jenna Pewarchie

Emma Wikle

A Note from the Editor

Jennalyn Stull



Jennalyn Stull (photo: Jennalyn Stull)

It is safe to say that none of us expected the impact that COVID-19 would have on this semester. In the blink of an eye, many of us had to pack up our belongings and move from our dorm rooms, not knowing whether we would be returning. As our classes began transitioning online and the situation began to worsen, many of us realized that we had left campus for the last time this school year. And for a lot of seniors, the rest of their college career.

As a senior myself, the hardest part is being unable to experience the simple things I watched past seniors do. Missing out on taking senior pictures, not being able to participate in end of the year club events, and not getting to personally say goodbye to longtime friends and professors is heartbreaking. And for students of all years, losing months of seeing close friends and a shortening of the college experience is just as tough. This is in addition to the stress of getting used to online classes and feeling a sudden need to adjust to working remotely.

But while this situation presents

a lot of challenges, in some ways, it allows all of us to learn more about ourselves as writers, editors, and designers. For example, one of my career aspirations has always been to work as an editor from home. Because of the Stay at Home order, I have learned that I struggle with remote work and prefer a collaborative, face-to-face environment. This situation has also taught many of us how to function in remote work settings, what programs to use, and how to communicate with people outside of our close friends and family using the professional writing principles we have learned in our classes. This is an experience that most writers would never have until entering the workforce.

But more than anything, this experience has proven the tenacity of writing students. Many of us have been working on big assignments this semester, whether they be final projects or the last bits of our major requirements. And though transitioning this work online has been difficult, we are pulling through. We are collaboratively writing instructions on Google docs; we are sharing a WordPress account to create our team website; we are meeting up in video calls to put the finishing touches on our collaborative essays; we are coordinating with our internship supervisors to move the rest of our work online. We are proving that we can make it through anything, even one of the biggest crises our generation has seen.

For myself, though I will not be able to walk in the graduation ceremony this April, I am grateful that I was able to leave my last semester at GVSU knowing that I was part of such a strong and amazing community of writers.

INWRITING

Winter 2020

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