

Notes from Bancroft

01 May 2026



A Letter from Our New Department Chair

If you've spent time in Bancroft Hall, you know that much of what defines this department lives in the in-between moments: a conversation that lingers after class, a piece of writing revised through careful, repeated attention, a question that reshapes how a student sees their work—or themselves. These are the parts of what we do that are hardest to measure, but often the ones that last.

As I've stepped into the role of Chair, I've been thinking about how a department sustains itself over time, not just through curriculum or programs, but through the accumulation of small, ongoing acts of attention and care. This year, as we mark the retirement of Professor Jo Koster, we are especially aware of what it means to carry work forward. In this issue, we pause to recognize that work and the ways it continues to evolve. What we do here is not built all at once. It is kept, revised, and carried forward by the people who move through these spaces.

For those of you reading this as alumni, you are part of that continuity. The work you began here travels into careers, communities, writing practices, and ways of thinking that continue to evolve. In many ways, this department is defined as much by where you've gone as by what happens within these walls.

In this issue of Notes from Bancroft, you'll see glimpses of that ongoing work: students experimenting across forms and media, faculty mentoring and researching, and projects that reach beyond the university and into broader publics. Together, they reflect a department in motion shaped by those who teach, study, and remain connected to it.

As we approach this season of reflection and support, I hope this issue offers a moment to reconnect, with the place, with the work, and with the threads that continue to shape what we are still becoming.

With appreciation,

Devon C. Fitzgerald

Dr. Devon C. Fitzgerald
Department Chair



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Student Creative Writing Showcases

Each semester, the Student Creative Writing Showcase celebrates the accomplished poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction of Winthrop students! Each reading stars nine students (three per genre) invited by Creative Writing faculty to share remarkable work written in their classes. Held in Whitton Auditorium, these readings give student writers the podium in front of an enthusiastic audience of their peers.

The fall 2025 showcase featured Kyran Anderson, Raegan Carter, Grace Davis, Abbie Holman, Greta Oswald, Mariana Razo, Es Senhouse, Trent Smith, and Caleb Stillson.

The spring 2026 showcase featured Zachary Bell, Marabel Bobek, Maisie Hain, Avaly Kounbandith, Wren Miller, Pablo Morales, Davyn Osborne, and Gillian Scott.



2026 Scholarships & Awards Ceremony

The English Department's 2026 Scholarships & Awards Ceremony took place on April 3, 2026 in DIGS 114. Sixteen students were recognized for exceptional writing and outstanding academic achievements: Dalayna Hill, Joshua Chintapalli, Gabriel Tristano, Cody Byrdic, Keri Nicole Beatty, Davyn Osborne, Zachary Bell, Ainsley Fraser, Megan Hewes, Simon Cherry, Gabriela Griggs, Izzy LaBounty, Emory Ivie, Liam Floyd, Hayden Roach, and Sophia Moore.

This year, English faculty established several new writing awards — the CRTW/HXCT Writing Award and the Creative Writing Awards in Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Nonfiction — to expand recognition of excellence in both creative and academic student writing.

English Department Chair, Dr. Devon Fitzgerald, officiated the ceremony, calling the day “our collective ‘full stop’ . . . our chance to step back and celebrate the exceptional craft, the rigorous inquiry, and the sheer dedication that defines this department.”

In addition to recognizing student achievements, Dr. Fitzgerald awarded four remarkable faculty members: Amy Bagwell for excellence in teaching; Dr. Amanda Hiner for excellence in scholarship; Dr. Kelly Richardson for excellence in service to the department and the University; and Dr. Jo Koster for long-term service and excellence in teaching and scholarship.

During the ceremony, Dr. Fitzgerald expressed gratitude to our donors and friends of the department, noting their foundational role in providing enriching opportunities: “Their generosity does more than just fund awards & scholarships; it validates the importance of the humanities. Because of their support, our students can pursue ambitious research; our faculty can push the boundaries of their scholarship, and our department can remain a vibrant home for critical thought and creative expression.”



Graduate Student Research Spotlight

Several Winthrop English MA students presented at prestigious academic conferences during the 2025 – 2026 academic year. In September 2025, Wren Miller presented their paper titled “The Vampiric Other in *Dracula* and *Carmilla*” at the Victorians Institute Conference held at Furman University in Greenville, SC. Cody Byrdic and Jzurnee Myers traveled to Cornell University in Ithaca, NY to present at the Toni Morrison: Literature & Public Life Symposium along with Dr. Leslie Bickford. Jzurnee Myers also presented a paper titled “‘No, No, No, No, No! Too loud, Too Reckless, Too Ghetto’: Black American Popular Culture & American Flag Symbolism” at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference (SAMLA) in Atlanta, GA in November 2025.

The 2026 College English Association (CEA) conference was held locally in Charlotte, NC in March, so grad student Cody Byrdic took the opportunity to present his paper titled “Neither Here nor There: Prosthetic Gender, Racial Subjectivity, and the Lacanian Split in Ernest Hemingway’s ‘The Garden of Eden.’”

In April 2026, Keri Beatty presented her paper “Unbound: Tracing Margery Kempe’s Scars” at the 46th Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum at Keene State College in Keene, NH.

The breadth of conferences that our graduate students attended this academic year showcases the diversity of research areas offered in the English Department’s coursework. We are grateful for the exceptional faculty mentorship, generous donors who support faculty and student travel, and the intriguing scholarship from our grad students who were motivated to share and continue improving their work at these distinguished conferences.

Accelerated BA to MA in English

Enrolled Winthrop University undergraduate students can earn a Master of Arts Degree in one additional year of study through this Accelerated program. Highly qualified juniors and seniors can apply to take up to 9 credit hours that count for both their undergraduate and graduate degrees, at no extra tuition cost. This program offers students a unique opportunity to save time, money, and to get the utmost professional experience out of their coursework. After completing their undergraduate degree, Accelerated B.A. to M.A. students will apply to the Master of Arts in English.

A promotional graphic for the Accelerated BA to MA in English program. It features a black background with white and yellow text. The text reads: "YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING: GET THERE SOONER WITH THE ACCELERATED B.A.-M.A. IN ENGLISH". Below the text is a white hand holding a red location pin. The Winthrop University Department of English logo is in the bottom left, and a QR code is in the bottom right. The text "SCAN FOR MORE INFO:" is positioned above the QR code.

New Faculty Roles



Dr. AJ Campbell,
Writing Center Director

Hi All- I am so pleased to introduce myself as the new Director of the Writing Center housed within the English Department. Since joining Winthrop in 2013, I have served in various faculty roles, taught a range of classes, and have a particular passion for our CRTW 201: Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing curriculum.

At the close of the 2024-2025 school year, I was promoted to Senior Instructor, and most recently, I defended my dissertation and earned my PhD in Literature and Criticism. It is an exciting time in my life, and I am eager to support students across the University in this new position. It has been such a joyful transition to join the warm, inviting, and intelligent group of graduate and undergraduate tutors for the 2025-2026 school year.

In my new role, I look forward to building writing support services that meet our students' unique needs while fostering confidence in the research and writing process. I believe all writers and tutors grow through collaborative peer mentoring, and I am grateful to offer these learning opportunities to our current and future students. I'm delighted to be here!

-Dr. Campbell



Dr. Kelly Richardson,
Grad Program Director

I'm delighted to be stepping into the role of Graduate Director. I received my Master's from this department, and so being able to contribute in this way is really personal to me. I have been working this year to understand better all the processes that come with this role, and I have appreciated people's patience during this transitional time.

The role has also given me a different perspective to consider trends in both higher education and literature. On a personal note, for example, I have been learning more about the developing field of blue humanities, and I presented at the Summer 2025 Melville Society conference focused on "Melville and the Oceanic." I am also working on researching the history of the textile industry in the area. Both of these areas connect interdisciplinary perspectives and are re-energizing ways of seeing subjects I thought had become familiar.

The experience has also been showing me something that I already knew—a distinctive quality of this program is the superior mentoring the department provides as several graduate students have done professional presentations this year. Such work speaks to the dedication and mentorship from the faculty. I am deeply proud of the work this department does, and, again, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute in this role. It reminds me to encourage all of us to channel our inner Walt Whitman and "celebrate" and "sing" ourselves. There is much to be proud of in this department.

-Dr. Richardson



"Vegetable Burger Soup"

By Dr. Amanda Hiner
from *Food for Thought*

Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 (16 oz.) cans stewed tomatoes
- 1 (16 oz.) can tomato sauce
- 4 cups water or beef broth
- 2 (10 oz.) packages frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 envelope dry onion soup mix
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp garlic salt

Directions:

- Brown the ground beef and drain off the fat.
- Stir in the remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 20 minutes.
- Makes 6-8 servings.
- Dr. Hiner usually doubles the recipe if she wants to have leftovers.

Celebrating Dr. Jo Koster's Retirement

If you took a class with Dr. Jo Koster, you likely remember it.

Maybe it was *History of the English Language*, where words you thought you knew suddenly had histories, migrations, and lives of their own. Maybe it was *Arthurian Legend*, where texts felt less like distant artifacts and more like living stories still shaping how we think about heroism and power. Maybe it was *Sherlock Holmes*, where careful attention and close reading became sharp, more like method. Dr. Koster has been a central figure in the Department of English since 1993, teaching courses that students return to in conversation. Her classes are known for the way they invite students into the academic space, asking them to think carefully, read closely, and trust themselves as emerging scholars.

Across her career, Dr. Koster has served the department in nearly every capacity: Writing Center Director, Director of Graduate Studies, and Director of the Medieval Studies Program. Through this work, she has shaped not only individual courses but the very structure of our programs. Her leadership in developing and sustaining the Medieval Studies program created an interdisciplinary space that continues to influence our curriculum and intellectual culture.

But for many students, her impact is most clearly felt in the classroom and in mentorship. As Director of Graduate Studies, she guided countless students through advanced academic work, often helping them see themselves as scholars when they hadn't yet imagined that path. That kind of encouragement has had lasting effects on the students who have worked with her. As Dr. Koster prepares to retire at the end of this summer, we want to ensure she knows that her influence is lasting. She has shaped this department in ways both visible and invisible, and her impact will continue through the students, faculty, and programs she has guided.

If you were one of her students, you are part of that legacy.

We invite you to honor Dr. Koster's impact by supporting the Department of English. You can contribute using the QR code below; your gift helps sustain the programs, mentorship, and learning experiences that she has spent her career building.



Consider Making a Gift to the English Department

Thanks to our donors, we can offer incredible learning opportunities for our students such as our American Shakespeare Center Trip, study abroad experiences, Writers Series events, travel to the National Council of Teachers of English Conference, and our annual Undergraduate & Graduate Research Conference. Please consider donating to the Department of English to support our exceptional students and programs!

Donation Link

