

MUSINGS

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Dates to Remember

- Monday, May 16: Spectrum Awards
- Wednesday May 25: English Departmental Review
- Saturday, May 28: Last day to Withdraw with a "W"
- Monday, May 30: Campus Closed for Memorial Day
- June 11: Commencement
- June 12: Spring quarter classes end
- June 14: Grades due
- June 15: Summer terms A, C and D begin

FROM THE CHAIR: A POST MODERN PROPOSAL

First, consider "The Liar's Paradox": "This statement is false." The proof for this statement "relies on a meticulous, fiddly mechanism." But when considered as a corollary to program outcomes, one must take into consideration fluctuations in personnel and clientele over the last biennia. As I address the number of FTE's over these two years, I will designate one group the A1John cognate and the other as B4Swift, corresponding to the years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. I am looking for appealing improvements in the FTE group as they progress through ENG 111, 112, and 113. If group A1John did not meet the required outcomes then B4Swift has the right to eat them. That's the rub!

But let's look at the success rates. A1John has regressed from 59% to 42% in the designated year. Shame on them! These low rates must speak to the problem either of the original outcomes or the assessment instruments used or, at least, miscalculations in the grade books. The magnitude of these numbers must be juxtaposed with the Modified Success Rates vs. the Modified Pass Rates. And what about those W grades? How shall they be figured in this mix? Palatable perimeters certainly exist but can we ultimately ask: "Should these students be in college in the first place?" It is a truth universally acknowledged that college is not for everybody. Should students be purged (yes, if B4Swift is given the opportunity to eat A1John then the purging will begin, no doubt) if they do not satisfy the prerequisites or abide by the placement scores?

These practical matters begin to bore me, and I yearn for the more theoretical. Let's go back to the paradox. Mathematicians, of course, were rocked by this paradox; yet the poets fully understood. One within a system cannot evaluate that system. Contradictions will arise. And if contradictions exist then $2+2=5$ or else perfectly ordinary statements may well be true but can never be proved. Axioms and theorems (remember those from your tenth grade geometry class?), therefore, create a new system and perhaps outcomes and perimeters will no longer equate. So is math subjective and English objective? If your logic class in college did not resolve this for you, then *you* should be ashamed. Because we know that if we

say program outcomes are not provable then we have proved that they exist, and if they exist, then there really is no contradiction. So is there a true statement that cannot be proved within the formal system? But that brings us back to our biennium.

Of the two groups – B4Swift and A1John – the former's Final Exam Averages show that they have stayed with us, at least, to take the final but that they have also passed into the realm of former students. Have our initiatives helped them reach this point or are they just drones on the wheel of compulsory education and we are drones on the wheel of instruction to imagine that we have affected them? ENG 112, however, proves to be the obstacle on the way to Success Rates. If 57% of these students do not comprehend the MLA (not knowing that they are FTE's) then we must rely upon the internet to help them conquer information literacy. As a Vanguard Learning College (previously a Quality College and before that an Advanced High School), we must expect there to be good news and bad news. The good? Googling and blogging have become ways of life. The bad? Professor emeriti don't know *blog* from *clod*. So who is better prepared? And prepared for what? Can we honestly say that A1John will not be better off in "the real world" when the reality show is the ultimate success? And what will B4Swift get out of eating their colleagues? I suppose that some population control is at hand, some rough beast slouching toward retirement, to purge that which does not meet the designated outcomes. Who's keeping raw scores, anyway? If you are helping through the Freshmen Experience; if you are tutoring, conferencing, grading, correcting, critiquing; if you serve on any Student Services committee; if you believe in love then you are contributing to those Success Rates. We must continue to watch the numbers or else they will begin to watch us – or have they already? Eating the A1John group might give the B4Swift group the impetus to grow beyond all of this nonsense. Remember the Poet's Paradox: Everything is Paradox.

Gary Mitchner

PRINTED AND PRESENTED

Chuck Freeland presented a paper entitled "Creating an Inclusive Space: Poetry Workshop in the Community College" at the College English Association Conference, April 2, in Indianapolis. He also spoke on April 15th to Fairborn High School's creative writing classes concerning writing and publishing.

Ed Davis is pleased to announce that he just inked the contract to present three workshops at the annual West Virginia Writers workshop at Cedar Lakes in June. He'll be presenting on autobiographical fiction: joys and pitfalls, advanced dialogue-writing and autobiographical fiction vs. memoir. Our condolences to Ed, as he'll be missing commencement for the occasion. As he remarked, "Sigh."

Lisa Tyler was selected as one of 10 participants in American Cities and Public Spaces, a Research Institute for Community College Faculty sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and organized by the Community College Humanities Association. The program offers community college faculty the opportunity to conduct guided, systematic research at the Library of Congress, with support from its Office of Scholarly Programs. Institute fellows will be in residence in Washington for four stays over a 13-month period beginning this June and will attend seminar presentations on the Institute's topic by distinguished visiting senior scholars.

Tim Waggoner will be presenting sessions on writing fiction at the Gencon convention in Indianapolis in August. His short story

"Special Delivery" was accepted for publication in the sixth edition of the award-winning Borderlands anthology series. He'll have a short story tentatively titled "The Blade and the Rose" coming out in the Eberon anthology from Wizards of the Coast. His fantasy novel *Godfire* (which he wrote right before he interviewed at Sinclair six years ago) is finally going to come out as two volumes from Five Star Press titled *The Orchard of Dreams* and *Heart's Wound*, respectively. His next two horror novels for Leisure Books will be titled *Beneath the Bone* and *Last Breath* (now he just has to write them!).

Becky Morean's novel *In the Dead of Winter* (published under her pseudonym, Abbey Pen Baker) has been included in *A Guide to Fiction Set in Vermont*, a reference book due out in June of 2005. She also gave a reading in Ohiopyle, PA (where her car blew up, incidentally) of two short stories from her collection: *The Persuasion of Miracles*.

Gary Mitchner gave a poetry workshop for UD's LitFest, spoke on Jane Austen at the English Speaking Union at The Ohio State University, and had three poems published in the spring *Cincinnati Review*. He took students on several field trips: to *Much Ado About Nothing* in Cincinnati; *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* and *Big Love* (an adaptation of Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women*) in Columbus; Brian Bedford's *The Lover, the Lunatic, and the Poet* in Springfield; and a poetry reading by former US Poet Laureate Louise Gluck at UC.

"In the Spring I have counted one hundred thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of twenty-four hours."

—Mark Twain

FROM THE TEAMS

The Library/English Liaison Team met to discuss ways of facilitating library use during the renovation process. We have communicated frequently asked questions and answers to both full and part-time English faculty, and continue to be available for questions regarding library use and to help address any problems that arise. One question was raised recently by a faculty member who likes to take his ENG 112 class to the library for independent work, or who allows students to go to the library for part of the class time. This may be one convenience not as readily available during the interim. Fewer tables and busier computers in the temporary library make space an issue. But this does not mean that faculty should give up those practices. Instead, they should make sure they coordinate any planned activities with the reference librarians ahead of time. (Tip: book your LRC visits before printing your

class assignment schedule.) In addition, The Literature and Scholarship Team encouraged Spanish professor Derek Petrey to take the lead in planning two roundtable discussions in April of the Big Read book, *Nickel and Dimed*.

From the Creative Writing Team: The 31st Writers' Workshop took place on April 14 and 15th, and despite some problems with the facilities, went well. The date and keynote speaker for next year are already set: Thursday Feb. 23 (for both the workshop and keynote presentation). The speaker will be poet Michael Harper. The workshop will occur earlier than usual because we're going to coordinate with the Paul Laurence Dunbar centennial celebration next year. The annual Spectrum Awards ceremony will take place Monday May 18 from 6-9, so mark your calendars. The next issue of *Flights* is moving along for targeted release next Fall quarter.

MORE FROM THE TEAMS

The operations of the **Writing Center** have not changed significantly because of the new changes expected in moving to the LRC. Prof. Carol Nancarrow has taken full responsibility in working with the plans for our new location, while Prof. Mildred Melendez has been taking her turn in the rotation as the Writing Center Coordinator since Fall Quarter, 2004. No new tutors have come on board, but we lost one Master Tutor at the end of Winter Quarter. The current concerns involve technician attitudes, sensitivity to tutee issues, and knowledge and assistance offered to students who come to the Writing Center.

From the Business/Tech Team: Beginning fall quarter 2005, all students enrolled in engineering programs will be required to take the composition series--English 111 and English 112 *instead* of Technical Composition--English 121 and English 122. This decision is based primarily around the issue of transfer; more and more of Sinclair's engineering students are transferring to four year institutions, and most will not accept the Technical Composition classes in place of English 111 and English 112. The engineering division will reevaluate these changes after one year.

GRAPEVINE

Richard Porter and his wife, Lesley, welcomed their second child, Tessa Catherine-Grace on March 30.

Laurel Gilbert is proud to announce that she has been accepted to Ohio State's MFA program and plans to attend in the fall. She thanks Tim Waggoner and Vicki Stalbird for their "feedback, input, good thoughts and moral support." Congratulations, Laurel.

William Loudermilk recently received his second graduate degree, a Masters in Communication, from Regent University's College of Communication and the Arts.

A fond farewell to **Dana Frierson**, who leaves us at the end of this year, her 10th at Sinclair. She will be married on June 25th in Nashville, where she and her husband will make their home. All the best to the newlyweds.

FACULTY FAVORITES: NATHAN HELLMERS

I can be pretty clueless sometimes.

When I was 15, a young lady friend in my youth group asked me if I'd like to see a movie. Unfortunately, it wasn't until the door of her parents' van opened and I saw another couple in the back that I realized I was on a date.

Now some people might have adjusted well enough to this sudden revelation. I, however, was probably not the best company that evening. The conversation was unmemorable, except when we talked about school assignments. I had just read Tolkien's *The Hobbit* in my English class and had found the book mildly interesting, though I wasn't much of a reader. I had heard of *The Lord of the Rings*, but hadn't bothered to look for a copy. It sounded quite long, and frankly, the odds of me reading the whole thing were slim to none.

As it turned out, the young lady had also recently read *The Hobbit* and had just purchased a three volume paperback copy of *The Lord of the Rings*. Her friends had told her it was a great book and she looked forward to reading it. As I listened, I was intrigued and mentioned that I might try to find a copy to read. She kindly offered to lend me hers, even before she read it.

I suppose I should have realized something at that point. But to continue....

It took me three weeks to read the book, and I'm not too ashamed to say that I cried, slightly, during the goodbyes at the end. I returned the set to the young lady, probably in less pristine condition that I received it, and went out and bought my own copy. I read it over and over again, read the rest of Tolkien's works, and moved on to countless other books and authors. After completing three degrees in English and Library Science, I can look back and say that a substantial part of the reason I now work in Libraries and teach English classes is because at 15 I found myself on a date with a determined young lady who happened to own a copy of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Nathan Hellmers

A word of advice: if you are a student on your first day of college classes and a young lady happens to sit next to you with a copy of *The Lord of the Rings* in her hand, don't attempt to strike up a conversation by saying, "I've read that book six times."

That would be pretty clueless.

*"...it's/ spring/ when the
world is puddle-
wonderful"*

—*e.e. cummings*

NEWS: CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

The winners of this year's Creative Writing Contest have been announced. Janet E. Irvin, of Springboro, added a first-place win in adult poetry to her first-place wins in fiction and non-fiction in the previous two years. Janet also won the Bill Vernon Award in 2003 for her short story, "The Weight of Possibility."

A total of 223 entrants submitted work in all five categories this year. While high school entrants held steady at 94 (versus 95 in '04), three categories increased over last year: fiction (31 versus 23 in '04), nonfiction (17 versus 9) and middle school (from a measly 9 to a whopping 43). This represents wonderful support from teachers, who not only encourage their students to enter, but often gather and mail their students' entries. A teacher at Stivers School for the Arts, for example, sent two huge packets of entries this year. And of course that meant a lot of hard work on the part of our high school judging committee: Kate Geiselman, Sally Lahmon and Susan Callender.

The Miami Valley School had a winner this year in both high school and middle school categories, and, once again, students at Oakwood and Chaminade-Julienne High Schools produced winners, joined by Meadowdale, Dixie and Stivers. It's great to see the middle school category grow and to have winning schools from adjacent counties like Lakota Plains Junior High and Wyoming Middle School alongside Kettering Middle School. As for Sinclair students, Tim Waggoner and I were thrilled that our former student Rebecca Kendell won second place in fiction and poetry (plus her winning short story, "Kundiawa," is this year's

League for Innovation Contest's fiction entry).

Many thanks belong to the judges, for sacrificing valuable time they could've spent grading final exams and planning spring gardens. Along with the aforementioned, this year's judges included: Tim Waggoner, Rebecca Morean and Liz Christensen (Fiction); Kay Berg, Chuck Wagner and Vicki Stalbird (Non-Fiction); Chuck Freeland, Gary Mitchner and Jamey Dunham (Poetry); and Jack Bennett and Carol Nancarrow (Middle School). And the contest simply could not exist without Fortunate Finley. This year she was greatly aided by student worker Natalie Day.

The annual awards ceremony will, for the first time, be a banquet held in the evening: 6:00-9:00 P.M. on Monday, May 16 in the Charity Earley Ballroom. Tom Smith's widow, Sue Smith, will be there to present the first Turnip Awards to deserving Sinclair writers, and Bill Vernon will present the award named for him to first-place nonfiction winner Mary Knapke. Come, enjoy, honor your students and support good writing!

And finally: after nine years, I'm stepping down as director, but leaving the contest in the capable hands of Professor Chuck Freeland, who was himself a contest winner in his younger years. Please support him, as you supported me: by judging, publicizing and attending the ceremony. In so many ways, the contest represents the best of what we do: encouraging people to write by demonstrating the many tangible and intangible rewards. Thanks to all of you for this important project that touches so many in our community.

Ed Davis

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

FICTION

First Place: Anne Marie Townsend, "I Love You, Goodnight"

Second Place: Amy Montgomery, "Cicada Dance"

Third Place: Rebecca Kendell, "Kundiawa"

POETRY

First Place: Janet E. Irvin, "Leonid Stadnick: An Oversized Life"

Second Place: Robert Gray, "Botticelli on Ice"

Third Place: Rebecca Kendell, "Images"

NONFICTION

First Place: Mary Knapke, "My Mother's Blue Hat"

Second Place: Megan Anderson, "Blue Spirits and Pink Packards"

Third Place: Paul C. Preston, "My First Job"

HIGH SCHOOL

First Place: Kristen Schafer, "Name Not A Number"

Second Place: Whitney Saleski, "American War Stories"

Third Place: Tyler Benedict, "Fallen Hero"

MIDDLE SCHOOL/JR. HIGH

First Place: Carly Spinazzola, "Spoons"

Second Place: Becca Fradkin, "A Concoction in a Bottle"

Third Place: Christina Pouagare, "All Alone"

A complete list of winners, including **Honorable Mentions**, is available in the English Department and will be posted online soon.

Faculty and Staff

- Chair:

Gary Mitchner

- Secretary:

Fortunate Finley

- Faculty:

Jack Bennett

Kay Berg

Susan Callender

Adrienne Cassel

Liz Christensen

Ed Davis

Jamey Dunham

Chuck Freeland

Dana Frierson

Kate Geiselman

Sarah Kiewitz

Sally Lahmon

Mildred Melendez

Becky Morean

Carol Nancarrow

Vicki Stalbird

Lisa Tyler

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Doug Greathouse

- Student worker:

Natalie Day

- Newsletter Editor:

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