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## From the Department Chair

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of The Final Draft, the newsletter for the Department of English and Modern Languages. This semester has been unlike any other, with COVID-19 forcing us to transition to distance learning in mid-March. In the midst of uncertainty and change, we continue to embrace our mission statement: We educate students to write well, think critically, and examine the world through the lenses of literature and languages. As you will see, our department's faculty, staff, and students navigated the challenges of this semester with grace and skill.

If you would like more information about our department, be sure to visit our website ([www.shepherd.edu/eml](http://www.shepherd.edu/eml)) and our Facebook page (Shepherd University's Dept. of English & Modern Languages). And graduates: we would love to hear from you! Please let us know what you are up to. You might find yourself featured in an upcoming installment of our "Alumni Spotlight."

Whether you are a current student, a future student, an alum, or simply a supporter of our department, we hope you will enjoy reading about the exciting news we have to share.

Sincerely,

Dr. Betty Ellzey



Cecelia Mason

**Dr. Betty Ellzey**  
Chair of the Department of English and  
Modern Languages





*The Poetry Festival organizers are (l. to r.) Katreena Stracke, Ashley Hess, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Linnea Meyer, and Alex McCarron.*

## Fourth Annual Poetry Festival

Sigma Tau Delta's fourth annual Poetry Festival was one of the few late spring 2020 events not to be disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. On March 7, students, faculty, and townspeople alike gathered to read poetry and celebrate each other's art. The festival had about 40 attendees with a little less than half reading poetry. Some people chose to read their favorite poems, while others read original poetry. The festival wasn't

just enjoyable for those reading poetry, however, or even just people involved in the English Department. Ashton Byers, an art education major, said, "I really enjoyed the opportunity to learn about people and their feelings without really knowing them." Members of Sigma Tau Delta hosted the event with the help of their faculty advisor, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan. The team members raffled off donated books, provided

poetry prompts at each table, and had various snacks purchased with money they raised at the Valentine's Day Bake Sale. With so many attendees enjoying the festival, the organization looks forward to hosting the event every year to help foster the love of poetry throughout the community and on campus. ■



*Attendees listen to poetry.*



*Community member and local poet Sue Silver shares her work.*



*Chemistry major/English minor Ellie George shares her poetry.*



## Rude Mechanicals

Before the COVID-19 shutdown, Shepherd University's Rude Mechanicals Medieval and Renaissance Players had a busy spring 2020 season, sharing their work at a variety of venues. On February 29, they presented "Medieval Drama and Contemporary Social Justice" at the

Wilson College Humanities Conference. This presentation demonstrated how medieval drama can be used to address violence against women and the LGBTQ+ community. On March 13, they performed *Joseph's Wedding*, an anonymous 16th-century Spanish play, at the New College

of Florida. Though their on-campus productions were canceled, the Rudes, under the direction of Dr. Betty Ellzey, already have plans in the works for some kind of summer and fall 2020 performances. Stay tuned! ■



*The Rude Mechanicals performing Joseph's Wedding at the New College of Florida. Pictured, from left to right: David Warner, Ash Hall, Jack Shackleford, Adam Wilson, William Prudnick, Ashley Barr, Lydia King, Mary Scaggs (nursing major), Austin Fitzgerald (history major), Victoria Fairchild (elementary education major), and, on the ground, Dakota DiMarino.*



*The Rude Mechanicals at the Wilson College Humanities Conference performance. Front row, left to right: Ashley Barr (English major), TK Lindsey (alumnus), Lauren Harvey (English major), Ash Hall (alumnus). Back row: Jack Shackleford (English major), Dr. Betty Ellzey; David Warner (English major), Lydia King (history major), William Prudnick (chemistry major), Adam Wilson (community member), and Dakota DiMarino (engineering major).*

## Sans Merci: Volume 44

Starting in August of the 2019-2020 school year, the editors of *Sans Merci* were hard at work on Volume 44 of Shepherd's own literary and arts magazine. Although the release party was canceled due to COVID-19, the art and literary editorial teams worked together to produce a digital release of the magazine via Instagram and Issuu.com. Using these online platforms, senior editors Fiona Tracey and Andrea Monsma and graphic designer Molly Henry released the names of this year's award winners at the anticipated time on April 1, mimicking the build-up of a physical release party. Best Poem went to Zoe Nicewander for her submission "21 Years of You," Best Prose went to Chevelle Whichard for her story "Summer Trips," and Best Art to Jason Fischetti and Leighann Hengemhile for their submissions "EXC - Being - Reflection" and "Extra Napkins, Please."

"Poetry is the reason I fall in love with new words everyday... it has always been a bit of sunshine in my life. Winning Best Poem is the biggest achievement in my writing career so far," said Nicewander. Whichard seconded this feeling of pride: "I'd like to thank the department for really helping me rediscover my love for writing. 'Summer Trips' is the story that I am most proud of and winning encourages me to continue [writing] and see what this path has in store."

"It is invaluable for students to be in charge of a publication from start to finish," said Dr. Carrie Messenger, the faculty advisor for literature for *Sans Merci*. "Our magazine is entirely student run. Kristin [Kaineg, the faculty advisor for art,] and I have never looked forward to the Release Party as much as this year, because the teams worked so well with each other... Luckily, this year's mag is good enough to shine even if the party has to wait." Kaineg agreed. "I missed having the opportunity to share this work with campus and community... Come the fall semester, I hope we take a moment to honor the work of the artists and editors who made Volume 44 possible. In the meantime, the publication can still be viewed online at [issuu.com](https://issuu.com/sansmerci/docs/sans_merci_vol_44_issuu)."

*Sans Merci* puts an emphasis on student autonomy and is a fantastic opportunity for students to experience the writing, editing, and publishing process. Nearly all of Shepherd's Creative Writing classes give student writers a small portfolio of work from which to submit, therefore encouraging students to get involved. Additionally, many students who are published in *Sans Merci* gain the experience and confidence they need to have work published in other journals—which is just another thing that makes *Sans Merci* great. To read this year's edition of *Sans Merci*, please visit [https://issuu.com/sansmerci/docs/sans\\_merci\\_vol\\_44\\_issuu](https://issuu.com/sansmerci/docs/sans_merci_vol_44_issuu). If you're interested in more information on *Sans Merci*, visit: [www.shepherd.edu/eml/sans-merci](http://www.shepherd.edu/eml/sans-merci) or follow the magazine on Instagram: @sansmercimag. ■



[merci\\_vol\\_44\\_issuu](https://issuu.com/sansmerci/docs/sans_merci_vol_44_issuu). If you're interested in more information on *Sans Merci*, visit: [www.shepherd.edu/eml/sans-merci](http://www.shepherd.edu/eml/sans-merci) or follow the magazine on Instagram: @sansmercimag. ■

## Sigma Tau Delta Convention



**SIGMA TAU DELTA**  
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

The Sigma Tau Delta International Convention is held every spring to honor the creative and critical writing of its members. This year, the conference was supposed to have taken place in Las Vegas, Nevada, but was canceled to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Several students from Shepherd's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta were invited to present at the conference, quite an achievement given that there were nearly 900 submissions from chapters around the world. In fact, just before spring break, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Dr. Tim Nixon, Dr. Carrie Messenger, and Dr. James Pate had the absolute privilege of hearing these five students practice their presentations for the convention. Dr. Hanrahan noted in an email, "Believe me when I tell you they were all amazing. We were and are so proud of them." Dr. Nixon agreed, adding, "these women deserve some recognition and celebration." Therefore, we want

to use this space to highlight these students' impressive work.

Allison Brashears was accepted to present her paper entitled "The Wilderness Motif" where she explores three 19th-century historical American novels—*The Scarlet Letter*, *Edgar Huntly*, and *Hope Leslie*—and tracks an individual wilderness motif throughout each narrative. These nature symbols each are linked to a main character and serve to develop them within each of these early works of American fiction, revealing, in turn, the fears and values held by early American colonists.

Ashley Hess was meant to present a collection of poetry called "A Summer of My Childhood." This autobiographical collection explores the traumatic experiences the poet had as a child both through the lens of herself at eight years old, and the more mature lens of an adult.

Alex McCarron intended to present a piece about Herman Melville's short story "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Through a feminist lens, McCarron explores the feminine and domestic qualities

of Bartleby and how they set him apart in his masculine, public workplace.

Andrea Monsma planned to present her short story entitled "Feathered Memories of You." This story is an imagery heavy fiction piece told in a nonlinear fashion. The story centers on Dorothy, a woman who mourns the loss of her childhood best friend and wishes for things that never came to be. The full piece is published in the 44th volume of *Sans Merci*.

Finally, Linnea Meyer was going to present her nonfiction piece, "My Backyard's Full," which traces the consequences of mental illness through four generations of women. It investigates the difficulty of living with bipolar depressive disorder from the Great Depression to the early 21st century. The story uses family songs to describe both the illness and the healing process.

Though these women were not given the chance to present their work at the International Convention, it is important that we recognize their achievements. ■

## Writing Tutors: Meeting the Needs of Shepherd's Students

Shepherd University offers many opportunities for students to receive help on a variety of subjects, but the English department plays a key role in some of the most important: the recruitment and training of writing tutors. Shepherd's Academic Support Center offers face-to-face tutoring, ShepOWL (or online) tutoring, and attached tutoring for the department's new "studio" English 101 classes. In these ways, students at all levels can receive assistance with their writing while the tutors can build their résumés and earn a paycheck.

Traditional face-to-face tutoring remains very popular with our students, but if a student is short on time, he or she can submit work to the online tutoring service, called ShepOWL. This

system allows tutors and tutees to connect across time and region, a great asset in the times of COVID-19. In the spring 2020 semester, when tutors and tutees were no longer able to meet face-to-face, tutees submitted any type of writing to ShepOWL and received assistance. In this way, tutors could also continue being paid for their work.

Students who work as "attached tutors" are linked to an English 101S, "studio" class. These classes, which replace the old "stretch English" model, add an hour of extra help or "studio" time for writers who need some extra support in first-year writing. The tutor attends the class once a week to offer extra assistance to students who need it. Thus, these students build

a close relationship with their tutor and come to see that writers at all levels benefit from support at every point in the writing process.

All student tutors receive training, ranging from learning how to effectively help students with autism spectrum disorder to learning how to utilize online tools for those who submit work electronically. Furthermore, the English department offers a Peer Tutoring class that tutors are encouraged to take. Tutors, tutees, and staff alike have benefited from the tutoring program at Shepherd to ensure that every student receives the extra help and support that they may need to succeed as writers. ■

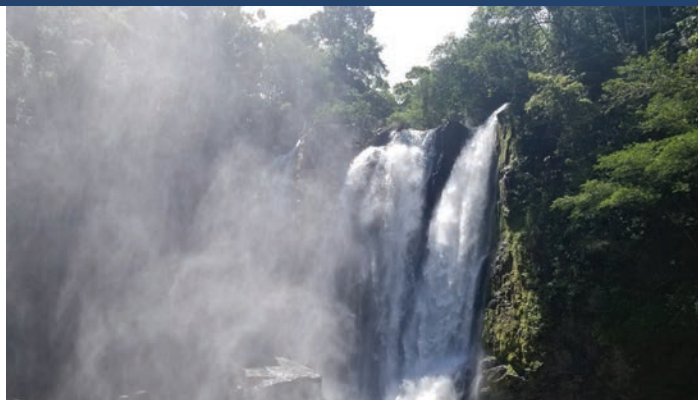


The ShepOWL tutors are (l. to r.) Madison Kersten, Jaelyn Wratchford, Mary Barker, Ashley Hess, Fiona Tracey, Allison Brashears, and Sarah Seibert.



Writing tutor Brandon Hagen speaks with the leader of an Autism Spectrum Disorder training workshop. Next to him are tutors Brandon Dolly and Anna Lynch.





*A waterfall in Costa Rica, taken by Claire Tryon, a 2018 study abroad student*



*Dr. Denis Berenschot white-water rafting with students in Costa Rica*

Though the study abroad trips scheduled this summer to Mexico and Quebec have been canceled due to the outbreak of COVID-19, that doesn't stop our Modern Languages professors from being advocates for the experience. Dr. Denis Berenschot, Spanish professor and the primary leader of many study abroad trips, believes that studying abroad is the best way to increase a student's cultural awareness. These trips help students in the obvious way of giving them a chance to practice their language of choice, but Dr. Berenschot believes it goes even farther than that. In an interview earlier this semester, he rattled off the reasons that students should explore study abroad options, including that they make students more open-minded and show them what is available in the world. In order to plan these trips, Dr. Berenschot and other Modern Languages professors take into account students' budgets and the credits they can earn for participating. In fact, our Modern

Languages professors work tirelessly to make language-learning more accessible and encourage students to take on majors or minors in the field rather than simply fulfilling their minimum degree requirements.

Dr. Berenschot notes that before the pandemic, the department had sponsored 15 continuous

lasting bonds with international universities will only inspire more travel. By keeping the trips relatively cheaply and providing students as much opportunity to travel as possible, they are only increasing student desire for foreign language and study abroad when travel restrictions are lifted.



*Old Quebec, a UNESCO World Heritage site*

years of student travel. Some of the places they have visited include Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Spain, Cuba, Mexico, and Quebec. Through these trips, Dr. Rachel Krantz, who teaches French, German, and Spanish, and Dr. Berenschot have made connections with universities in Costa Rica and Quebec. These



*Chloe Burdette enjoying some downtime after French class in Quebec last summer*



*The 2018 Costa Rica Study Abroad group*



*Great vibes at the Quebec Summer Music Festival*



*Claudia McCarron, Margo Willis, and Olivia Barrett on a beach in Costa Rica*



# Shepherd Students Succeed: Sigma Tau Delta and Beyond

On Saturday, November 9, Dr. Tim Nixon escorted a group of **German students** and faculty members through a visit of some sites of interest in **Washington, D.C.** The highlight of the trip was a tour of the home of Christian Heurich, a 19th-century mansion that is oftentimes referred to as "the Brewmaster's Castle." The group saw die Vereinigte Kirche, a Protestant church in Foggy Bottom where German-language services are still held, and everybody enjoyed lunch at Café Mozart. Dr. Rachel Krantz and her daughter Anna and Dr. Eva-Maria Suárez Budenbender and her husband, Dr. Carsten Krebs, were also on the trip. Es war ein herrlicher Ausflug!



## **SPARKS** Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Works

Congratulations to Ashley Hess and Madison Ingram, whose essays were published in **Sparks, Shepherd's journal of undergraduate research**, in February. In her essay, "Ovid's Metamorphoses as a Feminist Text," Hess argues that Ovid's text is a female epic portraying "the

struggles, triumphs, strengths, and pastimes of women." In her essay, "Women in the Grail Quest and Their Relationship with Pessimistic and Optimistic Storytelling," Ingram examines how the female characters in two grail stories influence the outcome of each quest.



Congratulations to **Alexandra McCarron**, whose essay "**Femininity, Domestic Spaces, and 'Bartleby, the Scrivener'**" will be published in Literary Undergraduate Research in English (LURe).



On Saturday, February 29, the **West Virginia Undergraduate Literary Symposium** was held at Fairmont State University. Six Shepherd students presented papers at the Symposium. Portia Dobrzanski and Sarah Seibert read essays on *The Scarlet Letter*. Allison Brashears

presented a paper on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Fiona Tracey presented on Fanny Fern and Candace Bushnell. Elisha Pidcock read her paper on two works by Jack London. Ashley Hess presented an essay on the biblical figure of Samson.



On the last day of classes of the fall 2019 semester, Sigma Tau Delta students gathered at Dr. Heidi Hanrahan's house for the **annual Holiday Party**. They played games, held a gift exchange, and shared a potluck dinner.

(continued on next page)





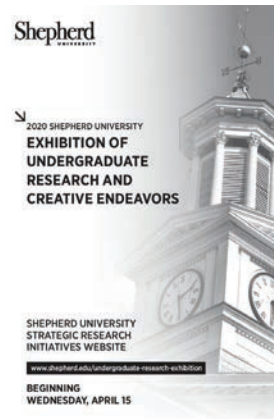
*Sigma Tau Delta students learn how to use the 3-D printer.*

In February, members of **Sigma Tau Delta** visited **Shepherd's FASTeNER lab** for a training session led by the Art Department's Kay Dartt. Dartt showed students how to use the lab's 3-D



*Some fun Jane Austen swag that the students made.*

printers. Once everyone is back on campus, the group hopes to use the equipment to make literary-themed swag to sell as fundraisers or hand out at department recruitment events.



Three English majors participated in **Shepherd's second annual Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors**, which launched online on April 15. Allison Brashears shared an

excerpt of her essay "The Wilderness Motif." Alexandra Rowe presented selections from her senior capstone project entitled, "Batman, Daffy, Wimpy, and Girls on the Run, Oh My! Postmodernism and the Cartoon World in John Ashbery's Poetry." Linnea Meyer created a poster presentation entitled "Fairytale in Action." You can view or listen to each presentation at [www.shepherd.edu/undergraduate-research-exhibition](http://www.shepherd.edu/undergraduate-research-exhibition).

## Shepherd Students Succeed: Awards and Recognitions



Congratulations to **Mikayla Hamrick**, an English major who has been awarded the **West Virginia Press Scholarship**. Mikayla will earn \$3,000 for an internship with **The Journal** and then receive an additional \$1,000 scholarship when she completes the internship. Mikayla explains, "I am blessed beyond belief that I was awarded the scholarship. It really just formulated that I not only have a voice that deserves to be heard, but that individuals whom I don't even personally know are supporting me in my effort to make a difference." We couldn't agree more.



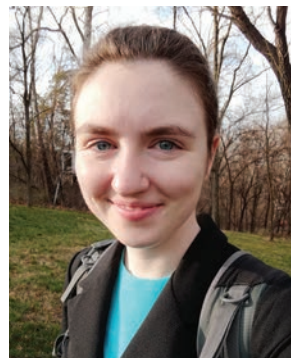
*Allison Brashears*



*Virginia Robbins*



*Bethany Kaetzel*



*Linnea Meyer*



*Fiona Tracey*

On April 24, in a virtual ceremony, five English majors received Shepherd's highest academic honor and were named **McMurrin Scholars: Allison Brashears, Bethany Kaetzel, Linnea Meyer, Fiona Tracey, and Virginia Robbins**. McMurrin Scholars must have a minimum 3.87

GPA, be nominated by at least three faculty members for "demonstrating good character and exemplary conduct, as well as the capacity and inclination to pursue scholarly inquiry," and be approved by the entire faculty. Congratulations to these fantastic students!



Though we were unable to hold an in-person initiation ceremony, our chapter of **Sigma Tau Delta** initiated 10 new members: **Stephen Beard**, **Mikayla Hamrick**, **Emily Keefer**, **Alexandrea “Jade” Kerns**, **Lily Kessler**, **Amanda Laitres**, **Aaron “Matt” Murphy**, **Isabella Sager**, **Sarah Seibert**, and **Vivienne Wells**.

NOT PICTURED BELOW: *Stephen Beard and Aaron “Matt” Murphy*



*Emily Keefer*



*Alexandrea “Jade” Kerns*



*Lily Kessler*



*Sarah Seibert*



*Mikayla Hamrick*



*Vivienne Wells*



*Amanda Laitres*



*Isabella Sager*

The Department of English and Modern Languages is proud to recognize the recipients of our annual awards.

Outstanding English Major: **Linnea Meyer**

Outstanding Spanish Major: **Henry Navarrete Mendez**

Outstanding English Major, Creative Writing Concentration: **Andrea Monsma**

Outstanding English Major, Literature Concentration: **Alexandra McCarron**

Outstanding English Minor: **Ellie George**

Outstanding Spanish Minor: **Sergio Tacaraya**

Outstanding Spanish Minor: **Gwendolyn Huff**

Outstanding Modern Languages Minor: **Annabelle Guice**

Vera Malton Scholarship: **Ashley Hess**

Nellie Gantt Owens Scholarship: **Fiona Tracey**

Dr. Lee and Wanda Keebler Scholarship: **Virginia Robbins**

Dr. Lee and Wanda Keebler Scholarship: **Brandon Hagen**

Catherine Fix Contest Essay Awards:

First place: **Joshua Walker**, “A Case for Multiculturalism”

Second place: **Nick Brown**, “Comedy in Social Justice”

Third place: **Thomas Brust**, “More than a Restaurant”



*Henry Navarrete Mendez*



*Andrea Monsma*



*Ellie George*



*Brandon Hagen*



*Annabelle Guice*



# Capstone Experience

## English Capstone: The Final Piece

Every English major must take English 485, the Capstone Presentation course, and present a capstone project at the end of their four years of study. While many students may be overwhelmed by the prospect of embarking on their capstone journey, the class has much to offer graduating seniors. In addition to creating and presenting a project, seniors compile both a professional and an academic portfolio, learn how to write a résumé and cover letter, complete a mock job interview, and learn about the job application process. With help from Career Services, capstone students peer review each other's writing and benefit from doing "professional" work in a friendly, learning environment.

Reflecting Shepherd University's spirit of creativity and individuality, each student's project is unique. Students in the Literature concentration construct a long, analytic paper for their culminating project, while students in the Creative Writing concentration develop a novel, a novella, a drama, or a collection of short stories or poems. While the process of devising a capstone project is difficult,

many students count it among their favorite experiences in the department. "Capstone gave me the opportunity to transform my favorite piece into the essay I originally envisioned," said Olivia Mason, a senior with a concentration in Literature. Allison Brashears, a senior with a concentration in Creative Writing, said, "Capstone gave me the opportunity to work passionately on my longest creative writing piece yet and get invaluable peer feedback. This class also opened my eyes to how to answer this evil question: what are you going to do with an English degree?" The answer is, of course, just about anything.

Although they were unable to present their capstones due to COVID-19, Shepherd students continued to remain inspired by their individual projects until the end of the semester, engaging in a collaborative editing process by giving each other feedback digitally, and even sharing their finished projects through social media. In addition, Shepherd faculty organized a virtual graduation party for these seniors through Zoom, which was enjoyed immensely by all.



Lena Nuñez, Andrea Monsma, Marilyn Creager, and Ka-treena Stracke, the first group of the Fall 2019 Capstone students, pose after their successful presentations.



Bethany Kaetzel, Emily Grabill, Lexy Amaro, and Alexandra Rowe, the second group of Fall 2019 Capstone students, pose after their successful presentations.



Dr. Carrie Messenger leads the Spring 2020 Capstone students through a discussion.



Clockwise from lower left: Allison Brashears, Fiona Tracey, Ashley Hess, Keara Heck, Olivia Mason, Oliver Pierce, Dr. Carrie Messenger, Linnea Meyer, Alex McCarron, Sarah Strong, Rebecca Brown, and Tiffany Kline.

## Spring 2020 Capstone Projects

Ashley Barr, *The Trilogy of Carter's Asylum* (short story collection)

Stephen Beard, *The Role of the Impermanent in Charlie Kaufman's Synecdoche, New York and Ecclesiastes: All Is Hevel; Now We Are Free*

Allison Brashears, *A Foundling* (novel in progress)

Rebecca Brown, *Transistor Boys* (novel in progress)

Keara Heck, *Double-Consciousness of the Lost Generation in James Baldwin and Ernest Hemingway*

Ashley Hess, *Identifying the Self and the Rejection of the Absurd: Zadie Smith's NW*

Gabrielle Hess, *An Analysis of Women in the Magical Realm*

Zhane Johnson, *The Weekend* (novel in progress)

Tiffany Kline, *The Magic Within* (novel in progress)

Olivia Mason, *A Search for Identity: Live Performance by Natalie Blake in Zadie Smith's NW*

Alex McCarron, *Models of Female Depravity: Hélène Kuragina, Sonya Rostova, and Gendered Redemption in War and Peace*

Linnea Meyer, *Three Fairy Tale Retellings* (short story collection)

Zoe Nicewander, *Paint Me Tangerine* (poetry collection)

Kaitlan Pickering, *It's Fine, I'm Fine, Everything's Fine* (novel in progress)

Oliver Pierce, *Stories of Americanism* (short story collection)

Sarah Strong, *Poetry Collection*

Fiona Tracey, *Where the Wild Wind Blows on the Mountain Side* (poetry collection)

David Warner, *A Cult in Candy Land* (novel in progress)

# Student Voices

## Students on the Shift to Distance Learning

Earlier in the semester this newsletter's student editors spent a lot of time talking with Dr. Heidi Hanrahan about what to focus on in the "Student Voices" section. Once we shifted to distance learning after spring break, though, it was clear what we should ask current students: "How did it go?" As they explained, the answers

weren't always straightforward. Spanish major Laura Castro-Vargas writes, "COVID-19 has affected my life as a student because I had all my classes online and it was difficult to understand the material. I learn better with face-to-face interaction. On the bright side, I can work at my own pace and I had more time to study for my exams." English major Mikayla Hamrick notes,

"All of my English professors were so kind, communicative, and understanding...And with the forum boards, everyone was required to engage in the conversation, so it was really great to hear the awesome ideas of individuals who don't talk regularly in class!" Below, three more students, all English majors, share their experiences and responses in more detail.



### Isabella Sager

Distance learning definitely had its challenges. These last few weeks of the semester made me realize how crucial in-class discussions and seminars are for an English course. Moving to online forums and video chats made me realize how stimulating person-to-person dialogue is, and I can't wait to get back to the classroom. Additionally, being isolated in my home caused some

mental blocks, making it more challenging to read and write like I used to. Through reminding myself that this was only temporary, I was luckily able to move past those challenges and successfully finish this semester. Despite living in a time of frightening uncertainty, I appreciate the wonderful faculty of the English department for being so adaptive to this situation, and more importantly, so understanding toward the students' difficulties and struggles with this strange situation

### Aneyla Dozier

COVID-19 has devastated the lives of many families and individuals, but it has touched all of us in some small way. As someone with depression, I rely on social interaction, time spent outdoors, and my consistent life routines to keep myself sane and productive. It's been hard for me to create new routines, force myself to spend time outside even when I have nowhere to go, and find ways to connect with my friends and family through a screen. Finishing the semester was especially difficult because the joy I got from sitting around a table discussing novels with my classmates was suddenly missing, but my professors did everything they could to show us that they were trying to hold onto some sort of normalcy, that they cared, and that they



missed us deeply. Because of the switch to distance learning, I was able to write blog posts about my feelings and emotions as well as my text books, I was given the space to share my thoughts on great poetry through outlets like Zoom, and I was even sent sweet, motivational pep talks to keep me going (thanks Dr. H, you're the best). Social distancing has challenged me in many ways, but just like the rest of the world, I've learned to adapt. It hasn't been easy to adjust, especially to adjust so quickly, but I have been encouraged and supported by people I never expected. We're constantly being shown through social media and news outlets what this pandemic is taking from us, but it has also given me a quiet space to reevaluate and recharge. I'm thankful for that.

### Abigail McClung

On Wednesday March 11, the rumors started spreading: West Virginia was surrounded by COVID-19 cases and we would have to leave school. Campus felt as though it were buzzing with nervous energy, as though we all knew something was coming. Thursday the 12th, the rumors were confirmed. We would be home for at least two weeks before coming back to school. On Friday the 13th, we packed up our things and left home, dreading the idea that we wouldn't be back in two short weeks.

Acceptance of this change was the hardest thing to learn this semester. After hoping against hope that the situation was not as grave as it seemed, the idea of acceptance seemed daunting. It involved, of course, knowing that our grades

could drop, or knowing that classes could be harder from then on. We soon found it also meant learning to say goodbye to friends, professors, and perhaps worst of all, graduates. Yet we faced our fear and kept on, and Shepherd remained reliable while we said our goodbyes.

The Department of English and Modern Languages adjusted with grace as we accepted our situation and slowly moved forward. We continued reading our books. Our face-to-face discussions quickly moved to online forums. Professors reminded us of how well we were handling countless challenges, all while taking every step they could to ensure we were not just getting by, but thriving. I will never forget the effort my professors put forth in such strange (and sometimes terrifying) circumstances.



In a time that should feel lonely, I have never seen so much support in my community. This support will be what keeps us together. We have something wonderful to return to this fall. In the meantime, seek comfort in a book or reach out to a classmate. We'll see each other on the other side of acceptance.



## Faculty Highlights

Dr. Denis Berenschot, associate professor of Spanish, presented his paper, "La Labor Crítica de Norge Mendoza Espinosa en la Dramaturgia Cubana y Otras Veleidades," at the 25th Congreso Internacional de Literatura y Estudios Hispánicos held in Lima, Peru, in March. He also received a \$500 mini-grant from the Professional Development Committee to cover some of his travel expenses. Berenschot's paper examines the dramatic and critical work of Cuban scholar Norge Espinosa Mendoza, whom he brought to Shepherd for a number of events a few years ago.

Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, professor of English, and her

co-author, Dr. Amy DeWitt, professor of sociology at Shepherd, won the Ralph Donald Award for best presentation at the 2019 Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Conference. Their paper, "The Asylum is Waiting for You: Analyzing Trans Allegheny Lunatic Asylum's 'Criminally Insane' Tour," will be published in MAPACA's journal, *Response*.

Dr. James Pate, associate professor of English, recently had two stories published: "The Gray Hours," in *Coffin Bell Journal*, and "The Off Season," in *Deracine Magazine*.

Dr. Tony Schiera, lecturer in English, successfully defended his dissertation, *The Positioning of*

Middle East Regional Writing Centers, Writing Tutors, and Student Clients, in February and graduated on May 8 with a Ph.D. in composition and TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Valerie Stevens, lecturer in English, had her article on Olive Schreiner published in Palgrave's *Encyclopedia of Victorian Women Writers*.

Dr. Christy Wenger, associate professor of English and director of First-Year Writing, was awarded the Shepherd University Outstanding Faculty Award for Scholarship in April. ■



Dr. Tony Schiera



Dr. Heidi Hanrahan



Dr. Christy Wenger



Dr. Denis Berenschot with his dog



Dr. Valerie Stevens



Dr. James Pate

# About Our Student Writers and Editors



*The content of this newsletter comes almost entirely from two Shepherd English majors who have completed the work as part of a practicum course they took with Dr. Heidi Hanrahan. Below, you can read a little bit about each of them.*

My name is **Ashley Hess** and I am a senior at Shepherd this semester (it's complicated). I major in English and will be completing a minor in Spanish this fall. I have loved to write poetry since I was in middle school, but have never labeled myself as a poet, or even a writer in general. I can't explain what possessed me to choose English as my major when I started at Shepherd. Something just called me to it and I have been in love ever since. Being at Shepherd has not only opened my eyes to my love of English, but has also sparked my passion for Spanish and the place in which the two meet. Going to Cuba in summer 2019 was one of the most (if not the most) influential experiences of my life. Seeing Cuban culture and the beautiful nuances of the Spanish language first hand changed my worldview and gave me a better sense of what I want to do after college. I haven't settled on an exact career, but I am interested in translation and teaching English as a second language.

My time at Shepherd has been rewarding in so many ways, from meeting some of my close-

est friends, to being supported by the best professors around. It was through Shepherd and through the Department of English and Modern Languages specifically that I have found my passion in life and have been encouraged to pursue that passion. I have been given so many opportunities to explore what an English degree can offer, from presenting critical essays at conferences, to reading poetry among my peers. There truly is no limit to what can be accomplished when you have the right support. I've been blessed with the opportunity to be a writing tutor and help my fellow students find the joy in writing that I do, to be an editor for our literary magazine, *Sans Merci*, and help with organization as the secretary of Sigma Tau Delta. Reading literature helps me to understand other cultures and perspectives, sometimes reminding me of why I am so lucky to pursue an education. I will always cherish the time I spent at Shepherd University and the guidance my professors provided. ■



My name is **Fiona Tracey** and I am a senior at Shepherd with a major in English (Creative Writing concentration) and minors in Psychology and Spanish. Although I have grown to love the Department of English and Modern Languages at Shepherd, I was not always sure that I be-

longed. When I first became a student, I wanted so badly to spend my time writing poetry, but even freshmen with incoming credits weren't allowed to take creative writing classes. However, during my very first semester I took English 215: The Art of Literature with Dr. Messenger, and I knew I had a place in the department. Even though 215 is a literature class, Dr. Messenger let me write a collection of poetry as my final project, and that made all the difference in the world for me.

Since then, my work ethic and my sincere passion for writing have opened doors for me and have allowed me to become involved on campus in a myriad of ways: as an intern with the Society for Creative Writing, as a member of Sigma Tau Delta, as a tutor with the Academic Support Center, as a presenter at several academic conferences, and finally, as the senior poetry editor of *Sans Merci*. While I have always relished articulating my thoughts on paper, leading meetings as senior editor and presenting papers at conferences like the West Virginia Literary Symposium has made me not only a competent public speaker, but also a person who enjoys commanding the attention of a room. By believing in

me and by acknowledging my achievements, my professors at Shepherd have allowed me to gain confidence and poise.

Being an active member of the department has helped me to hone my abilities as a writer, but it has also helped me to discover new talents. In addition to my work in English, my professors have supported me to pursue other interests and obligations outside of class, including singing with the Masterworks Chorale, studying Spanish and psychology, continuing to write poetry, and working two, sometimes three jobs. Recently, my love of literature and translation has also led me to pursue my Spanish studies with a renewed vigor, add Spanish as a second minor, and even write some of my capstone project in Spanish. Because of my experiences with both English and Spanish within the department, I feel that I am in a unique position to share the warm and supportive nature of our professors and students. I am incredibly grateful for my time at Shepherd and I hope that the spring 2020 newsletter encompasses a little of the joy and dedication that lie at the heart of the Department of English and Modern Languages. ■