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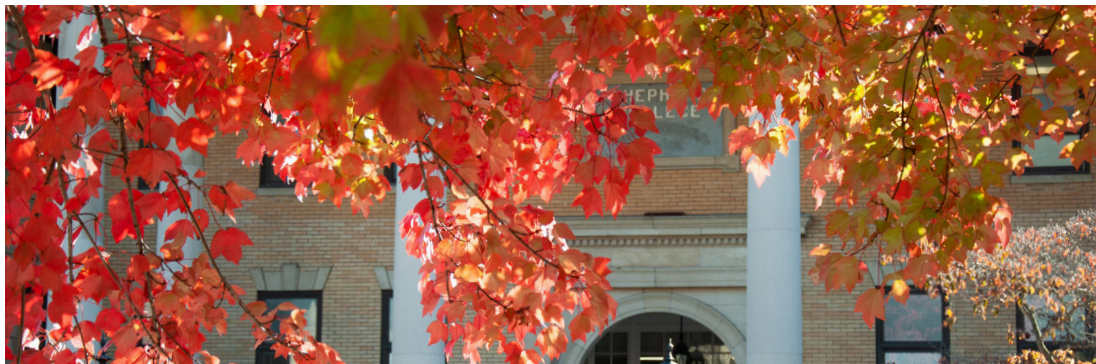


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From the Department Chair

Welcome to the eighth issue of *The Final Draft*, the newsletter for the Department of English and Modern Languages. What a great spring semester! We gathered together for Sigma Tau Delta's Valentine's tea party and used book sale, the *Sans Merci* release party, field trips, and language lunches. Students from Dr. Messenger's Drama Writing class had their plays performed (without masks) by the Rude Mechanicals. One of our graduating seniors presented a paper in person at an international Sigma Tau Delta conference in Denver. With the creation of three professional writing certificates, students have yet another way to enhance their résumés. We welcomed Professor Beth TeVault to the departmental faculty and Ms. Elizabeth Alfred as our administrative assistant. Again, I am so proud of what our department's faculty, staff, and students have accomplished. Our graduating seniors were able to walk across the stage in a full, traditional graduation ceremony!! We wish them the best in whatever journey they are embarking on and look forward to seeing our new and returning students in the fall!

If you would like more information about our department, be sure to visit our website (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."



Cecelia Mason

Dr. Betty Ellzey

Chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages

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





To Start a Flame



The Second Shepherds' Play



Playing God



A Murder Most Fowl

The Rude Mechanicals Take on Death, the End of the World, and...Sheep?

by Clara Monson

In March and April, the Rude Mechanicals Medieval and Renaissance Players put on one medieval play—*The Second Shepherds' Play*—and three student-written plays—*To Start a Flame* by Lyv Thompson, *Playing God* by Olivia Stevens, and *A Murder Most Fowl* by William Prudnick. On the last day of performances, Dr. Betty Ellzey, the student writers and directors, and Creative Writing: Drama professor Dr. Carrie Messenger hosted a panel discussion on the experiences with the student-written and directed plays.

The Second Shepherds' Play was directed by Dr. Ellzey and features themes of social class issues and religion balanced with humor. The play had previously been translated from Middle English to a modern dialect by Micheal Apfeldorf, but beyond that, the cast also included several modern sentiments, such as “Shazam!” being added to the end of Mak’s magic spell, which helped to enhance the play’s relatability. There were three main shepherds—played by Julie Bowen, William Prudnick, and Ash Wilson—and the two troublemakers, Mak and Gill—played by Lyv Thompson and Brianna Cline, respectively. As the three shepherds make their way through the lists of struggles they face as poor citizens, Mak shows up to complain both louder and with ever more dramatic tendencies. Though they are all on similar playing fields monetarily, he sneakily steals one of the sheep to bring home to his wife. Mak and Gill play wonderfully off each other, giving a comedic tinge to every word, and they even place a sheep-patterned blanket over the sheep they attempt to hide from the shepherds they stole it from. Each moment is full of both social commentary and hilarious, layered jokes worthy of a rewatch if only just to understand how each joke plays off of another. Not to mention that they meet Jesus and Mary in the manger at the end, a twist

that serves as a swift reminder that the other shepherd’s decision not to punish Mak is an act of forgiveness with religious connotations (as things ought to be in medieval times).

Following each performance of *The Second Shepherds' Play* came one of the student-written plays. The “Page-to-Stage Project” allows students to submit plays they have written in Dr. Messenger’s drama-writing class to a panel consisting of Dr. Ellzey and several Rude Mechanicals members, who then choose plays that will be performed the following semester. This is the seventh time student-written plays have been performed, totaling about 30 plays so far. As is the tradition for student-written plays, all three were directed by other students at Shepherd. *To Start a Flame* was directed by L Leavitt, *Playing God* by Julie Bowen, and *A Murder Most Fowl* by Lyv Thompson.

To Start a Flame features the antichrist, a teenage girl destined to bring about the end of the world (also known as Helena), and an angel tasked with stopping Helena’s destiny, Eden. The play is full of teen angst, comedy, and the drama that surrounds high school proms. It ends with the heartwarming (if mildly worrying for the non-angel or demon folks in the audience) sentiment that saving the world comes second to dancing at prom with a significant other.

Playing God followed a similar theme of death and despair, but from a more serious perspective. The main character, Eliza, is a nurse haunted by the deaths surrounding her. The audience is taken along a series of deaths, each featuring a cloaked figure, along with scenes showing how Eliza drifts away from her significant other and eventually all of her family. With each new character, the audience is introduced to a new facet of Eliza’s personality as well.

A Murder Most Fowl is a murder mystery, but it remains a comedy. The play is full of puns, “dad jokes,” innuendos, and, of course, references to birds. Each member of the hilarious team is completely unique, with odd quirks. There is even a chef, played by Mark Cuthrell, who pops up from time to time to break the tension. The stunning back-to-back twists, including a Heelys-wearing “murderer,” left the audience engaged and on the edge of their seats up until the final clap signaling the end of the play.

It is very rare for undergraduate writers to see their work fully staged. Stevens appreciated the experience, noting “It was so cool being able to see my work performed. It was kind of strange to hear my words said by other people, . . . [b]ut it was so fascinating to see how things I wrote were interpreted. The Rudes did a great job, and it was such an exciting experience and opportunity.” Dr. Ellzey said that she is “very proud. The actors, playwrights, directors, and tech crew all did such a good job. The Rudes are very much a family, and everyone had a great time.” ■



Student playwrights (l. to r.) Lyv Thompson, Olivia Stevens, and William Prudnick



Sans Merci Vol. 47 Released by Taylor Beam

The team behind *Sans Merci*, Shepherd's annual literary and visual arts publication, released its 47th volume during an event at the Marinoff Theater on April 17. Selected students performed their written works, including the recipients of Best Prose and Best Poetry (see below). Artworks featured in the magazine were also on display.



Attendees enjoyed a warm atmosphere, complete with refreshments and a photo booth. Charlotte Puttock, this volume's Senior Art Editor, found that the space was perfect for the event because there was room for attendees to sit back and enjoy live readings. Charlotte notes, "We actually used the same walls from the play *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* that had been presented the day before. We decorated the space to emulate the style of Sophia Scudieri, this year's Graphic Designer."

Charlotte is working toward a dual degree, with a BFA in Painting and a B.A. in English with a concentration in literature, and expects to graduate in 2024. This is Charlotte's second year as Senior Art Editor, and she has worked with the publication since her freshman year. Charlotte added, "It has been an amazing experience as it offered challenges and chances for me to grow that I would not otherwise be exposed to." *Sans Merci* provides an intersection between literature and visual art that allowed Charlotte to combine both of her interests and improve her skills in both areas. She explained, "I now have experience with professionally jurying artwork with a team of editors, installing work for events, and ensuring that it is properly formatted and edited for physical publications."

The year's volume was compiled by a great team of students, some members of the Department of English and Modern Languages, and others from various backgrounds. Carter Warhurst and Mary Barker shared the role of Senior Literary Editor. The rest of the Literary Team consisted of Tanner Boeckmann, Audrey Chapman, and Dylan Parry. Members of the Art Team included Emma Corley, Sikara Sokel, and Scout Purdy. The magazine was designed by Sophia Scudieri.

Pick up your free copy of volume 47 on the second floor of Knutti Hall, along with copies of previous editions. ■

Sans Merci Vol. 47 Literary Awards

During the *Sans Merci* release party, the volume's editors presented awards to the creators of the best prose, best poetry, and best art. Audrey Chapman, one of the literary editors, announced the recipients and provided the introductions.

Best Poem: Elliana Blevins' "Ivory Vapors"

This poet's delicate construction of language and atmosphere creates a haunting and acrimonious take on the modern ode. (Elliana pictured at right)

Runner-Up Poem: Marissa Taylor's "Bone"

This poem's biting confrontation of self and self-perception demands the reader to answer its striking questions through its strength of voice and imagery.



Best Prose: Lyv Thompson's "Rare"

This darkly humorous short story explores human desire through a thrilling exploration of carnality, art performance, and morbid intrigue. (Lyv pictured at right)

Runner-Up Prose: Gracie Fox-Zeigler's "Marble Opulence"

This short story's lush world of language constructs a darkly engaging fantasy in a setting that feels alive to the reader.



Department Launches National Writing Project Site

by Taylor Beam

Shepherd University is now a National Writing Project (NWP) site with Dr. Brian Santana, Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, and Dr. LeAnn Johnson coordinating the endeavor. This distinction allows the Department of English and Modern Languages to become a part of a nationwide network committed to furthering the writing skills of students from kindergarten to university. There are approximately 175 sites throughout the country that operate in every state, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to Dr. Hanrahan, the Department will focus on collaborating with local schoolteachers and holding workshops to promote writing education. The Department is now able to apply for government grants to fund this project. So far, it has been awarded a \$657,000 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR), colloquially known as an "earmark," that will fund three years' worth of workshops and training for K-12 teachers. Dr. Hanrahan commented on this opportunity: "This funding is especially important as students and teachers adjust to life after the pandemic when there was learning loss and trauma. Students need extra support to build the writing skills they will need to be successful—and their teachers need help, support, and training to make that happen." The federal funds will allow our NWP site to host two annual training events/workshops, the Literacy Leaders Conference, and an annual Summer Institute, which will help offset the cost of continuing education credits for participating teachers.

Key to our site's success will be English and Modern Languages' collaboration with Shepherd's School of Education, specifically with Dr. LeAnn Johnson. For years, Dr. Johnson has worked with the Jefferson County Reading Council to host the annual Literacy Leaders Conference—always on a shoestring budget. Now, for three years, the popular and impactful spring conference,

attended by local K-12 teachers across disciplines, will be fully funded.

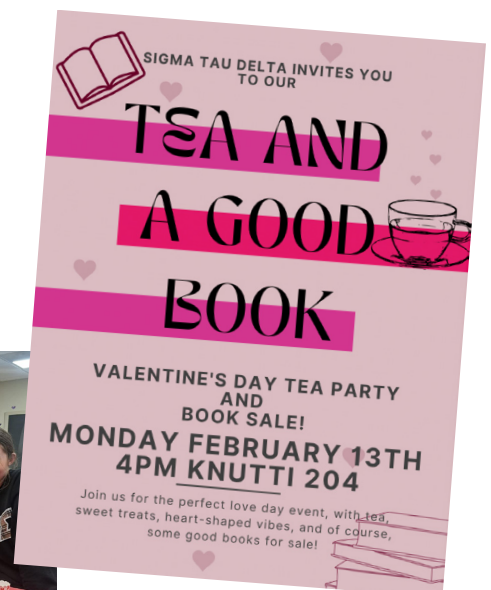
An annual Summer Institute will also be a part of the initiative. The first institute, funded by the Shepherd University President's Club and with the theme of "Creating Writing Projects, Building Writing Sites," will take place in June. Dr. Santana, poised to become the Shepherd University Site Leader when he transitions from visiting professor to assistant professor in August, has played a key role in planning the institute. He elaborated on its importance: "Our first institute is based on the belief that empowering local teachers produces the best and most lasting educational reform. During the Summer Institute, Shepherd writing faculty will lead workshops on theories and practices from rhetoric/composition and writing studies research." The Summer Institute, a staple of National Writing Project sites everywhere, involves both online work and an on-campus seminar. Other English faculty involved with the event include Professor Christopher Wilson, Dr. Valerie Stevens, and Professor Sadie Shorr-Parks. Moving forward, the CDSR will fully fund three summer institutes, putting Shepherd's site on the map and moving it toward being a self-sustaining resource for supporting teachers and their students.

Other sites in West Virginia are located at West Virginia University and Marshall University. To give some background on the projects often sponsored by the National Writing Project, WVU educators recently led a campaign to promote the destigmatization of Appalachian dialects in and outside the classroom. The leaders of Shepherd's site, united in their goals to support the teaching of writing and build a vibrant network, are confident our site will make contributions just as impactful. ■



Tea and a Good Book

Sigma Tau Delta hosted a Valentine's Day-themed book sale and tea party as both a social event and a fundraiser. Students, faculty, and community members were invited to choose from stacks of books donated over the years. They could then partake of Valentine's Day-themed treats with a hot cup of tea. If they felt so inclined, they could give a donation. The event successfully raised \$89 in donations. Special thanks go to Clara Monson, Sigma Tau Delta President and the department's unofficial baker, who prepared all the sweet treats!



Far left: A selection of the homemade sweet treats; center: Some of the attendees stop to pose for a picture; above: The flyer for the event.

Faculty Achievements



Dr. Heidi M. Hanrahan (above, left) and **Dr. Timothy K. Nixon** (above, center) presented at the National Organization for Student Success Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in March. Their presentation, "Capitalizing on Alumni Success to Prepare English Majors for the Workplace," discussed how Shepherd's Department of English and Modern Languages readies students for the workplace. They also showed how the Department uses alumni success stories to recruit new students and mentor current students.

In March, Dr. Hanrahan moderated a session entitled "Constructions of Race in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Virginia" at the Virginia Forum humanities conference, which Shepherd hosted. Dr. Hanrahan also led a workshop at the Ninth Annual Literacy Leaders Conference on campus, presenting on "Superhighways to College Level Writing: Using Feedback to Grow Your Students' Writing Attitude and Skill." **Dr. Valerie Stevens** (right) and Dr. Nixon provided invaluable information and feedback as she prepared her presentation. Finally, Dr. Hanrahan and **Dr. Brian Santana** (above, right) led a roundtable discussion on our new National Writing Project Site at the Literacy Leaders Conference.



At the turn of the year, **Dr. James Pate** (below, right), associate professor in the Department of English and Modern Languages, published a short story titled "Mister Ice Cream" in *Surely Magazine*. His short story "Autumnal Rites" has been picked up for publication this fall in the anthology *Come October: An Anthology of Autumnal Horror*.



Krantz Speaks on 2022 Laureate

The Department of English and Modern Languages is very proud of our own Dr. Rachel Krantz, who joined five other Shepherd faculty to share their expertise on the 2022 Nobel Laureates at the President's Lecture Series on February 20. Dr. Krantz spoke about the work of French author Annie Ernaux, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Pictured (front row, l. to r.) are Dr. Arend "Aart" Holtslag (Peace), Associate Professor of Political Science; Dr. Krantz (Literature), Associate Professor of French; Dr. Yuying "Joey" Xie (Economics), Associate Professor of Economics; back row, Dr. Haley Albright (Chemistry), Assistant Professor of Chemistry; Mr. Jason Miller, (Physiology or Medicine), Assistant Professor of Computer Science; and Dr. Sytil Murphy (Physics), Associate Professor of Physics.

Photo Credit: John Bresland.



Shepherd Students Succeed

Sigma Tau Delta Inducts New Members

On April 23, the Shepherd chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, was pleased to induct 10 new members.

Taylor Beam
Katherine Brady
Hannah Fraley
Meghan Hinebaugh
Erika Huff
Emily Kelly
Jaron Lussier
Madison Malin
Charlotte Puttock
Hannah Tinsman
Congratulations to these students! ■



Above: Sigma Tau Delta's Faculty Advisors with some of the new members. Pictured (l. to r.) are Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Taylor Beam, Maddie Malin, Dr. Tim Nixon, Katherine Brady, Hannah Fraley, Erika Huff, Hannah Tinsman, and Chapter President Clara Monson.

Right: Current Sigma Tau Delta leaders pose with two new members. Pictured (l. to r.) are President Clara Monson, new member Emily Kelly, Secretary Lee DiFante, and new member Maddie Malin.



2022-2023 Department Awards

On April 23, we recognized the winners of our Department Awards.

Outstanding Overall English Major: Lee DiFante

Outstanding English Minors: Dylan Parry and William Prudnick

Catherine C. Fix Essay Award winners:

First Place: Monte Dempster, "An African American School in 1917 and the Silver Lining"

Second Place: Alec Dunham, "The Effects of Community Against Systematic Poverty"

Third Place: Cynthia Huston, "Housing Developers Need to Stop Cutting Corners"

Outstanding English Major, Creative Writing Concentration: Kim Cano

Outstanding Spanish Major: Joanna Hernandez

Outstanding English Major, Literature Concentration: Maddie Malin

Outstanding Spanish Minors: Lucy Blue and Gabrielle Robinson

Outstanding English Major, English Education Concentration: Olyvia Thompson



Pictured foreground is Kim Cano; middle row (l. to r.) are Cynthia Huston and Olyvia Thompson; back row (l. to r.) are Lucy Blue, Gabrielle Robinson, Joanna Hernandez, Maddie Malin, Lee DiFante, Dylan Parry, William Prudnick, Alec Dunham, and Monte Dempster.

Students Attend Leadership Conference

by Taylor Beam

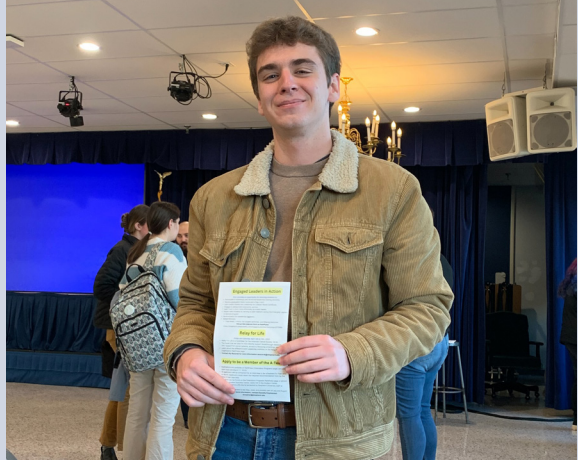
On February 4, several Sigma Tau Delta members represented the organization and the Department of English and Modern Languages at the 37th Annual Student Leadership Conference held at Shepherd University. The event was sponsored by the Stubblefield Institute's Listen Learn Engage Initiative, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, and Multicultural Student Affairs.

Students attended seminars led by Shepherd staff, students, and even a special guest, TEDx speaker Darryl Stinson. The conference is centered around building real-world leadership skills and offering inspirational lectures that help students be more confident in their leadership roles. Our very own Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, alongside Dr. Amy DeWitt from the Department of Sociology, Criminology, and Criminal Justice, hosted a session entitled "Introverts Navigating the Extroverted World of



Leadership." Sigma Tau Delta members, as well as other English and Modern Languages students, attended the session to show their support and gain insight into this topic.

The event proved a success, and attendees walked away with helpful information and credit towards the Leadership for a Better World certificate offered at Shepherd. Sigma Tau Delta member Mark Cuthrell, commenting on his experience, stated, "I felt the conference was greatly informative, and I enjoyed the entire day." ■



Pictured at the leadership conference. Above left: English majors Kim Cano (l.) attended on behalf of Sigma Tau Delta, and Mark Cuthrell (r.) attended on behalf of the Rude Mechanicals. Above right: English major Logan King attended the conference on behalf of his fraternity.

Shakespeare Students Attend Plays and Stage Their Own Scenes

by Kayla Allnutt

This semester, Dr. Betty Ellzey's Shakespeare class truly embraced the Shakespeare experience, studying, watching, and acting out scenes from the great English playwright. Key to this experience was attending live performances of *King Lear* and *As You Like It*. *King Lear*, at the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C., was directed by Simon Godwin and featured a performance by Tony Award-winner Patrick Page. On February 28, students departed from Shepherd and made it to D.C. with enough time to explore the city before meeting at the theater for the evening show. The set design and sound effects made the play immersive and engaging for students. Junior English major Michelle Wagner said the *King Lear* performance "was fantastic." Like Michelle, for many students, this was their first time attending a professional theatrical production, so the learning experience was invaluable. Students were able to better understand how staging choices can affect the way the audience interprets a play. This information was especially applicable when the students later staged and performed scenes from Shakespeare's plays in class.

On April 13, the class attended a performance of *As You Like It* at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia. This show was directed by Jen Wineman and featured performances by Kayla Carter, Tophér Embrey, and Summer England. The smaller theater made the performance more intimate and allowed for audience participation. The actors encouraged audience participation, and three Shepherd students even had a chance to sit on stage during the

performance. Junior English major Meghan Hinebaugh said that she "felt so fancy" sitting on the stage and would never forget the experience. As *You Like It* allowed students to see a vastly different interpretation of Shakespeare. The play was much less serious as actors sang onstage and made jokes with the audience. Both plays were a unique and valuable experience for students, especially those who were previously unfamiliar with live theater.

Back in the classroom, students used what they learned all semester to stage their own adaptations of scenes from *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Junior English major Matthew Parkinson joked about the value of this assignment: "We were trapped in the classroom and forced against our will to act, and we were actually good." English major Karlie Hepner agreed, noting the value of being "pushed outside of our comfort zones" and trying something new. Senior English education major Olivia Stevens added how "interesting it was to see [her] classmates' interpretations of their scenes." Junior English education major Evan Engle summed it up well: "Seeing live versions of Shakespeare's works, acting them out myself, and seeing my classmates do the same helped me better understand and appreciate the material." ■



Above: The group acting out scenes from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Pictured (l. to r.) are Clara Monson, Maddie Malin, Emily Kelly, Bea Harrod, Matthew Parkinson, and Jaron Lussier. Below: Dr. Ellzey and the Shakespeare class before seeing King Lear at the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C.



Spring 2023 Capstone Class

by Kayla Allnutt

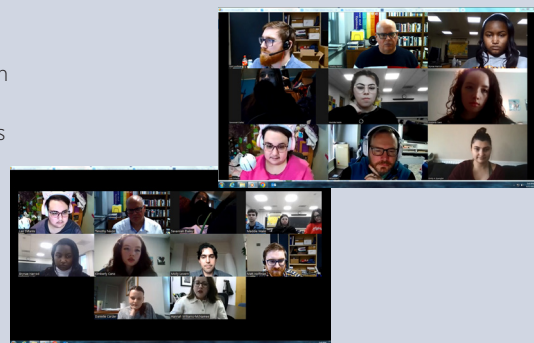
The English 485: Senior Capstone class wraps up students' undergraduate education and prepares them to enter the workforce or pursue further education. Because students primarily focus on revising existing work, students improve their revision and editing skills. In addition, students are taught how to translate writing skills into job search strategies as they prepare professional résumés and cover letters. Students leave the Capstone class with a professional portfolio and the confidence to begin their careers. Capstone students complete job searches, graduate school workshops, and mock interviews to prepare them for life after graduation. Matt Hoffman, Director of Career Services, spoke to the Capstone class on multiple occasions about career development. Dr. Tim Nixon, the instructor for this semester's course, said that students' "professionalism and comportment have benefited" from the time Matt has spent with the class. Bea Harrod, a Capstone student, declared that she has "benefitted greatly" from attending events such as Professional Connections Day. Because she learned how to use sites such as LinkedIn to connect with other professionals, she "feels more prepared" to enter the field of education.

Dr. Nixon also arranged for English program alumni to participate in Zoom sessions for several classes, sharing their work experiences, including tips on the job search, achieving professional success, and making very good money. Another session included alumni who had attended graduate school and were eager to share their experiences and tips.

All students work on a Capstone project, a major revision and expansion of an existing piece from their educational career. This semester's projects include a collection of poetry and nonfiction titled "Sweetness in Decay" by Kim Cano, "Translation from Literature to Cinema: The Visual Feminist Perspective of *Jane Eyre* and *Little Women*" by Madison Malin, "Dante's *Inferno*: A Criticism of the Catholic Church" by Brynae Harrod, and "The Use of Witches and Witch Tropes in Toni Morrison Novels" by Lee DiFante. On April 23, students presented their projects to department faculty, family, friends, and other students. Of the spring 2023 Capstone class, Dr. Nixon said that he has seen "great progress" specifically in their "confidence, professionalism, and attention to detail." ■



Above: Capstone students after their presentations. Pictured (l. to r.) Lee DiFante, Bea Harrod, Madison Malin, and Kim Cano. Below: Alumni join students to discuss career and graduate school experience.



Experiential Learning at Language Lunches

by Clara Monson

This academic year, for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, students studying the different languages offered at Shepherd University had the chance to gather and converse with their professors and peers for "Language Lunches." Dr. Rachel Krantz, Dr. Tim Nixon, Dr. Czarina López, and Dr. Denis Berenschot participated in planning, executing, and supervising these exciting learning opportunities, where students learning Spanish, French, and German gathered in the Student Center Rumsey Room to practice newly learned conversational language in a low-stress setting.

On April 5, the Spanish Language Lunch had a great turnout. Groups teamed up to play charades. Students picked cards with various verbs, such as *comer* (to eat) and *dormir* (to sleep) and acted them out for their teammates to guess. Once the teammates guessed correctly, the group wrote sentences containing the verbs in the correctly conjugated format. In the end, whichever team finished fastest with the correct number of verbs, won. Aster Davis, whose team included Tabetha Buck, Asa Thurman, Clara Monson, and Oli Pierce, shared that she felt she had learned some new verbs, like *llorar*, which means to cry. Dr. Berenschot and Dr. López assisted groups who had trouble and checked

the finished sentences of each group. Tabetha, a junior at Shepherd, commented that "learning outside the classroom in a space with other students from different Spanish classes was fun. There wasn't pressure to get an answer right." Instead, students could use what they already knew "while also gaining new knowledge without the pressure of a classroom setting."

Dr. Nixon, who participated in the German Language Lunches, commented on the value of experiential learning opportunities like these especially for learning languages. He said that the National Survey of Student Engagement collected data showing that "learning outside of the classroom increases student success" in language-learning programs. Language Lunches are an easy and fun way to give students these high-impact learning experiences. ■



Top right: Students and faculty gather for a Spanish Language Lunch. Bottom right: The winning charades team at Language Lab. Pictured (l. to r.) are Asa Thurman, Tabetha Buck, Oli Pierce, and Aster Davis.

DiFante Presents at Sigma Tau Delta Convention

In March, English major Lee DiFante became the first Shepherd student to attend an in-person Sigma Tau Delta Convention since the COVID-19 pandemic began. DiFante presented a paper and chaired a session at the convention, held in Denver, Colorado. Funding from the Department of English and Modern Languages and the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences made the trip possible for Lee. Below, they share their thoughts on the experience.

Tell us about your paper, its title, and its argument.

My paper was the same paper I wound up using for my capstone, “The Use of Witches and Witch Tropes in Toni Morrison Novels,” originally my final paper for a Toni Morrison seminar I took spring of ’21. The paper takes an in-depth look at the use of symbols and concepts associated with witchcraft and magic across several Toni Morrison novels from her first to her last, and particularly focuses on repeating patterns, for instance the repeating use of a matrilineal three-woman, three-generational trinity which is found in a significant number of Morrison’s works. The conclusion I draw from this is that Toni Morrison purposefully capitalized on the cultural connections between Black women in America and witchcraft via the uses of witches and magical realism, in order to paint a striking picture of the unique way Black women are othered in American society.

How was the conference? What were some highlights?

It was amazing. I’d never been to any kind of academic conference before, and it was really delightful to suddenly be around dozens, hundreds, of people who talked like me and kind of dressed like me (nerd chic) and had similar interests. Everyone was just so nice; I must have been unofficially adopted by four or five different schools as different groups realized I was there on my own. Seeing Denver was also incredible; what an astonishing city. A few things that I’ll definitely be taking with me are how incredible it was to hear the authors of *The Toni Morrison Book Club* speak and read from Lee’s book. Getting to talk to all of them, but especially Juda Bennett during the book signing

was absolutely next level. I also ran into someone during one of the presentations (an alum presenting on Lucy in *Dracula*) and through talking realized I had actually cited her personal blog in my own *Dracula* essay [for an essay in Dr. Hanrahan’s ENGL 341 class last fall].

Can you talk about both sharing your paper and chairing a session?

So, I was presenting in the very first time slot of the entire conference. I had no chance to see another session and kind of get a feel for how they went, I was just going in with peak nerves and strong prayers. But everyone was just as nervous as me, so I bit the bullet and volunteered to go first. It’s a bit strange to think that means I was one of maybe a dozen people who were the very first to present at the conference—wacky! Anyway, it went smoothly despite some last-minute hiccups the night before, and all of us were grouped up really well; our papers complemented each other’s. Despite my fears, I got a healthy number of questions and was able to answer them well.

As for chairing, I think that actually scared me more than presenting! I signed up for it because I thought it would be a good experience (I was right), but really I had no concept of what a chair did. Fortunately, I was chairing on the last day of the conference, so I basically just took notes in every panel I went to on how the chairs of each did it—they all did it a little differently—combined the bits I liked and did it myself. Despite that, I was so nervous introducing everyone that I very nearly lost my voice! Fortunately, it went well—a chair’s job is actually really quite easy—and I learned a lot in a panel I honestly probably wouldn’t have attended otherwise with so many going on simultaneously. It also felt nice to feel like I was “helping out” a bit while I was there.

What did you get out of attending?

I think experience is a big one for me. As I mentioned, I’d never attended any kind of academic conference like this before. I really had no idea what to expect. So just being able to go and see how these sorts of things work—especially on a practical level—was really valuable to me. On a more material level, I got soooo many resources. So many! Works



DiFante after presenting at the Sigma Tau Delta Convention

cited page upon works cited page have been entered into my little notebook. Not only did I learn a lot, I got an unfathomable number of resources to dig through, e-mail addresses for contacts, just a fantastic amount of practical research that was already done and just handily presented to me by other English students and even alumni across the country. I felt a little bit like a dragon whose hoard was doubling by the day.

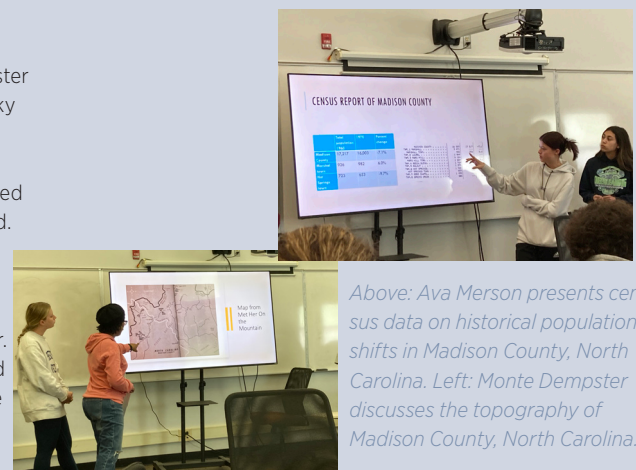
Anything else you want to share?

This really isn’t anything I’d ever thought I’d have an opportunity to do. I learned so much about the world of academics and conferences, and I also got to fly to a brand-new city (Denver! whoa!) I’d never even considered being able to go to and meet people I’d never even considered being able to meet (I am taking perfect snapshot memories of every word spoken to me by the authors of *The Toni Morrison Book Club* to my grave). I would really encourage anyone even thinking about applying to future Sigma Tau Delta conferences (or other conferences! any conferences!) to do so. Someone else on my panel won an award off a paper she’d originally written in high school! You absolutely have what it takes, and the experience is definitely unforgettable. ■

Students Learn Writing and Research Through True Crime

During the spring 2023 semester, Dr. Brian Santana’s English 102 “true crime” course investigated the 1970 unsolved murder of a 24-year-old VISTA worker named Nancy Morgan in Madison County, North Carolina. The class used “true crime” to explore research methods and ethics. Students learned how to file Freedom of Information Act requests and gained experience analyzing various primary source artifacts. In addition, the class collaborated with true crime writers like Emma Eisenberg and Mark Pinsky and benefitted from the expertise and advice they could share. Eisenberg, the author of *The Third Rainbow Girl*, Shepherd’s Common Reading

selection this year, visited campus last semester and visited with several English classes. Pinsky is a noted true crime author whose work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and *USA TODAY*. Pinsky even covered the trials of famed serial killers Ted Bundy and Jeffrey McDonald. With Pinsky’s help, the class tracked down a copy of Nancy Morgan’s original autopsy, which the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation believed was lost in a 1975 fire! Dr. Santana’s work with the class will be featured this summer on the popular Apple true crime podcast, *The Minds of Madness*. ■



Above: Ava Merson presents census data on historical population shifts in Madison County, North Carolina. Left: Monte Dempster discusses the topography of Madison County, North Carolina.

Student Voices

In every issue, we like to ask our students a question. This issue's question: "What's your favorite memory from an English or Modern Languages course this academic year?"

Meghan Hinebaugh, English major: My favorite memory was presenting our group performance in Shakespeare. My members and I had so much fun deciding how we could add comedy to our characters and just amp up the overall ridiculousness. We were really excited to finally act it out for the class. Also, it was the first time I ever acted in anything at all, so I was able to get out of my shell a little, which was nice, and I just had a great time doing so.



Hannah Tinsman, English education major: My favorite memory was when we read *A Streetcar Named Desire* in Professor Wilson's English 215 class. Having a class discussion on that



play was a lot different than the other material we read. Everyone was engaged and interested. We had interesting discussions where we analyzed the characters. It sticks out for me because it seemed like everyone was confident in how they felt about the play, at least enough to contribute to a class discussion.

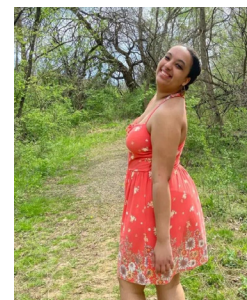
Dalia Rodriguez, Spanish major, modern languages minor: This semester, I took three classes, including Spanish 307 and Capstone 485. Two aspects of my modern language classes stand out to me in particular. The first is that Dr. Berenschot, my professor and advisor, is genuinely down to earth, and students may joke around with him. Believe it or not, despite being a full-time mom and working a full-time job, I actually look forward to going to class because it gives me some "alone" time. Not to mention how satisfyingly wicked it feels to sneak a Green Pineapple drink before class (away from my kids).



Erika Huff, English major: My favorite memory from an English course this semester is definitely getting to look through the end of the semester class magazine that my classmates and I from my Creative Writing: Fiction class put together. It was both fun and rewarding looking back on some of the pieces we wrote ourselves and the ones written by our amazing classmates.



Olivia Stevens, English education major: My favorite memory from a course this semester: Dr. Ellzey's Shakespeare trip to see *King Lear*. It was so fun and so amazing to get an opportunity to see such a wonderful production. ■



About Our Student Writers and Editors

The content of this newsletter comes almost entirely from three 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.



Kayla Allnutt

I am a junior English major with a concentration in literature. This is my first year at Shepherd University, and I have enjoyed my time here very much. The students in the English program are kind and welcoming, and I am grateful for all the guidance I have received from the wonderful faculty thus far. I have already learned so much, and I am excited to continue to grow here at Shepherd. ■



Taylor Beam

I am currently a sophomore here at Shepherd. I am double majoring in English with a concentration in literature and Culture in History and the Global Age. This is the second issue of the newsletter that I have worked on, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to do so. This semester will complete my first full academic year as a member of the Department of English and Modern Languages, and the experience has been incredibly beneficial. I am glad to have found community in my department and excited for what is to come. ■



Clara Monson

I am a junior English major with a concentration in literature and a minor in education. I just became the President of Sigma Tau Delta (aka my pride and joy) this semester, and this is my first semester working on the newsletter. I have especially enjoyed getting to take pictures. ■

New Writing Certificates Prepare Students for Careers

by Victoria Ford



A new offering from Shepherd University is aimed at opening doors for graduates interested in jobs in the business world. Starting in the fall of 2023, Shepherd will begin offering three certificates in professional writing: “Writing for the Professions,” “Writing in the Workplace,” and “Professional Writing and Design.” Each requires either 12 or 13 credit hours.

The professional writing certification program was spearheaded by Dr. Timothy Nixon. However, he did not always envision a certification program: “At the end of the last academic year, there was some talk in the Department about a professional writing emphasis, but there had been talk for a few years about that. I started working in a deliberate, focused manner on the issue, but thinking of it as a minor, in the first half of the summer.” He adds, though, that Dr. Stephen Spencer, the Provost Emeritus, was much more interested in certificates, “because there is less of a bureaucratic hurdle for those than for majors and minors.” Simply put, the University can create certification programs very quickly. So, Dr. Nixon shifted to a certificate focus and presented the proposal to departmental faculty early in the fall 2022 semester. By the end of the academic year, they had cleared every hurdle on campus, and the certificates will be included in the fall 2023 catalog.

“Writing for the Professions” will allow students to better showcase their ability to read analytically, reason logically, think critically, and write clearly. The certificate will take students beyond the in-demand skills baked into the English major

to learn about the kinds of writing expected in the business world. They will also build a writing portfolio. The certificate will allow students to make meaningful connections with real-world hiring managers. To earn the certificate, students will complete Grammar and Usage, a 200-level class; Business and Professional Writing, a 300-level class; Practicum in English, a 400-level course; as well as the student’s choice between two other 300-level classes: Grant Writing or Advanced Composition.

“Writing in the Workplace” is open to any Shepherd student but is particularly recommended for those pursuing majors in business, communication, and English. The certificate will help students pursue jobs in fields such as government analysis, technical communications, and human resources. The certificate includes a 200-level Grammar and Usage class followed by Business and Professional Writing and Advanced Composition, two 300-level courses. To round out the certificate, the student will choose one elective from a slew of offerings across departments on campus, including the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Communication.

The final certificate offering, “Professional Writing and Design,” is intended for students pursuing any major. It is likely to attract students majoring in art, business, communication, and English. Those who earn this certificate will be ready for positions in fields including marketing, public relations, and advertising. The certificate includes two required 300-level courses—Business and Professional Writing and Advanced Compo-

sition—and then one choice from a range of electives, with choices from the Department of Contemporary Art and Theater, the Department of Computer Science, and the Department of Communication.

These certifications aim to show the practical applications of college-level writing courses, ranging from government jobs to Instagram influencer, offering something for everyone. So far, these certifications are being welcomed enthusiastically by students and faculty. Students in the English program are excited for the new opportunities in learning about the world of writing beyond college. Current English major Maddie Malin, who intends to take the Business and Professional Writing course next semester, says she is “excited to further my professional portfolio. I think that it is an amazing addition to the curriculum to provide a course that will provide insight to what the professional writing world may look like for us.”

Dr. Nixon says students are very interested in the certificates and adds, “I’ve been pleasantly surprised by the positive response I’ve heard from students, particularly in advising sessions.” Dr. Nixon hopes that “students and the parents of prospective students will perceive the professional writing certificates as a bridge to a career. It makes our statements about the viability of the English major even more tangible. Students and their parents will perceive the certificates as a segue from academia to the corporate world.” ■

Giving Day 2023

For the third straight year, Sigma Tau Delta placed among the top three student organizations in the number of gifts generated on Giving Day. Giving Day impacts many clubs, academic groups, sororities, fraternities, and societies on campus. Every spring, the groups on campus come together to create video pleas, share information on social media, and reach out to the community and alumni for donations. Students and faculty participate in training sessions to become efficient advocates for their respective organizations and then create content hosted by the Giving Day website.

This year, Clara Monson, Sigma Tau Delta president, collaborated with fellow English majors Maddie Malin, Bea Harrod, and Matthew Parkinson to create a video on how funds donated to the Department of English and Modern Languages might benefit them. The students described the field trips recently taken by the Shakespeare class and other ways in which funds could contribute to the expansion of experiential learning opportunities. English and Modern Languages and Sigma Tau Delta raised over \$800 during the 24-hour donation period, tying for second among campus organizations and clubs in the number of gifts generated. We thank all the donors who contributed to furthering the success of our department! ■



Rude Mechanicals Perform at Humanities Conference

by Taylor Beam

On February 25, The Rude Mechanicals Medieval and Renaissance Players traveled to the Wilson College Humanities Conference in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The troupe staged their rendition of *The Second Shepherd's Play*, a 15th-century biblical mystery play. The name of the playwright is unknown. Traditionally, the play would be performed alongside a series of other pieces.

The Second Shepherd's Play follows three shepherds searching for their stolen sheep, which leads to them being present at the birth of Jesus Christ. Their journey is comedic yet touches on some of the social issues of the time in which it is set. William Prudnick, one of the cast members, mentioned that this was one of the funniest plays he has been part of.

The Rudes have performed at this conference many times in the past, but this is the first year the event has been held since spring 2021 due to the pandemic. The conference showcases work from a variety of disciplines including literature, philosophy, and history. Through their performances, the Rudes contribute insights into literature, medieval history, and theater to their audience.

Current students in the cast included Olyvia Thompson, Dannah Lohr, William Prudnick, Abigail Stradley, Julie Bowen, and Brianna Cline. Alumni TK Wilson and Ash Wilson were also in the cast, along with Catherine Criner, who is a Shepherd admissions counselor. ■



Pictured (front row, l. to r.) are Abigail Stradley, Julie Bowen; back row, Brianna Cline, Olyvia Thompson, Catherine Criner, Ash Wilson, William Prudnick, Dannah Lohr.

Author and Alumnus Visits Campus

by Clara Monson

Shepherd graduate and former instructor Dr. Joshua Cross visited campus on March 22-23. His Shepherd University homecoming included visits with three creative writing classes, a book signing at Four Seasons Books in Shepherdstown, and a Scarborough Society lecture. Students enjoyed hearing from someone who "made it big" by becoming a published author, and faculty enjoyed seeing their former colleague.

Joshua graduated from Shepherd in 2003; he was an English major and completed a minor in education. He completed a master's degree at the University of North Carolina (Charlotte) and a Ph.D. at Oklahoma State University. Joshua is currently a senior lecturer in the Department of English at Coastal Carolina University, where he teaches composition and creative writing courses. In 2021 Southeast Missouri State University Press published Joshua's short story collection, *Black Bear Creek*.

Joshua visited with students in the creative writing classes of Drs. Carrie Messenger and James Pate and Professor Sadie Shorr-Parks. In a question-and-answer session in one class, Joshua explained the historical and familial contexts behind his collection of short stories, which include his father's and grandfather's experiences in the coal mining industry. He said that his family's participation in the strikes as miners and teachers

was formative and shaped his worldview as someone who is "very much an environmentalist." He also gave advice to students looking to publish their own works, recommending strategies for revision, optimizing workshops in creative writing, and understanding the differences between novel- and short story-length works.

He finished the Q&A session with an acronym for the three things all good writing has: C.U.E.: confidence, urgency, and empathy.

One of the students in the classes, Katie Keckler (double major in English and communication), said, it "was a really cool opportunity" to meet with Joshua. "He graduated from here," she continued, "and just knowing that you can graduate and be successful in the field I want to be in was nice to see."

Joshua's return to campus was made possible

through the generosity of Dr. Rob Tudor, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, Assistant Dean of Interdisciplinary and Integrative Studies; and Ms. Sadie Shorr-Parks, Director of The Society for Creative Writing at Shepherd University. ■



Dr. Joshua Cross poses with Dr. Messenger's fiction class after leading a Q&A about writing.