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Greetings from the department chair! The English department currently numbers 118 students in three concentrations: literature, writing, and teacher education. Students earn a degree 100% online or seated, or a mix of both. They can also earn a bachelor’s and master’s degree in 5 years in our new combined, “fast-track” degree. Students in our program enjoy internships in textbook publishing, publishing the literary magazine, publishing the newsletter, and maintaining our social media. Students can also work as tutors in the Writers’ Studio. The faculty at CSU are never too busy for students, and we welcome you to drop in to talk.

I’ve just finished editing (with Dr. Parrott) a book Digital Reading and Writing in Composition Studies (Routledge, 2019). All the essays discuss ways to teach engaged reading and writing in digitized platforms. So I’ve been thinking about our frantic world where information washes over us constantly, screens vie for our attention, and apps repeatedly bleep for our focus. Robots build cars and tee-shirts, and artificial intelligence answers our questions online. Universities scramble to keep up with these changes touting new degrees for the new age, and naysayers cry the obsolescence of a liberal arts major. I suggest that, on the contrary, studying English has never been more important than now.

Our fast-paced job market means that college students today need to prepare for jobs that aren’t even created yet and demands workers who can continue learning. For one example, Joseph Aoun explains that “Google likes to hire generalists. The interview process gauges candidates’ responses to broad challenges, rather than quizzing them on any specific area of knowledge” (38). Who better than an English major? Google’s hiring process “measures candidate’s sense of curiosity, their instinct for innovation, and their knack for working well with others” (38).

Studying English teaches people to think creatively and hone the writing skills that transform thinking into explanations, ideas into solutions, and experiences into stories that make meaning of our world.

English majors are experts at human communication in all its forms; we are creative, innovative, and rhetorical thinkers, readers, and writers. English majors thrive not in spite of their major but because of it. And even as we embrace all the advantages digital technology offers, we also hone skills lacking in many people today, skills our world desperately needs: the ability to focus, to analyze, to pay attention, to create patterns out of chaos. These skills are cultivated through deep reading. Thomas Newkirk, along with others, encourages us to practice “slow reading” to cultivate the sense of “being present in our own lives” (5).

So I encourage you to browse a local library and see what surprises await. Visit a used bookstore, scan the shelves, read the covers, and pick up a book that piques your interest, not one recommended by an algorithm. Find a comfortable spot and get lost in another world. Enjoy the pleasure that reading a book offers. Enjoy it guilt-free assured that you are becoming a flexible, smart thinker, an excellent writer, astute analyst, skilled researcher, wide reader, deep thinker, and a curious, attentive human. This is, indeed, just what the world needs now.

Dr. Jason Allen comes to Clayton State University with a PhD in Literature and Creative Writing from Binghamton University, and an MFA from Pacific University, specializing in Fiction, Creative Non-Fiction, and Poetry. His published works include his 2015 and 2016 poetry collections *Gunmetal Blue* and *A Meditation on Fire* respectively. Most recently, his novel, *The East End*, is set to be released May 7, 2019, and it explores issues of class conflicts with tragic decisions and surprise twists.

As a professor, Dr. Allen engages students by trying to pique their interests; he wants “to get them excited about something they’re going to write,” which goes a long way in motivating students to invest in their own writing process. Dr. Allen also acknowledges the significance of understanding ways in which shifts in student demographics impact his pedagogical approaches. He finds it imperative to get to know his students to better understand what inspires them. Having taught some of the most diverse student populations, from teaching abroad in China to teaching here at Clayton State University, Dr. Allen uses his own insights as a non-traditional student himself, having enrolled as college freshman at age the age of twenty-eight after working hard labor for years. His own background serves as inspiration for his creative endeavors as well as his pedagogical approaches, making him invaluable in his ability to identify and empathize with his broad range of students.

Aside from his pastimes as a writer and professor, Dr. Allen enjoys reading, movies, seeing live music, and traveling. Some of his favorite authors include Bonnie Jo Campbell, Allen Ginsberg, and S.E. Hinton. This May he will be traveling the country while on a book tour for the release of his novel *The East End*, and he plans to complete his second novel as well as a memoir in the coming year. As a teacher and mentor, Professor Allen hopes to make a lasting impression on his students and to inspire them to pursue their dreams.

**Dr. Pratt Russell’s class brings Asian American Literature information table to Main Street**

Students Kimberly Brown, Elia Rivera and Chris Delgado (L-R) with Dr. Kathryn Pratt Russell (Second from left)
The Writers’ Studio at Clayton State has been offering free tutoring services to Clayton State students since 2006. Today, the Writers’ Studio offers individual and online tutoring in addition to a workshop series that covers common issues related to writing. The studio is a place where students can develop their writing processes and their identity as writers who are able to meet the challenges of academic writing.

But the Writers’ Studio also offers unique opportunities for its writing consultants, who are nominated by a professor for their strong writing and communication skills. Before they begin tutoring, consultants receive formal training in “Response to Writing,” a semester-long course that aims to “acquaint students with the methodology and mindset of working in a tutoring center,” according to Hector Espino, a senior writing consultant at the studio. John Magee, a current consultant, adds that he learned strategies for “scaffolding, motivation, pre-writing, and post-writing,” along with approaches to conducting research and “gathering, analyzing, transcribing, and reflecting upon data.”

Both consultants agree that the work is rewarding. Espino explains that students and consultants “learn from each other, and every student offers [...] the opportunity to learn something new or see things from a distinct perspective.” Magee adds that the flexibility, strong “sense of community among the staff, and the great leadership” of Dr. Klein make for a positive work experience.

While consultants enjoy a positive work environment and a paycheck, they also appreciate the professional development opportunities. Magee, who plans to teach English abroad after graduation, explains that his experience as a writing consultant has prepared him to work with a variety of personalities while also preparing him to work with students who learn in many different ways. Likewise, Espino, who plans to work in marketing, has learned to “adapt to different forms of tutoring with regard to the assignments and students’ needs.” He explains that this ability to adapt is “vital” in the workplace, where professionals regularly encounter new situations and new perspectives.

What makes a successful consultant? According to Magee, there are four traits of successful consultants: they are avid readers and writers, they are transparent in their writing, they have thick skin, and they are prepared for anything. Students who like to read, write, and help others should consider applying for a consultant position. “The studio is a place of encouraging the ideas of others, and any students who are interested in being a part of this team will distinctly serve their student body. We all want students to enjoy their writing practice,” says Espino. If you are a current CSU student and are interested in becoming a writing consultant, contact Dr. Klein or your English professor about the nomination process. And if you are interested in improving your writing, visit www.clayton.edu/writers to get started.

Hector Espino

John Magee
At the beginning of the 2018 Fall Semester, I was given the opportunity to interview an established professor, Dr. Robert Vaughan. Leading up to my interview, I did not know what to expect. I previously heard different things about Dr. Vaughan but had never really met him in person. I learned that Dr. Vaughan is a well-rounded teacher and vibrant voice among the Clayton State University community.

When I sat down with Dr. Vaughan I started off my interview by asking “How have your past experiences, for example growing up, influenced your pathway into teaching and as a professor?” Instead of giving a short and tepid answer, Dr. Vaughan sat back and delved into his past.

As Dr. Vaughan began to reminisce he said, “Well, I had some really good teachers myself, and I think that was probably the main influence for me. I mean, I had a really good English teacher in high school and I was really inspired by her.

Yet it was not until I went to college, where I was initially an engineering major, not an English major, that I was inspired to further my career in literature. Dr. Vaughan goes on to say “I wanted to become an engineer because my father was one, and because I really wanted to follow in his footsteps. I started out that way, and I really did not like what I was studying, but during my time taking my core literature and English courses, I saw how I really enjoyed those courses.

“In fact, I had a professor [Louis Henry of Clemson University] for sophomore lit., and I enjoyed the way he taught and how he was emotionally involved with the works.” Once Dr. Vaughan said this I began to think “Wow, even Dr. Vaughan had to do mandatory English classes like us Clayton State students!”

Good done anywhere is good done everywhere. For a change, start by speaking to people rather than walking by them like they’re stones. — Maya Angelou
Dr. Vaughan then continued, stating his sophomore English professor “was a student advocate; I can even remember sitting in his office and him being very transparent. I even have a picture of him hanging on the wall in my office at home right now. I also dedicated my book with my colleagues to him. Hopefully one day I can be a fraction of what he was to me, in my own students’ lives.” This statement impacted me because Dr. Vaughan truly wants to be the best teacher he can to his students. Dr. Vaughan states that he “was stimulated by Louis Henry. I remember when Henry was moved by the literature that he was teaching, almost to tears. That moved me and is a large reason why I teach students literature now.”

When asked about his teaching outcomes, Dr. Vaughan responded by saying, “I want to show students who are not English majors the importance of literature. I want to be able to reach the students who are not trying to be teachers of literature and the humanities, but those who are going for careers in education, business, healthcare, and whatever it may be. Those are the ones I want to spark interest in. I have even gotten some student evaluations, many from students who did not think they would enjoy the class, who by the end they found a liking of it. That was very enheartening for me.” Dr. Vaughan wants his students to enjoy what they are learning while growing as individuals. One of the main responses that really caught my attention was when I asked Dr. Vaughan what made him step down from being the Dean of Graduate Studies. This question was one of the little tidbits I learned before we sat down. Dr. Vaughan began by saying, “I stepped down because I wanted to get back to why I started teaching in the first place, the students.” I was amazed when Dr. Vaughan said this. It was nice to see that someone would go back to doing what they loved so much because they have the heart for it.

In this interview, I learned that there are many voices on this campus that need to be heard and many experiences that need to be shared. Dr. Robert Vaughan is one these individuals, and his vibrant voice stands out.

“The job of an educator is to teach students to see vitality in themselves”
— Joseph Campbell

Troy Williams is a sophomore marketing major currently living in McDonough. Troy has been exploring photography since the age of ten and looks forward to using his degree to help others around the world, telling stories with his camera.
Dr. Barbara Goodman’s World Literature I classes (ENGL 2111) in Spring and Fall 2018 worked on a PACE project in collaboration with the Veteran Resource Center. World Literature I students read diverse texts, such as *The Odyssey*, *Sundiata*, *Trojan Women*, and *Macbeth*, with key motifs of war, its aftermath, and homecomings. They also read an article “Theatre of War” which discusses a program that utilizes Greek tragedies as a means to start difficult conversations about topics such as PTSD, suicide, and violence among veterans, trauma survivors, and their community.

Then the Veteran Resource Center connected each student in the class with a Clayton State veteran. Then students developed a series of questions and met with veteran, either in person or via phone or FaceTime. They interviewed the veterans about their experiences in the service and after they returned to civilian life. These interviews are being used as part of a Clayton State Veterans Oral History webpage that is being created through the auspices of CELT and Dept. of Communication. The webpage should be available to the public in Spring 2019.

The story of Odysseus: A veteran’s long journey home

The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. —Douglas MacArthur
Dr. Chris Ritter has been teaching service-learning courses and contributing to the PACE initiative at Clayton State since 2014, work that continues a teaching style he was already developing while a Brittain Fellow at Georgia Tech.

In Dr. Ritter’s service-learning classes, particularly Professional & Technical Writing and Professional Editing, students act as writing consultants for community partners and make a meaningful impact beyond their typical academic progress. It’s no easy task: students find their own clients and develop a project, and Dr. Ritter helps manage client and student expectations for what can and should be accomplished.

Dr. Ritter’s students have been involved in diverse areas of the community and in the workforce, not only helping constituents and employers communicate more effectively and meet necessary goals but also gaining valuable professional support and even earning promotions.

Church outreach and teaching, production of instructional materials in professional contexts, and even flow charts for the aerospace industry are among the variety of projects Dr. Ritter’s students have undertaken successfully. These students are sharing their rhetorical skills not only within local communities but also on a national level.

Because this outreach work is usually an optional project for highly motivated students in Dr. Ritter’s classes, there has to be care taken to limit the scope of projects yet still come out with legitimate, useful products and contributions significant enough to satisfy constituencies and earn credit.

Projects begin with a proposal and memorandum of understanding and ordinarily take about eight weeks or about twenty-five hours to complete. So in addition to contributing through community involvement, Dr. Ritter’s students are developing skills in planning and time management and learning the benefits and setting and meeting project milestones while maintaining realistic expectations for work outcomes and finding satisfactory results for everyone involved.
Dr. Brigitte Byrd Hosts Visiting Writers Reading Series and Cygnet 2019 Launch

Dr. Khalilah Ali and the Dean’s Diversity Initiative Host L.I.T. Poetry Slam

Teacher of the Year Dr. Patricia Smith Speaks with Faculty on Innovations in Teaching
Thank you for picking up
The Vibrant Voice!

Published annually, The Vibrant Voice is the newsletter of the Department of English at Clayton State University. Here you will find news about programs, course offerings, faculty, student, and alumni accomplishments and more. We hope the Voice is informative and inviting to the Clayton State community in general. For students, if the Voice prompts a question or idea for you, why not visit a member of English faculty to discuss it and expand your subject matter expertise and portfolio? For faculty, alumni, and University colleagues—we hope you learn something new about what’s happening in English and appreciate the pride we take in our work and in one another.

If you have an idea for The Vibrant Voice, please don’t hesitate to share it or consider becoming a contributor.

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Cover Photo and Composition by Troy Williams. Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte in southeastern of France is an influential work of mid-seventeenth century architecture originally built for Nicolas Fouquet, Marquis de Belle Île, Viscount of Melun and Vaux.