Dear Colleagues and Coworkers,

Welcome to the 2024 Undergraduate Issue of Reading Matters! It was a great year for undergraduate programs, as we opened our new Literary Loft on the fourth floor, complete with snacks, socializing, and a library of alumni books. This year marks the first that Marie Kruger has directed our honors society, ATI, an intimidating task after the legendary tenure of Anne Stapleton (and by the way, not to steal Anne’s thunder, but shouldn’t we mention that Jack Stapleton will be receiving the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence at this year’s ceremony, for the work he did at the height of the AIDs crisis, and has done since, saving thousands of lives? You may know him as the very nice man who hosted some of our holiday parties, and who was Anne’s other half. But they are a power duo!). But I digress: Anne did wonders with ATI, and Marie has put her own amazing spin on things, inducting one of our largest ever groups into the society, and keeping them fully engaged with biweekly events and a trip to St. Louis for the annual national convention, where our own Donika Kelly was a keynote speaker. You can read Marie’s full update below, where you’ll see she’s one of many people who have made our undergraduate experience something really special.

Others who have contributed to that effort are Kaveh Akbar, as director of English Creative Writing, who organized our ongoing visiting writers’ series, Harry Stecopolous, who as our Director of Undergraduate Studies gained approval for a new 4+1 BA+Masters program, Lori Branch, who organized our “Iowa English Reads” group, and of course our advisors Kate Torno and Christine Norquest, who are just irreplaceable for keeping the trains running and the snacks in the Literary Loft flowing.

Shannon Yost, as Assistant to the DEO has also helped turn our front desk positions for students into a full internship experience. Those students are Josie Boyle, Josephine Geiger-Lee, Emma Birkbeck, Kyleigh Call, and Sam Mayer, or as I like to call them, the Shanonistas. They even had a spontaneous “Dress Like Shannon” day in her honor, and collectively they do amazing work to make every student, prospective student, and parent who comes to the office feel welcome and get a sense of what makes our department special.

What else? I guess this is my last Reading Matters! It’s been a good, if short, run and I’m excited that the department will be welcoming back Loren Glass next year for an encore performance. Rather than Cheers from the Chair I think I should label this Cheers to the Chair and wish him all the best in his new, old, role!

Sincerely,

Blaine

Figure 1: The Shanonistas
From the Director of Undergraduate Studies

I'm happy to report that our two undergraduate majors are thriving. We currently have 842 majors—the fourth largest number of majors in CLAS. I suspect that number will be even higher in the fall. No surprise, of course. We teach well and most of our classes are at capacity. We’re also blessed with two extraordinary student advisors in Christine Norquest and Kate Torno. They both make major contributions to our pedagogic enterprise, and we owe them a great deal.

Our students’ many achievements also warrant mention. One talented senior is writing a capstone creative project that draws on Kathy Acker, Samuel Beckett, and Jean Genet; another, an accomplished poet, has the happy problem of choosing between two superb MFA programs; a third student, a bright medievalist, completed an honors thesis on Chrétien’s Perceval. Seven precocious students shared their work at the annual Sigma Tau Delta convention in Saint Louis. And the enthusiastic members of the English Society have put on one innovative event after another. Even as other English departments struggle to maintain their numbers, we benefit from the presence of hundreds of wonderful students. Next year promises to bring us more of the same.

Harry Stecopoulos
Alpha Tau Iota (ATI), the University of Iowa chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, has enjoyed an exceptionally successful year in promoting the mission of the English Honors Society and foster an inclusive community with a love for creative expression and a commitment to community service. Under the leadership of President Sabrina Lacy, a team of dedicated ATI officers (Sophia Considine as Vice President; Madison Sukalo as Treasurer; Ella Rupe as Publicity Officer and Historian; and Finn Angelos as Alumni Liaison) recruited an exceptionally large group of 25 new members into their steadily expanding community.

Through a series of biweekly events, ATI offered English students a welcoming and inclusive space to engage in conversations about their creative and critical writing, to share their favorite (and least favorite) books, and to transform the Gerber Lounge into a lively Karaoke venue. Several events in the past year have been specifically dedicated to ATI’s mission to serve the Iowa City community: ATI members designed alphabet packets for elementary school children (February 2024); they crafted bracelets and donated them to the University of Iowa Children's Hospital (October 2023); and they created bookmarks which were made available to the patrons of the Iowa City Library (November 2023). In addition, ATI organized an event in September 2023 that featured the literary work selected by the international English Honors Society as this year’s “Common Reader,” Carl Phillips’s Pulitzer prize-winning poetry anthology, *Then the War*. The success of the event was recognized by Sigma Tau Delta with a Regents Common Reader Award, the first time ATI has secured such a prestigious acknowledgment from its parent organization.
Undergraduate Matters

Thanks to the Department’s generous support, ATI was able to send a large group of Iowa students to the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Saint Louis. Please congratulate Sabrina Lacy, Miranda Miller, Elizabeth Von Loh, Amritha Selvarajaguru, Kelsey James, Katherine Lyu, and Madeline Riske on their poised and eloquent presentations at the convention. They are currently preparing a convention report to share with the Department. Two other highlights from the convention deserve mention: we cheered on the Hawkeyes in their win against UConn, and two members of our team won the Literary Trivia Contest using the memorable moniker “Gerber’s Gals” (nicely done, Amritha and Miranda!).

ATI convention attendees: Kelsey, Kathrine, Sabrina, Amritha, Madeline, Elizabeth and Miranda

Hawkeyes in Saint Louis
Undergraduate Matters

To add further accolades to ATI, Miranda Miller, one of the convention attendees, has been selected from 146 international candidates (!!) to serve in the prestigious Summer Journal Internship of Sigma Tau Delta. From May 15 to August 15, 2024, Miranda will work with Professor Carie King and three other journal interns to review submissions and edit accepted publications for Sigma Tau Delta Review, the organization’s critical journal, and Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle, the organization’s creative journal.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all graduating seniors and thank officers Sabrina Lacy (President), Sophia Considine (Vice President), Madison Sukalo (Treasurer), Ella Rupe (Publicity Officer; Historian), and Finn Angelos (Alumni Liaison) for their excellent work leading our Iowa Chapter throughout the year. Seniors, we wish you well on your future journey beyond the University of Iowa. Stay connected!

Alpha Tau Iota’s Faculty Sponsor

Marie Kruger
Undergraduate Matters

Honors in English

Graduating English Majors
Harkin, Emily
Roy, Josephine Marie
Wilcoxon, Megan Katherine

Graduating English and Creative Writing Majors
Angelos, Finnegan Alexander
Bell, Georgina Louise
Birkbeck, Emma Joan
Bradley, Cecilia Kay
Brookins, Charlotte Alaine
Brooks, Eva Kelleher
Burd, Josie
Davis, James Finch
DeGroot, Taylor
Erlbacher, Emma Elizabeth
George, Olivia
Goodrich, Antoinette Rose
Haase, Ciara Delaney
Hirsch, Katherine Anne
Hummel, Victoria
Kestner, Anthony
Lacy, Sabrina Mae-June
Linquist, Link Alexander
Lyu, Shijia
Miller, Miranda
O’Brochta, Emily Erin
O’Neal, Robyn Elizabeth
Palese, Siena Gamble
Pech, Emma
Rajwar, Stevie Terry
Reagan, Kathryn Grace
Reid, Cameron Cody
Richardson, Annelise Sabine
Ruder, Kieran Gage
Scherer, Alana Virginia
Shearn, Abigail Therese
Stanton, Emma Jane
Terpstra, Darrin YooJung
Torrez, Maya Moon
Undergraduate Matters—Scholarship/Awards

*Helen K. Fairall Scholarships:* For Iowa born and educated juniors or seniors with preference to students interested in literature from 1900 to the present.

Shaye Sullivan, Taylor Conrad, Madelyn Tomson

*Helen Aicher and Kenneth Ward Nelson Scholarship:* This award is for individuals who intend to teach at the high school level following completion of their studies.

Jennifer Hogan, Amritha Selvarajaguru

*Darwin T. Turner Award:* Established in honor of Dr. Darwin T. Turner, chair of the African-American World Studies Program and Professor in the Department of English. The award recognizes outstanding students of color who best combine Dr. Turner’s devotion to literature and scholarship with his exemplary qualities as teacher and leader.

Braja Servin

*Margaret Leuz and Fred Einspahr Scholarship:* Established by John Einspahr in honor of his parents Margaret Leuz and Fred Einspahr. Margaret graduated from Iowa in 1912 with high honors in English, and this award recognizes excellent students who plan to pursue a career in teaching.

Josie Boyle, Lillian Giddings, Tanae Thiravong

*Ruth Gulden Holsteen and Charles Sophus Holsteen Memorial Scholarship:* Established by Jon Holsteen and Nancy Holsteen Lerner in honor of their parents, Charles Sophus and Ruth Gulden Holsteen, natives of Burlington, Iowa. Mrs. Holsteen graduated with a degree in English and this award honors students who share her commitment to excellence in the field.

Isobel Perez, Madeline Riske, Jennifer Schmitt, Sydney Smithgall
Undergraduate Matters

Louise P. Herring Scholarship: Established in honor of Louise P. Herring, who earned her master’s degree from the University of Iowa in 1930 and her doctorate in 1932. It recognizes excellent students with a commitment to English studies as a preparation for life.

Josephine Geiger-Lee

Sherry Simmons Loring Memorial Scholarship: Established by Eric Loring in honor of his late wife, Sherry Simmons Loring, who earned her BA in English at Iowa in 1970. The award recognizes students who, like the Lorings, have demonstrated their commitment to and pleasure in the life of the mind at the University of Iowa.

Katherine Davis

Emily Wagner Scholarship: This award honors Emily Wagner, who received her B.A. in English from the University of Iowa in 2002. After graduating, Emily pursued her love of reading and writing by joining the Teach for America Corps, and continued her career as an inspiring English teacher, challenging and engaging middle-school students until her death in 2010. This scholarship supports an English major who shares Emily’s love of literature, demonstrates academic excellence, and is a graduate of an Iowa high school.

Elijah Lewerenz, Braja Servin

Melvin J. Blough Scholarship: Established in honor of Melvin J. Blough, this award is given to support students studying in the English Department.

Undergraduate Matters

Scott A. Anderson Memorial Scholarship: Scott Anderson received his B.A. in English with highest distinction from the University of Iowa in 1984. He was an honors student, a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a winner of the Hancher-Finkbine Medallion, and, after graduation, he worked as a writer for the UI Foundation and in the television industry in New York and Los Angeles. This scholarship honors students who share his love of writing.


Sean Wu Memorial Scholarship: This award was established by Dave Wu and Una Yang in honor of Sean Wu and is used to support a freshman English and Creative Writing major who shows promise in this area.

Savannah Harris

Elizabeth Dietz Essay Prize: This award is given for the best essay on poetry, in honor of Elizabeth Dietz, who was a poet, a professor of Renaissance Literature at Rice University, and a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop and the doctoral program in English.

Amritha Selvarajaguru

Miriam Gilbert Award for Shakespeare Studies: This award is given each year for the best essay on Shakespeare, renaissance literature, or drama and performance, in honor of Professor Gilbert, who taught Shakespeare at Iowa until 2013.

Josephine Geiger-Lee

McGalliard Medieval Prize: Established by his former student, Professor Dolores Warwick Frese of Notre Dame University, in honor of John McGalliard, a widely known scholar and teacher of Old English, Old Norse, Old Irish, Chaucer, and other medieval subjects at the University of Iowa for more than forty years, from 1931 to 1975. This award is given to an English or comparative literature major who submits the most outstanding essay on a medieval subject.

Josephine Roy
Undergraduate Matters

The Fiction Prize: The UI English department's annual excellence in fiction writing prize for his story “Really—a small thing.”

Jacob Boudreau

The Poetry Prize: The UI English department’s annual excellence in poetry writing prize for her poem “Ekphrastic: Heeler III (Cankles) After Wangechi Mutu.”

Isobel Perez

The Nonfiction Prize: The UI English department’s annual excellence in fiction writing prize for his essay “Bloodletting, Carcinization, and Me”

Spencer Cooper-Ohm

The Essay Prizes

The UI English department’s annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity for his essay “The Progressive Fall of the Highest Goddess in the Religious Epic Poem”

Todd Tremble

The UI English department’s annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on pre-1900 historical contexts for her essay “Tests of Character: The Formulaic Role of the Fae in the Four Branches of The Mabinogion”

Robbie Hubbert

The UI English department’s annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on postcolonial and transnational studies for his essay “A World Without Humans: Wandering Souls, Propaganda, and Broken Promises in Duong Thu Huong’s No Man's Land”

Dylan McLaren
Melissa Febos had an essay published in AFAR Magazine last month about the Belgian beguines.

Loren Glass is being named M.F. Carpenter Professor of English, and Jon Wilcox is being named John C. Gerber Professor of English. Loren was also invited to give a talk: “Fiction in the City of Literature.” University of Iowa Retirees Association (UIRA). Iowa City, IA. March 20, 2024.

Congratulations to Louisa Hall for being awarded the John Gerber Undergraduate Teaching Award this year. This is awarded to a faculty member, selected by the department, who excels in undergraduate teaching.

Donika Kelly's poem "When the fact of your gaze means nothing, then you are truly alongside" was published in You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World, edited by U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón. The poem was featured in the Academy of American Poets Poem-A-Day. She was a guest on The New Yorker's Poetry podcast, where she discussed Mary Oliver's "One Hundred White-Sided Dolphins on a Summer Day," and her own poem "Sixteen Center."

On March 11th, Harry Stecopoulos lectured on US literature and diplomacy at the Center for American Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. On March 13th, Harry shared his research on Richard Wright and fossil fuel at the University of Copenhagen’s Environmental Humanities Seminar. On March 15th, he delivered the keynote address at a Copenhagen conference on Cormac McCarthy’s environmentalism.


Staff member Corey Campbell was named a 2024 MacDowell Fellow. She is spending four weeks writing fiction at MacDowell this spring.
Graduate Student Matters

Hannah Bonner had a review, "Illuminations: Elsewhere/Here" published on Reverse Shot and was selected as the 2024-2025 CLAS Postgraduate Visiting Writer in Nonfiction at the University of Iowa.

Annie Burkhart will be defending her dissertation (this month), The “New Person”: Radical Desire in British Literature, 1880–1930, from which an excerpt titled "Mona Maclean, Adaptably Amorous" will be published in Victoriographies this July.

Aileen Tierney has been awarded the Digital Scholarship & Publishing Studio Summer Fellowship for Summer 2024. Her plan is to learn Python to further my studies in how digital tools are being used in literary research.