Greetings, and welcome to the second issue of *English Accents*, a newsletter for alumni of the English Department at the University of Kansas.

As you flip through this year's installment, you will find the department at the “center of everything” interdisciplinary, community service-oriented, and environmentally-focused.

By encountering ecopoetics and studying abroad, our undergrads are seeking to understand financial markets as ecosystems. Our alumni are proposing mentoring programs for students who wish to translate their study of English into “alternative” positions. Our graduate students and faculty are doing their part to exhibit empathy and give back to the Lawrence community by participating in service projects at local non-profits and sharing their talents at readings around the city.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy what you’ve read here as much as we did creating it! It’s been a very good year for KU English.

What began as a nearly 600-page KU creative writing master’s thesis submitted in shopping bags is now entering a new phase. The Office of First-Year Experience has spoken, and Laura Moriarty’s acclaimed 2003 novel, *The Center of Everything*, has been named the 2014-2015 Common Book. A program in its third year of implementation, KU’s Common Book seeks to give incoming freshmen a common experience as they “seek to discover, engage, and belong to the University of Kansas.” Each incoming freshman at KU will receive a copy of *The Center of Everything* at orientation, and professors and instructors campus-wide have been presented with materials containing suggestions on how to integrate Moriarty’s text into their classrooms. As part of the program, Moriarty will be giving a keynote lecture at the KU Museum of Natural History in October and will participate in various classroom events around campus during the year.

After graduating from KU with a B.A. in Social Work, Moriarty began taking night classes with Tom Lorenz, leading to her eventual M.A. in Creative Writing. She joined the teaching faculty in the

“I grow as a writer when I teach and I grow as a teacher when I write.”

—Laura Moriarty

Associate Professor Laura Moriarty

....continued on page 3
2013 Year in Review

A great deal has happened in 2013-2014 and we’re excited to see so much innovation and success among our faculty and students. Terrific stories come from our alumni, who go on to do so many remarkable things. Please keep those stories coming! You take KU English on with you to so many worlds, but you also bring those worlds back to us. And you show why the study of literature, language, and writing matter at every level—from the local environment to the ecosphere.

When I last wrote, the department was poised to host the biggest national conference ever seen at KU. In May of 2013, ASLE, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, brought together over 700 people to talk about energy, environmental crisis, nature, and imaginative texts, including keynote addresses from the biggest names in the field. Shortly afterwards, we began a search for a specialist in environmental rhetoric as a part of a cluster of hires across the University on the topic of “Water Resources.” Dr. Phillip Drake, whose recent research has focused on the Sidoarjo mud volcano disaster in Indonesia, will be joining the faculty in January 2015. We are very excited about the interdisciplinary bridges that he and other faculty in the field will be building in the coming years, and the new possibilities these will open up for students in our programs.

The summer months also brought together a dynamic group of college and university teachers and graduate students to attend an NEH-funded Summer Institute: Don’t Deny My Voice: Reading and Teaching African American Poetry. This institute, the 3rd hosted by the History of Black Writing at KU, focused on the history, changes, and transformations of African American poetry in our cultural and social landscape since 1900. It also included several summer public events—such as open mic nights on the topic of “Poetry and its Publics.” But the program didn’t end when its participants left Lawrence. During the fall of 2013, DDMV also hosted a series of online, public discussions with a prominent group of intergenerational and award-winning poets, including Nikki Giovanni, Terrance Hayes, Leigh McInnis, Brenda Marie Osbev, Ishmael Reed, and Natasha Trethewey. These virtual guests both reunited and extended the community of scholars and teachers discussing this important body of African American writing.

Continuing on the poetry front: thanks to the hard work of our creative writing faculty and students, we have been able to host numerous other writers this year, including poets Jonathan Stalling, Kate Greenstreet, Maria Damon, Joshua Clover, and our own Megan Kaminski. Megan too has continued to run the Taproom and Undergraduate reading Series (the latter was headed this year by undergraduate writers Tasha Cerny and Shawn Patterson), while Big Tent readings continue at The Raven bookstore.

Issue 2 of The Siren (an online journal for graduate and undergraduate student writers) was launched last May, and Issue #3 of our graduate student edited literary magazine, Beecher’s appeared this spring.

Another major topic of discussion in the department this year was Digital Humanities. Professor Jonathan Lamb has been a leader in this area, participating in national conversations about how this digital world is changing our research, writing, and teaching—conversations that he introduced to students in a new first-year seminar on “The History of the Book from Gutenberg to Zuckerberg.” Meanwhile, other department members have been at work on innovative digital projects, including Professor Laura Mielke and graduate student Marty Baldwin, who have been collaborating on a digital edition of an 1859 dramatic manuscript. Watch this space to see how other faculty and students will continue to bring the past and present worlds of literature, writing, and language to digital life.

In other news, many of you will be delighted to hear that a much admired former professor, Jim Hartman, won the College of Liberal Arts Career Achievement Teaching Award in 2013. In accepting the award, Professor Hartman spoke movingly about the importance of a supportive context for strong teaching. Also in the fall, our greatly beloved Mary Klayder was voted Best Professor in Lawrence for 2013! Inspiring students outside of the classroom as well as inside it, Mary continues to guide, mentor, and act as a pillar of support to many, many present and former English majors, and we hope to see more events like the recent one in New York City (featured in this issue). Finally, Professor Giselle Anatol and English/Theater Performance/Global and International Studies major Jenny Curatola were honored as KU Women of Distinction this fall.

Looking slyly ahead, our redesigned major comes fully to life this coming year, and along with it a brand new creative writing minor. We think both will appeal to students across the university who want to blend creative and critical thinking with almost any other discipline you can think of from Business to Biology. We’re excited about offering new programs that allow students to think across categories and disciplines, and that showcase the relevance of English studies to all walks of life.

There is so much more to tell than I can say here; but you will see some of it as you read through this issue. Once again, we are so grateful to you, our community of former students and current friends who help to make our department what it is and who help us to see what more we can become. I wish you a wonderful summer and a fine year ahead.

Anna Neill,
Department Chair
English Graduate Students and Faculty Give Back to the Community

On a chilly Saturday in January, several English Department faculty, staff, and graduate students came together to serve a hot (and free!) lunch to Lawrence’s homeless, hungry, disabled, and low-income families through the Lawrence Interdenominational Nutrition Kitchen, or L.I.N.K. (www.linklawrence.org). I wanted to volunteer after spending many afternoons talking with homeless men and women who stopped in just for some water and for a chance to discuss life during a summer job I once held on Mass Street. The hardships these people face on a daily basis remind me how truly lucky I am in my position as a grad student, so I wanted to give back.

Just before our scheduled service day, our fearless leader and organizer, Professor Laura Moriarty, put out another call for chili and bread from volunteers. Worried that we may have been short, everyone doubled their recipes before bringing food to the kitchen, leaving us with enough for two—or maybe three lunch services.

I passed out cookies (homemades were a hit) on an assembly line of my colleagues, who doled out heaping bowls of chili, fruit, crackers, and bread. Though everyone we served that day was incredibly appreciative of our service, I left feeling so thankful for what I have, for the people around me, and the awareness I now have to continue helping the larger Lawrence community.

Continued from page 1...

English department in 2008 and achieved the rank of Associate Professor in 2014. Although she is a successful and award-winning novelist with four books under her belt, Moriarty is a dedicated advisor, mentor, and teacher who works not only with graduate and honors students, but also incoming freshmen. When asked about her teaching and what inspires her to continue to do it, Moriarty replied, “I like teaching, I really do. I grow as a writer when I teach and I grow as a teacher when I write.”

The department congratulates Laura for her successes and looks forward to watching what develops as she and her text become the “center of everything” for freshmen students in the fall of 2014.
Klayder Hosts Alumni Event in New York City

New York City caters to strong individuals, extroverts and introverts alike. We all seek connection and solace in equal measure. On May 2nd, Dr. Mary Klayder and 2011 alum Michael Wade Smith, with the on-site help of David Wilcox, brought together several bright and charismatic KU personalities for a welcome injection of familiarity and warmth. It was a joyous evening. There were enthusiastic “I-haven’t-seen-you-in-forever!!” embraces, courteous introductory handshakes, association breakdowns (“No way, I lived with her sophomore year!”), and maybe a new beginning or two (“Where do you work again?” “That sounds lovely—let’s chat over coffee.”). On behalf of everyone there and anybody who couldn’t make it: “Let’s do it again soon.”

The Department hopes to make gatherings like these a regular occurrence. Let us know if you would like to have a gathering in your part of the country.

Reactions

“It was refreshing to see English classmates I haven’t seen in years...All of this helped to cushion the blow of the news that McCollum Hall (or, as we called it when I lived there, McFireAlarm) will be torn down!”

— John Kuhn, B.A., 2008
Current Columbia PhD candidate

“It’s such a rare treat to see so many East Coast Jayhawks. People came from Boston and D.C.—it was really amazing. I can’t wait to do it again!”

— Erin Simpson, B.A., 2001
Received PhD from Harvard in 2007
Current CEO of Caerus Associates in Washington, D.C.
Alum Proposes Interdisciplinary Mentoring Program

Class of 2004 graduate and Topeka native, Dr. Sean Pauzauskie, found KU English a natural choice for one of his multiple undergraduate degrees. A lover of reading “big, fat novels” as well as Russian literature written by Nabokov and Chekhov (a natural scientist and medical doctor, respectively) since high school, Pauzauskie sees his study of the English language as “the underpinning for much of [his] success as a neurologist and beyond.”

A double major in English and Molecular and Cellular Biology, Pauzauskie never felt an incongruity between the two disciplines, claiming that, “the many different ‘characters’ of a cell mirror in complexity the characters of a Shakespeare play (the outcome of the cell and play are, of course, completely subjective to each respective discipline).” This method of thinking has led Pauzauskie to a peripheral mentoring role in the KU English department, proposing programs along with the medical and law communities to encourage and help develop students interested in professionalizing their English degree. Pauzauskie conceives of an English degree as a route to “thinking well” and sees interdisciplinary study as “what compost is to most people’s backyard gardens.” Pauzauskie clarifies his point further by stating, “If you’re not constantly asking questions from multiple different angles and contexts, you’re likely to only learn a piece of the puzzle in terms of the greater scheme of whatever you’re interested in learning more about. So, however you apply the good thinking and writing that comes from an English degree truly doesn’t matter—it’s just a matter of finding one’s inner aptitudes that might complement said good thinking, which comes standard with the degree.” Pauzauskie feels that the importance of mentors throughout this process cannot be overestimated and points to past and present faculty members such as Steve Parker, James Carothers, Mary Klayder, David Bergeron, Anna Neill, Katie Conrad, and Geraldo Sousa as inspiration as he seeks to illuminate the professional paths of current and future KU English students through the mentoring programs.
Kiosk

Kiosk is a unique reflection of the University of Kansas and its students. Each semester we publish the finest of KU student artwork and creative writing. The literary staff selects original student writing to publish in the magazine and edits the magazine before publication. The design staff selects visual art to publish and designs the format and layout of the publication.

The design and literary editors collaborate to piece together the selected writing and art so that the two complement each other to form a cohesive publication. Because of this collaboration, and the ever-changing staff members inherent to a student publication, each semester's edition looks completely different from the one before. Some editions are pocket-sized, others the size of a large magazine, but no matter the shape or size, each edition is held to the same high standard. With each new edition, our goal is to publish the best of what KU students are currently creating.

This semester Kiosk reached an incredible milestone: the fiftieth edition of the publication. We are beyond proud of this issue. In order to make the fiftieth issue even more special, we partnered up with KU's student newspaper, the University Daily Kansan. With their help, and the generosity of the KU School of Journalism, we published this edition of Kiosk as an insert in the UDK, ensuring that everyone who picked up the daily newspaper would be surprised with the latest issue of Kiosk as well.

As three graduating seniors who have been on the literary staff together for several years, we now have to pass the future of our magazine on to the next generation of KU students. It has been an honor to be a part of such a special publication, working across departments from the English to the Design and Journalism departments. Kiosk has been an incredible opportunity to learn about the editing and publishing process, but most of all, it has given us the chance to meet and work with a group of students who all have the same passion for giving other students the opportunity to publish their work.
PhD candidate Alyse Bensel reads from her chapbook Shift at January’s installment of the Taproom Reading Series.

Professor Darren Canady gives a dramatic reading at a fundraiser for Beecher’s Magazine in October 2013.

KU English offers a networked series of reading events where student writers along with writers of national and local talent can share their poetry, plays, fiction, and non-fiction with the Lawrence community. The Taproom Poetry Series, the Undergraduate Reading Series, and Big Tent Reading Series promote exchange between gown and town.

Curated by KU English Assistant Professor Megan Kaminski and local poet Jim McCrary, the Taproom Poetry Series provides a space for poets of all stripes within the English department, the Lawrence community, and the national poetry scene. Each reading begins with an open mic where any poet is encouraged to read one or two poems, followed by three featured readers. This year, these featured readers have included nationally-renowned poets such as Shane McCrae and Patricia Lockwood as well as two KU English graduate students (Alyse Bensel and Tim Lantz) and one professor (Mary Klayder).

Kaminski also coordinates the Undergraduate Reading Series which gives undergraduate students in English and Creative Writing the opportunity to share their work with the public at venues across campus. This worthwhile professionalization opportunity prepares students for graduate study at top-tier programs.

The monthly Big Tent Reading Series, curated by Joe Harrington, at the KU alum-owned Raven bookstore features writers in the graduate programs at KU as well as writers of national importance across genres. Poets, playwrights, fiction writers, and essayists are invited to share their work in this very intimate downtown Lawrence location, often with refreshments and the roaming resident cats.

Reading Series Bring KU into the Lawrence Writing Community
Adventures in the British Library

London Review study abroad participant Sarah Hornung reflects on her experiences abroad.

While participating in the London Review, an English study abroad trip over Spring Break, I knew without a doubt that I was going to see the British Library. The mere idea of spending time with books makes me giddy, so I was positively floored by the opportunity to visit. Blaire Ginsburg, another London Reviewer and fellow bibliophile came along on the adventure to this brilliant building. Our guide Nora McGregor led us down the winding behind-the-scenes hallways to a perch that overlooks the four floors of the main reading room. A worker at the Spencer Research Library, I am familiar with the quiet shuffle of a few patrons in the reading room; despite the multitude of researchers on each of the four levels, the intensity of the silence was rather eerie. In the exhibition hall, we gawked at the first manuscript of Beowulf and a few Shakespearean folios. I delighted in every moment, in every fascinating detail Nora provided about the book as tall as a doorway and the anxiety of transporting the Magna Carta. Following our little tour, we had a rest in the cafe. With a cup of tea and pastry in front of me, I gazed at the glassed-in stacks that stretched high above us, confused by the tiny space between the shelves and windows. Just as I was about to voice my befuddlement, a set of shelves crept backward a few feet, and a library staffer retrieved the book he was seeking. I knew it. The British Library is magical!

Sarah Hornung is a junior from Council Grove, Kansas. In addition to her studies at KU, Sarah works as a Reader Services Assistant at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library.
21-year-old Wichita native and 2014 Brousseau Creativity Award-winner, Rachel Cross, has positioned herself in the center of everything interdisciplinary. After a series of events recalibrated her degree focus from fiction to poetry writing, Cross, a junior-standing English major pursuing minors in Economics and Latin American studies, found her “place” in ecopoetics. With the aid of an award from the Center for Undergraduate Research, Rachel was able to participate in the English Department’s 2013 Costa Rican study abroad program that sparked her interest in ecotourism. On April 26th, 2014, she presented the multimedia project, “Ecopoetics: The Language of Connection or How to Write a poem about a place You are not From Without being a Colonial, Patronizing, Nitwit, a.k.a. Guide for a Terrible Tourist,” as a featured ACE speaker at the Undergraduate Research Symposium—a rather unprecedented honor for a creative writer.

Cross describes having a limited interest in ecopoetics before Costa Rica, but found her trip to be quite epiphanic “[after Costa Rica] ecopoetics stopped being poems about how beautiful this redwood forest is. [I realized] you can use economics to talk about how a forest grows, you can use almost anything to talk about anything—everything is an ecosystem. That’s how I like to think of my entire college career.”

This summer Cross embarks on her next Costa Rican adventure, working as a tour guide and caretaker at Monteverde Butterfly Preserve.

Rachel also serves the department as head editor for The Siren literary magazine, an online publication open for submissions of poetry and fiction from undergraduate and graduate students nation-wide. When asked about her work with The Siren, Cross mentioned that her favorite part was convincing freshmen and sopho-

International Impressions

Photos and articles on this page and the one before it reflect the study abroad experiences of undergraduate students fortunate enough to find funding for Dr. Klayder’s department-sponsored study abroad trips to London and Costa Rica.

Rachel Cross presents at the 2014 UGR symposium.
Outstanding seniors Jenny Curatola and William Dale are both placing themselves in interdisciplinary environments that allow them to take English study out of the classroom and into the streets.

William Dale, a 22-year-old from Topeka, spent his childhood in bookstores, wandering through the aisles in search of his next literary adventure. When he got to KU, studying English just made sense. This study allowed him to do what he loves most: read and write. In addition to his studies, Dale serves as the Executive Director of the Center for Community Outreach (CCO), a student-run volunteer organization that works to encourage activism in KU’s global and local communities. As he became more involved in non-profit and social justice work during the course of his undergraduate career, Dale found that his English classes illuminated new dimensions within his non-profit work.

When asked to elaborate on this illumination, Dale stated that he believes “English allows us, as readers, to enter unknown worlds. More importantly, literature has the power to give a voice to communities that are many times silenced.” Dale feels that approaching literature in this way has allowed him to constantly ‘check’ his own social positioning not only as he interacts with characters on the written page but also as he approaches his community service work, most notably his experiences as a community organizer in urban Kansas City and in his current position as Executive Director for the CCO. “English,” as Dale has discovered, “is not just about reading and writing. It is finding out what place you inhabit in the world and how that space interacts with others.”

After his May 2014 graduation, Dale plans to continue working for non-profits and campaigning for education access. His dream is to move to Washington, D.C. and develop policy to encourage innovation and collaboration in communities across the nation.

22-year-old Lansing native, Jenny Curatola, is also interested in public policy and social justice. An active member of Students for Justice in the Middle East, Curatola filtered her activist mindset, cultural interests, and undeniable talent into three undergraduate majors (in Theater performance, English, and Global and International Studies) and one minor (Italian).

During the course of her undergraduate career, Curatola has collected an impressive amount of awards, grants, and honors ranging from being named a 2013-2014 KU Woman of Distinction to co-founding a New Student Organization of the Year, (the Jayhawk Initiative for Student Theater). A National Merit Scholar and member of the KU Honors Program, she has also participated in multiple alternative breaks, and the KU New Cities Project. In the fall of 2013, Curatola applied and earned a finalist position for a Rhodes Scholarship, a process she described as grueling, but something she certainly plans on doing again in the future.

Driven by an interest in how art functions in building communities, Curatola chose to write and direct a community-devised performance piece challenging negative perceptions of aging for her senior honors thesis. The process of creating One Wild and Precious Life sent her off the Hill and into the greater Lawrence community—specifically to retirement homes. Curatola received the School of Arts Interdisciplinary Research Grant, Undergraduate Research Award, and Jack and Lavon Brosseau Creativity Award for this project.

Beginning in June of 2014, Curatola will use a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grant to spend three to five months in Jordan polishing her Arabic before applying for another Rhodes Scholarship to a graduate program where she will study the Middle East and diplomacy. Curatola ultimately hopes to work as a cultural affairs officer for the U.S. State Department.
KU English Celebrates the 450th Anniversary of Shakespeare’s Birth

This year marks the 450th anniversary of William Shakespeare’s birth in Stratford-upon-Avon, April 23rd, 1564. To help celebrate the event, two world-renowned scholars, Gordon McMullan of King’s College London and Michael Neill, of the University of Kent, England, and Auckland University, New Zealand, returned to our campus to share their groundbreaking research on Shakespeare at an event on April 15th, hosted by the Hall Center for the Humanities, and co-sponsored by the English Department and the Hall Center.

McMullan and Neill argued that, in an age where reduce, reuse, and recycle is a popular mantra, Shakespeare would have fit right in. Professor Neill spoke on *King Lear* and suggested that Shakespeare found inspiration in the world around him and recycled older texts and dormant genres. Professor McMullan, who earned his M.A. degree in English at KU in 1985, examined the topic of Shakespeare on ornithology and explained how Shakespeare modeled some works on traditional folklore about birds, especially cormorants and pelicans.

Both prolific authors and editors in the field, McMullan and Neill also share a passion for and experience with the theater. Gordon McMullan has enjoyed a close collaborative relationship with Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London and has served as textual advisor for Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) productions. He is also at the center of the planning for Shakespeare 400, a London season to commemorate the quater-centenary of Shakespeare’s death in 2016, organizing a consortium of London’s major cultural organizations, involving theater productions, concerts, exhibitions, and lectures.

Michael Neill regularly writes for the *London Review of Books* and has occasionally been an actor—most recently as King Lear in a 50th anniversary production for the University of Auckland’s Summer Shakespeare (2013).

Gordon McMullan has very fond memories of Lawrence and of the KU English Department. He had not been back since he lived and studied here in the mid-1980’s. Michael Neill was happy to return to Lawrence, where his daughter chairs the Department of English.

The success of this event has led to the possibility of establishing an annual Shakespeare’s Birthday Lecture. The English Department would welcome contributions for this purpose from alumni and friends.

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**NEW PROFESSOR PHILLIP DRAKE**

- KU English has hired Phillip Drake to fill an assistant professor position focusing on *Environmental Rhetoric*. Drake comes to KU after completing a two-year appointment as a lecturer in the Center for International Studies and the Program on the Global Environment at the University of Chicago. His teaching and research interests include political ecology, science fiction, technology and literature, composition, and critical theory.
Seniors Joyce Bohling, Tasha Cerny, Jenny Curatola, and Ryan Smith, along with juniors Katherine Gwynn and Heathyr Johnson were chosen to be 2013-2014 Hall Center Scholars. With respective side specialties in Creative Writing, German, Film and Media Studies, Global and International Studies, Italian, Theater Performance, History, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Secondary Education, these accomplished students have been given the opportunity to interact with well-known authors, scholars, and public intellectuals who visit the Hall Center.

Will Dale (Topeka), Hayley Jozwiak (Ogelsby, IL), Maria Carvajal (San Jose, Costa Rica), Ryan Smith (Overland Park), Charles Barkley (Manhattan), Sydney Rayl (Salina), Joyce Bohling (Lawrence), Sara Pyle (Overland Park), Jenny Curatola (Leavenworth), Tasha Cerny (Salina), Kayla Overbey (Hays), and Ryan Xiao (Lenexa) have been named by the department as the Class of 2014 Outstanding Seniors in English. With diverse future plans ranging from Harvard Medical School to working for the French government, these outstanding seniors exemplify the boundless opportunities available to those who choose to study English at KU.

Literature MA Chip Badley will spend a week in June working with the Hurston Manuscripts in the Alain Locke Collection at Howard University in Washington, D.C.
Thanks for Having Us

We’re excited to have the opportunity to keep you up to date on what’s happening here in the English Department. We hope you enjoyed this issue and we look forward to continuing.

Feel free to let us know what you think! Questions, comments and suggestions can be sent to: s7971573@ku.edu.

Creative Writing PhD Amy Ash was awarded the 2013 Cider Press Review Book Award for her poetry manuscript The Open Mouth of the Vase in January 2014. This lucrative award includes $1,000 and a standard publishing contract.

Class of 2013 Literature MA graduate Colleen Morrissey has won a 2014 O. Henry Prize. Her story “Good Faith” (first published in the Cincinnati Review) will be included alongside stories from Louise Erdrich and Stephen Dixon in “The O. Henry Prize Stories 2014” anthology, due out in September.

2011 BA Michael Wade Smith, currently pursuing an MBA at KU, joined the English Department Advisory Board during the 2013-2014 academic year. Smith’s invaluable community outreach expertise has helped create many opportunities for the department including alumni meet-ups and fundraising events.

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As an Anglophile, I feel it necessary to quote the great Winston Churchill whenever possible. To that end, Sir Winston said, “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” The English Department at KU is certainly a crossroads for the development of skills to make a living, but also a place to make a lasting impact through giving. As our state higher education budget continues to decrease and local funding becomes increasingly scarce, we are ever more reliant on the generosity of our alumni. Based on the impact of the KU English Department, you may have become a professor, a politician, a marketer, a writer, a comedian, or any number of amazing things.

Today, the KU English Department needs your help to continue to impact generations of Jayhawks to find deeper meaning in the human condition and apply it to their work in making a living. We need your help and gifts to ensure we can recruit the best faculty, provide competitive funding for the brightest graduate students, and to ensure that every undergraduate English major can partake in study abroad, research, or other experiential activities to enhance the value of their degree.

We cannot do it alone. Know that no amount is too small and every contribution is appreciated—we need your support. As you plan your giving for the year, along with the many organizations you likely give to, please consider a gift to the KU English Department as we strive to continue our work to impact lives and broaden the lenses with which our students and faculty view the world.

If you’re interested in giving, please contact English Department Chair Anna Neill at aneill@ku.edu
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The Center of Everything, the highly regarded first novel by Laura Moriarty, Associate Professor of English at the University of Kansas, has been named the 2014-15 KU Common Book by Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little. The Center of Everything is set in the fictional rural Kansas town of Kerrville in the 1980s and follows the lead character from age 10 through primary and secondary education. It is the first novel selected as the KU Common Book since the program’s inception in 2012. “We have so many talented faculty across campus, and next year’s KU Common Book will give our students and the community the unique opportunity to interact with one of our most impressive writers,” Gray-Little said. The Center of Everything will engage students through both the shared experiences of growing up and choosing to attend KU, which the lead character does, and a discussion of cultural issues that are relevant today.”

The Center of Everything is narrated by Evelyn Bucknow, an endearing character with a wholly refreshing way of looking at the world. Living with her single mother in a small apartment, Evelyn Bucknow is a young girl wincing her way through adolescence. With a voice that is as charming as it is recognizable, Evelyn immerses the reader in the dramas of an entire community. The people of Kerrville, stuck at once in the middle of nowhere but also at the center of everything, are the source from which Moriarty draws on universal dilemmas of love and belief to render a story that grows in emotional intensity until it lifts the reader to heights achieved only by the finest of fiction.

In the Notes from the Selection Committee that accompanied the recommendation of The Center of Everything to the chancellor, committee members highlighted the potential to connect with KU students on issues of economic inequality and educational opportunity: “As only a compelling novel can do, The Center of Everything represents these issues through the subjective experience of a protagonist whose moral and intellectual development consists of honestly and critically examining and reflecting on them. It offers a wealth of opportunities for our first-year students to engage with one another and with the world around them at the beginning of their college experience,” committee members wrote. Moriarty commented, “I remember when I was writing this book, I was thinking a lot about what it meant for me to come to KU as an undergraduate. As a new student from a small, faraway town, I was of course sometimes anxious or bewildered, but, even then, I understood that being here, being part of a community so focused on research and learning, was a gift. Now that I’m on the faculty, I still feel fortunate to be part of this kind of community, and so, personally, this selection means a great deal.” All incoming students will receive a copy of The Center of Everything and be encouraged to read it before the beginning of classes in August. Students participate in book discussion groups as part of Hawk Week. KU Common Book is directed by the Office of First-Year Experience. [Copy drawn from KU press release and Common Book publicity.]

The Department of English invites our alumni to read The Center of Everything along with the incoming freshman class, numerous courses at KU, and other members of the Lawrence community. If you subscribe to Facebook, please consider posting a response to the novel on our KU Department of English Facebook page. Find us at https://www.facebook.com/pages/KU-Department-of-English/221790697877328