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UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY · COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

# Department of English



## Message from the Chair

December 2022

Dear Alumni and Friends of the UK English  
Department,

It has been a pleasure to serve as your new Chair this fall. As we reach the end of a strong semester, we've seen a number of developments. Our incoming class of exuberant majors has nearly doubled since last year, and renovations for our new conference room will begin this spring, giving us more opportunities to teach and learn together. We have worked hard to rebuild our post-pandemic community, with monthly "Coffee and Conversations," research groups, and a wonderful Visiting Writers Series featuring readings by [Amy Leach](#), [Ron A. Austin](#), and [Danni Quintos](#). We hope to see you for some of our exciting events this spring, including a [Distinguished Panel on Phillis Wheatley's Futures](#), and three additional [Visiting Writers](#): Dionne Irving, Greg Pape, and Charles Dodd White. Please let me know if you're able to join us on any of these occasions so that we can (re)connect.

I am delighted to announce a new undergraduate award, the Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Prize, which will honor and celebrate the legacy of [Jane Gentry Vance](#) (1941-2014), Professor of English at the University of Kentucky for forty years, prolific poet, 1986 recipient of the UK Alumni Association's Great Teacher Award, a [2013 College of A&S Hall of Fame Inductee](#), and Kentucky's Poet Laureate in 2007-2008. This Prize, which is being established by Professor Vance's

daughters, Susannah Vance Gopalan and Lucy Vance Seligson, will be given for the first time at Awards Day this spring. To contribute to it, please click [here](#) to go to the College's secure giving platform. Use the magnifying glass search tool at the top right of the webpage and type 'Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Prize Fund' and click enter. On the next screen click on the grey "Donate to Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Prize Fund" button to complete your gift.

Our students, alumni, and faculty continue to impress! Just a few of our many [recent accomplishments](#) include:

- Emily Keaton (BA '23) was selected for the [2022-23 Undergraduate Research Ambassador program](#)
- Travis L. Martin (PhD '17) published [War & Homecoming](#)
- Erika Simpson (MFA '21) published "If You Ever Find Yourself" in [The Best American Essays 2022](#) and has a memoir forthcoming from Scribner
- Professor Peter Kalliney, William J. and Nina B. Tuggle Chair in English, published [The Aesthetic Cold War: Decolonization and Global Literature](#)
- Professor Crystal Wilkinson, Kentucky Poet Laureate, was named a [Poet Laureate Fellow](#)

Check out additional Department accomplishments and success stories [here](#). We also want to feature your updates! Please take a moment to add them under "news and comments" [here](#).

The great things we do benefit from (and continue to need) your support! To contribute, click [here](#). We have many ideas to keep growing, and we'd also love to know yours. Please reach out to me at [jill.rappoport@uky.edu](mailto:jill.rappoport@uky.edu) to let me know what you would like to see happening here. I hope to hear from you soon.

Best wishes for the holiday season,  
Jill

### Distinguished Panel on Phillis Wheatley's Futures

On February 3, English will host a [Distinguished Panel on Phillis Wheatley](#), the first African American to publish a volume of poetry. Featured speakers will be **Tara A. Bynum** (author, *Reading Pleasures: Everyday Black Living in Early America*); **Brigitte Fielder** (author, *Relative Races: Genealogies of Interracial Kinship in Nineteenth-Century America*; co-editor, *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print*); and **Cassander L. Smith** (author, *Black Africans in the British Imagination: English Narratives of the Early Atlantic*; co-editor of *The Earliest African American Literature*; co-editor of a recent *Early American Literature* special issue on Phillis Wheatley). This panel also honors the upcoming retirement of that journal's editor-in-chief, our English Department colleague Marion Rust, Professor of early American literature. Our conversation on Wheatley, Black literary history, and the state of race in American literary studies celebrates Black History Month and is supported by the [Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies \(CIBS\)](#) and the College of A&S Office of Inclusive Excellence. Please join us!

## Visiting Writers Series

The [Visiting Writers Series](#) brings nationally renowned creative writers of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction prose to campus to perform, teach, and interact with students. All events are free and open to the public, adding to the vibrant literary culture of Lexington—and the prominence of our own MFA program. This spring's series will feature **Dionne Irving** (author, *Quint, The Islands*); **Greg Pape** (author, *Sunflower Facing the Sun* and *Storm Pattern*); and **Charles Dodd White** (recipient, Thomas and Lillie D. Chaffin Award for Excellence in Appalachian Literature; author, *A Year Without Months, How Fire Runs, and In the House of Wilderness*). We are grateful to the donors whose contributions allow us to bring in such celebrated authors, and we hope that you will all come and take part in these events.

## GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of English fosters intellectual creativity and prepares students to be critical decision-makers and life-long leaders. Integrating award-winning teaching with research into the issues that most animate our world, our faculty in Literature, Creative Writing, and Film work side by side with students as they develop into articulate and empathetic citizens of an increasingly complex world.

Your gift to the [English Development Fund](#) or the [MFA Visiting Writers Series Fund](#) will provide critical resources to respond to student needs, attract world-class faculty, and support innovative opportunities for growth. Your contribution is an investment in the future of the department and the next generation of students. You can also make your gift in honor of or in memory of a friend, relative, or faculty member. If you'd like to discuss your ideas or our programs' needs, please feel free to reach out to our Department Chair at [jill.rappoport@uky.edu](mailto:jill.rappoport@uky.edu).

To make your online gift today for the Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Fund, [please click here](#) to go to the College's secure giving platform. Use the magnifying glass search tool at the top right of the webpage and type "Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Prize Fund" and click enter. On the next screen click on the grey "Donate to Jane Gentry Vance Poetry Prize Fund" button to complete your gift. If you would like to make a cash gift, please send a check payable to the University of Kentucky with the fund name written in the memo field (or you may enclose a cover letter noting the fund name). Your gift should be mailed to:

UK Philanthropy  
P.O. Box 23552  
Lexington, KY 40523

For assistance, please contact philanthropy officer [Laura Sutton](#) at 859-257-3551 or [lsutton@uky.edu](mailto:lsutton@uky.edu).



### Department Success Stories



### Donor-Funded Honors & Awards



### Give to UK English

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