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Dear PRWR students, faculty, & alumni:

Welcome to the end of Spring semester 2025!

As we close out the Spring semester, I want to wish our Spring '25 PRWR graduates well as they embark on new adventures: **Betsy Allen, M.S., Stephanie Anderson, M.S., Elizabeth Bartholomew, M.S., Brynn Devereaux, M.S., Elizabeth Eakes, M.S., Kelvin Scott, M.S., & Elizabeth Stevens, M.S.** Likewise, several of our ENGL-PRWR accelerated students will earn their B.S. this semester: **Shelby Cole, B.S., Gianna Espinoza, B.S., Findley Holland, B.S., & Juniper Scott, B.S.** Congratulations! Another proud note: the Graduate School chose **Elizabeth Eakes** to be the Graduate Commencement speaker. Graduation will take place Thursday May 22 at 3pm.

Profs. **Jeannie Vanasco** and **Geoff Becker** are busy planning the **Baltimore Writers' Conference**, which will take place on Saturday November 15, 2025 in the College of Liberal Arts.

Speaking of conferences, congratulations to the record number of PRWR students who successfully applied to national and international conferences during the 24-25 year! This includes **Margaret Bates, Divya Benezette, Shelby Cole, Elizabeth Eakes, Gianna Espinoza, Lydia Hadfield, Findley Holland, David Kelly Jr., Rob Konger, Jasmin Thames**, and alumna **Dani Bacigalupa**. Thanks so much for spreading the word about the PRWR program!

Several graduate-level [scholarships/fellowships](#) are currently available:

- American Association of University Women Scholarship
- Flagship Scholarship
- Fulbright US program
- Gates Cambridge Scholarship (UK)
- Hertz Fellowship
- Knight Hennessy Scholarship
- Luce Fellowship
- Mitchell Scholarship (Ireland)
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship
- SMART DoD Fellowship

If interested in learning more, contact me and I will put you in touch with Dr. Mary Sajini Devadas or Dr. Fran Botkin at TU's Office of Competitive Fellowships & Awards.

Thanks for helping make 2024-2025 such a successful academic year,

Dr. Sarah Gunning

Director, M.S. Professional Writing

Memoirs, Coffee, and Community

Elizabeth Eakes

In the Spring of 2024, I took *PRWR 641: Theory of Creativity*. The course required us to stretch ourselves into new genres, including flash fiction, poetry, graphic non-fiction, and memoir. I poured myself into the memoir assignment, and fell in love with the genre along the way.

The following fall, I submitted my micro memoir, *Isolation and Intimacy: Queer Growing Pains during a Global Pandemic*, to a competitive creative nonfiction conference. To my surprise, it was accepted! So, I applied for Graduate Student Association (GSA) funding, registered for the conference, and booked myself a motel room in upstate New York.

Then, like everyone else across the country and the world, I woke up to devastating election results on November 6th. Talking about the art of memoir with a bunch of strangers felt silly after receiving such impacting, disheartening news. But spending three days in community with an incredible, multigenerational group of writers was exactly what I needed that weekend.

The KAZ ALL WRITE Conference was organized by [Donna Kaz](#) and hosted at the Spencertown Academy, a beautiful space where we enjoyed workshops, speakers, and meals. The attending writers ranged in age from 24 - 74, with all levels of writing experience and backgrounds.

I was assigned to a workshop group with 8 other writers and was expected to read all of their pieces in advance; everyone's memoir ranged from 10-20 pages.



During the conference weekend, we all received an hour-long workshop where we were provided with thorough and thoughtful feedback about our piece. Other events during the weekend included a book talk by [Deja Vu Prem](#), a presentation by successful freelancer [Chloe Caldwell](#), and a facilitated round table discussion about writing residencies, career tips, and opportunities for creative nonfiction writers.

We also had some free time built in to write or explore the charming nearby town, Chatham, NY. I was enchanted by Chatham's record player-coffee shop and the live musicians playing violins and guitars in the local pub.



(cont'd from page 2)

The experience was fulfilling; I learned from experienced authors, received feedback on my own work, and left inspired to pursue new writing goals. Although a diverse group, our connection was strong; in the months since the conference, we've been sending the occasional publication update and cheering each other on. So, if you're thinking about applying to a conference: DO IT! And if you enjoy writing creative nonfiction, maybe I'll see you in Spencertown in the fall. If you're interested in attending the 2025 KAZ ALL WRITE Conference, check out the [website](#) and the [Submittable link](#).

FAQs ABOUT MY CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

The KAZ ALL WRITE Conference was from November 8 - 10, 2024 in Spencertown, New York. It will take place again in November 2025!

There were 18 attendees, split into two workshop groups. We attended the talks, discussions and meals as a whole group.

The cost of the experience (driving costs, motel, and conference registration) was about \$1500. The cost of conference registration included most meals, but a few meals were your responsibility.

Between TU's Graduate Student Association, English Department, and the CLA Dean, I was able to receive \$1100 from Towson. NOTE: I had to front the cost of the conference, and was reimbursed multiple weeks after my return.

New Student Profiles

Mike McCormick is a retired Baltimore City Police officer with an M.S. in Criminal Justice. He spent 10 years in the field, where he enjoyed training recruits and teaching report writing. He's also started some companies that failed, and learned, "You don't really do well, unless you fail. And that's pretty much true with a lot of things in life."

Mike is a technical writer. He likes to explain how things work, because not everybody is a visual learner: some need to read to understand. After taking a few more courses at Towson, Mike is planning to work towards his PhD; he recently submitted an application to Georgetown University.

He loves to read nonfiction, especially about social issues and politics. His current read is *Jim Crow: Voices from a Century of Struggle*, which is a two-part collection of writings compiled and edited by Tyina L. Steptoe. He said, "There's time for fiction, but fiction doesn't get legal things done. Nonfiction gets things done in your community."

Mike's favorite place to write is his bedroom. When he works at his desk in his bedroom, he can swivel around and lay out his documents on the bed to reference. It's convenient because, in his words, "When it's time to go to bed, then it's right there."

New Student Profiles Cont'd.

Sydney Lipsman is ready for a new career in higher education. She's eyeing PRWR's creative writing and teaching writing tracks. Sydney worked in tech and mobile gaming for several years.

She was attracted to PRWR because she missed writing.

The best book she's read recently is *The Jasmine Throne* by Tasha Suri.

If you like fantasy epics studded with body horror, sapphic romance, and abnormal plant

behavior, Sydney recommends *The Jasmine Throne* to you!

Sydney's heart belongs to novels. Monster fiction is among one of her favorite things to write. "I really enjoy playing in that space of the 'other' body and 'the nefarious force,'" Sydney says. She also likes writing literary criticism.

Sydney prefers to write in her bedroom. She admits it's a classic choice: quiet, private, and personal. Sydney settles onto her chaise longue to do her best work.

— Hadfield

Preeti Gary is a Graduate Studies Open House recruit. Her love of writing convinced her to join the PRWR program. While completing her undergraduate degree, Preeti worked in Towson University's Writing Center.

She wants to learn more about technical writing careers. The challenge of distilling information down to its clearest, most efficient essence entices Preeti.

Preeti relishes a good debate. Argument and analysis are her favorite components of composition. She describes herself as a "very math-and-logic minded." If she hadn't double-majored in English for Secondary Education and Philosophy, Preeti says she might've pursued computer science.

Movies are Preeti's favorite 'texts'. She recommends the 2015 speculative psychological thriller, *Circle*. "Because I love a good ethical dilemma," Preeti says. She's also ready to argue the merits of *Batman vs. Superman* (see "relishes a good debate").

— Hadfield



New Student Profiles Cont'd.

Megan Bradshaw is the Associate Director of Publications at Towson University. Megan embarks on her PRWR journey eager to “hear more musicality and rhetorical devices” as a writer and reader, she says. Megan wants to tune her skills in service of her favorite genre, creative nonfiction.

She's fascinated by unsung historical figures. Megan recommends the audiobook *The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel: Genius, Power, and Deception on the Eve of WWI* by Douglas Brunt to classmates who are likewise curious about people who “make history and then fall out of it.”

Megan is working on a biography of “the father of TU athletics,” Dr. Donald “Doc” Minnegan. Which of Doc's plays should make his historical highlight reel? Ask Megan! Here's a teaser: The U.S. State Department appointed Minnegan to create exercise programs for the military.



Megan's favorite place to write is on her couch. She often finds herself jockeying with her dogs for the best position. The photo above features a détente between Megan and her foster dog, Empire.

— Hadfield

Ashley Rogers is on her way to earning three degrees. She started her college career at CCBC Essex, where she got her A.A. in Creative Writing. Then she transferred to Towson, where she's now pursuing a B.A. in English and is an accelerated student in the PRWR program.



Screenwriting was one of her favorite courses at CCBC. She's excited to take fiction writing courses during her time in the PRWR program.

Ashley loves a good mystery- she's recently been enjoying Agatha Christie books, such as the infamous *Murder on the Orient Express*.

When it's time to do homework or write, Ashley prefers quiet spaces. She commutes to campus for class, but she tends to do her writing at home.

— Eakes

New Faculty Parade

Dr. Gabrielle Wilson-Kopko



Dr. Wilson-Kopko is excited to teach a digital literacy course that will cover misinformation, conspiracy theories, and how we make decisions about what information we choose to believe.

At Syracuse University this spring, incoming PRWR professor Gabrielle Wilson-Kopko defended her thesis: *“Disabling Structures: Graduate Student Professionalization and Disability”*.

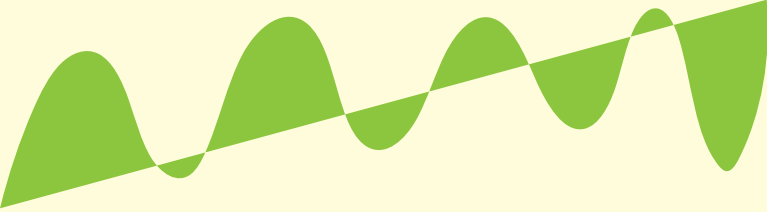
Her writing and research career spans seven years; Dr. Wilson-Kopko has authored a slew of peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and book reviews. Her passion for feminist rhetoric, composition, and accessibility are evident in her body of work.

When we discussed recent reads, Dr. Wilson-Kopko recommended the book, *You Are Here: A Field Guide for Navigating Polarized Speech, Conspiracy Theories, and Our Polluted Media Landscape* by Whitney Phillips and Ryan M. Milner.

Now that she’s finished her PhD program, Dr. Wilson-Kopko is ready for her new chapter at Towson. She expects to be teaching a writing class for Towson freshman in the fall, and looks forward to easing their acclimation into academic spaces. Dr. Wilson-Kopko is also excited to teach a digital literacy course that will cover misinformation, conspiracy theories, and how we make decisions about what information we choose to believe.

When she’s not working, Gabrielle enjoys exploring the outdoors with her dog. She’ll be new to the Maryland area in the fall, so if anyone has hike recommendations, Dr. Wilson-Kopko is eager to check them out.

—Eakes



New Faculty Parade Cont'd.

Dr. Shyam Pandey

When asked to answer questions about himself for the Towson community, Dr. Pandey provided these thoughtful responses via email:

What is the best book you've read recently?

One of the thought-provoking books I've read and enjoyed recently is *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* by Safiya Umoja Noble. This powerful and timely work explores how supposedly neutral algorithms can perpetuate systemic biases and reinforce racial and gender inequalities. What resonated with me most is how the book challenges readers to reconsider the ethics and politics of information access, particularly for historically marginalized communities.



At Sam Houston State University, you've taught a variety of courses: *Intercultural Technical Communication*, *Grant Writing*, *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*, and others. Which course are you most looking forward to teaching at Towson?

Frankly speaking, I'm equally excited about any of these courses. Teaching *Grant Writing*, *Intercultural Communication*, and *AI* courses align closely with the research areas I've been focusing on recently. That said, if I had to choose one, I'm especially looking forward to teaching *Intercultural Communication*. It's a subject that's close to my heart, particularly as someone from Nepal who has lived, studied, and worked across various cultural and institutional contexts.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with future students at Towson?

One thing I'd love to share is that I view teaching as a collaborative and transformative experience. My courses are intentionally designed to be inclusive, student-centered spaces where lived experiences, community knowledge, and rhetorical agency are deeply valued. I'm also passionate about community-engaged learning and frequently develop assignments that connect students' work to real-world audiences and pressing social issues. Outside the classroom, I'm a curious traveler, an amateur photographer, and a dad to two energetic kids—a lively 5-year-old and an adventurous 18-month-old—who definitely keep me on my toes!

—Eakes

New Faculty Parade Cont'd.

Dr. Jianan Qian

Incoming Assistant Professor
Dr. Jianan Qian is an educator, translator, and published author.

Her writing spans multiple genres— short story collections, novels, translations, and memoir— and her publications include four original works in Chinese, three English-Chinese translations, and four books under contract. One of her books, *A Future That Concerns Me: Letters from Iowa City*, was selected as a Top 8 Chinese Nonfiction in 2019 by Douban, which Dr. Qian describes as “the Chinese equivalent of Goodreads.”

Once she arrives at Towson in the fall, she’s looking forward to teaching *Introduction to Fiction Writing* and other Creative Writing courses. Dr. Qian loves fiction, and especially enjoys close-reading fiction passages. She describes her close-reading practice as “examining how beauty is constructed at a granular level,” and is excited to explore that perspective with her future students.

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Recently, Dr. Qian has been struck by William Faulkner’s beautiful prose in *Light in August*. “It is really constructed at the sentence level,” she explained, “I feel the suspense, but I also feel such a rich subtext within, or between, the sentences, that compels me to re-read the sentences over and over again.”



Dr. Qian recently defended her dissertation at the University of Southern California, where she has been integrating the fields of Creative Writing, Asian American Studies, Post-war American Literature, and Literary Translation. Her dissertation is titled, “*Inimical Encounter: China-US Tensions and Their Literature in Translation*”.

But writing isn’t Dr. Qian’s only creative pursuit; she’s a self-described amateur artist and also loves film. She recently enjoyed a film called *Only Lovers Left Alive*, a humorous indie drama about vegetarian, ethical vampires. She said, “If students want to talk about art pieces and films, and even video games, I’m open to it.”

—Eakes

New Faculty Parade Cont'd.

Prof. Elizabeth Evitts-Dickinson



“Writing is the infrastructure for my curiosity,” Professor Dickinson says.

Through steady application of her curiosity, Prof. Dickinson has built a flourishing freelance career. She’s published essays, creative non-fiction, and fiction in storied publications such as *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post Magazine*.

This fall, PRWR writers will get the chance to build their own freelancing portfolio in PRWR 713, taught by Prof. Dickinson. Among other topics, Prof. Dickinson plans to cover how to research story ideas, work with editors, and protect one’s intellectual property. “It’s very easy for writers to lose their own work by signing the wrong contract,” Prof. Dickinson warns. She intends for students to produce strong pieces for their freelance portfolios in her class.

Prof. Dickinson’s first book, which launches June 17, 2025, began as a freelance article for *The Washington Post*. The book, *Claire McCardell: The Designer Who Set Women*

Free, tells the story of a Maryland-born fashionista who invented ballet flat shoes and championed pockets in womenswear. The story that would become a full-fledged biography began to take shape when Prof. Dickinson received a grant to research women who’d revolutionized their industries yet were overlooked by history.

Finding funding for writing research is among the topics Prof. Dickinson hopes to touch on in her PRWR course. In addition, Prof. Dickinson says, “I love to explore and talk about the networks that aren’t obvious and how you can build your writerly community.”

Making connections with other writers and editors has always been important, and it still is in today’s rapidly changing publication market, Prof. Dickinson says. She’s looking forward to exploring the current reality of freelance work with PRWR students. “We’re not going to have all the answers in our class, but we’re going to identify challenges and talk about how to approach them,” Prof. Dickinson says.

—Hadfield

“I love to explore and talk about the networks that aren’t obvious and how you can build your writerly community,” Prof. Dickinson says.

Sabbatical Sneak Peeks

PRWR program faculty Prof. Leslie Harrison and Dr. Zosha Stuckey will take sabbaticals beginning Fall semester 2025.

At Towson University, tenured professors may apply to take sabbaticals (time off from teaching courses) after six years of service. During sabbatical, professors are free to engage in proposed disciplinary research and creative work.

Dr. Stuckey is looking forward to her second sabbatical, and describes her plans as two-fold: one is a collaborative project and the other is a personal piece of writing. Both will give voice to marginalized groups through a historical lens.

Although she will have a break from teaching, Dr. Stuckey plans to maintain her collaboration with the PRWR community. A small group of PRWR students & faculty are compiling & editing a “then-and-now” coffee table book with Historic East Towson, the oldest African-American community in Baltimore County whose origins date back to 1829 when newly freed people from the Towson Plantation went on to establish prominent communities.

Dr. Stuckey plans to work on the coffee table book during her sabbatical: “It will be filled with photographs and oral histories,” she explained, “that preserve and celebrate the struggle against gentrification and erasure.”

The personal piece she plans to write is a novel, specifically, a Queer Holocaust romance told as a memoir. Dr. Stuckey shared that “The story is based on my own Romanian Jewish roots and my wife’s Ukrainian Jewish roots that take us each over 200 miles (through the disappearing shtetls) to meet, fall in love, and hopefully, endure.”

Dr. Stuckey is not yet sure which project will show the most growth during her sabbatical. She noted, “Only time will tell which takes precedence.”

Personally, I’m looking forward to reading both.

— Eakes

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Sabbatical Sneak Peeks, Cont'd.

Prof. Leslie Harrison plans to write poems in the northern Massachusetts woods where she once lived.

Prof. Harrison, a former military brat, was used to feeling rootless. She never felt as though she belonged anywhere. But when she left a small forested Massachusetts town to teach in Maryland, Prof. Harrison realized she'd left home.

Prof. Harrison's sabbatical migration will mark her return home and put her in kinship with other homing animals. Prof. Harrison plans to investigate homing instincts through poetic metaphor and research.

She will also undertake a specific seasonal quest: "I'm chasing winter, because it doesn't exist here anymore," Prof. Harrison says, gesturing broadly to the world outside her Towson office, "and I'm afraid it's not going to exist anymore up there [New England]."

The ecological impact of climate change is a central interest in Prof. Harrison's plans, so far. As Prof. Harrison wrote in her sabbatical application, she anticipates writing poetry focused on climate change and mortality. Her extensive sabbatical reading list hops from *A Winter Walk* by Henry David Thoreau to *The Physics of Climate Change* by Lawrence Krauss to *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after*

Warming by David Wallace-Wells.

"Having a long sustained period to read is going to be amazing," Prof. Harrison says. "Faculty always assign a lot of reading and research, but we don't always have time to do it ourselves."

At Towson, professors are required to make a public post-sabbatical presentation. After her previous sabbatical, Prof. Harrison created a multimedia event. While the *Titantic* slowly sank onscreen behind her, Prof. Harrison read new poems that became part of her third book, *Reck*, and answered questions about her creative process. She doesn't yet know what poetry, presentation, or performance will result from this year's sabbatical.

Prof. Harrison expects her time away from the classroom will be productive as well as restorative. She said her first sabbatical from Towson afforded her space to reflect on her teaching practices and, she added, "I came back feeling like I'd become a better teacher."

—Hadfield

Words

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