English Exchange

Connecting English majors at Ashford University

Vol. 1.4

December 2014

Dr. Jacquelyn Markham

Inside

A Note from Dr. Markham, pg. 1

A Message from Dr. Bao, pg. 2

Jennifer Reyes Talks About Career, pg. 3

A Note from the Editor, pg. 10

Interviews:

Jennifer Reyes, pg. 3

Dr. Michael Cooper, pg. 7

A Note from Dr. Markham

Dear English Majors,

It has been my great privilege to have served as founding Faculty Editor and Advisor for the English Exchange, launched in early 2014. We have reached out to English majors and to some students considering English as a major and will continue to do so throughout 2015. I have been fortunate to work with student editors and my colleagues to publish quarterly editions throughout the year. Now, I say farewell and leave the English student newsletter to the talents of Dr. Gabriel Scala, Lora Seabury, and Jennifer Reyes. Fortunately, students do graduate, so if you would like to be involved with the English Exchange, contact Dr. Scala and express your interest.

As this issue's theme is jobs and opportunities for English majors, I want to share with you my reason for moving on. Yet another door has opened for me as an English major (my B.A., M.A. and Ph.D are all in English). Although I will miss my colleagues in English, I have joined the Liberal Arts

(Continued on pg. 9)

A message from

Dr. Bao

Academic Department
Chair, Div. of Comm. Arts

Who could have guessed that a Chinese girl used to humid places could be happy in the Mile High City?

Greetings English Majors!

Some of you already know that I have a Chinese accent that sounds like machine gun firing - perhaps I should take a moment to explain how I got this way. Chinese is a tonal language. All monosyllabic words in Chinese have approximately the same length with rising and falling pitches assigned at the syllable level, while English has melodies, linguistically defined as intonation, at the sentence level.

I was born in Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang province in Eastern China. The city has been one of the most renowned and prosperous cities in China due in part to its beautiful natural scenery. There is a Chinese saying, "Heaven Above, Suzhou and Hangzhou below." This phrase has a similar meaning to the English phrase "heaven on Earth" or "God's country."

I did my B.A. in Comparative Literature and completed my thesis on the English translations of the complex portraits of female characters in the Chinese classic *Dream of the Red Chamber* (also recognized as a Chinese Romeo-and-Juliet love story and a portrait of one of the world's great civilizations).

With the rising popularity of Teaching English as a Second Language in Asia, I continued my graduate study in Applied Linguistics focusing on second language acquisition and phonetics. Microsoft

(Continued on pg. 5)

An Interview With Jennifer Reyes

Jennifer Reyes began at Ashford University in July 2012. Her major is one that that she is surprised that there is not a greater interest in as she told us here at the *English Exchange*, "It may be hard to believe but Library Science is not an incredibly sought-after major." This has seemingly stunned our new student editor at the *English Exchange* newsletter who was obviously delighted at finding an institution of higher learning with her desired major, as she went on to explain, "There are not many schools that have both a great program of education as well as offering the ability to learn online." But Ashford University did offer Jennifer what she was looking for in the way of a desired curriculum, and now we are happy to welcome her as the newest student editor here at the *English Exchange*! We are excited to have her with

Jennifer Reyes talks about Career.

Congratulations, you have earned your Bachelor's degree in English! Now, what do you do with it? How do you find that perfect job that will utilize your skills while allowing you to make a living?

Focus on two things: researching the options available to your particular skill-set and keeping your mind open to opportunities that you may not think apply to you. English majors excel at reading and writing, but they also have excellent communication skills as they are trained in critical thinking and understanding nuance. With these abilities you can open yourself up to many careers that you may not recognize as "English-centric."

The first step is knowing what vocations are open to English majors. A simple search engine query for the phrase: "English major job options" will result in thousands of pages devoted to the topic. Jobs such as: freelance writing, public relations, marketing, publishing, teaching, librarian, media specialist, copywriting, and journalist are all common positions for those with English degrees (University of North Carolina, n.d.). According to one legal career information website, one of the top undergraduate majors for practicing attorneys is English (lawyeredu.org, 2012). Any workplace that needs a good communicator with exceptional reading, writing, and critical thinking skills will appreciate your English degree.

The second step is knowing how to find available jobs. There are a multitude of employment database websites available when you are job searching, and some are much more likely to yield you a position than others. Local or more obscure websites will not be updated or surveyed by employers as frequently as national or international websites.

us and to introduce her to you, her fellow students who hold the same passion that she shares for reading and literature. Welcome, Jennifer, to the *English Exchange* newsletter.

EE: Jennifer, can you tell us a little about your background educational experiences?

Jennifer: I began my college career sixteen years ago right out of high school at the University of Wyoming with a major in Criminal Justice. I earned thirty credit hours there and was able to apply all of them here at Ashford.

EE: Your interest in a major career field has changed since your return to academia here at Ashford University?

Jennifer: As an eighteen-year-old I was very interested in becoming a lawyer. However, as I matured I realized that my overwhelming passion, my whole life, has been my love of reading. I want to share that with others.

EE: And now that you have developed into an adult, and your interests have changed, you have finally found your niche?

Jennifer: My major this time around is Library Science and Media and it has been an absolute dream to learn so much so fast at Ashford… I did not even know that one could get a degree in Library Science.

(continued on pg. 6)

This means you should stay away from *job-hunter-illinois-local.com* and stick with *careerbuilder.com* and others like it. Websites such as *indeed.com* and *monster.com* will allow you to seek jobs that match any criteria you input into the search fields. Most of the professional employment board websites allow users to search for openings based on pay range, location, and skills required, among other criteria. Exploit these features to expedite your search by being as specific as you can. Another way to find open positions online is by utilizing the government to help you. Federally coordinated websites such as *jobcenter.usa.gov*, *careeronestop.org*, and *usajobs.gov* all offer users the ability to search both government and private sector jobs with many of the same search criteria options noted in the databases mentioned above. An additional resource for new graduates is the *Career Center*, which is offered online by Ashford University. A link on the student portal main page will connect students with many different job search resources as well as numerous job postings in different fields. Take advantage of as many online job source websites as possible, as the perfect job may not be posted in multiple places.

When you have an English degree the extent of careers available to you may be surprising. You are not locked into one specific career path as some majors are. Think outside the box when it comes to considering a career and be aware of what your English skills bring to the table for employers. Keep in mind that the reading, writing, and communication skills you now have are all indispensable in today's job market. Most importantly, draw on the major online employment databases' search preference options to allow you to find and apply for the maximum amount of positions in the least amount of time.

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lawyeredu.org. (2012). *Best Pre-law Schools and Majors*. Retrieved from http://www.lawyeredu.org/best-pre-law-schools.html

University of North Carolina. (n.d.). *Career Opportunities*. Retrieved from English and Comparative Literature Department: http://englishcomplit.unc.edu/english/undergrad/careers

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A message from Dr. Bao (continued from page 2}

rapidly in Beijing during that time, and the company decided to hire visiting students to conduct basic research in natural user interfaces, next-generation multimedia, and data-intensive computing. In addition to students in the fields of Engineering and Computer Science, those who studied linguistics were also part of their hiring, and I joined the Speech Group in 2002. I came to the United States with an Alumni Fellowship to pursue my PhD in Theoretical Linguistics after 2 years with Microsoft, and managed to keep my Chinese accent out of a combination of nostalgia and the critical period of language acquisition.

I joined Ashford and relocated to Denver, CO in 2013 (life plays funny tricks on you sometimes: who could have guessed that a Chinese girl used to humid places would be so happy in the Mile High city?). It took me far too long in my academic career to realize why I started with Comparative Literature and ended up being a linguist. At the same time, disciplines of language and literature are interacted.

Language studies is a science that tackles language from the perspective of structure, form, meaning and context, while literature is the art of the written composition, divided in poetry, prose and theatre. Language and literature are both very powerful expression tools and they offer insight into the building elements of a culture, the particular characteristics of a society or social group in terms of spirituality, intellect, emotion and physical environment.

Certainly the English Program at Ashford mirrors the kaleidoscope of English studies today. I am proud and delighted to be a part of this extraordinary place. We offer a wide variety of composition and literature courses in service to the university's general education curriculum, and many courses that students will find useful in their future careers. Courses offered by the program range from introductory courses to advanced courses focused on individual authors, theory, historical periods, and national literatures.

Thank you for your continued interest in, and involvement with, the English program.

Mingzhen Bao, Ph.D.
Academic Department Chair, Division of Communication Arts

An interview with Jennifer Reyes (continued from page 4)

It never occurred to me that I could get a degree in the area I am fascinated with.

EE: It appears as if you have found what you have been seeking here at Ashford University. How did you find the transition from the field of Criminal Justice into a new area of study, that of Library Science and Media?

Jennifer: My experience at Ashford has been that everyone truly wants me to succeed. Everyone from my academic advisor, my instructors, and every other member of staff has been instrumental in my accomplishments over the last two and half years.

EE: Can you elaborate for your fellow readers exactly what Library Science and Media entails?

Jennifer: The actual course work is all about learning what the libraries of the 21st century can offer to their communities. It is amazing how far library technology has come in the last decade.

EE: Here at Ashford University there are a variety of clubs and organizations for exceptional students like you. Are you a member of any of these clubs or organizations?

Jennifer: I am an active member of the Ashford chapter of the Golden Key International Honor Society and Alpha Sigma Lambda, which is the online school's honor society.

EE: When you are not busying yourself with schoolwork, where could we find you spending your free time?

Jennifer: Outside of school I am very busy. I have two children, ages four and six. I volunteer one day a week in their school library and am the Head Room Parent for my six-year-old's classroom. Every bit of free time I have I spend one of two ways, reading to my children or reading to myself!

EE: I am sure that our reading audience would be very interested in your future plans. Where do you see yourself in the future?

Jennifer: I will graduate from Ashford in April and in the fall of 2015 I will be entering the Library Science Master's Degree Program at Drexel University in Philadelphia with a concentration in Urban Public Librarianship. I hope to work in the public library system and help to develop and implement adult literacy programs.

EE: Again, we are happy to welcome you aboard at the *English Exchange*. Before I let you go, is there anything that you might like to add regarding your interest in working on the newsletter?

Jennifer: There are many reasons why I want to be involved with the *English Exchange*. The ability to get practical experience in this type of publication will help me a great deal when I begin my career. It will also strengthen my writing and publishing skills. As a stay at home mom, elementary school volunteer, and full-time student, I do not have much actual "work" experience. Becoming a student editor will allow me to learn and grow in new ways, which is what my time at Ashford has been all about.

EE: Thank you, Jennifer. It has been a pleasure for us, as well as our readers, to get to know you here at the *English Exchange*.

Michael Cooper, PhD

Assistant Professor, College of Liberal Arts

It is our great privilege here at Ashford University's *English Exchange* newsletter to be allowed an interview with Professor Michael Cooper, PhD Assistant Professor at the College of Liberal Arts. We appreciate the time that Professor Cooper has taken out of his busy schedule to inspire our readers with his own experiences as a student and now as a teacher. With all of the duties that he is currently undertaking at Ashford University and his own personal goals we are inspired by his diligence and dedication to his students as he has told us that "Teaching is my favorite responsibility—so much so that I hardly even think of it as a 'responsibility' at all." Welcome Professor Cooper and thank you for your time.

EE: Professor Cooper, you have accomplished so much in your life, will you be kind enough to let us know how your journey into teaching evolved?

Professor Cooper: I always let my students know that I went back to school after taking some time off. After high school, I worked a full-time job so college wasn't really an option. However, when I did return, I felt as though I came into my classes with greater maturity.

EE: Did you always plan on teaching as a career goal once you began your journey into higher education?

Professor Cooper: I earned a B.A. in English Literature. I had planned on going to law school after that—I even took the LSAT exam and then a few law schools accepted me, too. Yet, after taking so many English classes, I found that my plans had changed: I wanted to teach literature and writing. I went on to earn an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and a Ph.D. in the same discipline, though with an emphasis on American Literature.

EE: Professor Cooper, would you be kind enough to discuss some of the obstacles that you were forced to overcome to reach the goals that you have achieved?

Professor Cooper: Like any student, I had to learn how to manage my time effectively. I've always worked to earn an income while attending school. This meant that I would have to wake up an hour early on some mornings to finish my schoolwork, or I had to sacrifice a weekend to complete a big project. I just kept my final goal in mind: yes, it's challenging to juggle so many tasks, but it's important to keep the achievement of earning a degree in mind for extra motivation.

EE: Currently, what are your areas of responsibility and what are some of the other projects that you are working on at Ashford University?

Professor Cooper: At any given time, I am always teaching at least one English course at Ashford. I also complete administrative tasks throughout the year. Most recently, I've been revising Ashford courses to improve students' educational experiences. This is a lot of fun, too, though. When revising or designing a course, I get to think like a student again. What readings would I choose as a student taking this course? What assignments or discussion prompts would inspire the most critical thinking? How would I like to be challenged?

EE: It is becoming obvious that higher education is on the precipice of great changes. What changes do you see on the horizon in your field of discipline, and how will your strengths as an educator complement these changes?

Professor Cooper: I think that the online mode of teaching will continue to flourish, particularly as educators continue to refine their curriculums and online pedagogy. I feel privileged to be a part of this still-burgeoning field. Universities across America are starting to offer online courses to students. As the field grows and standards evolve, I look forward to staying current with any new pedagogical trends or university standards. For instance, I'm currently taking a Quality Matters Peer Review course, which will certify me to review new courses at different universities to determine whether they meet the educational standards all accredited schools must maintain.

EE: Can you discuss with us any specific goals that you are working toward in your life right now?

Professor Cooper: It's important to have professional goals, whether it is earning degrees, publishing, or achieving other career-related accolades. I earned my Ph.D. from Florida State University last year, a short-term goal. I moved to New Orleans this year to research a book project. I would like to say that this is a "short-term" goal, too, but with the publishing industry, a book takes a long time to become available to the public: writing is only part of the equation, especially when it comes time to work with an agent, editor, and publicists.

EE: With so many responsibilities, which are the ones that you find the most rewarding?

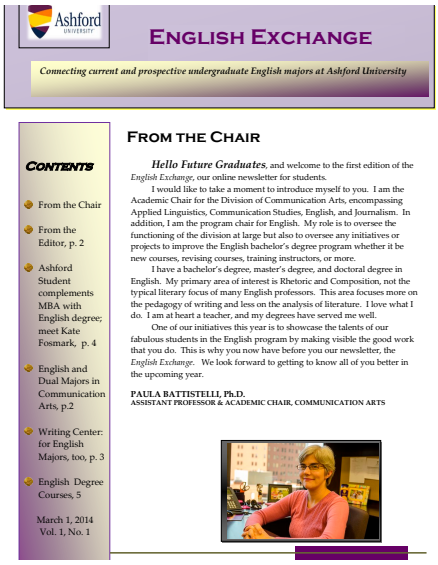
Professor Cooper: It's most rewarding to inspire students. It makes my job worthwhile to see my students demonstrate their learning from Week 1 to the end of a course. It's my goal to challenge them to think in new ways. I want to push their current skill levels in ways that will prepare them for future courses and even for their endeavors outside of the university. When a student thanks me at the end of a course, I remember those days when I was an undergraduate feeling gratitude toward an inspiring professor. It's the greatest part of teaching.

EE: When not inspiring students to reach their own goals or accomplishing administrative tasks for the university or for yourself, what do you do with the little bit of free time that you have left?

Professor Cooper: I like to get outdoors as much as possible…I like hiking nature trails, biking, fishing, going to the beach, all while spending time with family and friends.

EE: Before we leave you to your extremely busy schedule, are there any last words of career related inspiration that you would like to impart on our student readers?

Professor Cooper: I always tell my students to choose a career that they will love. Sometimes, it takes us a little while to find that path, but once we do, we need to follow it.



Ashford University

ENGLISH EXCHANGE

Connecting current and prospective undergraduate English majors at Ashford University

CONTENTS

- From the Chair
- From the Editor, p. 2
- Ashford Student complements MBA with English degree; meet Kate Fosmark, p. 4
- English and Dual Majors in Communication Arts, p.2
- Writing Center: for English Majors, too, p. 3
- English Degree Courses, 5

March 1, 2014
Vol. 1, No. 1

FROM THE CHAIR

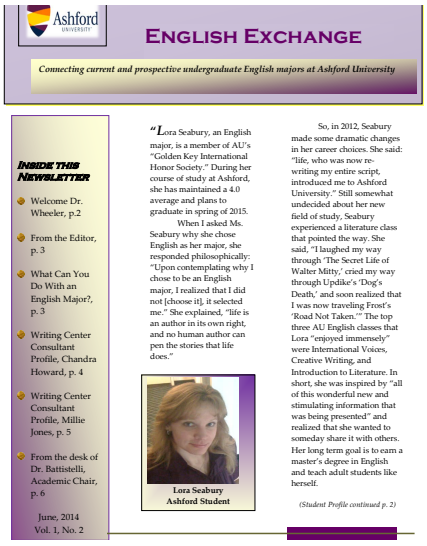
Hello Future Graduates, and welcome to the first edition of the *English Exchange*, our online newsletter for students.

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself to you. I am the Academic Chair for the Division of Communication Arts, encompassing Applied Linguistics, Communication Studies, English, and Journalism. In addition, I am the program chair for English. My role is to oversee the functioning of the division at large but also to oversee any initiatives or projects to improve the English bachelor's degree program whether it be new courses, revising courses, training instructors, or more.

I have a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree in English. My primary area of interest is Rhetoric and Composition, not the typical literary focus of many English professors. This area focuses more on the pedagogy of writing and less on the analysis of literature. I love what I do. I am at heart a teacher, and my degrees have served me well.

One of our initiatives this year is to showcase the talents of our fabulous students in the English program by making visible the good work that you do. This is why you now have before you our newsletter, the *English Exchange*. We look forward to getting to know all of you better in the upcoming year.

PAULA BATTISTELLI, Ph.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR & ACADEMIC CHAIR, COMMUNICATION ARTS



Ashford University

ENGLISH EXCHANGE

Connecting current and prospective undergraduate English majors at Ashford University

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER

- Welcome Dr. Wheeler, p.2
- From the Editor, p. 3
- What Can You Do With an English Major?, p. 3
- Writing Center Consultant Profile, Chandra Howard, p. 4
- Writing Center Consultant Profile, Millie Jones, p. 5
- From the desk of Dr. Battistelli, Academic Chair, p. 6

June, 2014
Vol. 1, No. 2

"Lora Seabury, an English major, is a member of AU's "Golden Key International Honor Society." During her course of study at Ashford, she has maintained a 4.0 average and plans to graduate in spring of 2015.

When I asked Ms. Seabury why she chose English as her major, she responded philosophically: "Upon contemplating why I chose to be an English major, I realized that I did not [choose it], it selected me." She explained, "life is an author in its own right, and no human author can pen the stories that life does."

Lora Seabury
Ashford Student

So, in 2012, Seabury made some dramatic changes in her career choices. She said: "life, who was now re-writing my entire script, introduced me to Ashford University." Still somewhat undecided about her new field of study, Seabury experienced a literature class that pointed the way. She said, "I laughed my way through 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,' cried my way through Updike's 'Dog's Death,' and soon realized that I was now traveling Frost's 'Road Not Taken.'" The top three AU English classes that Lora "enjoyed immensely" were International Voices, Creative Writing, and Introduction to Literature. In short, she was inspired by "all of this wonderful new and stimulating information that was being presented" and realized that she wanted to someday share it with others. Her long term goal is to earn a master's degree in English and teach adult students like herself.

(Student Profile continued p. 2)

ENGLISH EXCHANGE

Connecting Undergraduate English Majors at Ashford University

Ashford University

CONTENTS

- Ashford University Alum Profile, Marcela Reyes, p. 1, 4
- Lora Seabury, Student Editor, p. 2, 5
- Dr. Lorna Wheeler, English Chair, p. 3
- Dr. Jacquelyn Markham, Faculty Editor, p. 2
- New Shakespeare Course, p. 6
- Dr. Suzanne Kissel, p. 6
- Call for submissions, p. 6
- Claire Edwards, M.A., AWC Tutor Profile, p. 7
- Michelle Lekkerkerk, M.A., AWC Tutor Profile, p. 7
- Resources, p. 8

September, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 3

ASHFORD ALUM PROFILE
MARCELA REYES

On July 7, 2014, Marcela Reyes completed her BA in English at Ashford University. Almost instantaneously she was able to land her *dream job*.

Marcela knew that she ultimately wanted to work in the social services or the educational field, and she knew that the skills required to reach that goal were obtainable through the completion of a four-year degree. She also knew which academic path would lead to that desired outcome.

"Earning the BA in English changed my life, creating opportunities that were almost incomprehensible to me."
Dr. Lorna Wheeler
Chair of English
College of Liberal Arts

Marcela, after successfully completing Ashford University's English program, realized her goal of a position in *social services*. We were fortunate here at the *English Exchange* that Marcela found time in her busy new work schedule to grant us answers to the many questions that people typically have for successful English majors.

Interview continued on p. 4

"My degree in English is already helping me in the work field…My new job requires detailed written reports and great communication, critical thinking, and research skills—all qualities I gained while working toward my English degree."
Marcela Reyes, Ashford Alum

A Note from Dr. Markham (continued from page 1)

program and I am excited about this latest opportunity to broaden my perspective.

I appreciate everyone who has contributed to and read the English Exchange throughout the year.

So, I say farewell and leave you with the words of Mary Oliver: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?"

Jacquelyn Markham,

Associate Professor, Liberal Arts

A Note from the Editor

All of us in the Department of English are so grateful to Dr. Markham for her leadership and vision in building this wonderful newsletter. As Dr. Markham moves forward, so too does the English Exchange. Hi. I'm Gabriel Scala, the new faculty editor for your newsletter. I've been an Assistant Professor with Ashford University for the past two years and also serve as the Chair of the Publications Committee. We have lots of exciting things happening in the English department, and I will be telling you all about them right here, in the English Exchange.

I look forward to continuing the wonderful work that Dr. Markham began and wish you all a very happy holiday season and a wonderful start to a new year in 2015!

Gabriel Scala

Dr. Gabriel Scala,
Faculty Editor
jodigabriel.scala@ashford.edu

JOIN THE TEAM: The EE is looking for student editors! Send your letter of interest to: englishexchange @ashford.edu

Would you like to write an article for the English Exchange? Send a one-paragraph proposal to: englishexchange@ashford.edu

The Ash reads creative writing submissions year-round. Create an account at Submittable and submit your work!

Lora Seabury is a senior at Ashford University majoring in English. She was the first student editor to join the English Exchange staff.

Jennifer Reyes, an Ashford senior, is majoring in Library Science and Media. She is the new Student Editor of the English Exchange.