

Wabash College

Rhetoric Department Newsletter

Spring 2014



2013 Rhetoric Majors: Top row, Jacob Kersey, Garrett Wilson, Vann Hunt, Jonathan Koop, D. Victor Wagner, Matthew Page. Bottom row, Montana Timmons, Jordan Surenkamp, Bradley Carver, Colten Craig, Nicholas Hurt. Not pictured: Haneff Rashaan Stephens.

Welcome from the Chair

Hello from Crawfordsville, Indiana! My colleagues and I in the Rhetoric Department (formerly known as the Speech Department by many of you) are excited to share our activities with you. We graduated twelve Rhetoric majors last May, and this year fifteen seniors are pursuing the major. We offered an exciting slate of elective classes this academic year, including the Rhetoric of Sports, Deliberation, and the Rhetoric of the News Media. A new immersion course, Voices of America, took students to Washington, D.C. during spring break. And strong demand for our Public Speaking class continues, especially since we infused the class with the themes of democracy and civic responsibility (see page 2).

This year we pursued civic engagement initiatives beyond the Public Speaking classroom. We hosted a public deliberation on substance abuse in November for the local community, using students and faculty as facilitators. And, thanks in part to a grant we received from the Great Lakes Colleges Association, we held a Brigrance Colloquy in February that featured representatives from five different colleges with centers devoted to civic engagement.

We hope to make this newsletter an annual offering to help us keep in touch with our alumni and to help you connect with each other. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Abbott, Chair of the Rhetoric Department

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Rhetoric and Civic Engagement



“Students spend time considering the relationship between rhetoric and democracy.”

Above: One of the three 2012 Presidential DebateWatch events

Below: Sophomore Mason Zurek moderates the Question and Answer period at the Baldwin Oratorical Contest



Public Speaking and Civic Engagement: A Historic Tradition Lives On

The Rhetoric Department continues to proudly uphold the tradition of teaching public speaking, offering three to four class sections every semester. In 2010, we significantly revised the course so as to situate the skills students learn within the context of democracy, citizenship, and civic engagement. That means students still learn the fundamentals of argumentation, organization, style, and delivery, but they practice and reflect on how to use these skills to become more active members of their communities. In class, students spend time considering the relationship between rhetoric and democracy, as well as which forms of speaking work to strengthen communities.

One of the new assignments about which we are most excited is a small group deliberation. In groups of four or five people, students pick a significant public controversy. They neutrally inform the class about the problem and three prominent—and competing—approaches to solving it. Immediately afterward, they lead the rest of the class in a deliberative discussion over the benefits and drawbacks of each approach and the value dilemmas that underlie

competing options. We use this assignment to lead into their persuasive speech assignment, wherein each student advocates for a specific solution regarding the problems.

Issues our Public Speaking students have recently explored in the class include:

- teaching science as part of a liberal arts education
- hazing on campus
- Indiana’s lifeline law
- social life at Wabash

To accompany the course, Todd McDorman, Jennifer Abbott, and former department members David Timmerman (now Dean of the College at Monmouth College) and Jill Lamberton (now a member of the English Department at Wabash) are writing a public speaking textbook. This textbook is under revision with Oxford University Press.

Students are expressing enthusiasm for this new course, and our department has received noticeable attention for our efforts.

The revised focus on civic engagement in the Public Speaking class is fitting for the Rhetoric Department at Wabash College, as one of its most famous professors, W. Norwood Brigrance, was an incredible advocate for speech as training for democratic citizenship.



Above: 2012 Moot Court participants and judges.

Matthew Michaloski '14 has served as the Rhetoric Department's publication assistant for the past two years. You can read his entries on our blog at <http://blogs.wabash.edu/rhetoricnotes/>

Department Activities

Parliamentary Union

In the last two years, Wabash's Parliamentary Union debate society has continued to travel around the Midwest to tournaments at schools such as Butler University, Marquette University, Northern Illinois University, Purdue University, and the State Tournament at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Students competing at the February 2014 State Tournament included teams **Fritz Coutchie '15** and **Nick Freeman '15**, and **Steven Peters '16** and **James Fritz '16**. Wabash brought home 3rd place in the team sweepstakes and 2nd place in varsity. Read the news story at http://wabash.edu/news/displaystory.cfm?news_ID=10203.

Beyond competitive debate activity, Parliamentary Union members have also planned and implemented on-campus public debates. The public debates marry the competitive thrill of debating with the educational and civic impact that only a well researched—and well attended—debate can offer. Parliamentary Union members staged an on-campus public debate on December 6, 2012 concerning whether the next Wabash President should view Wabash as a school or a business. This debate was a significant

undertaking, involving seven members of the team (six debaters and one moderator). More than 35 students attended the debate in addition to eight faculty or staff members, including three members of the Presidential Search Committee, former College President Patrick White, and Larry Griffith (Chief Financial Officer of Wabash College). The students were very composed and did a great job using their advocacy skills to have a positive impact on the community.

Our future plans include competing in parliamentary debate and British parliamentary—"Worlds Style"—debate as well as holding more public debates on campus.

Moot Court

Each October, Professor Todd McDorman coordinates the Wabash College Moot Court competition. In this competition, students compete in teams of two in a mock appellate case. The 2012 case centered on the Defense of Marriage Act's denial of federal benefits to same-sex couples while the 2013 case involved affirmative action in college admissions. In 2013, the 20th competition, 36 students participated in the preliminary rounds, and **Adam Alexander '16**, **Jacob Burnett '15**,

Continued next page

Nash Jones '16, and **Cory Koptizke '14** competed in the final round on October 29, 2013. Cory Koptizke took home the Top Advocate award. The Moot Court event also involves alumni and faculty—20 alumni and 7 faculty served as judges during the competition. You can see the final round here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIHr4dInZpY>

DebateWatch and Flash Discussions

Rhetoric faculty members Sara Drury and Jeff Drury have co-hosted a number of public events that invite students to watch political rhetoric live and then discuss them with the Wabash community. They co-led three DebateWatch events for the 2012 Presidential Debates. These events were attended by more than 250 students. In 2013-2014, Professors Drury and Drury teamed up with Political Science faculty Professor Shamira Gelbman and Professor Michael Burch for Flash Discussions on Syria and the 2014 State of the Union. These events serve as an important opportunity for students and faculty to come together and, through conversation and reflection, foster analysis and understanding of public discourse.

For more about the 2012 Debate Watch events, see http://wabash.edu/news/displaystory.cfm?news_ID=9682. At the 2013 and 2014 Flash Discussion events, attendees live-tweeted the event using the hashtag #WabashFD.

Baldwin Oratorical Contest

We continue to honor the tradition of the Baldwin Oratorical Contest, which this spring will be in its 140th consecutive year! In the last few years, we made a few minor alterations to the contest that we plan to continue this year due to their success. In particular, we specified the theme of the ten-minute persuasive orations as “Practicing Civic Engagement,” and we timed the contest to coincide with our Public Speaking students’ persuasive speeches, all of which regard civic engagement in some broad sense. We discovered that these changes resulted in a significantly larger number of participants, which made the finalists a more selective and better qualified group. In addition, we increased the

Right: Baldwin winner Zach Thompson, class of 2013, delivers his speech



monetary awards and continued to use judges with strong connections to politics and civic engagement to evaluate the finalists.

In 2013, four students spoke in the final round of the 139th Baldwin Oratorical Contest, each responding to the new theme of civic engagement. Corey Hamilton '14 spoke on the problem of homelessness in Montgomery County, and advocated for Wabash students to become more involved with Habitat for Humanity. Scott Purucker '16 advocated for the addition of Lacrosse as a Varsity sport at Wabash, arguing that adding the sport would benefit the entire campus community. Justin Taylor '15 gave a passionate speech advocating for his fellow students to live more humanely by eliminating discrimination, particularly against sexual orientation. Finally, the contest winner, Zach Thompson '13, advocated for improvements to Crawfordsville that would make the town more “walkable” and thus more of a community for students and community members alike. The contest was judged by Marc Lotter (Communications Director for Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard), former President Patrick White, Chris White, and Donovan Bisbee '12.

More information on the 139th Baldwin Oratorical contest is available at:

<http://blogs.wabash.edu/rhetoricnotes/2013/04/21/2013-baldwin-oratorical-contest/>



Above: Dr. Rob Asen delivers the 2013 Brigrance Forum Lecture.

The Brigrance Forum Lecture Series

The Brigrance Forum is an annual public lecture or debate in memory of the late William Norwood Brigrance, teacher, scholar and leader at Wabash College and in the Speech Association of America. The last sevarl years, the invited lecturers reflected the Wabash College Rhetoric Department's interest in and commitment to rhetoric and civic engagement.

In March 2012, Professor John Murphy of the University of Illinois gave his talk, "The Moral Imagination of Barack Obama." In March 2013, Professor Robert Asen of the University of Wisconsin-Madison presented "Education and Democracy: How School Boards Use Deliberation to Build Trust."

The Murphy, and Asen talks are available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtR61-NFKLY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYSuladGUXE>

The Brigrance Colloquy on Civic Engagement and Public Discourse

On February 10-12, 2014, members of the Rhetoric Department and Jill Lamberton (English Department) organized a colloquy to educate the Wabash community of the diverse ways other colleges are pursuing civic engagement initiatives, and to help us consider how Wabash may strengthen our efforts. Through a Great Lakes Colleges Association New Directions Initiative grant, we invited the directors *and* student representatives from five colleges that are pursuing civic engagement initiatives in a wide variety of ways. These schools included:

- * Center for Political Participation at Allegheny College
- * Center for Public Deliberation at Colorado State University
- * Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College
- * Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement at Colby College
- * Mary Jane Underwood Stryker Center for Civic Engagement at Kalamazoo College

Over the three-day colloquy, we heard a Brigrance Forum address by Dr. Martin Carcasson, "Changing the Conversation: The Role of Colleges and Universities in Community Problem Solving."

(<http://youtu.be/5rG5zRGTai4>) We also coordinated lunchtime panels and a Civic Engagement workshop that featured the work of the visiting colleges.

To continue the momentum created through the colloquy, this summer we will host a workshop to help Wabash College faculty discuss the relationship between higher education and democratic practices.



Above: Dr. Martin Carcasson talks with Anthony Douglas '17 after delivering the 2014 Brigrance Forum Lecture and keynote address for the Brigrance Colloquy on Civic Engagement and Public Discourse.

Community Conversation on Substance Abuse

Members of the Rhetoric Department recently concluded an 18-month training program with the non-profit organization Kettering Foundation to learn deliberative practices. As part of the program, we identified and researched the pressing issue of substance abuse in our own Montgomery County, and we organized a public deliberation to help community members address the issue.

On November 6, 2013, over 100 members of Montgomery County gathered in the 4-H building at the county fairgrounds to discuss three different approaches to address illegal drug use. We recruited and trained several faculty members and 15 students from various class years and all three academic divisions to facilitate and record conversations at the tables. We followed this forum with four additional, smaller community meetings that focused on learning about what's already happening in the county to reduce substance abuse and to identify additional steps that should be taken. You can find the materials we used at the November 6 forum as well as reports of all the meetings at

<https://sites.google.com/site/mccommunityconversations/>.



*Above Top: Adam Alexander '16 leads Montgomery County community members through a deliberation
Above Bottom: The public forum, held in the 4-H building. More than 100 people attended.
Below: Prof. Sara Drury's tutorial students in the dialogue.*

Campus Dialogue on Mental Health

Professor Sara Drury's fall 2013 Freshman Tutorial, titled "A Gentleman and a Citizen: Engaging the Liberal Arts, Community, and Profession," enrolled 16 students interested in civic engagement. After spending the first two months of the course reading about inspiring examples of citizens making a difference, the students expressed interest in using their tutorial final projects to make a difference in their new community, Wabash College. After a class deliberation, the students decided to offer a public dialogue on mental health, connected to President Obama's initiative for community conversations about mental health. The students researched mental health struggles in college students and developed "hypothetical student" research papers. The campus dialogue, which they decided to call "A Gentleman's Mind," focused on having conversations about mental health struggles present in these hypothetical students and working to reduce the stigma of mental health. The students led their peers through a dialogue about the students and their struggles. This dialogue was the first mental health dialogue in the state of Indiana as part of the MentalHealth.Gov initiative (according to <http://creatingcommunitysolutions.org>).



Rhetoric Student Research

Over the last two years, Rhetoric majors, Rhetoric minors, and students participating in our courses have authored independent or collaborative research projects.

(* indicates a Rhetoric major or minor)

***Donovan Bisbee '12** and Professor Todd McDorman presented their essay "Nobody's Perfect": Armando Galarraga, Jim Joyce, and an almost Perfect Game," in March 2012 at the 5th Summit in Sport and Communication. Donovan is currently enrolled in an MA program in rhetorical studies at the University of Illinois.

***Jeremy Wentzel '14, Seton Goddard '15,** and ***Derek Andre '16** completed research on assessing deliberation in the college classroom with Professor Sara Drury. The team presented this research at the Kettering Foundation in May 2013.

Rhetoric has had a strong presence the last two years at the Wabash College Annual

Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work. Giving presentations in January 2014 were ***Nathan Manning '14** and ***Nathan Scola '14**, and in 2013, ***Jordan Surenkamp '13**, **Rudy Altergott '14**, **Jerel Taylor '16**, **Nathaniel Borden '13**, and ***Jacob Burnett '15**.

The last two years, Rhetoric senior essay projects have won the Nicholas Harrison Essay Award, a prize given to the students who write the best essays in American studies: in 2012, ***Donovan Bisbee '12** and in 2013, ***Jordan Surenkamp '13**.



Above: Donovan Bisbee presents his research.
Below: Professor Sara Drury works with Derek Andre, Seton Goddard, and Jeremy Wentzel during the summer of 2013.



Left: 2013 winner of the Joseph O'Rourke Speech Prize Jordan Surenkamp '13 beside Professor Jennifer Abbott and Emeritus Professor Joseph O'Rourke

News from the Rhetoric Faculty



Left: Professor Todd McDorman delivering the LaFollette Lecture in October 2013.

Bottom right: Professor Jennifer Abbott at the Rhetoric majors senior banquet.

Having joined the Wabash faculty in 1998, **Professor Todd McDorman** is in his 16th year at Wabash. Professor McDorman's research has examined the rhetoric of law and, more recently, the rhetoric of sport. Extending from this work he has three times offered an elective course in Rhetoric of Sport and in 2012 a Freshman Tutorial on Baseball and American Identity, which included an immersion trip to the Baseball Hall of Fame. As part of his scholarship, he has four times had the opportunity to present elements of his Pete Rose work at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum as part of the Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture.

In addition, Professor McDorman has engaged in a number of department oriented projects at the nexus of rhetoric and democracy. This has included being a co-planner of the department's three Brigrance Colloquies, co-editing (with David Timmerman) the book *Rhetoric and Democracy: Pedagogical and Political Practices* (Michigan State University Press, 2008), participating in the department's project to revise the public speaking course, and, most recently, co-authoring a public speaking textbook.

In October Professor McDorman became the first rhetoric faculty member to deliver the **LaFollette Lecture**. The LaFollette Lecture is

given annually by a Wabash College faculty member who is charged to address the relation of his or her special discipline to the humanities, broadly conceived. His lecture, "One for the Books: Rhetoric, Community, and Memory," provided an analysis of an exhibit at the Baseball Hall of Fame that considers the meaning of baseball records. You may read more about the lecture at http://wabash.edu/news/displaystory.cfm?news_ID=10067 or watch it at <http://youtu.be/wOEx9OZLmi4>.

Professor McDorman, who was promoted to the rank of full Professor in the spring, currently serves on the College Strategy Committee and Committee for Institutional Improvement, and he was the lead writer for the College's 2012 Accreditation Self-Study.

Professor McDorman, his wife (Kelly—Assistant Director of Wabash's Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts), and his three children (Dana--15, Lily--9, and Carter--4) live close to campus and attend many campus events.

Professor Jennifer Abbott is currently serving her fifth year as Chair of the Rhetoric Department during her twelfth year at the college. Her research interests remain focused on the news media and popular media portrayals of gender, though her work this year has mostly focused on co-writing a public speaking textbook. Recent conference presentations have reflected on infusing the basic public speaking course with rhetorical studies, deliberation, and civic engagement.



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In the last two years, Jennifer has taught classes related to her research interests, and she has sought opportunities to take her students out of the classroom. Last year, while teaching Gender and Communication, Jennifer accompanied three students to a Gender Matters Conference in Chicago. This year, her Rhetoric of the News Media students will travel in April to Indianapolis to watch WISH-TV tape its noon news and observe *Indianapolis Star* editors decide what they will publish on “page one” the next day. Both visits will include meeting with reporters to talk about their work.

Jennifer remains busy serving the college as the Parliamentarian for faculty meetings, as a member of the Presidential Search Committee last spring, and as a mentor to a new professor in Philosophy. As department chair, she enjoys working with her colleagues on various activities and initiatives and guiding her newest colleagues, Sara and Jeff Drury, through the tenure process.

When not working, Jennifer spends time with her husband Michael Abbott, Chair of the Theater department, and their six-year old daughter Zoe. She is also training to run in Indianapolis’ Mini-Marathon in May for the first time.

New Department Faculty

Professor Sara A. Mehlretter Drury



joined the Wabash Rhetoric Department in the fall of 2011. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. from Penn State University, and spent 2010-2011 working at the

Kettering Foundation, a nonprofit organization focusing on democratic practices and communication. Her teaching and research focus on the quality and character of public discourse, and she is particularly interested in the theories and practices of democratic deliberation.

Since arriving at Wabash, Professor Drury has enjoyed connecting her teaching and research to opportunities for Wabash students to enhance their curricular learning experience. In the summer of 2012, Wabash senior Rudy Altergott '14 traveled with Professor Drury to the Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan Presidential Archives. Drury and Altergott gathered research on national security rhetoric in those president’s administrations. Professor Drury also has connected her interests in deliberation to teaching and research at Wabash. She has received two Joint Learning Agreements with the Kettering Foundation. One such Joint Learning Agreement supported the work of a research-intensive elective course, RHE 370 Democratic Deliberation, Rhetoric, and Civic Engagement. As part of the course, six Wabash students worked with Professor Drury on assessing Wabash’s RHE 101 Public Speaking deliberation unit through focus group interviews. Over the summer of 2013, Professor Drury supervised students on writing up this assessment research and the team co-presented a draft of their essay to the Kettering Foundation in May 2013. In the spring of 2014, she offered an immersion course on rhetoric and politics that will traveled to Washington, D.C.

Professor Drury has enjoyed participating in Wabash culture. She lives a few blocks from campus, and in addition to attending Wabash sporting events, she also took part in the Wabash Theater Department’s 2012 production of *The Miser* in the role of Frosine.



In the fall of 2012, **Professor Jeffrey P. Mehltritt Drury** came to Wabash from Central Michigan University, where he had been a professor in the Communication and Dramatic Arts Department for the past four years. Prior to that, he earned his PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his BA and MA from Northern Illinois University.

The Rhetoric Department's new emphasis on civic engagement matches Professor Drury's scholarly expertise in advocacy and public discourse. He is particularly interested in what political argumentation means for the role and value of citizen participation.

For Professor Drury, one of the most rewarding aspects of being a teacher is seeing students put their classroom learning into practice. This is evident in both his research on political rhetoric and representation and in his teaching. When he taught political debate (RHE 143) for the past two years, for instance, he offered students extra credit to perform their final course debate before a "public" audience of Wabash students, faculty, and staff. The students who have accepted this offer indicated it to be a valuable experience for practicing their advocacy.

Professor Drury's book *Speaking with the People's Voice*, a study of presidential rhetoric and public opinion, was released in March 2014 with Texas A&M University Press.

Like many Wabash students, Professor Drury is Midwest born-and-raised, having lived in the four states that happen to border Lake Michigan: Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, and now Indiana. For good or bad, this also makes him a Big Ten—or B1G—fan, with a firm rooting interest for the Wisconsin Badgers. Apart from being a college sports fan, he enjoys relaxing with his wife, Rhetoric faculty member Sara Drury, travelling to interesting places, and baking (and eating) delicious desserts.

Support the Rhetoric Department

If you're excited by what the Rhetoric department is up to, consider supporting our efforts.

In particular, the Brigrance Forum is endowed by a fund begun by the W. Norwood Brigrance family, friends, former students whom he taught, and those who continued the tradition of speech and rhetoric at Wabash after him.

Contributions to support the Brigrance Forum may be sent to

Brigrance Forum
Director of Development
Wabash College
P.O. Box 352
Crawfordsville, IN 47933

Or contact the Wabash Advancement Office at 877-743-4545.

In future Rhetoric Department newsletters, we hope to include updates from our Rhetoric and Speech alumni. Please send your update to bowene@wabash.edu, with the subject "Rhetoric/Speech Alumni Update." It's a wonderful opportunity for our current students to see where a Rhetoric major can take you!