

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

Randolph-Macon is an undergraduate, coeducational college of the liberal arts. The purpose of a Randolph-Macon education is to develop the mind and the character of its students. They are challenged to communicate effectively, to think analytically and critically, to experience and appreciate the creative process, to develop qualities of leadership, and to synthesize what they know with who they are.

At Randolph-Macon College, the liberal arts constitute a comprehensive educational opportunity. The curriculum includes exposure both to broad perspectives and specific concepts. They are guided in this endeavor by a faculty of teacher-scholars who are dedicated to the liberal arts and active in their professional disciplines and in the extra-curricular life of the campus.

At Randolph-Macon the maturation and testing of the skills, values, and character required for a lifetime of challenges extends beyond the classroom. Students are encouraged to meet with faculty both socially and intellectually.

Randolph-Macon believes that a liberal arts education challenges the intellect, imagination, and character. Graduates of the College have the capacity to realize their potential as professionals, leaders, and lifelong learners. The comprehensive nature of a liberal arts education at Randolph-Macon College prepares students to respond to the changing career opportunities and to meet life's challenges with confidence, enthusiasm, and ethical awareness.

Summary of Accomplishments

Dr. Bryan Giemza joined the faculty of the English Department at Randolph-Macon College in 2008. In the space of his first three years at Randolph-Macon, he saw two books into print and finished editing another, developed nine new courses, wrote six articles that were accepted for publication, chaired a conference, and was elected to three faculty committees. He accomplished these things while earning highest praise from students in roughly three courses per semester. As one senior scholar put it, "Professor Giemza is probably the most versatile (that is to say, possessed in excellence in more areas) young teacher-scholar I have ever encountered... In fact, I have probably never known a young scholar who can do so many things so well at the same time..." Such productivity would be impressive for a scholar at any stage of career, but it is all the more significant that Dr. Giemza is at the beginning of his.

Bryan Giemza's work embodies those principles of scholarship that go beyond mere productivity, however. He demonstrates how the love of teaching can make the world a better place and draw lifelong learners to liberal education in a way that reflects the College's highest calling. It is for this reason that Randolph-Macon College has nominated him in the "Rising Star" category.

Teaching

First and foremost, Dr. Giemza supports Randolph-Macon College's mission to develop the mind and the character of its students in leading by example. Through his classes they come to appreciate the intrinsic rewards of education as a vocation. As a student who took multiple classes with him put it, "That is what makes [him] a great professor, no matter what he is teaching. He teaches his students to care about what they are doing." Randolph-Macon's mission proclaims it a place where "students are encouraged to meet with faculty both socially and intellectually," values that mesh well with Bryan Giemza's commitment to treating students as intellectual peers and fellow wayfarers. He adjusts and improves his teaching in response to those interactions: "He is constantly looking for feedback/student involvement which is refreshing, especially at a collegiate level," said one student. Dr. Giemza's syllabi suggest that college offers "a chance to be intentional about the relationships that will sustain you throughout life." As one of his students affirmed, "He is a great teacher because he knows his subject and his students." Another explained, "Through his judicious literary mentoring, my life is richer and clearer, and I am a better person." He challenges his students to communicate effectively, to think analytically and critically, to experience and appreciate the creative process, to develop qualities of leadership, and to synthesize what they know with who they are.

The motto of Randolph-Macon is "Believe in the Moment of Connection," so it is telling that Bryan Giemza's students evaluate his class with statements like "Dr. Giemza helps you 'make things click.'" Liberal arts colleges naturally aspire to enhance critical thinking skills, but just as important is the work of creating lifelong learners. After taking a class with Dr. Giemza, one of his students explained, "I learned to learn and think better." He teaches the importance of *learning how to learn* by foregrounding the art of enquiry with a degree of rigor that reflects his legal training. "It is clear to me that he not only helped me as a writer and reader, but as a thinker and an intellectual," wrote another student. His syllabi suggest that "the mark of a good scholar is his or her ability to ask good questions, not necessarily to provide all the answers," and so he invites students to become co-enquirers and teachers. A student from a recent literature class summed up: "I feel he stimulates independent thinking and rewards the same."

Many students express gratitude for his emphasis on fundamental thinking skills, crediting him for teaching them to follow the thread of a Socratic dialogue ("[his] Socratic style of

teaching allowed me to look into myself and decide what was important to me”), or articulating arguments (“I learned how to really make arguments for the first time in [his class]”). Along these lines, he emphasizes writing skills and offers revision opportunities in all of his classes, and uses conferences to give tailored advice to students, especially to those who are reticent about writing. “Dr. Giemza goes out of his way to help you. Even though the work is often difficult, he presents it in a way that makes you feel capable of handling the task,” explained one. “Giemza always knew what to say to help with a problem with writing,” noted another. Students embrace his high standards (“a stickler on style but he’s understanding and fair”) and rise to them (“Challenging! The first English class that I actually enjoyed because of the professor’s expectations.”) “Taking this class has made me step out of the box and change my writing style,” reported one student, adding, “It made me express my thoughts in different ways.” For some of his students, the ability to write with new confidence has been transformative:

This English class has been the first class to ever challenge my writing. For once, a qualitative definition of ‘good’ writing was put before me. At the conclusion of this course I walk away with a more competent understanding of the art of writing. This class truly epitomizes the reasons for my coming to college—to be challenged and to grow. I have grown as a writer, and in the process, as a person.

Dr. Giemza reaches as many students as possible through creative and varied teaching strategies, trying not just new material but new strategies of connection. “The course works for the way I learn,” explained one student; “Professor Giemza adopted his teaching method to the learning styles of the class.” When students report that he brings texts “to life,” they often point to his lively methods. Another former student who became an English major after taking two of his courses described Dr. Giemza’s pedagogy this way:

No class was ever the same; the variety of lesson plans and perspectives in which he approached a given subject made learning provocative and enjoyable. Debates, group projects, short essays, film critiques, research papers, discussion groups and presentations were part of the daily curriculum. The variety of lesson plans helped me to approach and think about literature in an unconventional and dynamic way.

Former students describe conversations that “made us question our values in light of some of the great thinkers in literary history” and that continue after class (“I ended the class with such passion for my argument that I sought out Dr. Giemza and classmates to continue the discussion”; “I enjoy the way he challenges us to think about usual mundane ideas and stereotypes. That’s a difficult thing to do and teach, but I think he does an excellent job of it.”). In a period when English majors have declined sharply, it is worth noting that his approach appeals to students who typically avoid English classes. “I purposely took [another class with him] because he makes English, a subject I’m not at all interested in, into an interesting and thought-provoking class,” explained one. His success in emphasizing the value of close and deep reading is reflected in student feedback as well: “Before this class, I had no desire to read, and when I did read I looked no deeper into the work than words on the paper. After this class and the discussion that went on during class, I have gained a new respect for American Literature and really focusing on the deeper meaning of texts.”

Professor Giemza has honored Randolph-Macon’s commitment to the comprehensive educational opportunities by energetically pursuing interdisciplinary partnerships. He designed and co-taught a First Year course exploring southern regional mythology in literature and history. Students consistently derive inspiration from his creative energy; student remarks such as “Giemza truly has a passion for teaching this course—not once, but every day,” “You can tell he loves his job” and “His love of the material shows in his teaching” are typical. Consequently,

students respond in kind: “He is the best professor I have ever had at Wake [Forest]. He is enthusiastic about the material and it is contagious. Giemza is the type of professor that you like so much that you want to do your very best for him because he deserves it.”

Perhaps the most striking evidence of his effectiveness in student development rests in his ability to draw students to his field and to academe. Because he is “devoted to education, both for himself and for those around him,” in the words of one student, students who are interested in the field of education find his classes especially influential. “I had to work hard to learn how to ‘read’ literature, but this course will make me a better language arts teacher,” explained one. “I want to try and be like him when I teach,” summed up one from a recent course. “I am currently considering a career-path as a professor,” wrote another, “and I can only hope that I can inspire and educate my students as much as Dr. Giemza has done for me.”

Discovery

Dr. Giemza embodies the “teacher-scholar” model of Randolph-Macon’s mission, as he is simultaneously “dedicated to the liberal arts and active in [his] professional discipline.” He honors the emphasis on liberal arts by bringing forth new knowledge in a wide variety of areas, beginning with transformational research into southern literary studies. Though Dr. Giemza is at the beginning of his career, he has already received accolades for two books, has completed a third, and has edited a fourth.

Many Irish American histories make no mention whatsoever of the South, but Dr. Giemza’s research has changed that. His third book, *Lost Colonies: Irish Catholic Writers and the Invention of the American South*, now in press at LSU Press, questions southern ethnic homogeneity and tugs the center of gravity in American Irish Studies southward. His research has allowed scholars to perceive the common themes of a previously unremarked group: a religious minority of singular importance in creating a regional image, whose ranks include the likes of Margaret Mitchell, Flannery O’Connor, and Cormac McCarthy. Dr. Giemza’s work on the Irish in the South has garnered not just financial support through multiple grants but the praise of colleagues in fields as disparate as History, Irish Studies, and Religious Studies. One Irish scholar described the impact of Dr. Giemza’s work this way:

My field of study is Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the best scholars, Dr Giemza opened up an entirely new panorama to me in the experiences of the Irish in the American South. Partly through his work, I fell in love not only with the region, but its people.

Intrigued by the riddle of a poet and priest who became a leading proponent of Confederate nationalism, Dr. Giemza developed the material of a dissertation chapter into a full-length, coauthored biography of Abram Ryan. A *Journal of Southern History* reviewer suggested that *Poet of the Lost Cause: A Life of Father Ryan* (U Tenn P, 2008) should be read “by anyone interested in the history of the Civil War, the Lost Cause, the experiences of the Irish in the South, southern Catholicism or southern literary history.” *Religious Studies Review* called it “a welcome addition to the increasing interest in examining the nexus between religion and the Civil War,” providing students “in history, literature and religious studies a comprehensive account of a complex individual” in “a superior study.” The book has been nominated for a number of prizes, many of them in history, including the McClemore, Jefferson Davis, and the prestigious Lincoln Prize.

Indeed, Dr. Giemza was carrying out award-winning research before he completed his graduate studies. He initially wrote a number of entries for LSU Press’s *Southern Writers: A*

New Biographical Dictionary, but his work was deemed so indispensable that he became one of the volume's editors. Reviewers singled out his entries for the "lively and allusive" quality of his prose. The book subsequently received the Jules and Frances Landry Award for Most Outstanding Achievement in Southern Studies.

Dr. Giemza's research connects with the public, scholars, and students alike, as evidenced by the inclusion of his essay on Walker Percy among the journal *Southern Cultures* "Greatest Hits & Classroom Favorites." His piece was among the journal's most downloaded/requested essays, chosen from a "decade of material includ[ing] hundreds of essays, articles, interviews, and other features." A common observation about contemporary literary criticism is that it has become too specialized, but Dr. Giemza is devoted to producing scholarship that enriches literature for all interested readers. His readers remark his ability to bring out exciting new research in bracing, jargon-free prose. Pulitzer-prize winning author Fred Hobson describes Dr. Giemza's work as "a joy to read"; William Andrews, himself a prize-winning writer and scholar of African American literature, explained,

I enjoyed reading [Dr. Giemza]'s dissertation, "Mavericks of Religion" more than any that have come across my desk since I came to UNC-Chapel Hill thirteen years ago. Bryan's perspective on the Irish Catholic influence on southern literature is as original and innovative as I have ever seen. As biography, each chapter's narrative structure carries the reader along purposefully, yet in a leisurely, often witty way that allows Bryan's storytelling gift to take hold. Bryan's dissertation, in my view, is distinctive. It displays what only the most talented Ph.D. students are able to muster early in their writing careers—an individual sense of voice, all too often lacking in academic writing in the humanities.

Guided by the awareness that there is much yet to be discovered in this previously unexplored subject, Dr. Giemza's voice has served to call other scholars into conversation. He served as the invited guest editor of an issue of *Southern Cultures* treating the Irish in the South. He also is the editor of a volume titled *Perspectives on the Irish in the American South*; its twelve contributors include both Irish and American scholars.

Beyond books, the wide scope of Dr. Giemza's interest in American literature and culture is reflected in his publication record, with articles treating topics as diverse as slave narratives, literary hoaxes, women's religious orders, Native American folklore, and the South in film. He also publishes on well-known American writers. For example, a recent monograph on Hemingway's debts to French sources was published in the 30th anniversary issue of *Hemingway Review*. The favorably received article helped to solve a decades-old mystery concerning several strange allusions in Hemingway's story. It also provided the seed material for new research sanctioned by the Hemingway Foundation and Society's Smith-Reynolds Founders Fellowship.

His capacity for creative discovery is not limited to literary research, as he is finding new venues for his work in poetry and fiction as well. A recent attendee of the Sewanee Writers' Conference, he is beginning to publish his creative work. Recently his poem "Indígena," about the difficulties of reconciling Native and national identities, received first place for poetry in the 2009 Blue Ridge Writers Contest. Judges counted the poem notable not just for its "engaging and compelling" language but its "clear social and historical commentary." In sum, as his postdoctoral advisor put it, "His prodigious output speaks for itself: Dr. Giemza is a scholar of remarkable productivity with a broad range of intellectual interests." He has shared them widely, reaching out to new media, genres, and audiences.

Knowledge Integration

Dr. Giemza's courses draw students to Randolph-Macon's mission by calling on them "to experience and appreciate the creative process" across disciplines. His experience in designing interdisciplinary programs runs unusually deep for a junior faculty member. A course he taught at the University of South Carolina illustrates his methods. First, he initiated the cross-listing of his course in law and humanities through the School of the Environment. Second, he enlisted a faculty member in the Law School to teach with him, with his course supporting her published research on teaching environmental law concepts to undergraduates. He linked up with lawyers and researchers at Earth Justice, a non-government legal organization, so that students could collaborate on research that would bear on real-world investigations. Legal enquiry was interleaved with literature, nonfiction accounts of life in coastal Louisiana, documentaries, and guest speakers. Ultimately, student research called attention to the economic disparities driving questionable development determinations and even helped to reverse one.

Per its mission statement, Randolph-Macon students and faculty alike are encouraged "to synthesize what they know with who they are," since "the liberal arts constitute a comprehensive educational opportunity." This mission is tied to Boyers's guiding question for knowledge integration: what do findings from scholarship ultimately *mean*? Within Dr. Giemza's discipline, the question might be framed this way: how does literature lead to "more comprehensive understanding?" Nominated several years ago to be the executive director of the North Carolina Humanities Council, he offered an answer to the Council Board:

In my teaching I often emphasize the importance of stories in self-understanding. After all, it is impossible to explain how the child becomes the adult without resorting to some larger narrative to reconcile the two. Histories, however impartial, still tell a story. So I think that the narratives of the humanities are the real stories of our culture at any given time. Accordingly, a French proverb of old coinage has it that "To understand everything is to forgive all." The power of the humanities to bring about understanding and reconciliation, in this sense, is far more than theoretical. For they offer the basics contexts of understanding that build distinctive communities, grow institutional memory, and cultivate meaningful local cultures and traditions that enrich our lives.

Accordingly, Dr. Giemza emphasizes the importance of narratives in self- and cultural understanding, emphasizing that stories really do have inherent meaning. He points to research that demonstrates that people who write about their lives report higher levels of happiness, and asks his students to write their own lives. As one student reported, "It isn't just an English course. It's very thought provoking and many aspects of it carry over into other classes or daily life."

Dr. Giemza's work shows a pattern of bringing together his multifaceted scholarship with interdisciplinary organizations, other teachers, and students. He does not presume that his research findings can be interpreted in isolation, but believes that the work of finding meaning in them is necessarily a joint venture. Thus he involves students in his work, for example, in researching the family history of writer Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt. He assists students in applying to conferences. He takes his discoveries abroad as an invited speaker to a historical society, writers' groups, graduate student convocations, and the cultural stage at the nation's largest regional Irish Festival in Savannah.

In sum, Dr. Giemza's excellence in knowledge integration is captured by Randolph-Macon College's Mission Statement: his courses *are* who he is, rooted in his scholarship and in the broadly defined learning communities and disciplines that he helps to foster. This integration demonstrably enriches those communities and extends the reach of his research.

Service

Dr. Giemza's commitment to service as the fruition of scholarship has been continuous and substantive, beginning with his days as an undergraduate at Notre Dame. During his senior year he lived as a student volunteer at a halfway house for released convicts. Before graduating, he designed a course, subsequently adopted by the sociology department, to ensure that future student volunteers might receive academic credit for work there. In addition to creating an academic legacy, he helped ensure that others would continue to benefit from the organization's experiential learning opportunities. Today he continues to reach beyond campus walls, for example, by mentoring English student-teachers who will serve the community.

Students and faculty alike have already taken notice of Dr. Giemza's leadership in service. The faculty have elected him to the Curriculum Committee, which meets weekly to engage problems of educational quality and fairness. As a valued advocate of young students, he also has been elected to the First Year Advisory Board, and serves as an elected Faculty Marshal. Students note his presence as well: "He also participates in school events outside of class, and it's awesome to see professors who really care about RMC as a whole, not just their classes." Per the College mission, he is immersed "in the extra-curricular life of the campus."

Indeed, he applies himself to solving specific problems. In response to students who asked for a creative venue for their writing, Dr. Giemza revived the college's creative writing magazine, which was founded in 1954. He invited the directors of two creative writing programs to campus, as well as graduate students who are currently in writing programs. Accepted to the Sewanee Writers' Conference, he saw a new opportunity to share his love of writing with his students, commenting, "I look forward to bringing back some practical advice for Stylus staffers and students in writing classes." Concerned about placement rates in law schools, he cultivated relationships with admissions counselors in several law schools. For the first time in campus history, he organized a mock admissions panel that drew praise from attendees as a tool for mastering the application process from the inside.

Another common thread in Dr. Giemza's service activities is his ability to affect quiet change and renewal through leadership. Three years ago, for the first time in its history, he established and chaired a panel on Native Americans and southern literature for the Society for the Study of Southern Literature. The success of the panel has made it a standing session at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. During the same year he delivered a public lecture in conjunction with a month devoted to exploring Native American history. Of his own initiative he invited a lecturer as well as a chief from a local tribe to participate in the activities. In short, Dr. Giemza has worked to promote Native American literary scholarship not just through his words but through his actions.

In the words of Dr. Amy Goodwin, the Chair of the English Department, Dr. Giemza's service in the English department has brought new energy to the intellectual life of the campus and helped "to create something that wasn't there before." When he arranged for Kwame Dawes to speak on campus, student responses to the standing-room only sessions were revealing: "In my three years at the college, Kwame Dawes was the first speaker at Randolph-Macon that I voluntarily attended," one wrote. "I felt that this meant that R-MC was broadening its horizons."

In keeping with Randolph Macon's belief that a liberal arts education "challenges the intellect, imagination, and character," Dr. Giemza finds joy in mentoring his students in a variety of capacities. In all of his advising, he emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of happiness, whether through careers in teaching, writing, or the law. He gives freely of himself to each.

Personal Statement

Last spring I went to the doctor with a mysterious lump on (not in) my throat. As the doctor, who had a voice made for radio, listed the diagnoses, he mentioned the possibility that I had a cyst or polyps on my vocal cords. “And what would the consequences of that be?” I asked brightly, in a laughably poor imitation of the doctor’s matter-of-fact tone. “Well,” he said, scribbling away, “sometimes people lose their ability to speak.”

I swallowed hard. This wasn’t in my tenure plan. For a long time I had been talking as if I had a head cold, and after a while, I accepted that this new sound coming out of me might actually be my new voice. Though I sounded like a yodeler undergoing pillow strangulation, I preferred to think that I was developing some of the gravelly gravitas of an Edward R. Murrow. I have asthma, but I’d take up smoking for *that* kind of voice.

Yet what could be more terrifying to a newly-launched teacher than the prospect of trying to speak, but never being heard? I pushed aside my panic. I had plenty of practice at this sort of thing. I sometimes taught the longer novels of Herman Melville, for one thing. Losing my voice might even enhance my professorial mystique. “He just stopped talking one day,” people would say; “He took it to a deeper level.” “You always feel like he has at least one unspoken thought.” “Very agreeable prof. Kind of quiet, though.” Like Melville’s Bartleby, I would give a magnificently mute answer to a professional cliché: *he helps everyone discover his voice*.

Soon I was more pleasantly occupied in wide-ranging fantasies of self-pity, a one-man demonstration of why my wife, who is a nurse practitioner, says that academics are the most—interesting—patients. Unemployable, I would loiter around a bridge somewhere in Richmond. Perhaps an old cannon rest on Belle Isle would serve as my bed. There, like an ancient Roman at his triclinium, I would engage in elegiac written conversations about the violence of grace with good-natured and uncomprehending VCU students, the sort too polite to break off and go sip their beer and wave to kayakers. I would be recognizable as a former academic only by my incongruous footwear and the incredibly wordy passage on my begging card (“...May God, or the non-denominational deity of your choice, bless you, unless you’re into the New Atheism, in which case I’d have to say there are days when I can’t argue with you.”) At night I would remove the peeling remnant of my tweed jacket and curl up with it like Linus and his blanket, equally serene and philosophic. No one would take my money, or steal my pathetic clutch of books, because you just don’t do that to someone who can’t speak, especially when someone else might see it.

Who was I kidding? I stood to lose something I loved achingly much, all the good conversations that begin at the podium. And I was unprepared. I had led a charmed life, really, and never known anything but run-of-the-mill hardships. To lose my voice would mean confinement to the page, an end to all the verses I liked to rattle off from memory in class as a way of reminding my students that a thing of beauty is a joy forever. And the headlines for English departments suggested that the writing was already on the wall. The ranks of our majors had long since thinned, and we were already falling silent as casualties of a so-called post-literate age. Playwright Richard Foreman, for example, warned that in this information age, we are losing our “inner repertory of dense cultural inheritance”; awash in ephemeral information, we run the risk of becoming “pancake people.” Reflecting on the nation-wide decline of English departments, William Chace called “for a return to the aesthetic wellsprings of literature, the rock-solid fact, often neglected, that it can indeed amuse, delight, and educate.”

This is what happens, I think, when students hear a voice in literature that they truly recognize, a voice so clear and striking that they must not only listen to it, but follow it to its source. The unremarked work—of helping students to become better readers, communicators and writers—is so often the most necessary. Far from the “heroic individualism” model of scholarly achievement, great ideas most often come from shared discovery and the careful observation of what is already right in front of us. For me, it’s nothing less than a personal

charge to stop the flattening effect by drilling down into texts and showing students the pleasures of deep and reflective reading, of finding the places where lived truth is recorded. This need not be a hard sell, for the hunger is universal: all of philosophy is there, and the larger pageant of history, the joy and wonder of life.

Paradoxically, through my teaching I want students to experience, like the fictional professor of John Williams's *Stoner* during his undergraduate days, "an epiphany of knowing something through words that could not be put in words." With the prospect of losing my voice, I'd be much better at the no words part of it, I thought. In less guarded moments I was prompted to ask—not for the first time—*Is there anything I can do as a teacher that will outlast the vanity of my desires?* Something that will transcend my need to imprint or be heard and remembered?

If so, my mother, who taught children with learning disabilities, set me in the right direction, patiently reminding me each day that everyone puts on his socks one at a time. I recalled her lessons when I was student teaching at a large state university. There I noticed that one of the students in the class—a student fifteen years older than I—would be physically present and engaged and suddenly seem strangely absent. Sometimes she labored to speak. When she struggled to complete her exams I was certain that there was more to her story.

I asked her to come and talk with me and she did. Throughout her life she had suffered from seizures. She grew up in a poor family. She was pursuing the degree to prove to herself that she could do it.

"Has anyone here asked you about what's going on?" I asked.

She smiled. "You're the only one," she said. "Every spell damages my brain." She was working against the clock in ways unthinkable to most people. Every day she tried to place another book on the shelf, not knowing when it would be knocked off, only certain that it would.

"So you take the 'F' and you move along, but you don't mention your seizures?" I asked.

"That's right," she said shyly.

"I think we can do a little better than that," I said.

All I wanted to do at that moment was to be able to write her story backwards. Like one of those films in reverse, the books would fly back up to the shelf; there would be better interventions, and money for them, and the beautifully undiminished futurity of a little girl at school with a teacher who wants her to be there, and so on. Since then I've met other students in analogous situations, and if I had to point to something in my library that resists the moth and the flame, it would have to be my conversations with them. It is a cliché, I suppose, but as simple as the universal need for encouragement: there are ways to help others find a voice. End of self-pity, but also the end of pity, which always implies that one stands on a superior footing.

And anyhow, if I should lose my voice, I expect that my students would give it back. In an American Realism class I asked them to find a "flat" character in life—an ordinary, working person in a seemingly drab job or situation. I asked them to listen in, and next to explain, in detached terms, as a realist might, how natural social forces had created the other person's world. Finally I asked them to write it from the point of view of the person described. The results were genuinely insightful. One of the students explained, "Something clicked when I realized you could write from another point of view. I thought it resonated with the realism discussions we had. I like the idea of putting yourself in someone else's shoes." If compassion can't be taught, perhaps it might be learned. I count myself fortunate to work at a college that calls on students "to synthesize what they know with who they are." I try to do that, too.

The cyst is gone now, and my voice is intact, thank goodness. I return to the fact that we all learned to speak from others, and I hold to a passion that goes beyond the self-flattering podium, or a reflective life in a snug harbor of books. If I'm lucky, it's stronger than an individual voice and it reaches a greater community. I give thanks for a voice that is never a given, and those students and teachers in my life who have shown me that Tolstoy was right all along. We can't—we don't—learn anything but through love. If I speak at all, let me speak that way.

Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae

Bryan A. Giemza

Education

B.A. English, University of Notre Dame, 1995
J.D. Law, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999
M.A. English, December 2001
Ph.D. English, August 2004

Professional Experience

Assistant Professor of English, Randolph-Macon College, 2008-present
Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute for Southern Studies, U of South Carolina, 2007-08
Visiting Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University, 2005-07

Honors and Fellowships

Hemingway Foundation and Society's Smith-Reynolds Founders Fellowship, 2011
Contributor, Poetry Workshop, Sewanee Writers' Conference, 2011
Rashkind Grant for Advanced Research, 2011
NEH Jessie Ball duPont Summer Seminars for Liberal Arts College Faculty, 2010
First Prize, Poetry, 2009 Blue Ridge Writers Club Writing Contest
Walter Williams Craigie Research Grant, Randolph-Macon College, 2009
Lincoln, McClemore, and Jefferson Davis Prize nominee for *Poet of the Lost Cause*, 2008
Postdoctoral Fellowship, Institute for Southern Studies, U of South Carolina, 2007-08
Nominated for Executive Director, North Carolina Humanities Council, 2007
Jules and Frances Landry Award, Most Outstanding Achievement in Southern Studies, 2006
Student Appreciation Award, Wake Forest Student Government, 2006
William C. Archie Research Grant Recipient, Wake Forest University, 2006
Charles Manning Booker Merit Fellowship, UNC Department of English, 2004
Hibernian Research Award, Ancient Order of Hibernians, 2004
Frankel Dissertation Fellowship, UNC Department of English, 2003-04

Publications

Books

Lost Colonies: Irish Catholic Writers and the Invention of the American South.
In press. LSU Press, 2012.

Poet of the Lost Cause: A Life of Father Ryan. University of Tennessee Press, 2008.
With Don Beagle.

(edited) *Southern Writers: A New Biographical Dictionary.* LSU Press, 2006.
With Joseph Flora and Amber Vogel.

Perspectives on the Irish in the American South. Editor.
Currently under consideration with University of Mississippi Press.

Selected Articles and Chapters

"An Interview With Valerie Sayers," *Flannery O'Connor Review*, 2012 (forthcoming).
"Turned Inside Out: Black, White, and Irish in the South," *Southern Cultures* 18.1 (Spring 2012).
Guest editor, *Southern Cultures* 17.1 (Spring 2011) Special Edition: "The Irish Issue."
"Joel Chandler Harris, Catholic," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 14.3 (Summer 2011).
"The Junebug Crisis," book chapter, *Southerners on Film: Essays on Hollywood Portrayals Since the 1970s*, McFarland Press, 2011.
"Racism, Original Sin, and Andre Dubus's 'Sorrowful Mysteries,'" *Xavier Review* 30:2 (Spring 2011).
"The French Connection: Some Visual and Literary Sources for 'The Light of the World,'" *Hemingway Review* 30.1 (Fall 2010). Featured Article, 30th Anniversary Issue.
"Sisters of Secession: The Unclaimed Legacies of Two Southern American Irish Women," *Irish Studies Review* 18:2, May 2010 (Special Issue: The Irish in the American Civil War).
"Racism, Original Sin, and Andre Dubus's 'Sorrowful Mysteries,'" *Xavier Review*, Winter 2011.
"Old-time Religions Revisited: Two New Volumes," *Southern Literary Journal*, Fall 2007.
"The Strange Case of Sequoyah Redivivus," *Mississippi Quarterly* 60:1, Special Issue (Native Americans), 2007.
"Catholic Minds of the South: A New Concert," *Southern Literary Journal*, Fall 2006.
"The Technique of Sorrow: An Irishman Takes a Page from American Slave Narratives," *New Hibernia Review*, Summer 2003.
"A Conspiracy of Dunces? Walker Percy and the Chance for a Last Laugh," lead article, *Southern Cultures*, Summer 2003.

Selected Lectures, Invited Talks, Chaired Panels and Conferences

Invited Lecturer, "James Joyce, Time, and Dubliners," *What is Time?* Seminar in the Humanities, University of Mary Washington, Spring 2011.
Invited Speaker, "Flannery O'Connor's Savannah," Savannah Irish Festival, Cultural Stage.
Invited Presenter, "Father Ryan," *Southern Festival of Books*, Humanities Tennessee.
Invited Lecturer, Center for the Study of the American South's *Tell About the South Lecture Series*, "The Irish Mavericks of Southern Literature," Fall 2008.
Conference Chair and Organizer, *Lost Colonies: Ireland and the American South Conference*, supported by the Watson-Brown Foundation and the Institute for Southern Studies, Fall 2008.
Chair, Society for the Study of Southern Literature Session, *The Return of the Native: Native Presence in Southern Literature*, SAML A 2008.
Conference Organizer. "Nature Writing and Conservation." UNC AEM.
Chair, Irish Studies I: Southern Irelands, Irish Souths, SAML A 2005.

Service

Thomas Wolfe Society, Board of Trustees
Member, South Atlantic Modern Language Association Studies Award Committee
Curriculum Committee (elected position)
Faculty Marshal (elected position)
First Year Advisory Board (elected position)
Pre-law Advisor
Faculty Advisor and Director, *The Stylus* (the College's journal of creative writing)
Academic Advisor to twenty Randolph-Macon students

Letters of Support (excerpted)

I write this letter of support because Professor Bryan Giemza has changed my life; through his judicious literary mentoring, my life is richer and clearer, and I am a better person. Professor Giemza is truly a phenomenon, and one of the most fascinating individuals I know. Whether walking along the expansive Blue Ridge, or in Congaree Swamp with students studying the loss of wetlands, or along the weathered streets of Rome, Dr. Bryan Giemza makes the most of every life moment and then he gives back twice as much in return. Probably one his most remarkable characteristics is his ability to truly embrace all people; his sincerity never wavers. He is a demanding yet engaging professor that gives students the skill set to succeed and the passion to thrive, instilling in them essential, sustaining qualities for not only literary criticism but also for life. As a visiting assistant professor, his classroom format was more organized and offered more variety than his tenured colleagues. I knew then that whatever college was fortunate enough to recruit him would benefit from his unique passion and mentoring style, which will become a legacy. He is a "Rising Star" for his versatility and sagacity.

--Kristin Frantz, Current Student, Wake Forest University

Bryan Giemza is a man who does not sleep much—always on the go to a conference, a library, a lecture, a poetry reading, or a swamp, or involved teaching a class, meeting students, revising or writing an essay or arranging for trees to be planted on our campus. He is simultaneously attentive to his students and his research, drawing from both a synergy. His students talk about the transformation they have undergone in his class, and I have seen the magic he works when he teaches. His quiet, gentle, insistent manner combines with a rich interdisciplinary approach to literature that captures the students' attention and imagination. In his Introduction to the Short Story course, to get students thinking about how artists manipulate form, Bryan showed them a series of landscape paintings by Cezanne and led them to see the connection to different techniques in short stories. I have seen him teach close reading techniques by having the students select words in a passage that seemed to them to have the most gravity and by having them try to draw the objects described in another passage. He knows how to build a foundation from the students' knowledge, and develops both their aesthetic appreciation of literature and their understanding of the ways in which history, culture, and literature inform each other. Their course evaluations comment with surprise and pleasure on how much they learned in his classes. He prods and nurtures his students to achieve in their own lives the kinds of growth and changes in perception that we find in the best literature. His deep commitment to literature and teaching is inspirational to students and his colleagues, and his classes make the engagement with literature and writing central to the college experience. **--Amy Goodwin, Chair, English Department, Randolph-Macon College**

Bryan Giemza seems to have been born a man afire. Gifted and focused, he has a work ethic that is hard to match. I count it a boon of my teaching career that in his first term in Graduate School he made his way into my course in the literature of the South. Rather quickly, I judged his critical acumen to be first-rate, and I began to think of him more as colleague than student. Bryan's teaching career, even in its very early stages, has reflected the right-brain, left-brain dichotomy of his intellectual concerns. With his interest in the natural world and environmental studies, his approach is as down to earth as Henry David Thoreau's. He loves to explore woods and shore, and he has taken pleasure in teaching about the law, the South, and the environment. He matches his publication record with an intense interest in his students. He learns with them, and he challenges them to explore the riches of the written word and the riches of the natural world. **--Joseph Flora, Atlanta Professor of Southern Culture, University of North Carolina**

I enjoyed reading Bryan Giemza's dissertation more than any that have come across my desk since I came to UNC-Chapel Hill thirteen years ago. Bryan's perspective on the Irish Catholic influence on southern literature is as original and innovative as I have ever seen. It displays what only the most talented Ph.D. students are able to muster early in their writing careers—an individual sense of voice, all too often lacking in academic writing in the humanities. Bryan is extremely well read, intellectually versatile (he has a degree in law), inquisitive, and shrewd, all excellent qualities of mind that he balances with an engaging wit and a love of dialogue and personal interaction. While many young professors write competently and out of a sense of professional duty, Bryan writes engagingly, often brilliantly, out of a genuine love of the art itself. He is, in short, *sui generis*, in a class by himself. --**Bill Andrews, E. Maynard Adams Professor of English, Senior Associate Dean for Fine Arts and Humanities, UNC**

After just his first year at Randolph-Macon College, Dr. Giemza established himself as an extraordinarily talented young teacher in the English Department and a much admired scholar. Loved and admired by both his students and his faculty colleagues, Bryan is an insightful and gifted professor, with a strong background specializing in Literature of the American South and a one-of-a-kind educational experience gained from both a Ph.D. in English and a J.D. in Law. He brings to his studies and his teaching a profound interdisciplinary expertise like no one I have met in the humanities—it comes from his education and from his broad interests and ability to tie ideas together from diverse fields. His work on *Southern Writers* won the 2006 Jules and Frances Landry Award, one of the most competitive and prestigious of such awards in America. He came to Randolph-Macon after three years of postdoctoral work at prestigious Southern universities, and with a scholarly and pedagogical maturity that would rival any professor at any age. In short, Dr. Giemza has gifts that anyone would envy, and he uses them generously to produce a compelling positive impact from his work. --**William W. Johnston, Former Provost, Randolph-Macon College**

Dr. Giemza is a superior scholar, teacher, colleague and leader by any international standard. My field of study is Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the best scholars, Dr. Giemza opened up an entirely new panorama to me in the experiences of the Irish in the American South. Partly through his work, I fell in love not only with the region, but its people. He is a passionate advocate for the cultures that he studies, with a mind possessed of balanced judgment and sharp critique in equal measure (which may in part reflect on his own training in the law). In support of this work, Dr. Giemza has a wide and evolving range of publications. Through his foundational biography of Father Ryan he is moving to locate the American south in global context. This is crucial activity in the changing world that we seem now to be entering, and I cannot think of a better advocate in the classroom and in the public sphere for the intellectual excellence of the state of Virginia and its investment in education. You have one of the brightest stars in contemporary literary and historical criticism in his subject on your books. Even more than that, you have a gifted individual with the capacity to translate his intelligence from the book to the classroom and to the students who are your citizens and leaders tomorrow. --**Nicholas Allen, Moore Institute Professor, NUI-Galway**

Dr. Giemza's dedication towards educating himself and those around him makes him a passionate and enthusiastic public figure. More personally, Dr. Giemza's gentle and encouraging demeanor makes him a well-rounded teacher. His classes convinced me to pursue an English major. No class was ever the same; the variety of lesson plans and perspectives in which he approached a given subject made learning provocative and enjoyable. Debates, group projects, short essays, film critiques, research papers, discussion groups and presentations were part of the daily curriculum. The variety of lesson plans helped me to approach and think about literature in an unconventional and dynamic way. It is clear to me that he not only helped

me as a writer and reader, but as a thinker and an intellectual. Even when he went to work at other institutions he supported me at every turn and was instrumental in helping me secure a grant with the French embassy. I am currently considering a career-path as a professor, and I can only hope that I can inspire and educate my students as much as Dr. Giemza has done for me. --**Katherine Robinson, WFU Class of 2009**

Professor Giemza is probably the most versatile (that is to say, possessed in excellence in more areas) young teacher-scholar I have ever encountered. He is an outstanding teacher, a scholar of the first rank (and besides that, one whose work is a joy to read), a caring mentor of students, a superb creative writer, one who has used his law degree to teach courses in such areas as environmental law, and if all that were not enough, a former through-hiker of the 2200-mile (approximately) Appalachian Trail. In fact, I have probably never known a young scholar who can do so many things so well at the same time—teaching (and in a number of areas, including but not limited to American and southern literature, Irish and Irish-American literature, African American and Native American literature, courses involving legal issues, and environmental studies), writing, and mentoring. He is indeed a rising star in the world of academia. --**Fred Hobson, Professor of English and Lineberger Professor in the Humanities, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

In addition to the kind words on his evaluations, ("Dr. Giemza is an inspiring professor with great ideas and insightful instruction"; "Dr. Giemza is one of the best professors I have had") Dr. Giemza could often be seen meeting and talking with his students outside the classroom. We require our post-doctoral fellow to use his or her time to work toward the completion of a book manuscript. During his time here, Bryan worked on not only one, but three, book projects. His prodigious output speaks for itself: Dr. Giemza is a scholar of remarkable productivity with a broad range of intellectual interests. His teaching and scholarship are truly impressive for a junior faculty member. He also is a splendid and supportive colleague.--**Walter B. Edgar, Director, Institute for Southern Studies, University of South Carolina**

By reaching across departments and areas of study, Dr. Giemza helps scholars and professionals from different lines of study to interact and share with one another; a practice which many think is too uncommon. A kind, genuine, and studious demeanor endeared Dr. Giemza not only to his students but to his colleagues in a short time. --**William Duke, Institute of Southern Studies (Student Worker), USC Class of 2008**

Dr. Bryan Giemza is not only an outstanding professor, but also an outstanding individual. Class became interesting and fun thanks to Dr. Giemza's creative ways to express and portray a story's ideas and themes. Dr. Giemza has changed and inspired me in ways one could only find in a perfect world. With the help of Dr. Giemza's extraordinary teaching abilities, I wrote a story that won our school-wide writing contest. This was an honor I could not take without acknowledging Dr. Giemza for his help and inspiration. He also inspired me to become a writer and English major. --**Brandon Kemps, Randolph-Macon Class of 2012**

As an English major whose interest lies primarily in the realm of British literature, I enrolled in Professor Giemza's class on the Realistic Movement in America with admittedly lukewarm expectations. However, within the space of a few months, this young, refreshingly enthusiastic professor took my preconceived notions and turned them upside down. From his dedication to engaging each and every student with the literature in an in-depth manner to his efforts to bring back nineteenth century slang, it was impossible not to enjoy Professor Giemza's class.--**Meagan Moore, Randolph-Macon College, Class of 2010**

Additional Documentation

Excerpted Recent Course Evaluations from Students

Environmental Law and Literature (in his first semester of college teaching rated one of the top five professors overall in the Department)

- At the beginning of the semester, I was apprehensive about this class. I decided to stay in it because I knew that I would take something away from it. That is what makes Dr. Giemza a great professor, no matter what he is teaching. He teaches his students to care about what they are doing.
- Genuinely cares whether we learn. He was very respectful of each and every student. He allowed us to express our views instead of just learn[ing] his.
- I feel he stimulates independent thinking and rewards the same. He is approachable and thoughtful.
- Absolutely fantastic, way all teachers should be. His enthusiasm made me want to do the readings and come to class and his class stimulated my interest in the environment.
- Outstanding because he not only knows what he is teaching, but he likes what he teaches. He is a very caring professor.
- He has a “passion for teaching and helping.”
- The course was challenging but that’s why I liked it so much.
- Giemza was one of the most engaging and challenging professors I have had here or at my former college. His love of the material shows in his teaching.

Introduction to American Literature (Wake Forest and Randolph-Macon)

- I feel that this course was a highlight of my college career.
- The professor gets us to think more deeply.
- His animation and excitement made me want to learn and I don’t even like English.
- Made sure everyone understood the material. Showed he cared about the class & students. Best Professor I’ve had at R-MC.
- Dr. Giemza is one of the best professors I’ve had at Wake Forest. I purposely took [another class with him] because he makes English, a subject I’m not at all interested in, into an interesting and thought-provoking class.
- Dr. Giemza is arguably the best professor I have had here at Wake. He is very concerned with making sure that the students understand and enjoy the most important aspects of the literature.
- He constantly engages his students.
- Definitely not an easy teacher but I feel like he really challenged me. It’s one of those classes you truly feel smarter after taking.
- I would love to take another class from this prof. He is motivated, interested, and driven.
- He is very passionate about his teaching and loves the subject. Really helped with my writing. Loved the teacher and his style.
- He always makes you feel 100% comfortable about class participation.
- Dr. Giemza did a great job of making me think about important issues in a subject that I don’t enjoy.
- He inspired me to view literature in a new way. I have never thought so deeply about literary works.
- His ability to engage the entire class is extraordinary.
- Although I found his [first year seminar] demanding, I got so much back from it and gained so much respect for him that I chose to take him again.

Writing Seminar

- Professor Giemza’s teaching style is extraordinary.
- I have recommended him to many other students because I learned so much.
- Taking this class has made me step out of the box and change my writing style. It made me express my thoughts in different ways.
- Learning the technical aspects of writing especially helped me make arguments. He commented to push me in the right direction and help me figure it out on my own.
- Giemza always knew what to say to help with a problem with writing.
- I have never felt such an improvement in my writing style because of a teacher in one semester.
- Prof. Giemza was a wonderful teacher. The conferences about our papers really helped in improving my writing.
- The best English class I have ever had, hands down.

Introduction to the Short Story/American Romanticism/American Realism

- Professor Giemza brought the text to life. Great professor.
- Giemza’s style of teaching was great because he opened our eyes to the rest of the world with ... literature.
- It’s nice to have a professor that actually gets excited about what they teach.
- Passionate about teaching and shows it when he teaches. He makes the class interactive and meaningful.
- I didn’t think that I would like this course, but once we got to breaking down the stories, the professor reeled me in and got me interested.
- Professor Giemza taught in a way that made the material make sense.
- Excellent teacher. I want to try and be like him when I teach.

Literature of the American South/First Year Experience Colloquium on the American South

- This class has not only challenged me, but I think made me a better student.
- His style has been extremely effective. Not only does he expect us to have ideas on what the literature means, he also helps us to develop them further.
- He is constantly looking for feedback/student involvement which is refreshing, especially at a collegiate level.
- This is by far my favorite class since starting college.... Giemza has made it exciting and interactive.
- He took material that was so confusing to me and made it understandable. He also broadened my way of thinking.
- I enjoy the way he challenges us to think about usual mundane ideas and stereotypes. That’s a difficult thing to do and teach, but I think he does an excellent job of it.
- This is the most fascinating class I have taken and Giemza is the most engaging prof.
- Professor Giemza is a marvelous teacher. Great guy, great professor. I always feel like I’ve learned a ton from his courses. For some reason I remember everything I’ve learned as well.
- He does a good job of lecturing not at us, but with us.
- The course works for the way I learn. Professor Giemza adopted his teaching method to the learning styles of the class.
- He is very concerned with the performance of students. I wish all of my professors were more like him.
- Dr. Giemza allowed for a presentation of original thought, avoiding the problem of “regurgitation” that plagues many other literature professors.

Southern cultures

SPRING 2011

The Irish



The Irish

Bryan Giemza, Guest Editor

Front Porch

by Harry L. Watson

"The authors in this special issue on Ireland and the South argue that the Irish left an out-sized imprint on the cultures of the American South and forged a persistent affinity between Ireland and the South."

"A lengthening chain in the shape of memories"

The Irish and Southern Culture

by William R. Ferris

"Irish rockers U2 are committed fans of B.B. King and wrote the song 'When Love Comes to Town' at his request. The song introduced King to important new rock audiences."

Tara, the O'Haras,
and the Irish *Gone With the Wind*

by Geraldine Higgins

"Into the debate about place, race, and the second-best-selling book of all time, we can also bring Irishness."

Another "Lost Cause"

The Irish in the South Remember the Confederacy

by David Gleeson

"As there had been only two prominent Irish generals, and only one, Cleburne, had had a very distinguished record, the story of the common soldier was the story of the Irish Confederate."

Blacks and Irish on the Riverine Frontiers

The Roots of American Popular Music

by Christopher J. Smith

"One of the realities of American life is that certain features of African American performance style will remain strange and alluring to those outside the culture. Not least among such features is the making of hard social commentary on recurring problems of life, often through cutting and breaking techniques-contentious interactions continually calling for a change of direction."

Smoke 'n' Guns

A Preface to a Poem about Marginal Souths, and then the Poem

by Conor O'Callaghan

"Addressing a jubilant crowd in Belfast shortly after the declaration of the original ceasefire in 1993, Gerry Adams reminded his audience that 'they haven't gone away, you know.' He meant that even as 'the cause' was dwindling, its upholders-'the boys'-were still among us. He might just as easily have been talking about the Klan."

Available on St. Patrick's Day in print, online, and as an eBook.

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**Randolph-Macon
College**

Ashland, Virginia

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R-MC English Professor Receives Smith-Reynolds Fellowship



Ashland, VA – Randolph-Macon College English Professor Bryan Giemza has been chosen to receive one of two Smith-Reynolds Founders Fellowships. The Fellowship, sponsored by the Hemingway Foundation and Society, will support summer research in the Ernest B. Hemingway collection at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts.

Giemza is currently writing a book about the importance of debts and valuation in Hemingway's short fiction.

"The book looks at how Hemingway was interested in counting costs of all kinds: not just monetary, but national, moral, familial, authorial, and above all, the costs of love," says Giemza. "It also considers how writers express their literary debts to Hemingway. For example, Richard Ford and Cormac McCarthy expressly take up Hemingway's work as they consider irresolvable human obligations—debts, trespasses, and fair play."

Giemza has recently completed a literary history of Irish Catholic writers of the American South. The book manuscript is currently in press at LSU Press. He is an editor of *Southern Writers* (LSU Press, 2006) and the co-author of *Poet of the Lost Cause: A Life of Father Ryan* (with Donald Beagle, University of Tennessee Press, 2008). The book was nominated for the Lincoln, McClemore and

Jefferson Davis Prizes.

In addition, Giemza has been invited to be a contributor to one of four poetry workshops at the 2011 Sewanee Writers' Conference. The conference, which will bring together distinguished faculty to provide instruction and criticism through workshops and craft lectures in fiction, poetry, and playwriting, will be held at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. "I look forward to bringing back some practical advice for Stylus staffers and students in writing classes," says Giemza.

Giemza joined the faculty at R-MC in 2008. He earned his B.A. at the University of Notre Dame and his J.D., M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Founded in 1830, and located in historic Ashland, Virginia, ideally located just north of Richmond and 90 miles south of Washington D.C., Randolph-Macon College is a selective, co-educational, nationally-recognized liberal arts college with a mission of "developing the minds and character of its students." The college achieves this mission through a combination of personal interaction and academic rigor. The student-faculty ratio is 11:1 and the average class size is 15 students. Enrollment is kept at approximately 1,200 to maintain this intimate learning environment. Randolph-Macon College has an outstanding reputation for its exceptional faculty, national and international internships, study abroad and undergraduate research opportunities and unique First-Year Experience program. The college also offers a wealth of social and athletic programs to its students. Randolph-Macon, the oldest United Methodist Church-affiliated college in the nation, received recognition from the Phi Beta Kappa Society for having the most outstanding chapter at a liberal arts college in the United States.