Welcome from the Dean

Dr. Stanton Green

The story – from Rumpelstiltskin to War and Peace – is one of the basic tools invented by the human mind for the purpose of understanding. There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.

Ursula K. Le Guin

Human beings often struggle to preserve a given cultural group through the stories it holds in common.

Robert Bly

It is an exciting time to be a part of the McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Monmouth University. Stories of inquiry, creativity and social action are pulsing through the disciplines that form the liberal arts core to which, we as faculty, students and staff have committed.

Ursula K. Le Guin, the award winning author (and daughter of one of the founding fathers of Anthropology), refers to such stories as the culmination of a society’s achievements. Robert Bly, the acclaimed poet and social activist, equates culture to the stories of a community. And the stories we have written as a School this past year reflect the intellectuality and creativity of our faculty, students and staff.

Let’s look at just some of the titles:

- University Galleries exhibit Three Generations of Wyeths and Jacob Landau Retrospectives
- First Annual Ocean Film and Arts Festival is co-sponsored by our school and the School of Science, Technology & Engineering
- Five acclaimed poets read at Visiting Writers Series
- Students perform a theatre production of The Apple Tree
- Hadyn’s Mass in Time of War performed by MU and local high school students
- High School and incoming students get started early by enrolling in summer classes
- Israeli and Palestinian Fulbright Scholars visit campus
- WMCX again receives Bayliss Radio Foundation scholarships and internships
- Foreign Language Studies initiates Italian study abroad program in Florence, Italy
- Global Understanding Convention addresses Global Solutions
- University faculty participate in Long Branch Poetry Festival
- Performing Arts Series sponsors master classes with McGuinn and Ahn Trio
- Diversity Dissertation Fellow (Stephen Marr) completes successful year
- Model UN team wins Distinguished Delegate award at the National Model UN convention among 3,000 students from the US and abroad.
- History Department begins new graduate specialization in World History
- University co-sponsors Samuel Beckett Festival with Two River Theatre Company
- Psychological Counseling CACREP accreditation proposal approved for site.
- Psychological Counseling awarded HUD/Long Branch Housing Projects contract.
- Psychology Department creates Gender Research Center
- Master of Arts in English graduate program continues to grow
- University assumes publication of academic journal The Space Between
- Criminal Justice students and faculty visit Prague as part of study abroad program
- Social Work Department sponsored student field trips to Mexico City and Santiago, Chile

The diversity of these titles reflects the breadth of our School as it builds a learning environment in which we can all learn – an environment where we can enjoy our lives within a community of people who work to enrich each others’ lives – an environment that can promote social justice to
those less fortunate than us.

The stretch from Theatre to Anthropology – from Criminal Justice to Philosophy – from Psychological Counseling to Foreign Language Studies (you can pick your dyad) is something that both challenges us and invigorates us because when we connect these seemingly far-flung disciplines we enrich our community culture in both practical and aesthetic ways. I often find myself learning more about reality by reading fiction than non-fiction because by telling a story through a novel, painting, poem or play that is not based on empirical reality (leaving aside the issue of reality at the moment to our philosophers), one can express and try to understand broad truths and cultural patterns unconstrained by direct observations. At the same time, that empirical reality needs to be observed systematically – according to some rules of logic – and that we leave to our social scientists and our non-fiction writers.

Our School has the great advantage of having people of all intellectual persuasions among us – the fiction writers, the pollsters, the statisticians, the historians, the visual artists, the performers, and the (theoretical and applied) social scientists. That is why we can learn from each other and it is why as the liberal arts core of Monmouth University, we can best contribute to students as they find their ways within our culture.

Closing with Robert Bly is natural for an anthropologist like me, as he says:

_Colleges and universities are precisely where the gifts of the past are meant to be studied and absorbed._

To that I can add that the Humanities and Social Sciences build upon “the gifts of the past” toward the future benefit of humanity. We should all be proud of the work we have done as a School and Community and I look forward to the exciting things we will begin in the new academic year 2007-2008.

**From the Desk of Dr. Golam M. Mathbor, Associate Dean**

First, I would like to thank you all for your continued support, cooperation, and the confidence that you have in my leadership in serving your unique needs. The biggest concern that I had when I accepted this position was how to balance between scholarship expectations and my administrative duties. In fact, many of my friends and colleagues continuously reminded me not to slow down my sustained record of scholarly work after I became an administrator. At the same time, I needed to make adjustments to the new culture of academic administration. I believe I have figured out a way how not to compromise with scholarly expectation as a faculty member, and how to serve as an effective administrator. Please don’t ask for the recipe; it is my secret!

Our school’s office staff: Ms. Eileen Jones, Ms. Judith Ramos, and Ms. Lynne Clay have always provided me timely and needed information and resources to perform my duties effectively and efficiently. I am truly indebted to Dean Stan Green for his generous support and encouragement in giving me the opportunity to become a successful academic administrator. Michael Thomas, Assistant Dean, has always been welcoming ever since I joined the school. Michael, I sincerely appreciate your cooperation. In the role of Associate Dean, I am in constant touch with all the department chairs and their staffs. Without their friendly support and cooperation, I would not be able to perform my duties in a timely fashion. I admire their tireless support, and I look forward to their continued cooperation in the days coming. I must say a special thanks to Dr. Datta Naik, Dean of the Graduate School, for his continued support, advice, and consultation that I receive in doing my day-to-day administrative duties effectively. Thank you, Dean Naik, for being there, and for the warmth and compassion you have extended to me on both a personal and professional level.

There are many exciting events emanating from our school. Our school has been an instrumental partner in promoting and advancing global education on campus and its implications beyond the campus. Our school’s faculty deserves credit for raising on-campus awareness about global issues that ultimately impact us at the local level. We must maintain this momentum on campus as students become more and more interested in global components in their learning aspiration. Dr. Saliba Sarsar, Associate Vice President and Professor of Political Science, and Dr. Rekha Datta, Chair of the Political Science Department, has played an intricate part in spearheading all of us in promoting global education as an integral part of our academic pursuits envisioned here, at Monmouth.

The Sixth Global Understanding Convention 2007, “Global Solutions: Sharing Resources, Shaping Peace” was a great success. Indeed, we could listen to many solutions and strategies taking place at various levels from our distinguished presenters, discussants, and participants. There were about 62 presentations, nine panel discussions, and seven films shown during this convention that took place from April 9-14, 2007. The convention concluded with a cultural festival organized by the International Student Society of Monmouth University. Our sincere appreciation and special thanks go to Ms. Barbara Nitzberg and her students for organizing and presenting such a wonderful event. The Global Understanding Project Committee, during a retreat in June, announced the theme for next

Our campus-wide faculty forums were a huge success, and kicked off with a presentation in October 2006 by Dr. Judith Bazler. Dr. Bazler’s lecture focused on “China-in-transition tossing aside the past and running into the future.” Her presentation questions China-tall buildings with huge cranes lurching in the background waiting to build the next “nest” for whom? November’s forum was led by Dr. Brian Severs and Dr. Laura Kelly and focused on “Stereotypes and College Textbooks: How Aware Are We?” The presentation was supported by concrete evidence from 12 textbooks. The presenters focused on gender, minorities, race, and religion, in particular, and the issue in general. The new year started with Stephen Marr, Diversity Fellow at Monmouth University, as the Speaker for our February forum. Mr. Marr lectured on “Botswana: An African Miracle.” He raised a concern that despite its glowing reputation, Botswana faces severe pressures from a population largely marginalized from the country’s swift development over the past four decades. The struggle is most evident in Botswana’s capital, Gaborone, where conflicts over access to economic resources and urban spaces are a visible part of the everyday life of the city. Professor Don Swanson was our speaker at the March forum. Professor Swanson addressed Monmouth’s Critical Discourse Program (HU201) by asking what is being taught and why? What impact does it have on the thinking and learning of our students? Dr. Julius Adekunle led the April forum on “Confusion in Politics: The Shari’a in Nigeria.” Dr. Adekunle’s presentation highlighted how political leaders mix religion with politics, and how the introduction of the Shari’a (Muslim Law) has caused confusion and division among Nigerians. If anyone is interested in presenting a topic for the up-coming academic year, please contact Eileen Jones via e-mail: emjones@monmouth.edu.

From the Office of the Assistant Dean

Mentoring: Mystery, Humility, and Other Ideals

by Michael P. Thomas, Assistant Dean

One night at a Visiting Writers’ reception in Syracuse while I was in graduate school, a man came up to me, his face muscles tensing, and said, “What have you been writing? What have you been working on? You should have twelve new poems a week.” He leered, his 6’4” wrestler’s frame bending towards me. I would not call what I felt then, fear, but it was something else I can’t explain entirely, something mixed with an urgency, a sudden motivation which I could locate outside my own goals and personal desires. I wondered why the hell he cared so much and why he seemed so angry with me. The truth was that I hadn’t been writing enough in that second year of grad school. I needed more money and gave up most nights to waiting tables. He knew I wasn’t as productive as I had been in my first year. And he, the writer Stephen Dobyns, was one of my mentors, though I didn’t know or understand what that word meant. I discovered, slowly, the formal and informal characteristics of that type of relationship. The fact that I think of that moment 15 or 16 years later, and still consider it a transformative one, means that I had become an “apprentice” without knowing it.

On a different night, after workshop, as another blizzard took hold during a frigid February in upstate New York, Stephen was in a somber mood and confessed to our small group that he needed us, “What would I do without other poets and without my students?” He needed us. Wasn’t it supposed to be the other way, the younger, inexperienced writers clinging onto the famous poet for knowledge? My writing turned into, for the first time, a project beyond my personal life, or what I hoped to achieve in poetry. I suddenly felt over the course of that semester that I had to produce for him, and also for the poets working alongside me. Dare I say that I began to contemplate the urge to make poems for the sake of poetry itself. My commitment was almost instantly locked into a
lifelong one, and that would become the true reward of graduate school for me.

What defines the principle and act of mentoring on a college campus? And, unlike my example, can it play such a significant role with undergraduates? Does it only happen "organically" arising from some chance meeting between a student and a faculty member, and even further, with a faculty member in that student's major? Is there a difference between Advising and Mentoring?

Four years ago, my student, Dan Duffy ('07), wrote a fifteen-page memoir for an assignment I called, simply, "The Freewrite." I asked for ten pages of spontaneous writing to free the students up in their first year from the constraints of the four or five page essay. Dan wrote mostly about the death of a friend and I found the ending as beautiful as anything I had read while teaching here. I nominated it for an Honor's School Award and after he received it, his parents told him they would support him as an English major and pay his way after college to write full time for a year. What followed was four years of informal talks with Dan about books and writing. When his Honors' Thesis was lost after his computer crashed, he showed up in my office looking like he had gone fifteen rounds with Joe Frazier. There wasn't much I could do then, except listen. What he did was quite miraculous. He rewrote the forty pages of his thesis and then completed it with another ten.

I think again of my own mentor, who challenged me with another question following the others at that same reception. While he towered above, literally and figuratively, he asked with a sneer, "Are you afraid of the blank page?" Creative writing, most writing, begins there, with that sense of emptiness and contemplation, which can seem overwhelming at times. And so can the role of mentoring. What I hope for is that I can ask questions a student may not know the answer to for years to come. That may not be so practical when someone wants to know if I will sign their late withdrawal form, but that same student may have other questions next year or may notice the photograph of Miles Davis in my office and begin to tell me about her father's love of jazz and about how hard it was when he passed away. Beginnings and endings can be unpredictable, even in our world of semester linearity.

When the poet, W.S. Merwin asked his teacher, John Berryman about whether his poems were any good, Berryman had a memorable response, which Merwin then wrote about in his well-known poem, "Berryman."

The poem's last two stanzas are as follows:

I had hardly begun to read
I asked how can you ever be sure
that what you write is really
any good at all and he said you can't

you can't you can never be sure
you die without knowing
whether anything you wrote was any good
if you have to be sure don't write(33-40)

Although this may seem harsh or extreme, the meaningful part of this poem, as it connects to teaching and mentoring is that we can't always measure the outcome. The relationship of a mentor with his or her apprentice can't be anticipated. But whether that relationship is formal or informal, it requires a unique mixture of risk, generosity, spontaneity, commitment and humility. We can't always know how long what we say or teach will be remembered. Maybe it will be only a few months or a year. But it may also mark someone's memory for 16 years, or even turn into the subject of a piece of writing, a poem perhaps published by a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, words immortalized for centuries.