

UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



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Happenings & Accomplishments

*Keep up to date with the going-ons of the English department by visiting the [News and Events](#) page!

Conference Presentation: Monique Bain, Tek Chhetry, and Jennifer Byrd will be participating with Dr. Will Duffy in a panel presentation at the RSA (Rhetoric Society of America) conference in Portland, Oregon, on Friday, May 22, 2026! The presentation is titled, "Students' Right to Their Own Language in a Global Context." Congrats!

Graduating TAs

Congratulations to our TAs graduating this semester or this summer! We wish you the absolute best in your future endeavors.

- Bethany Datuin, MFA
- Gloria Odary, MFA
- Marilyn Jackson, MFA
- Obiageli Iloakasia, MFA

WPA Graduate Assistant Director Opening

The Graduate Assistant Director will teach one composition course per semester and devote 10 hours per week to administrative work for the first-year writing program.

Application: To apply, TAs with at least two years of teaching experience should submit their transcripts, a CV, and a statement of purpose for their time as the Graduate Assistant Director. The statement of purpose should discuss how the applicant's course work and teaching experiences have prepared the TA to take on this administrative role and outline a potential project the applicant would like to undertake while serving as the Graduate Assistant Director.

The project should seek to improve the First-Year Writing program and respond to current research or innovations in writing studies or explain how expertise from another field can make important interventions in the program.

Please submit applications to Dr. Fredlund at kfrdlund@memphis.edu with the subject line "WPA GAD Application" by Wednesday May 13th.

Fall 2026

The fall semester begins on Monday, August 24th. You can find the syllabi on the Department's Canvas course and the [shared One Drive](#) starting May 15.

We would love to celebrate your accomplishments or spread the word about your events! Please send your upcoming conference presentations, publications, and defenses to Lindsay Helms (lldailey@memphis.edu).



ReCAP: Teaching Faculty Panel

At April's All-CAP meeting, a panel of teaching-track faculty shared their experiences as professors of teaching, including what led them to pursue teaching-focused positions, advice for applying to such roles, and their perspectives on the role of teaching faculty in academia. Below is a summary of the key topics discussed during the panel.

Panelists:

- Rhonda Powers - rrpowers@memphis.edu
- Kendra Vanderlip - klvndrlp@memphis.edu
- Lindsay Helms - lldailey@memphis.edu
- Adam Sneed - asneed4@memphis.edu
- Carlos Bolton - cbolton@memphis.edu

Moderator: Andy Donnelly - a.donnelly@memphis.edu

The Role of Teaching Faculty Positions in Academia

Teaching-track positions are expanding at universities, even as research and tenure-track positions in the humanities are declining. At the same time, the development of promotional ladders with advancement & some protections is on the rise for these types of positions. As a result, graduate students should seriously consider applying for teaching-track positions.

Prof. Powers: “This is a viable career, and **you can make great contributions** to the university as a teacher, researcher, or administrator. Be flexible and look for different opportunities.”

Career Pathways

The professors had varied career trajectories that culminated in teaching-track positions. For example, Profs. Sneed and Powers taught at community colleges first, Prof. Helms taught high school Spanish, and Prof. Bolton was hired as he was finishing his MFA program. For many of the professors, **family and personal life influenced their decision** to take a teaching-track job.

What to Expect in a Teaching-Track Position

Prof Vanderlip stated that “most of us teach four courses per semester.” Prof Helms explained that the UofM requires teaching faculty to dedicate 80% of their time to teaching and 20% to service as opposed to tenure-track positions which allow time for research.

Several of the professors added that different universities might have different requirements; for example, both Profs. Sneed and Powers experienced teaching five courses per semester while teaching at community colleges. Prof. Helms added that some institutions may even have different titles for teaching positions, including “lecturer,” “instructor,” or “professor of teaching.” At some institutions, teaching professors teach three courses a semester. Prof. Donnelly emphasized the “distinction between adjunct lecturers and full-time faculty” is often that full-time positions include benefits as well as opportunities for promotion.

Dedicating Time to Research

Profs. Vanderlip and Helms stressed the importance of protecting research time as a teaching professor. “The **department is flexible to work with me** on my schedule so that all of my classes are on the same days,” said Prof. Vanderlip. “My days off are for writing and conferences.” She also noted that the department is flexible with her days because she is willing to do more preps and teach a wider variety of courses.

Prof. Helms added that teaching faculty “**must be intentional**” about **protecting their time**. She described having a “research pipeline” which involves a steady stream of “data, partially finished articles, and something waiting to be published.” She said this process allows her to publish an average of two articles per year.

Early in her career, Prof. Powers became interested in the research in teaching and learning coming out of psychology. She explained, “When you are a teacher, your goal is to improve, so the scholarship often happens in the classroom,” she said. “**Your teaching can be part of your research and scholarship.**” Prof. Sneed added that granting other researchers access to his classes had resulted in opportunities to be part of grant research.

Advice for the Job Market

Several of the professors suggested that CAP students begin now to prepare for future teaching positions. Prof. Bolton recommended saving resources to a Drive outside of Canvas or One Drive to access them after graduation. “Get permission from students now so that you can use their work in future classes,” he added.

Prof. Powers agreed. **“Gather materials consciously,”** she said. “Think about what courses you’d like to teach but also realize that teaching comp is your bread and butter.” Powers warned that she had been on committees that had rejected applicants for speaking negatively about teaching first-year writing courses.

Prepping for Interviews

Prof. Helms pointed out some ways that CAP is preparing future teaching faculty to position themselves ahead of other applicants. For example, if the interview process requires a teaching demonstration, CAP participants already have experience and can pull from prepared lessons.

If you would like to ask follow-up questions of any of the panelists, feel free to shoot them an email! They would be happy to answer/discuss any questions you have about teaching positions.



Important Grading Info

As Spring 26 comes to a close, we want to remind you of some important information. Most of the following has been retrieved from the [Registrar's Final Grading webpage](#).

Important Dates and Deadlines

- Last Day of Class - Wed., April 29
- Study Day - Thurs., April 30
- Final Exams - Friday, May 1 - Thursday, May 7
 - [Final Exam Schedule](#)

Final Grading

You can either submit your grades via Banner under "Faculty Self-Service" or via Canvas. Here are some quick guides on grading for both methods:

- [Final Grading in Banner 9 Faculty Self Service](#)
- [Canvas Banner Grade Exchange](#)

Incompletes

For students who qualify to receive an incomplete, you should select an "I" grade on the Final Grades roster, but with certain stipulations. For additional information and instructions, please see the "Giving an Incomplete" email that Bridget Wells will send on April 27.

If the grading session has closed, you will need to submit the corrected grade through the "Grade Change Tool" under the "Faculty Grading" tab in My Memphis. You will not have access to this tool until grades are official, typically two days after the grading due date.

Attendance

You are given the option to enter a “Last Attend Date” for each student. If a student attended class, but stopped attending during the term, resulting in failure, select a grade of ‘FN’ and enter the date/approximate date in the ‘Last Attend Date’ field.

DO NOT enter a date for students who COMPLETED the class.

DO NOT enter anything in the ‘Hours Attended’ column for students who COMPLETED the class.

For students who attended class but stopped during the term, resulting in failure, select a grade of “FN” and enter the date they stopped attending in the “Last Attend Date” field.

If a student never attended class, and they failed the class, select a grade of “FN”, and enter a “0” (zero) in the ‘Hours Attended’ field to indicate they never attended.

TA Spotlight: Graduating TAs

We asked the graduating TAs to share a bit about their experiences in the CAP program. Here is what they said:

“The CAP program always reminded me that I was never alone because I had a community of people learning and unlearning with me. The program often helped me negotiate better ways to support my students in the classroom and even support myself as an instructor. It showed me areas I was excelling at and areas that needed improvement. All new (or early) college-level writing instructors need a program like this to properly ground them in the business of teaching.”

— Obiagelia Iloaskia, MFA

“Listening to colleagues share their teaching practices and experiences at CAP meetings helped me fill in the gaps in my knowledge and find footing as a new professor.”

— Gloria O’Dary, MFA

“CAP has been such a helpful resource for me these past couple of years! I cannot imagine what teaching for the first time would have been like without it. Getting to learn the pedagogy of my mentors, instructors, and peers through meetings allowed me to figure out my own teaching philosophy. They also helped to prepare me for what awaits after graduation. I owe a lot of my growth as an educator to the program.”

— Bethany Datuin, MFA

“The CAP program encouraged me to critically reflect on my teaching methods while challenging me to shift from the mindset of a graduate teaching assistant to that of an instructor. This shift in perspective has been invaluable in shaping my confidence and approach in the classroom, as well as in future teaching opportunities. The insightful feedback from my teaching observations helped me identify both my strengths and areas for growth. I also appreciated the candid advice shared during the faculty-led career sessions, which eased some of the uncertainty around transitioning from grad school to the academic job market. It was reassuring to gain insight into what to expect and how to align my writing goals with a teaching career. I am truly grateful for this opportunity.”

— Marilyn Jackson, MFA

CAP Calendar

Our first meeting of the Fall 26 semester will be on Tuesday, August 25th. The fall schedule will be available in August. We look forward to seeing you all then!

