

For the love of words



As head of the NMU English department, Jim Schiffer is surrounded daily by people who have a love of words, whether their passion is writing or literature. When he comes in contact with NMU donors, he has two favorite words: thank you.

“Gifts made to support the English department’s endeavors are greatly appreciated,” said Schiffer. “They are used for such things as student travel to regional and national conferences, scholarships, the department’s awards program, as well as to help bring nationally recognized writers and poets to campus.”

The English department supports every Northern undergraduate student, regardless of major, as all students are required to take composition courses to receive an associate or bachelor’s degree. The department also features Northern’s only terminal degree, a master of fine arts in creative writing with

concentrations in fiction, nonfiction and poetry. It also offers a master’s degree with concentrations in literature, pedagogy and writing. At the undergraduate level, the department has majors and minors ranging from literature, writing and journalism to secondary English education and film studies.

The English department also oversees the publication of the student newspaper, *The North Wind*, by providing faculty advisement. Students work in various capacities to help produce *Passages North*, Northern’s nationally recognized literary magazine.

“We’re a large and dynamic department,” said Schiffer. “I’m extremely proud of our students and the work they are doing, which I believe reflects the high caliber of our faculty. We are fortunate to have so many instructors who themselves are publishing or who are regularly presenting at national conferences. What is also impressive

is how many of our students, from undergraduates to those in the MFA program, are presenting papers and publishing. Our programs are enjoying a level of success that, in many ways, is comparable to some of the elite writing and literature programs.”

Currently, seven scholarships are specifically for English majors: Karla Bester English Scholarship, James Bowman Scholarship, Russell Thomas Memorial Scholarship, Ms. Anne Frances Tuffley, Myrle E. Wahtera Memorial Scholarship, Gerald Waite *North Wind* Scholarship, and the *Detroit Free Press* First Amendment Scholarship.

Schiffer would like to have the number of scholarships increase, as well as the opportunities for students to present at national and regional conferences. He’d also like to one day see an endowment created for a visiting creative writing professor.

“We’ve been fortunate to have faculty members with professional connections who have brought many acclaimed writers and poets to campus, but an endowed professorship for a visiting writer would provide that added element of prestige for our guest, as well as provide more extensive interaction with students and faculty,” said Schiffer.

The English department currently has these student honors: the Barnard Award (in honor of Dr. Ellsworth Barnard) for an exceptional paper submitted in EN 111, the Houston Award (in honor of Dr. Howard Houston) for an exceptional paper written in EN 211, and the



Gifts from donors help support student travel, such as attending the renowned Stratford Festival in Canada.

Legler Memorial Poetry Prize (in honor of Professor Phil Legler).

With the passing of John VandeZande, professor emeritus, in May, family, friends, colleagues and former students are working to create an annual short fiction award for students.

“John VandeZande was a dearly beloved and admired member of the NMU English department faculty for over 30 years. Often since his retirement in 1996, former students

who have returned to campus have reiterated how influential John was in their lives and how much they learned from his insight and great sense of humor. A student award in his honor celebrating creativity is most fitting,” said Schiffer.

Contributions to the John VandeZande Memorial Fund can be made in care of the NMU Foundation, via online at www.nmu.edu/foundation or by mail to 1401 Presque Isle Avenue, Marquette, MI 49855.

Schiffer says it is unfortunate

that alumni and friends who give to NMU don’t always get a chance to see the impact their gifts have on students.

“I get a chance to see this on almost a daily basis and that is why I appreciate the opportunity to say thank you to alumni and friends for their continued support,” said Schiffer.

—Cindy Paavola '84 BS



Family, friends, colleagues and former students are working to create an annual award for short fiction by a student in honor of the late John VandeZande, a respected fiction writer and longtime NMU English professor.

LARGE GIFT HELPS U.P. STUDENTS

An anonymous donor has established a new \$200,000 endowment to provide scholarships to students attending Northern who graduate from Upper Peninsula high schools.

In keeping with NMU’s endowment spending policy, the scholarship award amount for 2006-07 will be \$5,000. As the donor adds funds and the endowment grows, the number of scholarships will be increased so that one can be awarded to a freshman, sophomore, junior and senior each year.

“Northern has a tradition of providing access to the students of the Upper Peninsula, regardless of their family’s economic status. Gifts such as this one help NMU to carry on that tradition,” said Amy Silk, director of NMU Foundation operations.

Students can apply for the scholarship during the winter semester by going to the NMU Foundation Web site and clicking on the online scholarship application link.

To learn more about the NMU Foundation’s scholarship program, go to www.nmu.edu/foundation or call 906-227-2627.