

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM COVER PAGE

Student Researcher: [REDACTED] Department: English

NMU Student ID: [REDACTED] Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Course Name and Number student plans to enroll in during one of the summer sessions:
Thesis: EN 699

Project Title: To the Lighthouse: The Great Duck Island Experience

Project Abstract (250 Words):

This summer a group of College of the Atlantic (COA) students in Bar Harbor, Maine will accompany Dr. John Anderson to one of COA's offshore island research stations, Great Duck Island, to observe various types of seabirds and work on the development of the offshore campus. They have graciously invited me to join them to work on my own research as they observe the habits of various seabirds on the island.

This project will provide me with invaluable firsthand experience living a life of self-sustainability and will surround me with authorities on human ecology, which is what every COA student majors in. Both self-sustainability and human ecology are foundational elements in my thesis, which is a novel about a woman who finds herself to be the last person on earth. I have little experience with isolation, with being at the mercy of the sky and sea and adapting to the natural environment. But this is exactly what my main character will be dealing with as, inevitably, the abandoned world reaches the end of its programming and nature takes back control.

As a participant in this research trip, I will be contributing manual labor on the island in the form of maintenance while learning the mechanics of rainwater collection, desalinization of ocean water, lighthouse upkeep and maintenance, construction, and various other techniques for self-sustainment. Not only is this trip ideal for informing my thesis, Dr. Anderson has also offered me the opportunity to provide creative writing instruction to the COA students in an effort to help them marry science, research, and creativity. As an aspiring creative writing instructor, this would be an incredible opportunity to gain teaching experience.

SIGNATURES:

[REDACTED]
Student Researcher

2-6-17
Date

[REDACTED]
Faculty Advisor

2-6-17
Date

[REDACTED]
Department Head

2-6-17
Date

Departmental Rating of Proposal: (Additional comments can be attached)

☐ Excellent ☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Fair

Ranking of Proposal within the Department: ___ of ___ proposals.

Excellence in Education Award
Budget Information

Name: [REDACTED] _____

Department: English

*Please indicate how you will use the \$1,500 Excellence in Education Award if you are
selected to receive an award this summer.

Complete this form, save, and insert in your proposal.

Expenses:

<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Cost</u>
<u>Equipment/Supplies:</u>	
Marmot Women's PreCip Jacket	\$ 100.00
Leatherman Multitool, "Rebar"	\$ 59.85
Marmot Mavericks 40 Semi Rec Sleeping Bag	\$ 89.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Equipment/Supplies:	\$ 248.85
<u>Travel:</u>	
MQT to BHB roundtrip flight	\$ 850.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Travel:	\$ 850.00
<u>Living Expenses:</u>	
Two-night hotel stay in Bar Harbor (upon arrival and departure)	\$ 280.00
Food	\$ 150.00
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Living Expenses:	\$ 430.00
<u>Miscellaneous Expenses:</u>	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
Total Miscellaneous Expenses:	\$ 0.00

GRAND TOTAL EXPENSES: **\$ 1,528.85**

COMMENTS: Anything above the allotted \$1,500 I will pay for out-of-pocket.

Statement of Problem

I am applying for the Excellence in Education grant in order to fund a research trip with Dr. John Anderson and students from College of the Atlantic (COA) to spend one to two weeks, weather depending, on Great Duck Island off the coast of Maine. The most pivotal aspects of this trip in regards to my own creative work are experiencing, firsthand, techniques of self-sustainability and also learning from Dr. John Anderson and the COA students, all of whom are studying human ecology, about the effects of humans on their environments.

My thesis is a novel for which, as of yet, I have only written the prologue. It is about a woman who wakes up to find she is the last creature on earth, and it ultimately explores why a person might choose to live if only for themselves and not for any other human or animal. She decides to travel to each state, living in the shells of other people's lives until she finds a place where she wants to make a home that's hers. The book will address isolation, loneliness, mental illness, sexuality, personal ideology, philosophy, iterations of love, environmental distress and healing, and, of course, many other themes. The problem is, I need to deepen my well of experience in regards to isolation and innovation; I need to research methods of self-sustainability, to speak with people who are experienced survivalists, but I also need firsthand experience with these methods so that when it is time to write about them I can do so authentically and with confidence.

On Great Duck Island there is also a lighthouse, which is the structure that sparked the idea for this project in the first place, as I would like the lighthouse to be a prominent symbol in my novel. However, in regards to themes of hope and isolation, the lighthouse symbol has been used over and over again, and I don't wish to fall back on what is predictable and established. However, I believe that in the history of the lighthouse, in its transition to automation, in its bare

bones—something I’ve only recently begun to research with Eric Jay Dolin’s book *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse*—there lies a yet untapped symbolism and significance that I wish to explore. Time in a lighthouse, learning about its particular mechanics and idiosyncrasies, would be an invaluable source for inspiration and education on my part, and it would, again, allow me to incorporate into my novel the intimate details that keep readers turning the page for more.

Project Rationale & Significance

I spend my days in an English department, surrounded by fellow writers and literature scholars, and it is a community I value greatly. However, to join the College of the Atlantic community on this research trip allows me an opportunity I am rarely afforded, which is to immerse myself in a different field of expertise, to let what has been largely literary and creative novel-writing preparation be informed by science and experience and travel. There is no other scenario I can conjure up in which I am able to tackle, head-on, so many of the tasks and challenges my main character will encounter—building construction, dry-goods meal preparation, and water supply desalinization; tinkering with machines and mechanisms, learning to tie a hearty knot, and building trust with your own body.

As I will be doing some creative writing instruction with the COA students as well, I will have the opportunity to practice my skills as a creative writing instructor prior to my application to teach Intro to Creative Writing at Northern during my third MFA year. I also believe that establishing a positive rapport with a college as prestigious and unique as College of the Atlantic could potentially provide excellent opportunities for Northern and its future students.

Expected Outcomes

My hope is to write, at the very least, the first 30 pages of my thesis while I'm on the island, in addition to reading two of the texts from my Literature Review. When I return to Marquette, I will spend the remainder of my summer adding to the novel, with significantly more experience tucked under my belt, so that I am confident and prepared to write a refined thesis prospectus come fall. I also expect to come away with a comprehensive knowledge of the history, mechanics, and cultural significance of the lighthouse and to have fresh insight and inspiration into its symbolic utility.

Literature Review

The literature I have chosen includes a book offering a comprehensive history of the lighthouse, *Brilliant Beacons*, which will help me in my search for untapped symbolism. I have also included a guide to traditional skills and a book about survival in various circumstances, both of which will not only help me prepare for the trip but also will inform my main character as she figures out how to live of her own devices. *The World Without Us* is a book I believe will be central to research for my thesis, because, in it, I will be challenged to show how the world changes over decades without human interference. The remaining books address mental illness, plant and birdlife, isolation, philosophy, and the craft of novel-writing.

Dolin, Eric Jay. *Brilliant Beacons: The History of the American Lighthouse*. New York: Liveright Corporation, 2016. Print.

Gonzales, Laurence. *Deep Survival*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. Print.

Gehring, Abigail R., ed. *Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills*. 3rd ed.

New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008. Print.

Heinrich, Bernd. *One Wild Bird at a Time: Portraits of Individual Lives*. Boston: Houghton

Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. Print

Jahren, Hope. *Lab Girl*. New York: Knopf, 2016. Print.

Kundera, Milan. *The Art of the Novel*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003. Print.

Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. Print.

Timetable

(As dates are subject to change based on weather, as we will have to take a boat out to the island,

I will not have exact dates for the trip until much closer to departure.)

May: Begin reading Literature Review list and ordering supplies.

June/July: Fly from Marquette to Bar Harbor, stay one night in a hotel before departure via boat with Dr. Anderson and COA students to Great Duck Island. Stay one to two weeks, weather depending, on Great Duck Island before returning to Bar Harbor, staying one night in a hotel, and flying from Bar Harbor to Marquette the following day.

July/early August: Continue writing my thesis with relevant experience on the books and finish reading any books from the Literature Review. Begin thesis prospectus.

Budget Justification

A majority of the budget will be dedicated to travel, but supplies are also an important aspect of this trip. I do not want to be a burden on Dr. Anderson or the COA students, and intend to contribute to the island community as much as any other person there, and in order for me to do so I'll need to have the same supplies they do. This includes a wind- and waterproof jacket I can layer, a reliable multitool, and a quality sleeping bag. Everyone pitches in for food to stock the community kitchen, so I have allotted money for that, as well as two nights in a hotel upon arrival and departure in Bar Harbor. Any additional costs I will gladly cover out of pocket in order that I might take advantage of this incredible opportunity.

Appendix I: Curriculum Vitae

inserted here

Appendix II: Unofficial (or Official) Transcript
inserted here



Department of English
1401 Presque Isle Avenue
Marquette, MI 49855-5301
906-227-2711
Fax: 906-227-1096
Web site: www.nmu.edu/english

February 1, 2017

Dear Excellence in Education Award Committee:

It's my privilege to write a letter of support for [REDACTED] Excellence in Education Award application. [REDACTED] is an outstanding writer and educator, as well as an ambassador for our MFA program, which, I believe, is especially important regarding her vision for this specific research project.

[REDACTED] has been given approval by College of the Atlantic administration and faculty to travel to Bar Harbor, Maine, then to COA's Greater Duck Island Light Station research facility for a two-week residency at the remote island's former Coast Guard beacon and quarters. Greater Duck Island—13 nautical miles from Bar Harbor—is important not only for the scientific research taking place there, but also for its rich biological and cultural history. [REDACTED] is a student of the significance of lighthouses in American history; her affinity for light stations and the cultures surrounding them suffuses her writing. COA does not have graduate students involved in their summer program, so they are especially excited about hosting [REDACTED]. While in residence, [REDACTED] will not only be assisting with seagull biological studies, but will also be leading COA's undergraduate students in creative writing workshops. Living conditions on the island are rustic and travel to and from the island, by COA's 42-foot research vessel *Osprey*, is weather and seas-dependent. Residents must be resilient and able to troubleshoot and solve problems while living in communal quarters. I believe [REDACTED] is well suited for the challenge. She will also likely have an opportunity to visit Mount Desert Rock, COA's whale-studies island facility.

I've been able to help support several successful Excellence in Education projects while at NMU, but frankly, this is the most challenging and exciting opportunity I've been involved with. Not only will the experience specifically inform [REDACTED]'s art, a thesis of collected fiction, but it will share [REDACTED]'s talent and spirit—and NMU—with a dozen exceptional undergraduates off Maine's rugged, singular Atlantic coast.

[REDACTED] is a hard worker with talent and vision; I'm thrilled to give [REDACTED] and her adventurous research my most enthusiastic recommendation. Thank you—please call me on my cell if you have further questions regarding [REDACTED]'s project: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Assistant Professor

[REDACTED]