

R E V I V A L

UNL magazine staff hopes to diversify group of writers

Rarely will you find an English major hanging around Hamilton Hall or a business student roaming through the Temple building without hearing them grumble "stupid ES/IS requirements."

But disciplines cross paths all of the time. So how do we bridge a gap at the university between the drama department, the business college and so on?

Greg Kuzma, the faculty adviser for Laurus and a UNL English professor, has an idea: get Laurus, a publication which prints the creative work of undergraduates at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, out of Andrews Hall.

Laurus is thought of as a magazine that is limited to publishing the work of only English majors. And, not surprisingly, the bulk of contributors are from that department. The genres of writing printed also remain in that aesthetic realm.

"Our core interest is in creative works — essays, poems, stories," Kuzma said. "But we're interested in diversity. There are hundreds of topics we'd like to address."

Krista Magnuson, one of four editors on this year's Laurus staff, agreed that one vision for Laurus is to get contributors from other departments in the university.

"We're trying to make Laurus more of a campus tradition, rather than an English one," Magnuson said. "We're getting good work from English majors, but we want to get work from everyone to show that you don't have to be an English major to contribute."

On top of being thought of as an English publication, many feel that students from other disciplines aren't even aware Laurus exists.

Karen Kunc, an art history professor, said some students in the art department know about Laurus.

"Students are aware but probably not as much as they ought to be," Kunc said. "But when students participated in the past, they were thrilled."

"I'm not sure too many students know about Laurus," said Tice Miller, a professor of theater arts and dance. "It needs a little campaigning, but it's a wonderful publication."

This year's copy of Laurus has included some work from students in other departments.

"We're using art (from students) and have made a connection with the theater department," Kuzma said.

In addition to the inclusion of art, a few other forms of writing appear in this edition of Laurus. Among them is a play by Justin Bottsford and a panel discussion among four artists by Adryan Malloreay.

But Magnuson and Kuzma said they feel the scope of their vision can be better realized.

"We made some headway in the current issue, but not near as much as we hoped. We're working really hard at it," Magnuson said.

"If we could get contributions about science or sports, it would be really great," Kuzma said. "But it will be tough."

Kuzma said works of all kinds could be submitted.

"We want to know where the students are coming from," he said.

Kuzma mentioned a few ideas: travel and sports writing or personal essays by people from all walks of life.

"Students could write about sports women in sports and what their experience is like - or someone could write an essay about contemporary music," Kuzma said. "I'd like to see a passionate piece on the local music scene."

Kunc suggested that allotting different chapters for different disciplines could get more students involved in the whole process.

"Graphic design students would love a whole section where they could manage the design and content," Kunc said.

Some still question whether these are realistic goals for Laurus.

"The aim of Laurus is to become a university magazine for UNL," Kuzma said. "I think there's still room for a general magazine that catches students and satisfies everyone's interests while cutting across disciplines."

Miller said that with more awareness about Laurus, the goals will come into focus.

"As students' work starts showing up, others get interested," Miller said. "I think that's happening, but we need to do more. This work needs a wider audience."

To reach a broader audience, some current Laurus contributors read their works earlier this semester at the Coffee House, 1324 P St.

Miller said more public readings might help increase awareness on campus.

"There ought to be (more) readings from the book," Miller said. "We need to let people know this is good stuff."

Though the magazine is not profitable, publicity for the publication and the aim will remain a high priority.

"I'm not interested in profit," Kuzma said. "I want to have it be something that brings people and the great diversity of the campus together."

Magnuson said the staff of Laurus has a welcoming attitude toward the works they receive.

"We're really accessible and we'll work with people. We try to be as open and flexible as possible," Magnuson said. "People who don't think they're writers — give it a shot — a lot of people in fields without a writing emphasis may not realize they can do it. This is an option open to them."

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How to contribute: Manuscripts can be dropped in the Laurus box in the English department mailroom across from Andrews 202, or at the English Advising Center, Andrews Hall, room 123.