

PUBLISHED FOR ALUMNI, FAMILIES,
& FRIENDS OF NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE

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today



THE VISION FOR NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE

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GRANT TO MAKE NEW
ACADEMIC BUILDING
A REALITY**

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New England
College



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Over the past several months, the topic of innovation has been discussed and explored at many lively meetings and planning sessions on the NEC campus. With the nation's economy still sputtering and little improvement in the housing and job markets, several analysts have suggested that innovation will be the dominant force in an enduring economic recovery. From my perspective as a college president, I couldn't agree more.

At this year's academic Convocation, I focused on the need for innovation in higher education. To be truly innovative we must learn to identify the opportunities that emerge from a challenged and thus altered environment. I see the current economic crisis as a kind of seismic shift in modern society. Metaphorically speaking, where previously solid terrain has been disrupted or destroyed, new geographic formations have emerged. Some parts of our world have disappeared forever. But the undiscovered topography offers an exciting new frontier. Those who can see this new world through a clear lens will take advantage of the opportunity and reap the benefits of being first to adapt.

College and university presidents all over the country are faced with similar challenges. Providing an accessible, relevant, rigorous, and affordable education is the core of our mission. Successfully accomplishing our mission requires that we bring innovative practice to all that we do. Put simply, we must do more than thinking outside the box. We must resolve never to get back in it.

This year alone we have completely rethought the way we orient our first-year students to their college experience. We are continuing to engage larger numbers of non-traditional audiences, create new educational delivery models, and redesign the traditional college residential experience. From a housing model that offers private living space to all first-year students for all four years of their college experience, to a robust twelve-month campus full of engaged and experiential learning components, NEC is on the forefront of educational innovation and gaining visibility and prestige as one of the leaders in the new world of higher learning. And we do this while preserving with great reverence the traditions that have sustained this institution throughout its proud history.

The strategic plan that you will read about in more detail in this issue identifies a number of projects and goals that promote learning, sustain our growth, and enhance our image and reputation. The innovative practice that we apply to each of these goals will set us apart from other institutions and secure the future of the College.

It's hard to believe that ten years have passed since I first came to New England College. We have made great strides in that decade but I believe that our best work together is yet to come.

With warmest regards,

Michele D. Perkins, Ed.D.
President

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Ivy Page

MFA GRADUATE REDEFINES COMMUNITY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S NORTH COUNTRY

By Dawn Coutu

Ivy Page is a poet with a terminal degree and a passion to connect with people. Since graduating from the MFA Program in Poetry two years ago, Ivy has been instrumental in creating ways to build a sense of community among the poets of New Hampshire's northern woods. Ivy traces her strong sense of community to the interaction she experienced with aspiring poets and her mentors at NEC. She has found ways to satisfy her own need to connect with people by leading a writing group, compiling a literary arts magazine, directing two reading series, and teaching as an adjunct professor.

Ivy has taught at Colby-Sawyer College, Plymouth State University, Keene State College, Axia College, and New Hampshire Technical Institute. Although she lives more than an hour from each campus, her passion for her craft and her strong sense of community inspired her to keep traveling the distance. "I have attacked my teaching with manic energy and with both hands. I am getting all that I can out of every moment."

She taps into that same energy when it comes to organizing two reading series: The Mill Fudge Factory and the White Mountain Kitchen Series. "It's time consuming to run two open mics. I negotiate time and money with authors. After I secure them, I list them on the Internet, with community TV stations, in newspaper articles, and then I put up local posters."

Through the White Mountain Kitchen Sessions, held at Ivy's home, she encourages poets to read new work that has not been presented before. Kitchen Sessions feature camp outs, late-night poetry readings, s'mores, and a morning poetry workshop – all within distance of

indoor plumbing. Some participants have described the sessions as "Woodstock for poetry, except with wine."

"The best thing about working with poets is that they are so accessible," notes Ivy. "They're not shut off. In a way, poets are their own agents and they have to be willing to talk to anyone."

Ivy has teamed up with husband Stephen and a number of NEC alumni from the MFA program to start a print and online literary and visual arts journal called *Organs of Vision and Speech Magazine* – or *OVS*. Cinnamon Stuckey, MFA '09 serves as Associate Editor, Lisa Sisler, MFA '09 serves as Assistant Editor, and guest editors have included several other MFA alumni.

As for her own work, Ivy maintains her high-level momentum by sending out new submissions as soon as she receives a response and keeps up to twenty-three journal submissions out at any given time. Her goal has been to publish each poem in her first manuscript within one year. "I do the research, and I spend the time. If you put submissions out shotgun style, it feels like a waste of time when you get the rejection letters back."

This approach has proven successful for Ivy, whose debut manuscript, *Any Other Branch*, was accepted for publication by Salmon Poetry within six months of submission. Even before Ivy's first manuscript went to print, Salmon Poetry accepted her second manuscript, *Elemental*, for publication in 2014. Salmon Poetry has also published works by noted poet Ray Bradbury.

Inspired by the encouragement of her mentors and colleagues, Ivy Page continues to redefine the meaning of community and connectedness through poetry.

MFA PROGRAM CELEBRATES ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

This year, the Master of Fine Arts in Poetry program at New England College celebrates its tenth anniversary! From its beginnings, the MFA program has attracted an international faculty of leading figures in contemporary poetry who are both award-winning and widely published. The MFA in Poetry low-residency program continues to be recognized as one of only two single-genre creative writing programs in the country and combines a rigorous curriculum with innovative concentrations in performance, new media, prose, and translation.

The anniversary kick-off celebrations began with a reading organized through the New Hampshire Writers' Project as part of their first annual New Hampshire Book Festival in October.

A variety of special events are planned for the 2011-12 academic year that include a faculty and alumni reading in Chicago during the annual AWP conference in February. Additional programming will feature an alumni reunion over the June 23-24 weekend during the on-campus summer residency, which will host a book fair of alumni and faculty publications, readings, writing workshops and panels taught by returning alumni and guest faculty and open to the public.

For more information about New England College's MFA program, visit the program's blog at www.Tygerburning.blogspot.com or contact the New England College Graduate Office of Admission at 603-428-2252.

FROM OPEN MIC TO MFA

LEA DESCHENES TALKS ABOUT HER TRANSITION IN POETRY

By Dawn Coutu



Lea Deschenes

Lea Deschenes entered the open mic scene in the early 1990s with a bachelor's degree in theatre performance. Once slam poetry hit Worcester, Massachusetts in 1993, Lea found that she enjoyed the way it blended the two disciplines of theatre and poetry. "It was a contrast to the prevalent reading style at the time," she observed.

By 2005, Lea had advanced to representative status in the Individual World Poetry Slam, but has since stopped slamming. "A lot of people have this idea that you need to discuss political rhetoric or put on a Broadway show," she noted. "But, for me, it's about presenting the

poem well." Now, when Lea performs at an open mic, she gets back in touch with her theatre background and has made a solid connection between her reading style and the emotional content of each poem. She and her husband, poet Victor Infante, travel around the country, performing poetry and visiting friends. She finds it is a way to freshen her perspective and continue the learning process.

Before she was accepted into the MFA program at New England College, Lea was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, she had won a Jacob Knight Award, and had compiled two manuscripts. As Lea discovered, writers often wonder what they can do to take their work further. "One of the things I appreciate most about the MFA program is how well it supports students' individual voices. I'd heard stories about MFA programs that turn out graduates that all sound the same, and was relieved and excited that NEC was so different."

Lea found that MFA program mentors showed her how to improve her work and encouraged her to push her boundaries to develop her own unique voice. "The program changed my writing process a lot. You begin to understand where your own

placeholders and mannerisms are in drafts and that tightens up the editing process. You know what your own weaknesses are. This program did a lot for my development as a writer that I couldn't have done working on my own." As she noted, the MFA program itself also continues to evolve through the recent addition of new concentrations.

Since her graduation from the MFA program in 2007, Lea has kept in touch with many colleagues. They act as sounding boards for her ideas, offer support and feedback for new material, and share in her excitement when a poem or manuscript is published. She has successfully collaborated with colleague Lisa Sisler on the anthology *Knocking at the Door: Approaching the Other*.

Lea also works as an editor at *Radius Journal*, and as a builder of book interiors for Write Bloody Publishing. Her first full-length poetry collection, *The Constant Velocity of Trains*, a Pushcart Prize nominee, is now available through Write Bloody Publishing.

DANCE TO FREELANCE

By Dawn Coutu

Mary-Catherine Jones combines her work as a freelance creative director and copywriter with her classical training as a dancer. Each word choice and keyboard stroke is an act of editing similar to the phrases of dance that she once performed. Music and rhythm are everywhere in her writing. She is a writer who thinks visually. "Choreography serves movement on the stage as it does words moving on a page," she says.

She crafts language for ad campaigns and social media, websites, video scripts, billboards, and even tweets. Some of her clients include Aveda, Target, Southwest Airlines, Snickers, and Chanel. "You have to be extremely conscious of how you use and lay out words," she notes. That is particularly challenging with tweets, where creativity is limited to a mere 140 characters.

Mary-Catherine moved to New Hampshire from New York City with her husband Adam and their two young children.

In New York, she was surrounded by artists and creative people, and quickly found ways to build a community of talented individuals in the Granite State. Just a few short months after graduating from the MFA program at New England College, Mary-Catherine established the Datum:Earth reading series. Datum:Earth builds on New Hampshire's reputation as the home of many fine poets and writers. During the 2011 season the series featured award-winning poets, a Brooklyn experimental prose poet, and a creative nonfiction author. According to Mary-Catherine,

Datum:Earth represents the more eclectic voices of New Hampshire and beyond, and she has dedicated herself to seeking out writers who represent new perspectives. She also looks to expose New Hampshire writers to work they may not have encountered otherwise and has attracted writers from as far away as Chicago and New York. The series also draws on the talents of two other members of the MFA community at New England College for promotional assistance – Dawn Coutu and Tucker Sampson. As far as Mary-Catherine is concerned, a poetry reading is a success even if only three new people show up.

Mary-Catherine graduated from the MFA program poetry in 2009 and sums up her educational experience as reading, writing, and thinking. "For the caliber of mentorship that this program offers, it is well worth the investment." She found that the program enriched her work as a freelance copywriter and helped to shape her first poetry manuscript. "I think what changed, more than anything, was my sense of discipline for the craft and practice of poetry. The rigor that had been there for dance is still there when I freelance, it just calls on a different set of muscles."

To learn more about upcoming readings through Datum:Earth, visit the website at www.datumearth.blogspot.com.

Mary-Catherine's portfolio is featured at www.marycatherinejones.com.

