

# **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**DIVISION OF**

**LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

## INTRODUCTION

The members of the Division of Languages and Literature wish to welcome you. We hope the time that you spend with us is the beginning of a long and enduring friendship with the written and spoken word. To help orient you to our personnel, programs and services, the faculty members of this Division have prepared this handbook. In the following pages, you will find information that will assist you in charting a course of study in languages and literature. This handbook is not intended to replace the Delta State catalog or conferences with your advisors and teachers. However, it will allow you to make better use of other available sources of information. For example, once you have decided on a degree program, a B.A. in English for instance, you can record your progress and plan schedules for each semester by using the pertinent forms that are included as an addendum to this text. By following this process, you can help make advising conferences more organized and productive. In short, this handbook is a place for you to begin to learn more about the opportunities available in this Division. So read through this handbook carefully, consult it often, and use it as one of the tools to help plan your career at Delta State.

## GOALS OF THE DIVISION

The Division of Languages and Literature strives to teach students the values and functions of the written and spoken word. The Division teaches students to read, write and speak the English language with greater fluency, creativity, and accuracy. In addition, the Division offers students the chance to become proficient in the reading, writing, and speaking of two modern languages. To meet these goals, we offer two degrees in two majors: a BA in English (with an emphasis in literature, creative writing, or philosophy), and a BSE in English. Furthermore, we offer minors in communication studies and theatre arts, English, and philosophy. The details of all of these courses of study are described in subsequent sections of this handbook.

“I say again... the unexamined life is not worth living.”

Socrates (From Plato's *The Apology*, Section 38)

## **NOTEWORTHY FACTS ABOUT DELTA STATE DIVISION OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

### **Student Achievements**

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- Recent winners at the Southern Literary Festival
- A new academic honorary for high-performing English students, Sigma Tau Delta
- Jane Austen Society of America Essay Award Winners
- Mississippi Press Association Awards

### **Faculty Achievements**

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- More than twenty Outstanding Teaching Awards
- Several Mississippi Committee for the Humanities Grants
- Several Mississippi Arts Commission Grants
- National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship-in-Residence Grant
- National Endowment for the Humanities Grant
- Robert M. Hearin Foundation Grants
- Fourteen NEH Summer Seminar Grants for College Teachers
- Two Faculty Enhancement Program Grants
- Two USM Center for Community and Civic Engagement Fellowships
- Several American Association of University Women Grants
- Several publications of scholarship and creative work, including fourteen books

### **Innovative Programs**

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- A University-wide Writing Proficiency Program
- A professionally staffed Writing Center and Language Laboratory
- Internships for communications studies and writing students
- Regularly planned opportunities for student study and travel
- Host of a branch office of The University Press of Mississippi (UPM)
- Publication of *Da*, a student-run journal
- Publication of *Persuasions*, a journal that focuses on the works of Jane Austen
- Student/faculty Poetry Nights
- Annual readings/workshops with guest writers of national reputation

## ADVISORS

Each student who enters a degree program in the Division usually has an initial advising conference with the Division Chair, and then the student is assigned to a permanent advisor. If you do not receive a permanent advisor assignment soon after entering the Division, be certain to confer with the Division Chair. The sooner you have a permanent advisor, the more quickly you will become acclimated to your program.

Your permanent advisor will be a full-time member of the Division who is experienced in guiding students through many of the problems that may arise in an academic environment. Essentially, the advisor's role is to provide the student with options from which the student makes choices about a program. Generally, students should meet with their advisor at least twice a semester. **To make the most of these conferences, please prepare ahead of time by studying the Delta State catalog, class schedules, and other information pertinent to planning each semester's work.**

Academic advisors are usually available for conferences at the hours posted on their doors or by appointment.

“To talk in public, to think in solitude,  
to read and to hear, to inquire and  
answer inquiries is the business of a scholar.”  
—Samuel Johnson

## SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, AND FINANCIAL AID

The Division of Languages and Literature offers several scholarships and awards, including:

### **The John Ford Shakespeare Award**

- Established in 2014 in honor of Professor John Ford, who taught Shakespeare at Delta State University for over twenty-five years, this award goes to an English major who has demonstrated academic excellence in Shakespeare studies.

### **The John and Dorothy Merrill Scholarship**

- Delta State University's top award for students involved with student publications. It was established in honor of Dr. John C. Merrill, a renowned journalist, educator, author, and Delta State University alumnus.

### **The Leola Gregory Williams Scholarship**

- The Leola G. Williams Scholarship was established in 1981 to honor the courage and dedication exhibited by Mrs. Williams, an educator for more than thirty years and instructor of English at the University from 1974 until her death in 1981.

### **The Weaver Betts Cotton Scholarship**

- The scholarship is presented to a junior or senior woman who is majoring in English who demonstrates excellence in scholarship, citizenship, and character.

### **The Evelyn Hammett Scholarship**

- This award is presented to an English major who is chosen by the English faculty as an outstanding writer.

### **The J'Nell Posey Coffman Memorial Scholarship**

- This award for creative writing was established by Charlie Coffman in memory of his wife, J'Nell Posey Coffman. It is awarded to an outstanding student in the creative writing degree program.

### **The Annie Caulfield Winston Scholarship**

- This award is presented to a junior or senior English major who is selected on the basis of excellence in English, character, and general culture.

### **The Robert "Buzzy" D. Wright Scholarship**

- This scholarship is presented to an English major of varied interests. Students who study more than one language are usually given top consideration.

### **The John Hargrove Tatum Memorial Scholarship**

- Established in memory of Dr. John Tatum, who served for twenty years as Professor of German and Coordinator of International Studies, the scholarship is awarded annually to a deserving German or international undergraduate student.

### **The Rose Drake Burrell Scholarship**

- This scholarship is awarded to a deserving English or History major who demonstrates excellence in scholarship, citizenship, and character.

### **The William Arthur Pennington Award**

- This award, honoring Dr. William A. Pennington, who served on the faculty of DSU for over forty years, will be given annually to an outstanding student with a particular interest in religion and/or Philosophy.

### **Jack Winton Gunn Award**

- The highest academic honor given to a Delta State University student, in honor of the former Dean of the University.

### **Hazel and Grover Thornell Award**

- Established in memory of Ms. Hazel Thornell, this award is given annually to an outstanding student in the division.

### **The Davidson Scholarship**

- Entering freshmen in liberal arts may compete for the Davidson Scholarship, which covers the entire cost of tuition, room and board, and books. For further information, contact the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, 662-846-4100.

General academic scholarships are awarded once an official transcript is received and all qualifications met. University Work Study Programs and the Delta State Regular Student Employment Program are available also. For details, call The Student Financial Assistance Office, 662-846-4670. Community College Transfer Scholarships are also available. Guidelines for applying for Community College Transfer Scholarships can be obtained from the Division Office, 662-846-4060.

## WRITING CONTESTS AND STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the incentives provided by its formal curricula, the Division of Languages and Literature encourages student writing, both critical and creative, through two competitions and two publications: the Leola G. Williams, the John Ford, and the *Da* contests, and *Da* and *The Delta Statement*.

The **Leola G. Williams Scholarship** was established in 1981 to honor the courage and dedication exhibited by Mrs. Williams, an educator for more than thirty years and instructor of English at the University from 1974 until her death in 1981. This competition is open to any student with a GPA of at least 3.0 who has written an essay for a General Education course within the preceding calendar year. Anonymous nominations are customarily submitted by the faculty to the Chair of the Composition Committee, and there are three anonymous readers/evaluators: one representative from the Black Student Organization, from Lambda Iota Tau, and from the English faculty.

There are two categories of competition, one for essays from University-wide General Education courses and one for essays from sophomore literature courses. The two winners receive a cash award along with recognition at the annual Honors Day.

The **John Ford Shakespeare Award** was established in 2014 in honor of Professor John Ford, who taught Shakespeare at Delta State University for over twenty-five years; this award goes to an English major who has demonstrated academic excellence in Shakespeare studies.

The third such recognition for superior student writing is the ***Da* contest**—in preparation for the Southern Literary Festival, an annual spring convention hosted by various colleges and universities throughout the Southeast. Since Mississippi initiated the Festival, it is customarily held in-state every other year: Delta State is usually the host institution about every decade or so. Overall, the University has had more winners than any other participating school.

The five categories of the *Da*/Festival competition (short story, poetry, one-act play, formal and informal essays) are open to all undergraduate students. Manuscripts are submitted to the Publications Committee during the fall semester and winners, automatically entered in the regional contest, are announced in the spring. Campus judging is usually conducted by off-campus writers, and the host institution for the following year's Festival has the responsibility for judging at the regional level. All student participants are encouraged to attend the Festival, and expenses for select students are paid by the Division.

Winning entries from both the Williams and *Da* competitions are published in *Da*, Delta State's annual literary magazine. Published in the spring, for summer/fall distribution, *Da* is edited and managed by students for student writers and artists. A committee of Division faculty serves in an advisory capacity to the publication. To be a member of the *Da* staff, students should enroll in the one hour Student Publications Workshop course.

A second student publication is the online campus newspaper, ***The Delta Statement***. Designed to provide a visual and verbal record of current events focusing upon the life of the University, *The Delta Statement* offers experience to those interested in news reporting and features, sports, and editorial writing.

## **THEATRE PRODUCTIONS**

Each academic year, the theatre area of the Division of Languages and Literature tries to produce at least two plays. In addition to the two main productions, the Division also offers such unique theatre experiences as the 24-Hour Play Festival, Concert Readings, and Variety Shows. The theatre arts program concentrates on providing as much experience as possible in the study and presentation of appropriate materials in comedy, drama, and musical theatre. Each semester, open auditions are held campus wide for students interested in acting roles. Stage crew positions in set construction, lighting, sound, make-up and hairstyling, or costuming are selected not only from theatre majors, but also from students majoring in other areas as well. Collaboration from faculty and students from the Art Department, Delta Music Institute, and Fashion Merchandising has provided the excellent designs in set, sound, and costuming.

## **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Since 1982 the Division has integrated readings by contemporary authors into both curricular and extracurricular activities, primarily through a visiting writer's program administered by the Publications Committee. Through this program, the Division has brought to campus such authors as Adrienne Rich, Ernest J. Gaines, Ellen Douglas, James Whitehead, Larry Brown, Willie Morris, Ann Nelson, Richard Ford, Rebecca Hill, Margaret Walker, Dave Smith, Steve Yarborough, Richard Marius, and John Dufresne, and Natasha Trethewey. Writers' visits are often coordinated with class study and extracurricular seminars designed to prepare the student and faculty audience to best benefit from the readings. In connection with this same effort, field trips are often arranged for students and faculty to hear readings of other authors: James Dickey, Barry Hannah, Larry McMurtry, Toni Morrison, Howard Nemerov, Margaret Walker, Eudora Welty, and many others. These field trips are in conjunction with the River City Contemporary Writers Series in Memphis, the annual Mississippi Writer's Day sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the University Press of Mississippi, the Mississippi Council of Teachers of English's Mississippi Writer's Day, the Visiting Writer's Program at the University of Mississippi, and the Southern Literary Festival. In addition to these events, members of the Delta State faculty also hold public readings from time to time.

As a special arrangement of our visiting writer's program, the Division brought Ellen Douglas to campus as Delta State's first writer-in-residence. The program was very successful for both students and faculty, and the Division plans to work toward a regular residency as funds will allow.

Students with unique interests can use a special topics course to advance personal goals in reading, writing, and scholarship. Students may pursue these goals by enrolling in English 492 which can be repeated for credit a limited number of times. For example, creative writing students were able to use this option to take a course in fiction writing from Ellen Douglas during her residency. Other examples include a student who pursued her interest in Jane Austen, and another who read political literature relative to Central America. Additionally, groups of students regularly participate in a special drama course that includes travel and study in England.

## DIVISION COMMITTEES

Much of the Division planning is done through a comprehensive group of standing committees. These committees are designed to help facilitate different aspects of the Division's regular activities. Students, normally majors or minors in the Division, are asked to join the standing committees, and student input is important in each committee's work and recommendations. If you are asked to serve on a Division committee, please accept the offer, attend the committee meetings, and give us your ideas. Moreover, if you are not asked to serve on a committee but feel like you could make a contribution, then study the description of each committee listed below, contact its respective chair, and volunteer your services.

**The Composition Committee** oversees matters relating to developmental, beginning, and advanced writing courses. This committee also supervises the Writing Proficiency Exam, organizes writing workshops, and sponsors other programs which promote the quality of the written word.

**The Curriculum & Assessment Committee** initiates all changes in degree programs, the addition of degree programs, the addition or deletion of courses and the restructuring of courses within the Division; it also makes suggestions for modification of academic rules which affect the entire University. It also plans and evaluates methods for the quantification of student learning outcomes for all programs in the Division.

**The Graduate Committee** monitors policies and procedures related to graduate admissions and program requirements, and serves as the organizing body for thesis projects.

**The Personnel Advisory Committee** screens, interviews, and recommends applicants for vacant faculty positions in the Division and reviews and oversees Division hiring policies and procedures.

**The Library & Publications Committee** sponsors *Confidante*, the student literary journal; plans the visits of guest writers to campus, supervises the annual literary contests, and edits and publishes *Tapestry*, the Division faculty journal.

**The Scholarship Committee** coordinates all scholarships within the Division.

**The Student Advisement Committee** searches for ways to improve the quality of information which students in the Division receive about their degree programs, courses, career plans and other academic pursuits.

**The Student/Faculty Organizations Committee** helps arrange Division social activities.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

**The W.B. Roberts Library** houses a collection of journals, bibliographies, books, audio, audio-visual, electronic resources and other materials which are pertinent to the study of all fields in this Division. Whenever your research requires books or articles our library does not have, you can obtain them through online sources or Inter-Library Loan. One of the reference librarians will assist you with this process. Moreover, if you know of a title (book or journal) that our library does not have and that would be particularly useful to you and other students, please recommend it to Dr. Susan Allen Ford, who is in charge of library acquisitions for the Division.

**The Writing Center**, located in room 201 of Kethley Hall, provides assistance for students with particular writing needs: arriving at paper topics, organizing and developing an argument, working on research projects, developing exam-taking strategies, or shaping letters and resumes. The Writing Center is staffed with faculty and peer tutors who can respond to your individual needs. The Writing Center is also a resource center, containing several computers with word-processing software for student and faculty use, as well as writing texts, style manuals, and a small collection of books, journals, and newsletters on composition theory and practice. The Writing Center is open as follows: Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and Monday through Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. During semesters when staffing is available, the Writing Center is open for extended hours as posted. We encourage all students in the Division to make use of this facility.

**The Diane Stewart Foreign Language Laboratory**, located in Room 235 of Kethley Hall, is equipped to assist foreign language students with their listening and speaking skills. A variety of programs is available, including audio and video tapes of lessons from your texts, literary works, and cultural programs. The Foreign Language Lab, open several hours each day, is staffed by a person who is trained to help you use all of the Lab's resources. Additionally, your foreign language professors will, from time to time, come to the Lab to assist you and monitor your progress.