

Dorothy Wright Awards for Teaching Excellence
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 30, 2008
San Jose State University

Sponsored by the SJSU English Department

Mike Andres, Willow Glen High School

“Mr. Andres helped me to learn how to write intellectually without going off on a tangent. He taught me how to relate my ideas to my writing and have evidence to back it up. He would have many class discussions that would cause us to think abstractly. If we said something, he would actually question or challenge it to make sure we knew what we were talking about.” -- Linzy Singleton

Valerie Arbizu, Evergreen Valley High School

“She prepared us by helping us learn to translate Old English poems for fun and to better understand *Beowulf*.” -- Erma Halili

“Mrs. Arbizu was very knowledgeable of the required material, and she taught us a college curriculum in high school.” --Tyler No

Patricia Biemford, Granada High School

“In class we were assigned a poetry project in which we wrote a few poems in various poetry techniques. I never believed I was good at poetry and dreaded the project. However Mrs. Biemford sat down with the class and showed us how fun it could be and how to make poetry more appealing to each and every student.” --Jason Utpadel

Monique Childs, Piedmont Hills High School

“She was very nice and gentle. She would give us stories from her life that connect with what we were reading in class. She was very thoughtful and caring. Once she cried because one of her students was drafted to Iraq and died in a mishap.” --Thuy Pham

“She has good strategies for teaching. She made English fun. She puts effort into teaching students the concepts of English.” --Navjot Kaur

Nancy Freschi, Branham High School

“She vastly improved my vocabulary and did a ton of work preparing us for college level writing. She won teacher of the year. She now teaches teachers how to teach.”

--Jessica Nicodemus

“She helped me with the ability to understand what I am reading critically and analytically. She helped me expand my vocabulary and understand the true meaning of the word through looking back at its roots. She helped me get through a hard situation and realize how much I am valued. She didn’t just help me with English; she helped me with life.” --Mario Keener

Nancy Galindo, Yerba Buena High School

“She was energetic about teaching her students how to write good college essays. She did an excellent job teaching me how to write a good research paper. She was strict when she had to be, giving too much work, but that proved to be good because I am passing my English classes in college.” --Evendira Ponce

“She always knew that college was going to be different for her students, so her class was just like a college class. There were no exceptions for anything.” -- Jennifer Thach

Harriet Garcia Rousseau, Independence High School

“She made students write many different essays. Also, we had lots of reading assignments that we had to do. So, by doing this, it helped me in my English classes. She was strict and made students come to class. She would discipline the students who were noisy, late, or sleeping in class. Everyone loved her though, because she is very positive and she just wanted to see us succeed.” -- Cynthia Fa

“She helped me to better understand the reading and to write better essays.”

-- Dennis Ly

“She made English for me fun and interactive. I enjoyed making the movie on the book I read *Siddartha*.” --Thien Tran

Wendy Garner, Amador Valley High School

“Mrs. Garner cares deeply for each student. Whenever I needed extra help while struggling with an essay, she sacrificed a tremendous amount of time to help me. She assigned a wide range of essays that helped me sharpen my writing abilities. The class was unique in that we also were able to discuss social justice issues. This class expanded my horizons on social justice issues as well as English composition. Because Mrs. Garner cared so much for her students, it motivated my class to do our best.”

-- Catherine Chang

Paula Haaser, Live Oak High School

“Ms. Haaser fine tuned my writing skills. She taught me how to take one idea and turn it into a complete five page essay. She educated me academically and philosophically. Her essay teachings were so crucial to me that I still use them with my college essays.”

-- Joshua Levy

Josh Hancock, Westmont High School

“My writing skills are so much better than if I had not had his assistance. He made his own curriculum and guide book of sentence structures. He taught us how to appreciate and understand reading, writing, and literature.” -- Erica King

“He helped me analyze novels, helped me write amazing analytical essays with the use of a variety of sentence patterns, he prepared me for the SAT by giving us daily SAT questions. I was struggling a lot at the beginning of the year because I did not have sufficient advanced knowledge of the English language so he offered me extra teaching.”

-- Irina Lelic

John Herrera, Independence High School

“He worked us hard and was always there for us. He was a reasonable teacher and always wanted to help his students to achieve the very best. He had a calm/cool attitude and was very understanding and fair.” -- Hen Ngoc Nguyen

“He gave us the opportunity to creatively retell the stories *Julius Caesar* and *The Red Badge of Courage* in order for us to fully understand the stories by allowing us to create student films. He inspired many of his students to continue seeking higher education.” -- Ferdinand T. Luis, Jr.

Chris Haskett, Westmont High School

“We learned excellent skills for analyzing symbols and themes in literature which have been infinitely helpful in college. Mr. Haskett has an incredible sense of humor, and taught English by engaging the students and encouraging creativity in writing. He also does everything possible to help struggling students with English, and even runs the Homework Center after school for extra help.” -- Liz Vlasoff

Kevin Lydon, Mission San Jose High School

“He taught us in a way that was fun and educational. He taught me methods and tricks to make my writing stronger. We read novels in class and he explained everything that went on in the novel. He was the only teacher who showed his students that he truly cared about them and their future.” -- Parisa Azimi

John Manning, Prospect High School

“In addition to keeping himself available to students for help in their writing and test-taking skills, he also required a wide selection of classic novels and plays to be read by all students as well as outside reading material. . . . John Manning was the hardest English teacher I’ve had. Because of his harsh curriculum combined with extra help, I know how to read critically and write exceptional essays for my English classes.”

-- Amulya Datla

William Maples, San Jose High Academy

“He was one of the best parts of my Junior year. His enthusiasm and passion made me excited about English and school. It was the first class that I felt really prepared me for college. And in this class I learned so much.” -- Jessica Johnson

Tina Mayer, Campolindo High School

“She really taught me how to read critically. She also was a tough grader on essays, which really helped improve my writing. When I sit down to write anything for any class, I am not worried that I am going to make a mistake, but rather I know it will be correct.” -- Alanna Mancebo

“She was passionate about English and spread this passion to her students. She had a great attitude, and I could tell she really wanted us to tap into our potential talents. I feel my writing has improved dramatically since her classes.” -- Laura Curren

Marie Milner, Andrew Hill High School

“She showed us how to analyze literature in depth and effectively. She instilled in us a passion for reading and learning. With each novel we read in class, she integrated into the lesson plan various lectures about the issues each novel raises, and the time period it was written in for a fuller understanding of the work. It is because of her that I am an English major.” -- Jesus Espinoza

Dawn Nelson, Branham High School

“Ms. Nelson is very detailed and enjoys helping her students rise academically and make great achievements and outstanding accomplishments. She has a passion for teaching. She’s great!” -- Dilmoona Stepanpour

Margaret Ota, Gilroy High School

“She helped to build my essay writing skill to the level it is today by being hard on her students but always being there to help.” -- Justin Trammell

“ She strengthened my essay writing skills and had expectations to prepare us for college.” -- Jenny Loi

Patty Raun-linde, Fremont High School

“She definitely helped me a lot in how to organize my essay, come up with introductions that have a “bam!” to them. She was very encouraging and never tried to make you feel stupid when you did something incorrect. She continued to push me until I achieved an essay that both of us were proud of. She really gave me confidence that I would do well in my first college English class.” -- Rachel Acidera

Michelle Ritter, Pioneer High School

“She put her time and effort into making sure that I understood how to write an essay well. She taught me how to be successful with my writing.” -- Michael Evans

“She was very happy and helpful. She was always there to help if you wanted it. She loved her job and was happy to be there. She wanted to help the kids and would sacrifice her time to do anything for them.” -- Daniel Evans

Nancy Schwalen, Santa Teresa High School

“She helped me personally because senior year I missed a lot of school due to my health and family deaths. She always made sure I had my work and adequate time to do it. She was a tough grader, but she made me realize my potential for writing. She was the most dedicated teacher I had in all four years. She always had patience and took the time to make sure everyone understood.” -- Ashlee Narvaiz

“She helped me a lot in my essay development and introduced me to a book called *On Writing Well* that helped me become a better writer. She is a joyous, personable teacher who is passionate about her work.” -- Krista Goss

Ralph Stark, Junipero Serra High School

“Mr. Stark helped us thoroughly understand the readings we did in and out of class. He was always available if we ever needed any additional help. He was always there when you were in need, whether in English or any other subject matter. He was a well-rounded teacher and always kept the students interested in what we were learning at the time. He always made us search for the deeper meaning in the text and would never give us the easy way out.” -- Matthew Faina

“He helped me become a better writer by focusing on the basics and then taking it to the next level. He made everything make sense by relating it to something interesting. His class was fun and he made sure everyone was clear on the subject before continuing.”

-- Nathan Lien

Marilyn Sullivan, Terra Nova High School

“She taught me how to clearly devise a thesis and organize an essay. She also showed me how to input my own opinions. She helped everyone in all her classes and those who weren’t. She had a close relationship with all the students.” -- Tony Lamadora

“Ms. Sullivan prepared me for college English at San Jose State by introducing the proper writing style to me. Our class worked on an entire “college packet/workshop” that went from applying for classes to writing essays at the college level.” -- Yosh Arwade

Craig Whitt, Archbishop Mitty High School

“Thorough, engaging, provocative exercises, and he gave feedback in a non-threatening manner that produced effective change.” -- James Nealon

“Mr. Whitt was a former professor at Cal Poly so he was able to prepare his students for college courses. He helped students write informative, persuasive, and comparison essays. His classes were constructive by giving helpful criticism.” -- Alexis Yoshihara

Liz Williams, Homestead High School

“She taught us the importance of syntax and diction. She taught the importance of a strong foundation by talking out loud what should be going through our minds at least ten or fifteen times. Often I would come to her class during her prep period to get extra help with essays and understanding the current novel.” -- Robert Fischer

Michael Winsatt, Andrew Hill High School

“Mr. Winsatt always tries to make class fun, yet challenging.” -- Ellse Tieu

“He was always committed to his students. His class was challenging and entertaining. If it weren’t for Mr. Winsatt, I would never have had the confidence to advance my English knowledge.” -- Theresa Ton

Kelly Wong, Monta Vista High School

“She was very friendly and approachable and having a teacher like her made it easier to transition from high school to college. She gave us fun projects that let us use creativity and made it enjoyable for the whole class to watch the presentations. She was always smiling and happy and even though I had that class first thing in the morning and I never wanted to fall asleep.” -- Tian Liew

Stephanie Wurst, James Lick High School

“She prepared us for our exams and challenged us to think outside the box. She helped me see my own potential, and move me to honors even though at the time I was not an honors student. She believed in me.” -- Mary Gonzales

Gary Zellner, Silver Creek High School

“He made me think in different ways. It was an approach I wasn’t used to. Instead of confronting a subject, we would go at it from different angles.” -- Jacer Balubal

“Many of his students are successful and smart. He taught differently from other teachers.” -- Bich Son Nguyen

“Mr. Zellner built my vocabulary so that I could speak and write in a more sophisticated manner. He had the class read college literature and learn how to analyze books and poems. He also taught me much about creating a meaningful life.” -- Sara Nguyen