



Photo by Cathie McCormick

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## PSH Professor Discusses Irish Theater

By Joanne Catherson  
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On Feb. 4, PSH's own Dr. Margaret Jaster, associate professor of humanities and literature and an Irish literature scholar, and Dr. Crystal Downing, an English professor from Messiah College, facilitated a discussion following Open Stage's production of the play "The Beauty Queen of Leenane."

Written by Martin McDonagh and set in County Galway, Ireland, this dark comedy details the disturbing relationship between a middle-aged woman and her spiteful, interfering mother. The play explores themes of mental and physical abuse concealed by secrets and lies.

Dr. Jaster, with her usual straightforward charm, discussed McDonagh's theme calling it the "lace curtain Irish mentality" where no one wants to admit the secrets or "come out from behind the lace curtain."

In the play, this concealment is sustained not only by mother and daughter but by the entire town. According to Dr. Jaster, "the traditional clannishness of the town, or townees, perpetuates the communal lie."

Dr. Downing discussed McDonagh's influences, including such heavyweights as Martin Scorsese and David Mamet and what she believes is McDonagh's way of juxtaposing violence and sexuality, beauty and love.

Some audience members found the play's dialect hard to understand. "Would ya be wantin' a Kimberley, so, Ray, now?" can take a little getting used to but, as Dr. Downing said, if you remove the dialect "you would lose the Irishness" of the play.

# Graduate Student Association makes comeback

By Paula Marinak  
Capital Times Staff Writer

After an absence of more than a decade, the Graduate Student Association officially returned to PSH when it held its first organizational meeting late last month.

Former SGA President Roderick Lee has worked since last spring with Dr. Howard Sachs, the associate dean for research and graduate studies, to restore the GSA. Sachs, along with Sue Ellen Ramer, advises the GSA. Lee heads the current group of officers. Ken Enos, who now serves as the group's vice president, also played a key role in its revival.

Last semester's enrollment figures show that PSH had 1,390 graduate students. Because graduate students comprise roughly 43 percent of Penn State Harrisburg's total student population of about 3,500, Enos and Lee felt it was very important to resurrect a group that will represent grad students needs and concerns and help them feel more connected to the college community.

"Graduate students at any university represent a totally different subset of the student population," said Lee. "Most of our graduate students maintain full-time jobs and do not have the luxury to meet with faculty or staff to effectively voice their concerns or issues."

The structure of the GSA should give graduate students a greater opportunity to raise their voices. The organization has a seven-member executive board, which functions mainly as an administrative body and an assembly. The assembly is made up not only of the executive board and advisers but also of delegates from each of the college's five schools.

The delegates' main job is to serve as liaison between the students within that school and the department head. Melodee Gerrish represents the school of business administration; Jennifer Boger represents the school of public administration. Kam Sansoni represents humanities students, and Lekisha Edwards is the delegate for students in the school of behavioral science and education. Keith Corson rounds out the list of delegates. He represents the school of science, engineering and technology.

GSA's other executive officers are Executive Secretary Jennifer Kasunick, Treasurer Melissa Evans and Director of

Public Relations Nora Carreras. Taewoo Kim is Webmaster and John Smith is chair of the judiciary.

Any registered graduate or doctoral student can join the GSA. PSH seniors

old, they already have a full schedule. They will begin a personal care item drive for the Bethesda Mission on February 20. The collection will last one week and GSA members will place bags at offices across campus.

For men, they hope to receive shaving and hair care items, nail and skin care items, plastic soap dishes, pillow cases, washcloths, deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Women require most of the same items; GSA also hopes to collect some journals for them. Children need books, toys, art supplies and school supplies in addition to toiletries.

No clothing is needed and no mouthwash will be accepted because of the alcohol content. If students or faculty have questions, contact Boger at [jlb418@psu.edu](mailto:jlb418@psu.edu).

The Graduate Student Association will also hold mixers on Feb. 19 and March 20 from 5 - 7 p.m. in the Gallery Lounge. The group has 57 members now, but they expect to exceed 300 after the mixers.

On March 9, GSA will sponsor a bowling night for members and their families. Anyone interested should contact Boger or call Sue Ellen Ramer at 948-6303. Later in March, GSA will hold its first Skate Fest. Contact Lee or Ramer for more information.

A Graduate School Open Forum is planned for March 27. Contact Ramer or Enos to learn more about the event. Lastly, the group has planned an Easter flower sale to help raise money.

Dr. Madlyn Hanes, provost and dean, is very excited about the GSA's rebirth. "Any organization that would provide the opportunity for students to participate, to experience a sense of community and to serve in leadership positions is critical to our college."

Enos shares Hanes' excitement. "Our members will get better graduate programs because of our existence. Through each school's delegate, they will have an outlet to voice concerns and frustrations," he said. But he added that the GSA can only be as strong as its members allow it to be. "If our members care enough to be a part of a graduate program and campus community instead of just being students who are here for one class a week, GSA will be able to do wonderful things," Enos said.

Though the GSA is not yet a month



Photo compliments of GSA

(top from left) Melodee Gerrish, Ray Burton-Virgo, Ken Enos, Roderick Lee, Jennifer Kasunick, Melissa Evans, Taewoo Kim.  
(bottom from left) John Smith, Nora Carreras.

who have at least six credits and who are considering graduate school can also become members.

PSH's Graduate Student Association modeled itself after the organization at University Park, and that means good things for graduate students here. The GSA at Penn State's main campus has given a seat on its graduate council to the Harrisburg campus. This means student concerns here will have a university-wide audience.

Whatever their individual role in the GSA at PSH, all members share a common goal. "We want our voice to be heard in an effort to make the graduate population and the grad programs the best they can possibly be," said Kasunick.

Enos said another key task for the GSA is to foster a sense of community that has been missing among the graduate students. They plan to create that atmosphere through such activities as meetings, social events, fundraisers and participation in community service events. The GSA also offers leadership opportunities for members through its affiliation with The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students.

This connection with a professional organization gives students a chance to create networks that will help them find jobs. They can also attend seminars and workshops to sharpen their leadership, management and organizational skills, along with any other support they may need.