Voices of the West

Voices of the West: Telling Stories That Matter

What It Takes

The Campaign for

Montana State University
OUR STORIES DEFINE US.

Where we come from, how we live and what we value are all passed down through our stories, whether those stories take the form of novels, histories, plays or even research reports. MSU is committed to supporting writers whose voices tell stories that are true to the land and culture of the North American West.

MENTORING TOMORROW’S WRITERS.

The writer in residence program brings distinguished writers to MSU who write about the past and present of the North American West, so that they may mentor the writers of tomorrow.

By sponsoring writers in the classroom, at public events and in their written work, this program brings students and community members into dialogue with the writers who are wrestling with issues that will shape the future.
### Writing around campus and beyond

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<th>57</th>
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<tr>
<td>percentage of students in creative writing classes who are not writing track majors</td>
<td>number of faculty that currently teach creative writing at MSU</td>
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<th>1</th>
<th>3,317</th>
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<tr>
<td>only writer in residence program in Montana</td>
<td>total enrollment for all writing courses in 2014-15</td>
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#### WRITING IS FOR EVERYONE.

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, students need to learn the art of communication. Each writer in residence, accomplished in a field, will share his or her creative and unique approaches to thinking and expression—practices that have value for students of all disciplines.

MSU’s core curriculum ensures that students from every major enroll in foundational writing classes. Students from a wide range of disciplines including engineering, English education, business, music technology, neuroscience and mathematics majors also enroll in creative writing classes.

The writer in residence will work side-by-side with students to cultivate the writing talent of the next generation.

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#### A LEGACY FOR THE WEST.

MSU’s Writer in Residence program offers space for voices of the West to be cultivated and heard.

Many talented writers call the West home. Their writing—nonfiction, novels, poems and plays—will outlive us all, leaving a legacy of the political, environmental and cultural interests of our region.

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#### BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH CONVERSATION.

The writer in residence will give public talks and readings that are free and open to the public, such as Rick Bass’s conversation with journalist Scott McMillion at the Ellen Theater in May 2015, where the two discussed what it means to live and write in the West. These events help forge and sustain a bridge between the university and the community.
Kelsey Weyerbacher grew up in Kinsey, Mont., a small farming community where she learned to love both the land and the stories of the people who worked it. As an MSU student, she has won the Vendler-Faye award for the top writing student, served as editor of the campus literary arts magazine, and represented MSU at national conferences for her research in rhetoric and writing center work.

However, MSU almost missed out on her. Kelsey’s first stop after high school was at the University of Portland.

“I originally went to Oregon because I thought I had to go out of state to pursue the arts. I thought, ‘People in Montana don’t do that.’ There wasn’t a lot of opportunity for that kind of work where I grew up—a farming community in eastern Montana.”

She transferred to MSU because she missed Montana.

For her senior thesis, Kelsey is assembling the written history of Kinsey and weaving it together with her photography and her own story of growing up on a rural farm.

“When we were little we had to go out and work in the beet fields. My family put me in the fields with the other talkative members of our farm crew. I used to hear a lot of stories out there.”

Now, she feels, it’s her turn to give those stories back to the world. “It’s my responsibility to be able to share those stories, and to share the culture of these people, a voice that hasn’t been heard yet.”

Kelsey was able to hear author Rick Bass discuss writing and the West when he visited Bozeman in 2015. She had the kind of experience that the writer in residence program is designed to inspire.

“It was awesome getting to hear another writer who is so connected to Montana talk about his work. We both share a love for this place and the challenge of expressing it so people who have never lived here can understand what it means to us.”

“It’s my responsibility to be able to share those stories, and to share the culture of these people, a voice that hasn’t been heard yet.”

Kelsey Weyerbacher holds a piece from her senior thesis project, a modified portrait of her great-grandmother.

Learn more about how to write your own page of Montana State University history.