

Mary Hussmann, Associate Professor of English  
Letter of Application, Director of Outdoor Studies and the Adirondack Semester

As most of you know, I've been involved in the Adirondack Semester since I first arrived on campus and taught in the inaugural program in 2000. Next fall marks our tenth anniversary and I've taught in or served as interim director for eight of those years. I've seen the program grow and change over the years, from the monumental effort and vision of Karl McKnight in building the yurt village called Arcadia on the shores of a remote lake, in which students could explore and articulate their relationships to the natural world, to the refining of program goals to include an emphasis on environmental and sustainability issues under the leadership of Baylor Johnson. I truly believe the Adirondack Semester is one of the most transformative educational experiences we offer students at St. Lawrence. Most students return to campus physically restored and intellectually energized. Many of them remain passionate and engaged as campus leaders in issues of environmental justice, local and sustainable foodways, and climate change, to name a few. I think it's very telling that almost all of last fall's Adirondack students felt compelled to attend PowerShift in Washington, DC this spring.

The Adirondack Semester is attracting greater numbers of students, and those students are academically stronger. Going forward it will be imperative to keep the program's momentum, to continue to refine and re-vision. I believe it's important to remember that while the Semester shapes the students' experience, its success depends on being flexible enough to be shaped by students' needs and interests as well. In order for this small and intense living/learning community to work, we all need to be fully vested in all aspects of the program, students, faculty and staff alike. Over the past several years especially, we've had a "dream team" of faculty and assistant directors who have worked hard to integrate the individual courses into a larger, more cohesive curricular design. I think we've done a good job of using the Adirondacks as a lens through which to investigate environmental issues from disparate yet complementary disciplines such as science, history, philosophy, nature and environmental writing and creative expression. I would work to keep refining that cohesive curriculum.

I'm particularly excited about the bioregionalism course developed by our previous assistant directors with its culmination in the Adirondack Semester practicum. Rather than flying students to a warmer climate at the end of the semester, we responded to one of the recurring student themes of wanting more contact with people in the Adirondacks. After Thanksgiving break students now have a three week self designed internship, then come together during finals week to present oral reports on their projects. For the past two years students have worked with such groups as North Country Public radio, Bluseed Studio in Saranac Lake, Birdsfoot farm in Canton, Adirondack Harvest and the Adirondack Center for Writing at Paul Smiths, among others. I think this practicum is tremendously valuable for our students and I would make it a priority to continue and expand it, to further emphasize its value as a transitional experience between nature and society.

I would also keep the woodworking component, in which students work with master craftsmen Everett Smith and Michael Frenette to learn the art of carving paddles and making furniture. This kind of hands-on work is another valuable form of learning and students are rightfully proud of the skills they learn.

I mentioned the value of the experiential/community component of the program and that sense of shared work and community is an integral and crucial aspect. Students are obligated to work around the camp, learning to maintain the solar array, the composting toilet, chop wood, treat water etc. They continually wrestle with issues of consumption, of their impact on the earth, of what they need and what they can do without. The emphasis on simple, low impact living has a profound effect on students; they become more conscious about the patterns of their own consumption. One trend I've seen develop in the past several years is an increased awareness of food choices. They plan and cook all their meals, buy from local CSAs and work on the farms. More and more students seem to really enjoy cooking healthy and local food and count learning the environmental and ethical implications of food as one of the highlights of the semester. For example, last year's group figured out that they could make yogurt more cheaply than buying it and did so throughout the semester. Given my own interest in local and sustainable food, this is an area that I would continue to support and expand. They also know that some of their food comes from industrial agricultural suppliers such as Sysco. This is an illustration of what's really at the heart of the program. Students are very aware of the paradoxes inherent in a program like this. Yes, they live materially simple lives without computers or internet access, running water, showers or flush toilets, yet travel in gas guzzling Suburbans for field trips and outdoor activities, travel to Tupper Lake every two weeks to do laundry, shop at the Stewarts, whip out their cell phones and reconnect with the world from time to time. This is the semester in a nutshell: it's really about finding the balance between nature and culture, and considering the implications of both.

Directing the Adirondack Semester presents logistical challenges unlike anything one's academic training has prepared one for. Everything in the village must be barged across a bay or walked in, and the village is for the most part erected and dismantled each year. Water must be hauled from the lake and treated, the composting toilet, yurts, wood stoves, propane heaters, and solar array need maintenance and cleaning, propane tanks need to be filled and refilled, wood sourced, chopped and delivered, compost and garbage hauled out each week. There are unexpected windstorms and snowstorms. Frankly, it's a lot of work to maintain the infrastructure. Past directors have more experience in building and maintenance than I do. Assistant directors have varying levels of expertise but are usually adept at some of the maintenance. I would likely find a way to hire a camp "handyman" for several hours each week and could finance it through cutting the director's contractual time by several of weeks, or perhaps by trimming the budget elsewhere.

Additional challenges loom; the yurts are aging and will need to be replaced, though not at the same time. The Suburbans are aging and reliable transportation is

a necessity in case of emergencies. The arrangement for the Ranger to supply wood ends with the expiration of the lease in 2010 and they have made it clear that they will no longer supply any firewood. The lease itself will need to be renegotiated, though that should present no problem. I would also continue Baylor's long term project of migrating the yurts away from the lake and the surrounding softwoods to the relatively safer hardwoods further inland. I'll never forget the day I came to teach after a huge tree had fallen and crushed half of a student yurt. Luckily no one was in it when the tree fell, but I understand that fear of unforeseen accidents is part of the director's job. Safety is an ongoing issue.

Other challenges involve personnel. The two assistant directors have the most difficult job in the Adirondack Semester; they teach a course; run the camp; manage the practicum, and are directly responsible for the community building among the students, not an easy task in such a tight group. It's imperative to find qualified assistants; if they prove incompatible with the students, faculty or goals of the program, the negative effect on the program is undeniable. The most successful assistants I've seen have been teams in which one is a past graduate of the program and I would make it a priority to recruit past grads as assistants. I'm also concerned about maintaining St. Lawrence faculty interest in teaching. Courses in which we've had to use adjunct faculty not associated with St. Lawrence have simply not been as successful. I also am well aware that in this uncertain economic climate, our departments are less likely to receive sabbatical replacements and retirements no longer guarantee an automatic replacement hire. Faculty have less flexibility as pressures mount to meet on campus curricular needs. And frankly, those who may be inclined to teach in the Adirondack Semester are a small, and self-selecting group. The next director must make outreach towards departments and faculty an integral part of the job.

In terms of outreach, I've always been disappointed that the program doesn't attract students of color. I think there may be ways to reach out that we've not tried. For example, I'd contact Bill Short and plan an "open house" day in which HEOP students, and perhaps other student groups could visit the yurt village and discover that one gets to sleep in a cozy yurt with a heater, take a sauna, and eat a delicious hot meal every evening. I would also like to develop closer ties with CIIS to discover ways in which we might foreground the Semester's value as a truly "intercultural" experience.

Earlier I said that the Adirondack Semester is attracting more and better prepared students. We now turn away at least half of those who apply, since the reality of the infrastructure is that a group of twelve works best. I know from initial conversations with Baylor and Val that there's keen interest in developing a kind of "sister" program to the Adirondack Semester. The yurt village is inaccessible during the harshest months of winter and would present too many logistical challenges to make a regular spring semester program feasible. Though it will undoubtedly be a challenge, I think planning, developing, and possibly implementing a complementary program will necessarily be an exciting priority for the next

director. I've had cursory talks with Val and Baylor about options. One model could potentially use the yurt village from March to June, though I think faculty logistics would be problematic. Even if a faculty member taught two courses for most of the semester and added the Adirondack semester course in March as the third, that would still make for a six month teaching semester, not an attractive option for those with summer research and/or teaching plans. That's not to mention that winter grips the Adirondacks often into April.

Another option that I personally find exciting, is to offer a "sustainability semester." That program could possibly utilize land owned by the university around the ESL, and either be housed there, or in a more remote location on SLU property. Baylor has suggested building a truly low-impact village with students actually working on structures that utilize innovative designs such as straw bale houses, passive solar design, or earth berm construction. Obviously this latter idea would take a fair amount of money to implement, but given the interest in sustainability issues and energy efficiency, there may be donors willing to support such a program. For example, I teach occasionally in a log cabin at the Bennetts' farm that was donated by a couple of trustees. Needless to say, I would be excited to work with others on campus, such as Louise Gava, Eric Williams-Bergan and the Outdoor Council, to explore those or other possibilities. I also have a very good working relationship with Environmental Studies who would seem a logical partner in such an endeavor. Student interest in sustainability is growing; we've seen it develop in the Adirondack Semester, as well as in the proliferation of student groups such as the EAO and Lettuce Turnip the Beet. My hunch is that this is not a passing fad and St. Lawrence could potentially find itself ahead of the game with a sister program to the Adirondack Semester that focused on sustainable food and living.

The next director will have to deal with the status of the Outdoor Studies minor. As it stands, only a few students take the on-campus option. Students in the Adirondack Semester need only one more class in order to complete the minor. Baylor told me that he signed only one on-campus minor form for this year's graduating class, and at best there are only a few on-campus minors. The director is currently obligated to teach the Outdoor Studies core course each spring, and truthfully, I'm not sure of the demographic for which that course is designed. I also know that Baylor and other faculty have worked with the Education Department to redesign the minor as a kind of outdoor education minor with emphases in different disciplinary areas. Clearly, the next director will need to work with the Dean and other faculty and staff consider all options as we determine the future of the minor. Personally, I would like to continue my teaching and advising with the English/Environmental studies major which has grown tremendously in the last several years. Natalia Singer and I are the only two English faculty who teach and advise on the English side of that combined major and it's a major that I care deeply about.

The director of Outdoor Studies also has oversight of the Outdoor Program. During my year as interim director I came to understand that Phil Royce knows his

job, runs a tight ship, is an excellent educator in his own right, and has built a fine program over his years here. In addition to training the elite Hadwen guides, mentoring staff, and teaching courses and guiding trips himself, Phil has worked hard to increase student participation in outdoor recreational activities by expanding programs for beginners. I would encourage that kind of outreach and work with Phil on ways to bring in underrepresented groups, again coordinating activities with Bill Short for example. Of course any program needs to be monitored and tweaked but in general, the Outdoor Program does an outstanding job in fulfilling its mission.

Finally, let me make an admission. Most of you know that I had a pretty rough year when I was the interim director. Everything went wrong: bears in camp, a crazy cook and crazier student, a broken solar array, two assistant directors who'd broken up and hated each other, a grumpy and recalcitrant group of students. Yes, we even had the Tupper Lake police called to the site. I quit teaching in the program for two years because I felt I needed time to ponder and recover. But the reason I came back was because I really believe in the value of the work we do with students; I believe in the mission of the program. I also know that the odds are that I simply can't have all the bad luck I had the first time around. My own research and writing interests are also serendipitously aligned in terms of place based education and sustainability issues. I find intellectual and creative stimulation in the work of the semester and I look forward to continuing a series of essays on experiential education and local living.

Though it's hard to articulate, the program creates a shared bond among students, faculty and staff. Back on campus we stay in close contact with our students, and they with each other. Perhaps that's the nature of any abroad program, of any immersion experience. For the students, the opportunity to get to know one small corner of the world so deeply, to understand the rhythms of nature and their community, gives them the skills and knowledge to look at the myriad challenges they face in the larger world with fresh eyes and a hopeful spirit.

Bear with me a moment longer and let me close with the words of a student I'm working with on a senior writing project about her time at Arcadia:

I know that I've grown closer to nature, and that I've learned a great deal about the work that goes into creating a strong, cohesive community. But the understanding I worked hardest for is the knowledge that we must find a balance. It was difficult to go from a canoe to a car, and from the forest to Tupper Lake, but it was through these contradictions that our purpose became clear. For me, this semester wasn't a quest for solitude; it wasn't a vacation. It was the first tangible answer, the groundwork for feasible, practical, imperative change. We won't solve environmental problems by hiding in cities, constructing walls of technology between our lives and the natural world. And we certainly won't solve them by hiding in the woods, ignoring the societies from which problems are born. . . . We must know and

cherish the nature that we care about and depend on, and we must also know society, economy, technology. Though we will at times feel clumsy, it is this balance of the woods and the world that promises a successful, sustainable future.

--Katie Powers, '09

All I can say is, exactly.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### EDUCATION

**M. F. A. in Creative Nonfiction**, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA (May, 1996).  
**B. A. in English Literature**, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA (with high honors, 1975).

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Associate Professor**, St. Lawrence University, February 2006 to present.  
**Assistant Professor**, St. Lawrence University, August 2000 to February 2006.  
**Adjunct Assistant Professor**, The University of Iowa, August, 1996-May 2000.  
**Adjunct Instructor**, The University of Iowa, 1993 to 1996.  
**Guest faculty:** *Creative Nonfiction* Summer Writers' Conference at Goucher College, summers 1998 and 1999.

### COURSES TAUGHT:

#### St. Lawrence University:

- **Special topics: Going Locavore**
- **Outdoor Studies Core Course**
- **First Year Program:** Knowing Nature: The Role of Place, Gender, and Culture in Identity
- **First Year Program:** Knowing Nature: Place and Identity
- **First Year Seminar:** People and Place: Environmental Autobiography
- **First Year Seminar:** American Rivers
- **Advanced Poetry Workshop**
- **Nature and Environmental Writing**
- **Creative Expressions of Nature:** St. Lawrence University Adirondack Semester
- **Advanced Nonfiction Writing**
- **Introduction to Creative Nonfiction**
- **SYE: Research and Writing Seminar**

## The University of Iowa:

- **Honors Seminar in Literary and Electronic Magazine Editing**
- **Advanced Nonfiction Writing**
- **Undergraduate Nonfiction Workshop**
- **Undergraduate Nonfiction Writing:** The Personal Essay
- **Undergraduate Nonfiction Writing:** Personal Narratives
- **Literary Editing:** The Iowa Review editorial course
- **Nature and Environmental Writing:** Belin Blank Center for Gifted Education at The University of Iowa.
- **Thesis Committee Member:** served on six MFA thesis committees in the Creative Nonfiction Program at The University of Iowa.

**Faculty: Mid-Atlantic Creative Nonfiction Summer Writers Conference:** an intensive 5-day workshop with fifteen students and four 3-hour workshops, plus individual conferences and manuscript evaluation for each student. Summers 1998 and 1999.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Assistant Editor,** *River Teeth*, January 2009 continuing.

**Director, Outdoor Studies and the Adirondack Semester,** full time administrative position developing and running the fall 2003 Adirondack Semester. In addition, administrative and budgetary oversight of Outdoor Program and Outdoor Studies minor.

**Director, Undergraduate Writing Program,** Department of English, The University of Iowa, August 1999 to June 2000. Responsible for all undergraduate writing courses for 1,400 majors in the Department of English. Supervised TAs, hired adjunct faculty, developed courses, supervised writing internships and chaired committees.

**Editor,** The University of Iowa, June 1996 to August 1999. Responsible for all phases of manuscript selection, production and supervision of graduate student staff of *The Iowa Review*, a nationally distributed literary magazine.

**Associate Editor,** *The Iowa Review*, The University of Iowa, 1989 to May 1996.

**Acting Editor,** *The Iowa Review*, The University of Iowa, 1992.

**Journals Consultant,** The University of Iowa, 1983-1989.

**Co-owner, Iowa City Women's Press, Inc.,** 1980-1983. Printer/publisher and member of management collective.

## PUBLICATIONS

### After appointment at St. Lawrence:

#### Essays:

- "Slow Food, Adirondack-style" in *Stories, Food, Life*, ed. Ellen Rocco. North Country Public Radio, 2008.

- “Life-everlasting: Nature and Culture on Sapelo Island,” *Southern Cultures*, Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina, April 2006.
- “Terrain,” *The Iowan*. Winter 2004.
- “Great Campus,” in *Adirondack Life*, summer 2004.
- “Doorways” in *The Yalobusba Review*, summer 2002.
- “R & R in Tupper Lake” in *Adirondack*, spring 2002.
- “Out There” reprinted in *American Nature Writing 2001*, edited by John Murray (Oregon State University Press, 2001)

**Interviews:**

- “A Conversation with Terry Tempest Williams,” reprinted in *A Voice in the Wilderness: Interviews with Terry Tempest Williams*, University of Utah Press, 2006.

**Fiction:**

- “After the Heart” Spring 2003 in *Sudden Stories: A Mammoth Anthology of Miniscule Fiction*, edited by Dinty W. Moore

**Work in Progress:**

- “Arcadia: An Outdoor Education”

**Before appointment at St. Lawrence:**

**Books:**

- *Transgressions: The Iowa Review Anthology of Innovative Fiction*, Mary Hussmann, David Hamilton, and Lee Montgomery, editors. (The University of Iowa Press, 1994).

**Poems:**

- “Rodeo Lips,” *The Kenyon Review*, Spring, 1994.
- “The Dog,” *The North American Review*, Summer, 1975

**Interviews:**

- “A Conversation with Terry Tempest Williams,” *The Iowa Review*, Spring 1997.
- “A Conversation with Patricia Hampl,” *The Iowa Review*, Fall, 1993.
- “An Interview with Carol Bly,” *The Iowa Review*, Fall, 1992.

**Essays:**

- "Cigarettes" in *Brevity: A Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction* (spring 1999. Also ran on the Web del Sol website and in *5 Tropes*, an online literary magazine.)
- "North," in *Women on the Verge* (Beacon, Fall 1999).
- “Horizon,” in *Homestretch* (Cleis Press, 1998).
- “Warning Signals,” reprinted in *Echoes* (2nd edition), Eds. Michael Connell and Steve Gates (McGraw-Hill, August 1996).
- “Out There,” in *Alaska: On My Mind* (Sasquatch Books, Fall 1996).
- “Words,” *The Iowa Review*, Winter, 1993.

**Book Review:**

- “On Adrienne Rich,” *The Iowa Review*, Winter 1992

## PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

**After appointment at St. Lawrence:**

- **Panel presentation:** Going Locavore: From Classroom to Community at St. Lawrence University. With Louise Gava and two student, Alle Wingerter and Laura Dobbs. Rural Heritage Institute, Sterling College, June 2009.
- **Reading:** invited to read from “Arcadia: An Outdoor Education” at the Nature and Environmental Writers—College and University Educators conference in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, June 2008.
- **Paper presentation:** substantially shortened version of “Life-everlasting: Nature and Culture on Sapelo Island” accepted for 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on Communication and Environment sponsored by the University of Georgia, Jekyll Island, Georgia, June 2005.
- **Reading:** invited to read early draft of “Life-everlasting: Nature and Culture on Sapelo Island” at the Nature and Environmental Writers—College and University Educators conference in Boothbay Harbor, ME, June 2004.
- **Panel presentation:** delivered paper on The Adirondack Semester: Creating Community in the Natural World at the Fourteenth North American Interdisciplinary Conference on Environment and Community, Saratoga Springs, February 2004.
- **Paper presentation:** delivered paper on the relation of Gullah people and landscape on Sapelo island at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, Boston, June 2003.

- **Panelist:** co participant with Grant Cornwell, Steve Horwitz, Eve Stoddard, Karl McKnight, Margaret Bass, Mary Jane Smith on panel: “Experiential Learning Communities: Dialectics of Ideas and Experience. January 2003 at the American Association of Colleges and Universities annual conference in Seattle.
- **Panelist:** talk called “The Burden of Knowledge” for the session “Teaching Environmental Literatures” at the Northeastern Modern Language Association meeting in Toronto, April, 2002.
- **Panelist:** Paper presentation on “The Burbs” panel at Rewriting Landscapes: Imagination and Urban Environments at Chatham College, Pittsburgh PA, June 1-3, 2001. This was a version of the essay on New Orleans called “Doorways” that was subsequently published in *The Yalobusha Review*.

#### **Before appointment at St. Lawrence:**

- **Panel Moderator:** “Prose and Its Malcontents” with Sara Levine and John D’Agata at 2000 Associated Writing Programs Conference, Kansas City, Mo.
- **Guest Lecturer:** Barnes and Noble sponsored essay writing workshop, February 2000.
- **Guest Lecturer:** 1999 Mid-Atlantic Creative Nonfiction Summer Writers Conference, Goucher College.
- **Guest Reader:** with Barry Lopez at 1998 Mid-Atlantic Creative Nonfiction Summer Writers Conference, Goucher College.
- **Panel Moderator:** Moderator for *Editors’ Choice: A Roundtable on Literary Publishing*. Associated Writing Programs Annual Conference, March, 1998 in Portland, Oregon.
- **Panel Moderator: Selling Nonfiction to Literary Magazines** with George Plimpton, Lee Gutkind, Megan Sexton and Dinty W. Moore. 1998 Mid-Atlantic Creative Nonfiction Summer Writers Conference, Goucher College.
- **Roundtable Panelist:** Panel member on *Experiments in Creative Nonfiction: Beyond Memoir*. Associated Writing Programs Annual Conference in April 1997 in Washington, DC.
- **Guest Panelist:** On literary publishing. “Voices from Nature: The James Hearst Celebration of Writing,” Cedar Falls, Iowa, September 1996.
- **Guest Speaker:** On the program in Creative Nonfiction, its history as a program and as an emerging genre. The University of Iowa Summer Writing Festival, July, 1995.
- **Guest Lecturer:** On Adrienne Rich’s *An Atlas of the Difficult World*. The University of Iowa, to upper level undergraduate poetry class, John Gery, Instructor, November 1992.
- **Guest Panelist:** On publishing in literary magazines. The 175th anniversary conference for *The North American Review*, The University of Northern Iowa, May, 1992.
- **Guest Speaker:** On literary publishing and the history of *The Iowa Review*. The University of Iowa Summer Writing Festival, July, 1992.

#### GRANTS AND AWARDS

**St. Lawrence Greek Community Faculty of the Year Award, 2006.**

**William B. Bradbury Junior Faculty Award, 2003,** in the amount of \$3,000 to support research in Iowa for writing project.

**National Endowment for the Arts Grant, 1995.** \$10,000 support for *The Iowa Review*.

**Second Place Prize, Brevity: A Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction** contest for a short essay, *Cigarettes*.

#### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

**Member:** Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment.

**Member:** Associated Writing Programs

**Member:** Nature and Environmental Writers-College and University Educators

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE: St. Lawrence University

#### English Department service:

- Poetry position search committee member, 2004
- Nonfiction position search committee member, 2002-03
- Facilitator for Academy of American Poets contest, 2002
- Curriculum committee member for revision of major and minor in English, 2001
- Faculty advisor for *The Laurentian*, 2000-2002
- Viebranz Visiting Writer search committee, 2000-2007

#### Other University service:

- Member, Mellon Environmental Studies grant group 2007-2008; member of Mellon Grant Steering Committee, spring 2009-continuing.
- CCEL Faculty Associate, 2008-2010
- Member, Professional Standards Committee, two year term starting fall 2007; Vice Chair 2008-2009.
- Co-edited, revised, and rewrote the 2008 Middle States Report with Kim Mooney, summer and fall 2007.
- McNair Scholar program faculty mentor, Summer 2006
- Member, Middle State Steering Committee, Spring 2006 to present
- Faculty Council member 2005-2006
- Faculty Advisor for *The Stump* 2004-2008
- Member, Faculty Life Committee, fall 2004
- Member, Academic Conflict Resolution Committee, fall 2004
- Literary editor resource person for faculty publishing workshop, spring 2004
- Member, University Conservation Council, 2003-04
- Lunch panel on writing annual activity reports for first year faculty at the CTL, spring 2003
- Member, Council on the Status of Women, 2003

- Member, Outdoor Council, 2000-2004
- Chair, Outdoor Council, fall 2002
- Chair, Outdoor Council sub-committee on curriculum initiative for Outdoor Studies minor, 2001
- Interviewer for students applying to Adirondack semester for 2002-2003, 2003-04
- Faculty mentor for Mwenda Ntarangi, 2002
- FYP chairs, 2002
- FYP portfolio reader, 2001
- FYP program evaluator, 2001
- FYP Canaras Planning Committee, 2001
- Adirondack semester presenter at President's dinner in NYC, 2001
- Board of Trustees lunch panel speaker, 2000