

# Weaving the World Together

TABLE TALK WITH EIMER PAGE

By Sarah Zobel

**E**nglish Instructor Eimer Page was appointed director of Exeter's global initiatives, a new position, as part of Principal Tom Hassan's call for expanded global exploration by the entire Exeter community. Through that imperative, Hassan is seeking to further opportunities for students and faculty to engage with peers and enjoy experiences beyond the school campus—thereby facilitating knowledge sharing on an international scale.

"Global initiatives afford our students and faculty the opportunity to learn, build connections and become engaged in a world that transcends national borders," says Page. Such initiatives must be part of the backbone of what sustains Exeter as a school of excellence, she says, adding, "We want to give our students and faculty rich opportunities to infuse our curriculum with fresh perspectives and experiences."

Page, a native of Newry, Northern Ireland, with a Ph.D. from Trinity College Dublin and a onetime Fulbright Scholar at Harvard, stepped into the role of global initiatives director last August. She was already teaching English to preps and *Visions of Paradise? Utopias and Dystopias in Literature* to seniors, as well as overseeing the Exeter-Ballytobin/Callan Program, which enables qualified seniors to live and work in Ireland alongside people with special needs. Page says it was music, however, that first brought her to campus eight years ago, and music that has most fully shaped her life, from very early childhood on.

To the outside world, Northern Ireland in the 1970s and '80s might have seemed a difficult place to grow up, but in fact life wasn't all about the Troubles. In those days, every 7-year-old child was given an ear test to assess his or her music skills. The more promising among them would then receive complimentary instruments (selected for them), lessons and membership in community orchestras. Page was offered a viola ("Perhaps because of my broad handspan?" she laughs).

Taking part in youth ensembles gave Page the opportunity to travel, as well as to meet students from different religious back-

grounds in a country where that distinction was highlighted daily. It also helped her grasp the importance of diversity. Further, she says she "came to realize that education and the chance to connect around a common interest are the keys to understanding."

And it was music that brought her to the United States in 2004, when her husband, John—whom she'd met when both were members of the North-

ern Ireland Symphony—was appointed assistant conductor for the Boston Philharmonic. Page, who was then teaching at The Portsmouth Grammar School in England, found Exeter on the recommendation of several professional mentors. She and John and their two sons, Oscair, 8, and Cormac, 3, currently live in Dunbar Hall, where she's dorm head. Even as Hurricane Sandy was barreling toward the East Coast in October, Page was coordinating an acoustic music session to keep the 60 girls who live there occupied while they rode out the storm.

Page returns with her family to Northern Ireland every summer, and she says that her childhood there definitely affected her perception of education. Though housing, sports and schools were segregated along religious and political lines, "real efforts were made in school to expose students to the other side and to help us understand the history of the issues," she says, adding, "Education was emphasized as the key to breaking the deadlock."

Today, in her new role, Page is assessing where Exeter is currently reaching others outside the campus boundaries, and where there might be gaps. Happily, she hasn't found many—indeed, Exeter's influence extends around the globe, through four distinct program areas, or "strands."

The first, and perhaps most uniquely Exonian, is Harkness outreach, through which Exeter's instructors share with public school teachers the Harkness approach, as well as specific aspects of the school's curriculum.

"We have very robust Harkness outreach programs that have been around for a long time," says Page, adding that "so much at Exeter comes from the ground up—it comes from faculty devel-



FRED CARLSON

## Advocating for the Incarcerated

### Q-and-A with Dr. Lannette Linthicum '75

In October, the John Phillips Award was presented to Dr. Lannette Linthicum '75, health services director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). During her 26 years with TDCJ, the country's largest state correctional facility, Linthicum's unit has become a national model for correctional medicine. She leads 4,000 medical and administrative personnel who facilitate complete health care services to 160,000 offenders in 112 Texas prisons. With more than 30 percent of inmates chronically ill, Linthicum routinely faces complex health care issues within a prison population she equates to "the size of a small city."



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**Q:What do you find most meaningful about the work you do? What are your biggest hurdles?**

**A:**The ability to impact people's lives positively . . . the offenders and staff, that's the best part. In health care, we talk about public safety, that the role of corrections is to provide public safety, to keep people incarcerated. But correctional medicine plays a big role in public safety as well, because we have very high-risk populations—they've been intravenous drug users; they haven't had much preventive health care. If we can return a healthier person to his community, that would put his loved ones and others at less risk of contracting some of these communicable diseases. In that sense, what we do in corrections benefits the community at large.

The hardest part is managing health care services while dealing with state-legislated budgetary cuts. During the last legislative session we had our budgets cut, about \$75 million reduced from a \$1 billion budget.

**Q:What accomplishment are you most proud of thus far in your position?**

**A:**The creation of the Office of Professional Standards' Patient Liaison Program. It's often referred to as the ombudsman program. It's a service for external, third-party members, family, friends, prison advocates—anyone who has a complaint or inquiry can contact this staff to obtain information about an offender's situation. Each inquiry is assigned to a staff member, who investigates and sends a response letter. Last quarter, we received close to 3,000 calls and letters. Some of the family members we talk to so much, we're on a first-name basis.

**Q:What do you foresee for correctional health care?**

**A:** It's going to be extremely challenging going forward, because the main issue for us is the burden of disease, especially communicable diseases. [With] HIV and AIDS, for example, the costs for drug therapy alone . . . take up 47 percent of our pharmacy budget. Years ago, we did a study on incoming inmates: Thirty percent of our population was infected [with hepatitis C]. That's 50,000 inmates.

The other major concern . . . is the graying of the prison population. Prisoners are getting older, and all of the issues associated with geriatrics and the elderly are the same issues in prisons.

The state mental health system [also] limits the number of illnesses they treat, so if people don't fall into certain categories they get left on the fringes . . . they end up in prison [by] committing crimes, so we are a de facto mental health system.

**Q:What led you to a career in medicine? Did you choose TDCJ or did it choose you?**

**A:**When I left Exeter, I thought I'd be a history teacher. I went to Smith [College], and I started taking biology courses, and I found that . . . it was something that clicked in me. I realized, 'Well, you want to be a teacher and you have this interest in the biological sciences, [so] medicine is perfect for you because it combines the two.'

Originally, the state health commissioner just assigned us to TDCJ. But as time went on, yes, they definitely chose me. They did not want me to leave the state.

opment and interest, rather than being imposed top-down. The Harkness outreach follows that model. It's teachers who've been interested in offering these opportunities for teachers around the world."

It starts in Exeter's own backyard, in the Raymond and Newmarket, NH, schools—Raymond's Iber Holmes Gove Middle School, proud recipient of two Harkness tables from PEA last year, was named the state's 2011 "Middle School of Excellence"—and extends to teachers from around the country through the Exeter Humanities Institute, The Biology Institute at Exeter, the Rex A. McGuinn Conference on Shakespeare, The Exeter Astronomy Conference and more. Some 2,500 public school teachers alone have been trained in Exeter's problem-solving math curriculum through the Exeter Mathematics Institute, which is brought to schools nationwide.

The second strand is faculty professional development, which is often underwritten through support from alumni/ae donors. Faculty members have traveled in teams to Ireland, Japan and Korea, Morocco and Ghana, and China. In March, one group will spend spring break in Israel, while another will visit India (on the latter trip, PEA students chosen for previous exposure to India through coursework "are the experts, which is really exciting," says Page). The groups are composed of 10 to 12 faculty members from a variety of disciplines; a local partner organizes a study tour that is broad enough to be relevant to all, looking at issues in education, as well as the country's culture, history, politics and environment.

In her third year on campus, Page led 18 English Department faculty members to Ireland. She says she might do it again, but she'd make it cocurricular, bringing science faculty, for instance, who would appreciate Trinity's renowned Science Department.

Traveling faculty members take the Harkness table with them—figuratively, anyway. Explains Page, they use the experiences they have during the day to "process and talk in the way that we do in the classrooms, to have conversations about what people experience, what they're questioning, what they're impressed by and what they're taking away from this, and how their thinking is being stretched by being there." The conver- (continued on page 101)

Watch a video of Dr. Linthicum discussing her work: [www.exeter.edu/bulletinextras](http://www.exeter.edu/bulletinextras).



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sations continue when they're back on campus, where other faculty members are invited to join in.

The third global initiative is student curricular learning: those programs that contribute to students' diplomas and involve off-campus study. Exonians have spent terms in the Bahamas, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Russia and Vietnam. New programs this year are in Rome, Italy, and Cuenca, Ecuador, and Page will seek faculty approval for a program in Ghana next year. It would be based at SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College, where 20 percent of students are refugees and orphans, and, says Page, would provide "huge opportunities for [Exeter] students to participate in meaningful community service, which is woven into the fabric of their school week."

The final strand is student experiential learning, which doesn't count toward academic requirements but can be fine-tuned to meet an individual's interests. Students have undertaken internships with the Academy of American Poets, at the Conservation Law Foundation, at *The Paris Review*, and with designer Nicole Miller. As of this academic year, they also have the option to take part in Exeter Explorations, Thanksgiving break excursions that allow them close-up views of Silicon Valley start-ups and New York City-based nonprofits, as well as participation in the National Outdoor Leadership School in Arizona.

Some students have also participated in the Punahou School's Student Global Leadership Institute in Hawaii, while others have gone on Exeter Social Service Organization *non sibi* trips that allowed them to teach English in rural China, work at an inclusive arts festival in Ireland, help with medical issues in a Lakota community in South Dakota, and study the impact of tourism on the environment in Costa Rica.

"I try to keep at the heart of what we're doing the idea that any off-campus trips are combining our founding document's goals of developing knowledge and goodness," Page says. "I want to be sure that what we do works with our own emphasis on the Harkness method of discussion-based learning and on student ownership of the experience, and also that we're developing students' capacity for connec-

tion, empathy and goodness. Then I think we're going to be on the right track."

In the long run, Page's goal is for the entire Exeter community to have a clear understanding of the programs and their purposes. Other than not having a program in place yet in the Arabic-speaking world—something that's next on Page's agenda—the lack of awareness may be the biggest weakness toward continuing to nurture and grow Exeter's global outreach. Page says she regularly speaks to parents and alumni/ae and notes that they're often surprised to learn just how expansive the school's reach is.

"I told the Trustees that there are other schools that are doing a lot like this," says Page, ever the musician, "and they're very capable of playing their own trumpets. But we have an entire orchestra playing here and we don't make much of it!" ●

## Trustee Roundup

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the past two summers in completely refurbishing this signature building. The Trustees also recognized and applauded the enormous amount of work and coordination needed to complete such an extensive project on a very tight schedule.

The remainder of Thursday afternoon included a discussion of other buildings and grounds projects. Trustees were advised of the plans for the full renovation of the Lamont Health and Wellness Center, which will begin this spring and is slated for completion at the end of summer 2013. More specific details about this project will be available in the coming months. In addition, the group heard more about planning for new performing arts facilities, which include three areas: a new theater, a new dance studio, and an expansion of practice and concert space for our musicians. The Trustees fully support the importance of our growing and thriving arts program while recognizing that construction of new facilities will involve significant financial resources acquired through fundraising.

The Trustees ended a long and productive day over dinner with faculty involved in Harkness outreach through our various programs. They were energized to learn about the great variety of offerings and the connections the Academy is making with schools and teachers throughout this country and the world. On Friday they heard from Director of Summer School Ethan

Shapiro and Hassan about preliminary conversations PEA has had with a new urban school eager to adopt Harkness pedagogy, and they will learn more in the coming months as discussions proceed. Also on Thursday night, some trustees joined Hassan for dinner with this year's John Phillips Award recipient, Dr. Lannette Linthicum '75, who spoke the next morning at assembly with every trustee in attendance.

As is tradition, several trustees met with Student Council leaders over breakfast Friday morning. They were glad to hear that the students are enjoying their experience here and are so devoted to the leadership work of the council. Later that morning, Chief Financial Officer Chris Wejchert reviewed the budget with the Trustees. The Trustees earmarked a small positive variance in the operating budget to put into quasi-endowment and used at a later date to support building projects now in the planning stages. Hassan and Dean of Faculty Ron Kim also talked about the progress made in controlled hiring. By way of background, in the wake of the financial market collapse, the Academy instituted the practice of controlled hiring. As part of this process when there is a staff or faculty opening, the Academy evaluates whether the position should continue and if so at what level. PEA has met the budget reduction target set three years ago and recognizes that controlled hiring has served the school well. This practice will, therefore, continue, with the expansion of the target set for the level of faculty hires.

The rest of Friday included a discussion led by Kim and Exeter's Director of Global Initiatives Eimer Page on the topics of diversity and outreach. The Trustees were very pleased to learn about the Academy's focus on diversity both in the opening faculty workshop and through the recently released diversity and equity report findings. They look forward to hearing more as the internal community discusses the report and decides on the next steps to support our diversity and equity efforts. They also applauded the various off-campus outreach offerings for both students and faculty and continue their interest in seeing these experiences inform our coursework and our mutual engagement.

Overall, the Trustees appreciated the warm welcome they received from staff, faculty and students and look forward to their next visit to campus in January. ●