

Presented with an opportunity

Twelve students were accepted to present their critical essays, poetry and creative writing pieces at this year's National Sigma Tau Delta Convention.

*The St. Norbert delegation constituted one of the largest groups among the 170 universities and colleges present at the undergraduate conference. **Rebecca Krus '07** was one of the presenters. She wrote this account of how a smaller school like St. Norbert can make a big splash in Pittsburgh.*

Honored to have the opportunity and excited to travel mid-semester, I forgot about the anxiety of presenting as part of an academic panel until a day or so before we left. So, with a sudden rush of nerves, luggage bursting with business casual attire, and four of us buckled in the minivan, we set out for Pennsylvania.

Thirteen hours, eight stops, countless word games, two missed exits, and four states later, **Gina Hilbert '07**, **Holly Morphey '07**, **Mike Thiel '07** and I arrived at the hotel completely exhausted, but anxious to begin the convention in the morning.

Day Two: After a quick stop at Bruegger's Bagels, we met up with our advisors, **Laurie MacDiarmid** and **John Pennington** (English), at the convention center.

Pennington was the co-organizer of this year's event and also serves as the publications editor for Sigma Tau Delta, which only enhanced St. Norbert's reputation at the convention.

Stuart Ninabuck '08 was the first to present, reading his short story "Rooster," and things were under way. The other presentations of the day, one by **Andrew Caldie '07** and another from Stuart, went off without a hitch.

At this point I began to feel slightly more at ease, and besides we were in Pittsburgh! All of us had dinner together at the Church Brew Restaurant that evening and, in true English major fashion, wrapped up the meal with a poetry game.

That night's keynote speaker, David Rakoff, delivered an amazing reading from his latest book, "Don't Get Too Comfortable," gaining at least one devoted reader. Later that night I frantically revised and rehearsed my paper, and got a few hours of sleep (we began to call it napping instead of sleeping) before the alarm went off, signaling Day Three.

Kalin Lebrun '08 and **Stefanie Jochman '07** were the first two presenters of the day, each of



Rebecca Krus (left) author of this account, and Erin Gannon (pictured, right) are two of four graduating seniors who have made valuable contributions to this magazine over its last two years as interns in the Office of Communications.

This issue we say a sincere thank you and fond farewell to them and to their fellow interns **Meredith Meier** and **Nina Nolan**. **Meredith** supported the College's media relations efforts and **Nina** supplied design and photography skills.

Becky's piece also celebrates one of the last of many significant achievements of her fellow student and former colleague **Cassandra Voss**, whose sad and early death is recorded on the facing page. **Cassandra** also served as an intern in communications during her sophomore year, and we miss her greatly.

their sessions well-attended by a crowd of incredibly supportive St. Norbert students and faculty.

I was next, and after downing a large cup of coffee, I read my paper, "The Emerging Identity of the Independent Woman: The Governess in Henry James' 'The Turn of the Screw.' "

Getting through the title was the first hurdle, but I cleared it and began with my introduction. I focused on one sentence at a time, and tried not to think about the fact that some 25 people were staring at me and analyzing my scholarship.

When I reached the final page it was like a light finally appeared at the end of the tunnel, and I became much more at ease. After I finished reading, the feeling of calm lasted until the question and answer portion began.

I was asked some difficult questions and had to defend my claim on the spot, but I managed to present my paper and even field questions from the audience with at least the appearance of composure.

Verbally defending my work was a challenging and fantastic experience. I felt a bit overwhelmed after the session ended and the adrenaline rush was over, but I was excited that I had gotten to share my insights and felt confident in defense of my paper.

I suddenly realized the unique opportunity this conference provided, allowing us to enter into the discussions occurring in academia. As undergraduates, our research and study rarely extends beyond an institutional, and even departmental, level. Presenting at the national conference gave us the chance to share our work with our peers from other colleges and institutions, making real contributions to the field.

Over the next two days **Brigette Flasch '09**, **Gina**, **Meredith Meier '07**, **Holly**, **Mike**, **Cassandra Voss '08** and **Zach Willis '07** presented their work, each with success. **Sharon Olds** was on hand for a reading of her poetry and **Jim Daniels** shared a reading and led a workshop.

On the final night of the convention, after much ironing and curling of hair, we attended the Sigma Tau Delta Convention banquet and awards ceremony. Along with an enjoyable meal and even better conversation, St. Norbert College students were presented with an impressive eight awards—four times more than any other institution received.

Stuart received second place (\$125) for Best Piece of Original Fiction presented at the convention and Andrew took third place (\$75) for Best Critical Essay of the convention.

To my surprise, I was awarded the Regents' Scholarship, Midwestern Region (\$1,000), and **Amber Hartl '08**, who is currently studying in London, was named recipient of the E. Nelson James Junior Scholarship (\$2,500).

However, it was our chapter president, **Stefanie**, who stole the show. She received the award for Best Essay on the Convention Theme (\$100), first place (\$200) for Best Critical Essay of the convention, and the Sigma Tau Delta Scholarship (\$3,000), the most prestigious award given by the organization. ○