

Ronald and Barbara Dorr Endowment for Rhetoric and Humanities

James Madison College at Michigan State University

This endowment is named in honor of Professor Ronald Dorr, whose vision, dedication, and passion for teaching have immeasurably enriched the College. Dorr's founding vision of a first-year writing program focused on the human dimensions of public affairs has insured that, from their first semester on campus, James Madison students are encouraged to "take serious books seriously," gaining an appreciation of the richness and complexity of the human experience by engaging with significant texts from the humanities.

Ron's dedication to fostering his students' analytical abilities has contributed to the College's reputation for graduating students skilled at conveying complex ideas clearly, whether in writing, in speaking, or in both. His own passion for ideas and model of self-reflection have helped his students develop the habits of mind essential to a liberal education. His sponsorship of the Madison MADhouses has enabled countless students to share their literary and musical talents, enhancing the sense of community that is vital to a residential college.

Ron's commitment to educating the whole student—in the classroom, in his office hours, and at evening MADhouses—embodies the College's primary mission of excellence in undergraduate teaching. The Dorr Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Writing, in particular, acknowledges the central place of writing in the Madison curriculum, and honors Ron Dorr's outstanding contributions to the Madison community.

The Dorr Endowment in Rhetoric and Humanities also honors a rich and loving partnership. Like Ron, Barbara Cooper graduated from Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. She too was a Grinnell Travel Service Scholar, teaching at the Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca in Bogotá, Colombia. The two of them courted in Colombia and returned to the United States for their wedding in 1966. They also share the same birthday. As graduate students at the University of Minnesota (she in Spanish, he in American studies), she convinced him to get season's tickets to the Guthrie Theater, thus initiating an interest in drama that continues in his teaching. A Spanish major at Grinnell, Barbara taught Ron how to analyze texts well.

Whether it is Bogotá, Cartagena, Quito, Sacramento, San Francisco, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Chicago, Cincinnati, Washington, D.C., New York City, Des Moines, or Lansing, Barbara and Ron have loved to explore cities together. In the Presbyterian Church of Okemos, she helped lead the work in settling Laotian refugees in Lansing. Today she teaches English as a second language to refugees and immigrants at Lansing Community College. Like Francis Bacon, she and Ron believe that "the world is not to be narrowed till it will go into the understanding, but the understanding is to be expanded and opened

till it can take in the image of the world.” They are parents of three children: Benjamin, who has studied in China, Elizabeth, who has studied in Ecuador, and Jacob, who has traveled to Quito.

Funds from the Ronald and Barbara Dorr Endowment will take care of the Ron Dorr Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Writing in perpetuity. There will always be a Dorr prize at Madison College. In addition, the annual remainder of expendable funds will be used for the following kinds of activities:

- Taking trips to Stratford, Ontario, to see plays at the Stratford Theater or to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, to see plays at the Shaw Festival;
- Subsidizing tickets for students to see plays at Michigan State University, at the Boarshead Theater in Lansing, and at other local theaters;
- Providing food, entertainment, and performances at the MADhouses, such as the Flatfoot music group, a jazz combo, or M.S.U. choral groups;
- Inviting people such as David Loud, subject of study in MC 111, to Madison College for a week of lectures and informal meetings with students;
- Welcoming professional writers such as Jodi Wilgoren of the New York TIMES for lectures and Informal sessions with students;
- Helping to sponsor nationally-known speakers such as Jonathan Kozol, Maya Angelou, and Don Luce when they are invited to speak at Michigan State University;
- Subsidizing the writing consultants at James Madison College;
- Offering Madison students scholarships for study abroad and internships, especially in Latin American countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua;
- Offering scholarships to immigrants, refugees, and their children, especially from Cuba, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia;
- Providing money for Madison students, professors, or both for making presentations on the humanities at public libraries throughout Michigan;
- Giving travel money to Madison students, professors, or staff members going to countries in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia;
- Providing merit awards to Madison students or professors for special achievements in teaching, scholarship, or service in the humanities.

The Dorr Award in Writing will be given every year. Other activities funded can vary, as the need and occasion arise. Other ways to spend the money, different from the examples cited above, are also options.

The overall intent, however, is to enhance rhetoric—the art of speaking and writing well, the arts, and humanities at James Madison College and Michigan State University. If liberal education is the cultivation of the habits of the mind, heart, and soul that are worthy of free, productive, loving, and interdependent citizens, surely writing and speaking clearly, expressing oneself creatively, and enhancing the human spirit are part of that education. The Ronald and Barbara Dorr Endowment is designed to nourish and recognize such humane activity.