LMMI: Mentorship Program

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The openness and camaraderie of the Montgomery community have always fostered informal mentorship, but the aim of this program is to formalize it somewhat to ensure that emerging scholars at different stages of their careers and from different geographical and educational backgrounds are matched with mentors who can provide input on their scholarly work, in particular 2020 conference and forum material; help give direction for scholarship and career opportunities; and establish a long-term contact to whom the mentee can turn for advice, support, and even recommendations.

We currently have fifteen pairs of mentors/mentees (fifteen mentees and fourteen mentors). With one exception, the mentors are all from Canada and the US. The mentees are from Canada, US, UK, Ireland, Austria, Poland, and Slovakia and range from upper-level undergraduate students to early career academics; several have moved out of academia but continue their scholarly interest in Montgomery.

We achieved our goals, I think, albeit not consistently or widely. Reaching out to the mentors, I asked four clusters of questions and have summarized the responses below.

How many conversations did you have with your mentee? Between when and when? Method of communication (in person, email, phone, Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, etc.)?

Most mentors made contact with their mentees in February 2020, shortly after the pairings were set up, and most reported that they are still in contact. The number of

conversation exchanges ranges from ten to a “couple.” Most communicated primarily through emails, although one reported having a Skype call.

Brief indication of what you discussed. What kind of feedback/advice you suggested?

There is a range here, so I will list a few that were mentioned:

- Intersecting research interests and abstracts
- Critics and available scholarly resources in specific areas
- Strengthening the theoretical framework of the conference paper
- Feedback for revisions on abstract (turning a proposal into an abstract) and first and second drafts of conference paper (and in several cases, other Montgomery-based material)
- Elizabeth R. Epperly Award for Outstanding Early Career Paper
- Potential for publishing in the *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies* (for conference paper and other material)
- Future postdoctoral possibilities and funding
- LMMI Visiting Scholar position
- The MLA Roundtable celebrating *Rilla of Ingleside*’s 100th anniversary (in January 2021)
- Reading group recommendation in mentee’s area of interest
- Introduction to other scholars in the field in mentee’s geographical area
- Academic life/preparing for defence/preparing for job applications and interviews
- Mentee mentoring the mentor about technology
- General conversations about situation in mentor’s and mentee’s respective regions and countries
- Planning a panel on Montgomery for a 2021 conference in Vienna
- Planning to exchange papers before submitting to the “Montgomery and Mental Health” call for papers
- COVID-19 shutdown of universities and libraries … and preparing material for Forum
- Encouraging submission of proposal for 2022 conference

Do you see this mentorship pairing continuing in the future?

Again there is a range of responses, but most thought they would keep in contact with their mentee, even if in a more informal mentorship capacity.

Bumps/Highlights/Suggestions?

Obviously the biggest bump was the cancellation of the conference and the disappointment that many, both mentors and mentees, experienced. Despite this, the response was generally in favour of keeping the mentorship program going throughout 2021, a non-conference year, with the hope of meeting with their mentee in person at the 2022 conference.

Although I did not canvass the mentees about their experiences, casual conversations that I have had indicate that the mentorship program provided an invaluable opportunity that they would not otherwise have had.

Thank you to the mentors for providing feedback for this report.

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No