

## **Meet the Prof: Ron Rindo**

**by Faculty Advocacy Committee - Wednesday, June 24, 2009**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2040/meet-the-prof-ron-rindo/>

*The following faculty Q&A was submitted by the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Faculty Advocacy Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate. Richard Kalinoski, associate theatre professor and resident playwright, wrote the introduction.*

It is my pleasure to introduce professor Ron Rindo, chair of the distinguished and Regents Award-winning English department at UW Oshkosh. A genial and thoughtful man with a ready smile, Ron has been an inspiration to his students — many of whom have gone on to further study in notable graduate programs.

I am acquainted with several of Ron's former students, and they have commented to me that Ron's careful listening and sage advice have helped them grow as writers and researchers. A devoted teacher, Ron also has been exceptional in his service to UW Oshkosh. He is a source of sound advice for both faculty and students.

A sensitive and evocative fiction writer, Ron has won the Wisconsin Arts Board Creative Writing Fellowship twice. His published short stories uncover the drama in domestic life, and despite his many responsibilities as a colleague, father and husband, Ron always finds time to write. UW Oshkosh is fortunate to have Ron Rindo helping to foster a supportive and collegial environment in a growing institution.

### **How did you find your way to UW Oshkosh?**

Fresh out of graduate school, I accepted a tenure-track position at Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Ala. I loved many things about living and teaching in Alabama, but I also missed Wisconsin, particularly the autumns here, so three years later, in 1992, I came to UW Oshkosh.

### **Why did you choose to go into your field?**

As a young boy, I read in bed every night, and I also used to keep a little notebook under my mattress. Sometimes I'd wake up early in the morning and write stories in that notebook. So reading and writing, and teaching others to read and write, are activities central to my life and have almost always been. So I'm fortunate. I've made a career doing the things I love.

### **What is your favorite thing about UW Oshkosh?**

I enjoy working with my wonderful colleagues in the department of English, and I really enjoy working with the students here. They're Wisconsin kids, for the most part, and since I grew up in southern Wisconsin, I feel as if I'm still one of them.

**What is the professional accomplishment of which you are most proud?**

I love when my students go on to have success in their lives. Lately, some of our finest creative writing students have gotten into wonderful graduate programs. One of my former students recently published a great novel. A year ago, another won a national playwriting contest. When you're a teacher, seeing your students go on to have success is a bit like being a parent and watching your children succeed.

**What leadership or service activities are you involved in?**

Probably the most important work I've done in this area is serve as chair of the department of English. I was associate chair for many years, and I just finished three years of what will end up being six years as department chair. Administrative work can be complex and time-consuming, but there are enough surprises to make it interesting.

**What is the most common misperception about what you do?**

It seems to me that academics have not done a good job of explaining the nature of our work to the general public. There is a misperception that all we do is teach three or four classes, that we're in the classroom just 12 hours or so each week and we don't do anything else.

The fact is those 12 hours are the most enjoyable and least onerous part of our jobs. We spend many more hours preparing for each class, and for English faculty and staff, many, many additional hours late into the evening and on weekends reading, grading and commenting upon perhaps four or five hundred student essays every semester.

Beyond that, we are constantly updating the curriculum and working to expand and develop new opportunities for students, and we are meeting with committees to do all sorts of other University work. And then we spend hours every week doing research or writing related to our teaching.

**What is the most exciting project you are working on right now?**

We are expanding opportunities for English majors to study abroad and domestically. In the past, we've led study tours abroad to England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Vietnam. Next year we're offering students an opportunity to go to Nicaragua or New Mexico or to spend an entire semester studying in Scotland.

**How does what you research help you to be an effective teacher?**

I'm a fiction writer, and it would be impossible to teach others to write fiction if I didn't also write regularly myself. The writing life is difficult. It's inefficient, it's messy, it's filled with rejection, but if you're a writer, it's as essential to your life as eating and drinking. I wouldn't know the answers to so many of the questions students ask in my classes if I wasn't also writing and publishing myself.

**Describe some ways your department serves Northeastern Wisconsin.**

I like to think that students emerge from their English classes with an understanding of the importance

and value of excellent writing skills and a clear sense of what reading can mean to the quality of their future lives. Widespread literacy benefits everyone in a community, and it's essential to a well-functioning democracy.

**Tell us about your family.**

My wife Jenna and I have a blended family of five wonderful children, three of whom — Della, Claire and Tyler — are just completing their first year of college. We also have two younger boys, Riley (13) and Noah (9). We live on five acres near Pickett and raise chickens and Shetland sheep. Over time, we've also put in a small orchard of about 20 fruit trees.

**What are your hobbies?**

I have a lot of them, but I especially love raising the animals; tending the fruit trees and a large summer vegetable garden; swimming, fishing, and sailing with my wife and children at a lake in northern Wisconsin; and fly fishing.

- [Read more faculty profiles.](#)

*Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to contribute calendar items, campus announcements and other good news to UW Oshkosh Today at [uwot@uwosh.edu](mailto:uwot@uwosh.edu).*