

## **ANNA LEAHY**

*Nominated for AWP Board Representative, Pacific West Region, she is running unopposed.*

### **CAMPAIGN STATEMENT**

I have attended more than a dozen AWP conferences since my first participation in 1993, presented on panels at several of those conferences, and served as an interim coordinator for the Pedagogy Forum in 2003. This organization has been important to the ways in which I envision the professions of writing and teaching and the ways I envision myself as a writer and as a teacher. I welcome the nomination for a position on the AWP board and would be honored to serve in such a role.

Because I write and publish in more than one genre, I'm interested in the commonalities that creative writers tend to share as well as in the differences in craft, habits, and opportunities among writers embarking on different kinds of projects, embracing different aesthetics, and finding themselves at different stages in their processes and careers. AWP has been meaningful to me, in part, because it has supported my exploration of writing at different stages, encouraged me to try new things, and taught me that I needn't feel adrift. Numerous artists and neurologists have recognized that, while the act of writing or making art is most often done in isolation, the writer who engages with a community of creative people tends to be more productive. AWP allows individuals and our ideas to collide with each other, and, through these collisions, we find innovation and encouragement. At its best, AWP, then, is more than the sum of its parts.

I currently teach in the MFA and BFA programs at Chapman University in Orange, California, where I am an associate professor. I also direct Tabula Poetica: The Center for Poetry at Chapman University, which I've built from the ground up since arriving in 2008. Tabula Poetica hosts an annual poetry reading series, other on-campus poetry programs, and outreach to the community. In January 2013, the center will launch *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, which will publish online issues and one annual print issue. As a result of this work beyond the classroom, I'll bring strong organizational skills and a range of ideas to the board. I'm especially interested in the challenges we face in sustaining literature, writing, and reading in and outside the academy, particularly with the rise of electronic publishing and economic crisis.

Since completing my graduate degrees (when I was a teaching assistant), I've taught at a variety of institutions, from public universities like Ohio University's branch campuses to liberal arts colleges like Knox College to comprehensive colleges like Chapman University. I've taught inmates working toward their college degrees in a correctional facility and helped non-native-English-speaking graduate students with their writing skills. This variety of experience led me to make pedagogy and the profession one ongoing focus of my publishing career. I edited *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, which launched the New Writing Viewpoints series at Multilingual Matters. I continue to publish articles widely in this area, most recently a series of pieces at *The Huffington Post* co-authored with five other creative writing professors. In recent years, AWP has

made strides in recognizing promoting teaching excellence as one of its top goals and in recognizing the need to elucidate what we do as writers and as teachers, both for ourselves and for the larger public, our institution's administrators, and our students.

AWP supports both the writers and the writing programs stated in the organization's name. Great attention is paid to the hundreds of writing programs and those of us who teach in them, and I look forward to contributing to the board's conversation about that. As I've participated in program review and assessment in my current position, I have come to appreciate AWP's resources all the more. AWP also gives attention to writers and writing outside of the academy, and I look forward to engaging with the board on issues related to general support of writers, small-press and commercial publishing, public perceptions of literature and creative writing, and connections with the larger arts community. That most graduates of creative writing programs will not step into tenure-track positions nor garner six-figure book contracts is also reason to think broadly about the organization's powerful role in enriching its members' writing lives and encouraging contemporary literature and a book-loving public. If elected to the board, I will serve to the best of my abilities the writers and writing programs AWP represents.

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Anna Leahy is the author of *Constituents of Matter*, which won the Wick Poetry Prize in 2006, and she is the editor of *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, which launched the New Writing Viewpoints series. Her poetry and nonfiction has appeared in journals such as the *Connecticut Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Journal*, *Phoebe*, and the *Southern Review*. *Lofty Ambitions* is the blog she co-authors with Doug Dechow; they are working on a nonfiction book about the U.S. space program. Leahy is the director of *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, and an associate professor of English at Chapman University.