



Association of Writers  
& Writing Programs

PRESS RELEASE

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November 16, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) Board of Directors Thanks Board Chair; Welcomes New Officers and Board Members**

NORFOLK, VA – The AWP Board of Directors met in late October for its quarterly meeting, which included approving new board members, bidding farewell to board chair Kathleen Driskell, and welcoming January Gill O’Neil as the new board chair.

Kathleen Driskell started her term in 2018 and became board chair in 2019, she governed during a time of worldwide chaos. Through her guidance and support, AWP was able to not only remain stable in an uncertain time, but to further strengthen its mission to support all writers and to increase its focus on accessibility and inclusion. The staff and board wish her the best in all future endeavors.

The AWP board voted in January Gill O’Neil as board chair. January has been on the AWP board since 2015 and previously served as the Vice Chair for two years. She is an associate professor at Salem State University and the author of *Glitter Road* (forthcoming, 2022), *Rewilding* (2018), *Misery Islands* (2014), and *Underlife* (2009), all published by CavanKerry Press. From 2012–2018, she served as the executive director of the Massachusetts Poetry Festival. January shares the following in an excerpt of her introductory letter (which can be viewed in its entirety in [Writer’s News](#)):

As AWP stands on its solid foundation with more than fifty years of excellence in the service of creative writing, we now turn toward a future focused on elevating voices and telling your stories.

AWP is a special organization, and I believe deeply in its mission.

The future of AWP depends on our ability to help you tell your stories and to provide opportunities at all stages of your creative journeys.

Additional changes in office include Jenny Yang Cropp (term 2021–2025), voted in as Vice Chair serving alongside Vice Chair Mimi Herman (term 2019–2023). Kris Bigalk will continue to serve as Secretary and Bruce Saul will continue as Treasurer.

AWP welcomes the following new board members:

Travis Kurowski, editor of *Paper Dreams: Writers and Editors on the American Literary Magazine* (Atticus Books, 2013), an Independent Publisher Book Award winner, and coeditor of *Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century* (Milkweed Editions, 2016). He has served on the mastheads of numerous magazines, including *Story*, winning a CLMP Firecracker Award. His writing has appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and *TriQuarterly*, and he was a columnist for *Poets & Writers*. He is an associate professor at York College of Pennsylvania, where he directs the writing program. He received his PhD from The University of Southern Mississippi.

Laura Tohe is the current Navajo Nation Poet Laureate. An award-winning poet, her books include *No Parole Today*, *Making Friends with Water*, *Sister Nations*, *Tséyi*, *Deep in the Rock*, and *Code Talker Stories* that have appeared in the U.S., Canada, and Europe with French, Dutch, and Italian translations. Her commissioned librettos are *Enemy Slayer*, *A Navajo Oratorio* on the Naxos classical music label, and *Nahasdzáán in the Glittering World* with performances in France in 2019 and 2021. Among her awards are the 2019–2020 Academy of American Poets Fellowship, the 2019 American Indian Festival of Writers Award, the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund Award, the Dan Schilling Public Scholar Award, and she was twice nominated for the Pushcart Award. She is Professor Emerita with Distinction from Arizona State University.

Discussions at the meeting included the state of the organization, preparing for the future of the organization, and potential meeting spaces for the annual conference and bookfair.

For a full list of the board of directors, visit the [AWP website](https://awpwriter.org). For press inquiries or questions, please email Juanita Lester, director of communications & technology at [awpPR@awpwriter.org](mailto:awpPR@awpwriter.org).