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## Preface: On the College of Humanities Fine Arts Graduate Student Symposium

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## Preface: On the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Graduate Student Symposium

In the fall of 2006, we sat down to discuss the possibility of creating a venue for the celebration of excellence in student work in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. Although we initially considered large-scale models that would include both undergraduate and graduate students and that would make space for the presentation of traditional research, creative work, and performance, we soon realized the wisdom of “starting small” by focusing on graduate-level work representing traditional research in the humanities. From the beginning, the goal has remained the same: to provide space for the presentation of excellent work, nominated by members of the graduate faculty in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and selected by a screening committee appointed by the Dean. That work is then presented to a live audience during a half-day event and is considered by a panel of adjudicators, who reflect on the presentations and choose students who will receive cash prizes or travel awards at the conclusion of the symposium.

Since its inception four years ago, the event has grown, not only in terms of the number of works submitted for the screening committee’s consideration but also in terms of the design of the entire experience. In the spring of 2009, the event expanded to include a keynote speaker of national renown, Professor Gregory M. Colón Semenza of the University of Connecticut-Storrs, whose *Graduate Study for the 21st Century: Building an Academic Career in the Humanities* (Palgrave, 2005) has become one of the most celebrated guides to graduate study; more locally, Dr. Semenza’s book has, for the last few years, been required reading for first-semester graduate students in several programs in the College. The day before the symposium, graduate faculty from across campus, who had participated in a reading group devoted to Semenza’s book, met with him for a spirited discussion over lunch, and at the opening of the symposium, Semenza delivered an address titled “Finding Your Voice in (and for) the Humanities,” a provocative examination of *the role of writing* in the professionalization of graduate students. Opening the event with a call for excellence in the communication of ideas, Professor Semenza set the bar high for the presentations to follow, and the students whose work had been selected for the symposium did not disappoint.

What follows is a collection of presentations delivered at the Third Annual College of Humanities and Fine Arts Graduate Research Symposium, which was held on Friday, April 3, 2009, in the Great Reading Room of Seerley Hall. Each presentation is introduced by the member of the graduate faculty who nominated the student, and some are augmented by accompanying PowerPoint presentations, which we have linked here.

Organizing, overseeing, and funding the annual College of Humanities and Fine Arts Graduate Symposium has proven a real joy for both of us, and we are pleased to present



the papers that follow as exemplary of some of the excellent work undertaken by graduate students in our College.

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