



Association of Writers
& Writing Programs

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) Board of Directors Welcomes New Members, Elects Officers, Bids Farewell to Former Treasurer

RIVERDALE PARK, MD – Last week, AWP’s Board of Directors met remotely for its annual meeting. Following that meeting, the board proudly makes the following announcements:

The board welcomed six new members to its ranks, each of whom brings a wealth of academic, literary, and nonprofit experience.

Michelle Aielli is vice president, associate publisher, and founding member of the Hachette Books imprint at the Hachette Book Group. She has worked in book publishing for over two decades and previously worked in publicity at Little, Brown and Company.

DeMisty D. Bellinger teaches creative writing at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts and is an editor at Malarkey Books, the poetry editor at *Porcupine Literary*, and an alumna reader at *Prairie Schooner*.

Brian Leung is an award-winning novelist and past recipient of the Lambda Literary Outstanding Mid-Career Prize. Brian’s fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry appear in numerous magazines and journals. He is a professor of creative writing at Purdue University.

Kenyatta Rogers is a Cave Canem Fellow and lead teacher for the Poetry Foundations Teacher Institute and Chautauqua Institution’s Young Writer Institute. He serves on the creative writing faculty at the Chicago High School for the Arts.

Bruce H. Saul, a former policy analyst at the U.S. Treasury Department, has spent most of his career as a senior legal officer in the U.S. financial services sector, including chief counsel and chief compliance officer roles in insurance and other financial services businesses within Fortune 500 companies.

Cheryl Woodruff is the president and founder of BookMavericks, a full-service book publishing consulting firm. Over her decades-long career as a pioneering publisher and editor,

Cheryl has produced over 30 national bestsellers and literary award-winners. She has served as president and associate publisher of SmileyBooks/Hay House and associate publisher and founder of One World/Ballantine Books (Penguin Random House), the first multicultural imprint at a mainstream publishing house.

To read the full bios of new board members, visit AWP's [Board of Directors](#) web page.

New officers were also elected by the full board. **Kathleen Driskell** of Spalding University was retained as board chair. Vice chairs are **January Gill O'Neil** of Salem State University and **Mimi Herman** of Writeaways; the treasurer is **Ruth Dickey** of Seattle Arts & Lectures; and **Kris Bigalk** of Normandale Community College was retained as secretary.

Rob Trott, former treasurer, rotated off the board of directors after five years of service to AWP. The other board members who remain are **Regina Brooks**; **Kim Chinquee**, Northeast Council chair; **Jeff Kleinman**; **Susan Rodgers**, Northwestern Regional Council chair; **Ryan Stone**, Southwestern Regional Council chair; **Stephanie Vanderslice**, Southern Council Chair; and **Dan Vera**.

At this meeting, the board discussed the annual budget, received an update on the audit (still in progress), and addressed continuing initiatives to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic, including Virtual AWP, nonprofit collaborations, and the annual AWP Conference & Bookfair. The board also discussed goals for year-round services and programming to benefit individual members and creative writing groups and programs.

The mission of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) is to foster literary achievement, to advance the art of writing as essential to a good education, and to serve the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing.