

5 May 2016

Donette Thomas, President
Friends of the Humanities
P. O. Box 53581
Lafayette, LA 70505

Dear Donette and Friends:

I am enclosing my Annual Endowed Professorship Report for 2015-2016. As you can see, I have had a very productive year professionally, and I have the Friends' generous contribution to the James D. Wilson Memorial Endowed Professorship in Southern Studies to thank.

Because this professorship was established in the 1990s shortly after my husband Jim died, the current Friends may not be aware of its history. First of all, my husband Jim was also my colleague in the English department, and he was a noted Mark Twain scholar. After his death, Joanie Hill and her family began an endowment in his name at the university, followed by various generous community donations. President Ray Authement secured the major part of the endowment from the Board of Regents, but we needed another \$10,000 to complete it. I asked the Friends, and they generously completed this endowment in Jim's name.

The first holder of this professorship was Dr. Mary Farmer-Kaiser, faculty in the history department, and a scholar of southern women's history. She is now UL's Graduate Dean.

This is my first year holding this professorship, and besides the boost to my salary, it also comes with a \$2,000/annual supplement for travel, research, and/or equipment. Since our English department—and most departments across the university—is seriously lacking in travel funds because of current and ongoing budget constraints, this supplement funded my travel to two major conferences in my field: the Society for the Study of American Women Writers in Philadelphia in November 2015; and the Society for the Study of Southern Literature in Boston in March 2016. These are gathering places for major scholars and editors in the various fields in southern studies. I presented papers at both, giving our university and program national visibility. My friend and colleague Michael Martin, head of the Center for Louisiana Studies, was on the Louisiana panel with me in Boston.

I am as always grateful for the Friends' generosity and deep commitment to humanities teaching and scholarship. You have made many wonderful things possible in my professional life, and holding this James D. Wilson professorship is at the top of the list.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Wilson/Professor of English
James D. Wilson Memorial/BORSF Endowed Professor in
Southern Studies