

## Julia Conaway Bondanella

Julia Conaway Bondanella came to IU in 1973 from a position at Wayne State University in Detroit, where she had gone after earning her Ph.D. in comparative literature at the University of Oregon. In an interview released when she was appointed vice-chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 2001, Julia claimed that she came to IU for three reasons: to join her husband Peter, an IU faculty member since 1972; to take advantage of the quality and holdings of the IU library, especially in her areas of European Renaissance literature and culture; and to savor Bloomington's "incredible cultural environment." In 1973, Julia joined IU's Honors Division (since renamed the Honors College, and now the Hutton Honors College), where she worked for almost three decades as an associate director and subsequently both associate and acting dean, until 2001, when she left, temporarily, to join the NEH for one year. When she returned to Bloomington, Julia taught full time in the French and Italian department, but she still maintained her strong ties to the Honors College, teaching one course every semester for honors students. The most remarkable aspect of Julia's career at honors is that she did all that work while pursuing her scholarly and teaching career as a faculty member in the French and Italian department, where she became a full professor of Italian in 1994. As she said of honors in a 2001 interview:

I never imagined this kind of career for myself, I had a more traditional career in mind. But fortunately for me I became part of the honors program. And now I cannot imagine my years at IU without my experiences in honors, which have enriched my life and my mind, through my constant contact with exceptional colleagues, especially the honors staff, and with my wonderful students.

In her tenure at honors Julia has been crucially involved from the beginning in all of the innovations and curricular changes the college has undergone. Professor Abhijit Basu, chair of geological sciences, notes:

She inspired me to teach in the Honors College by accepting a cross-disciplinary course proposal on "meteorites and planets" that my own department did not initially approve as a "geology" course. That positive act, as opposed to rhetoric and pep talk, served as an inspiration to me for all the cross-disciplinary honors seminars that I have taught over the years.

Conaway Bondanella was also instrumental in the development of the honors grant and the freshman merit scholarship programs. Between 1999 and 2001, thanks to the cooperation of the IU Foundation and the generosity of donor Edward Hutton, Bondanella was involved in helping to establish the Honors College International Experiences Program. As she says herself:

Travel abroad offers opportunities to understand modes of life that differ from our own. It can also bring a deeper understanding of what it means, in the best sense of the word, to be an American. Mr. Hutton's vision will reap splendid benefits for students and their communities now and in the future.

Conaway Bondanella's involvement with the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) helped stimulate her thinking about some of the new developments in honors she helped foster. In 1992 she was elected vice president of NCHC, and became president for the years 1993-1994. The NCHC conference she organized in St. Louis in 1993 had as its title Privilege, Responsibility, and Community. She notes:

In some ways that title explains my concept of what honors education ought to do for students. Not only should it enrich their academic experience through special courses, research, and internship experiences, but it should also enrich them by encouraging action in the community.

Many members of NCHC laud Conaway Bondanella's contributions there. For example, Dean Cheryl Achterberg of Pennsylvania State University's Schreyer Honors College said in 2001 that Bondanella helped make her own program grow and thrive:

The most important thing that Julia has done for me is to mentor me through NCHC . . . . Julia was warm, welcoming, and a good instructor. She set me on a path that has served Penn State well and showed us how to become engaged and involved, and how to contribute to both NCHC and honors education more generally . . . . She is strong, honest, inspirational, wise, and an excellent leader. Neither NCHC nor the Schreyer Honors College would be exactly where it is today without her.

We would not want to end this biographical sketch without stressing the importance of Julia's work as a scholar of the Italian Renaissance. While her initial literary interest was Renaissance love poetry, Julia broadened her field to become a scholar and translator, most of the time with her husband, Peter, of some of the most important Renaissance authors, such as Machiavelli, Vasari, and Cellini, not to mention her beloved Petrarch, a long-standing focus of her research since graduate school. Her most recent effort is the edition with Peter of Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* for the Barnes and Noble classics library. Over the years, she has taught many times courses that have enriched the lives of IU's undergraduates, putting them in contact with the world of Renaissance ideas. The absence of a suitable anthology for such a purpose led her to edit with Mark Musa the well-known *Italian Renaissance Reader*, utilized by many universities in the teaching of Renaissance writers and artists. As in the case of her husband, Peter, Julia will be sorely missed by colleagues and students alike. IU and honors will not be the same without her.

*Andrea Ciccarelli and Massimo Scalabrini*