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UNT's Mayborn Conference to launch writing seminar and competition for high school and community college students

DENTON (UNT), Texas — In an effort to nurture the next generation of storytellers and journalists, the organizers of the [University of North Texas' Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference](#) have teamed up with the Education Department at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum to create literary nonfiction programming and an annual biography writing competition.

On March 3 (Thursday), high school and community college students from Texas and the entire nation will be able to participate in a distance learning program on literary nonfiction writing at the presidential library. "The Biography: Writing Techniques," will be led by James McGrath Morris, author of *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power* and president of Biographers International Organization.

"We are thrilled to provide this opportunity for students to help hone their skills for writing literary nonfiction," said Dr. Shirley Hammond, education director and the program organizer. "Creating well-researched and documented literary nonfiction is a useful skill across the curriculum."

Distance learning facilitation is made through the Trans Texas Videoconference Network of Texas A&M University with the Texas Education Telecommunications Network. The program will be available via videoconferencing, videostreaming or an archived recording.

To register a school for the March 3 program, visit <http://dl.esc6.net>. Contact Kimberly Taylor at ktaylor@esc6.net for additional information. Schools also can register to view the archived recording.

In addition, Mayborn Conference organizers will announce a new literary competition inviting students to research and write biographies about individuals who have left a deep and lasting legacy in their community. Morris said that the competition will help students build life skills applicable in a variety of fields and encourage intergenerational conversations.

"There is a misconception that the technological changes of the recent decades have eliminated the need for narrative storytelling, but in reality the opposite is true," said Morris. "Storytelling is an essential 21st century skill, and biography is a form that lends itself to the narrative style."

Biographies must be submitted to UNT's [Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism](#) by June 13 (Monday). Ten winners will be selected by a jury pool of prominent biographers and

narrative nonfiction writers. For more details on the biography competition, visit the Mayborn Conference Website at <http://www.themayborn.unt.edu/>

To participate in the biography writing competition, applicants must register for the March 3 program or view the recording after the fact. Five Texas winners will be selected and another five will be selected through a national campaign, led by the Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism and its partner Big Thought, a nationally renowned non-profit organization working in schools across America to provide creative learning opportunities.

Each winner and a teacher of his or her choice will be awarded scholarships to this summer's Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference, which will be held July 22-24 (Friday – Sunday) at the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center in Grapevine, Texas. The winners will be recognized during the conference's Literary Lights dinner on July 23 (Saturday), and the winning biographies will be published in *The Dallas Morning News*.

Lee Hancock, a reporter at *The Dallas Morning News* and a regular Mayborn Conference attendee, conceived the initial idea to involve young people in the conference after observing her 13-year-old daughter at last year's conference.

"My daughter and her friend Sophia really enjoyed the conference," said Hancock. "It truly transformed the way that they look at reading and writing, and that made me realize that the conference is a great opportunity to inspire the next generation of storytellers."

Hancock and Jim Moroney, publisher of *The Dallas Morning News*, provided the funding for conference organizers to launch The Mayborn Young Spurs Excellence and Opportunity Initiative, which is supporting the biography competition in Texas and across the nation.

For additional information about the biography competition or the Mayborn Conference, contact Jo Ann Ballantine, conference manager, at 940-565-4778 or Joann.ballantine@unt.edu.

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