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## **Rhodes State Professor Awarded Prestigious Poetry Fellowship**

LIMA, Ohio—It may not be his students' idea of a fun vacation, but writing poetry for two weeks this summer is Will Wells' dream come true. The professor of English and Humanities at Rhodes State College was recently awarded the prestigious Walter E. Dakin Fellowship in Poetry to attend the Sewanee Writers' Conference in July. The conference draws prominent writers and faculty members, including many Pulitzer Prize winners, from all across the country.

"I will be assisting with workshops and also attending conferences and having my work critiqued," says Wells. "I plan to enjoy the fellowship of other writers and obtain inspiration and suggestions to put to the test."

Wells was granted the fellowship on the strength of his recent book, *Unsettled Accounts*, which was published this February by Ohio University/Swallow Press. This compilation of his poems, which were written over a period of 20 years, was awarded the 2009 Hollis Summers Poetry Prize. It also captured the attention of Andrew Hudgins, a renowned poet who's been a finalist for the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Hudgins, who teaches at The Ohio State University, nominated Wells for the Dakin Fellowship.

Wells has been a poet since his teenage years. He's a formalist who pens poems in traditional verse. His poems have a strong narrative slant and often are inspired by his personal experiences. "My writing process is fairly compulsive with multiple drafts and revisions," he says. "I'm fussy about form and getting it just right."

In his classes at Rhodes State, Wells encourages his students to be meticulous in their writing, too. He also shows them how to enliven their sentences with richer details and stronger word choices. "My students are often surprised to discover I have this other life as a poet," he says, with a laugh.

The Sewanee Writers' Conference is sponsored by the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, an institution that has a long and rich literary tradition. The Walter E. Dakin Fellowship was

established from the estate of the late playwright Tennessee Williams. Williams left a portion of his estate to the University of the South in memory of his grandfather, The Reverend William E. Dakin, who studied theology at the university in the late 1800s. Williams wanted the funds to be used to encourage creative writing.

Wells has written one other book of poetry, *Conversing with the Light*, which also won poetry prizes. He's been awarded fellowships through the Ohio Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. He's taught at Rhodes State for 29 years where he also serves as the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

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