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Faculty Profile: Maureen Connelly

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Maureen Connelly is a regular contributor to the Irish Echo, a national newspaper of Irish-American culture. Her column, "Celtic Clippings" is an eclectic look at the Irish-American scene in New England with columns ranging from an analysis of Irish President Mary Robinson to a discussion of an Irish-American dermatologists' convention in Dublin. Professor Connelly is also past president of the Eire Society, which is dedicated to advancing Irish culture in America. Her most recent work is with the Irish Famine Memorial Committee which is seeking to raise $3 million to erect a statue in Boston to commemorate the Irish famine of the 1840's and to establish a living memorial to help famine victims around the world.

Professor Connelly is encouraged by the renewed interest in Irish studies at Bridgewater. In part because of what she calls the "Riverdance phenomena", the popularity of the rock group U-2, and the present peace talks in Northern Ireland, Professor Connelly finds her students seeking to explore their heritage. Professor Connelly is more than happy to assist students who want to expand their Irish-American horizons. Whenever she can Professor Connelly does not hesitate to put in a plug for expanded Irish studies offerings at the college. With Irish-Americans the largest of the hyphenated ethnic groups in Massachusetts, Professor Connelly is convinced that establishing a program of Irish studies would be a clear winner.

Because of her interest in Irish poets and writers Professor Connelly is anxious to expand her research on Irish female writers. She believes that for too long Irish women of letters like Maria Edgeworth, and Somerville and Ross have been ignored and not given the critical acclaim they deserve. Professor Connelly intends to travel to Ireland in 1998 to delve more deeply into the work of these writers and develop a new focus to her course on Irish literature.

When not involved in Irish literature, Professor Connelly is also the journalism instructor on campus. She regularly teaches the journalism course and advises students on how they can hone their writing skills to prepare for careers with a newspaper or the electronic media. Professor Connelly has worked in the Freshman skills program which is designed to strengthen the writing ability of incoming students. It is this interaction with students in the classroom and in specialized programs that energizes Professor Connelly.

But there is always Ireland and the Irish in America for Professor Connelly to come back to. Her love of her Irish heritage serves as a kind of academic catalyst that has made her a vital part of the Bridgewater faculty and an invaluable resource for people of Irish descent in Massachusetts.