

Undergraduate Writing Program

Parag Budhecha wants to know why her students decided to go to college and why they picked Duke. She's not looking for the answers that might have gotten them admitted, but that reveal something about their ideological views of higher education.

Budhecha is a Mellon Teaching Fellow, one of a group of 25 postdoctoral scholars who teach sections of Academic Writing, better known as Writing 20, helping small groups of first-year students to learn to read closely and critically and to write creatively about what they've read. The fellows, from disciplines ranging from epidemiology and gender studies to molecular biology and sociology, teach seminars with such distinctive themes as "The Many Texts of Tourism," "The Idea of Sexuality," "Ritual in the Middle East," "The American Militia Movement"—and Budhecha's "Writing the Academy Inside Out: The Rhetoric of Institutions of Higher Learning and Their Role in the Community."

"The course invites students to examine the institution of higher education and the definition of 'academic,'" Budhecha says. "We explore competing ideologies about higher education—such as education for education's sake

versus education for consumers—and examine the various ways the university has been written—by government, by the public, by individuals—and the ways the university writes its role in such sociopolitical issues as the wars in Vietnam and Iraq."

A graduate of the University of Arizona (BA 1993 and MA 1995) and Miami University of Ohio (Ph.D. 2000), Budhecha won the 2005 Award for Excellence in Teaching Writing from the University Writing Program (UWP), which administers the Writing 20 seminars. Her teaching has been enhanced by the UWP's interdisciplinary structure. "My colleagues have helped me broaden my definition of academic writing and the infinite approaches to teaching it," she says. "We're given the opportunity to collaborate and interact with one another, and the result is only positive." As an associate director of the UWP, Budhecha also mentors the 10 graduate students who teach Writing 20 seminars.

The work of the Mellon Teaching Fellows is supported in part by a \$2 million grant given to Duke in 2000 by the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**. The foundation renewed its support for the UWP in 2004. Although the second Mellon grant will run out at the end of



2007, the foundation offered Duke a challenge grant of an additional \$1 million, provided that Duke generates \$2 million through its own fundraising efforts. Challenge grants like this are gifts that generate other gifts, enabling donors to participate in higher levels of philanthropy than they might otherwise be able.

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