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McCumber '19 on the Value of Pursuit and Discovery

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[McCumber '19 on the Value of Pursuit and Discovery](#)

Corinne McCumber '19 knows a rewarding opportunity when she sees one. As a research assistant for [Distinguished McKnight University Professor of English Michael Lackey](#) her junior year, McCumber began locating source materials for a couple projects, including an entry for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* as well as a collection of Joanna Scott's interviews. When the opportunity came to interview the distinguished author for Lackey's new book, *Conversations with Joanna Scott* (2020), McCumber saw a chance to dig deeper into the complexity of Scott's work.

"It never hurts to speak up when you see an opportunity. Professor Lackey had announced in class that he was looking for someone to help him with transcribing interviews," says McCumber. "I dropped by his office after class—I had only recently declared that I was an English major—and by the end of the week, I had the position!"

Conversations with Joanna Scott presents 18 interviews that span three decades, shedding light on Scott's fiction and her observations on literature and life. Included in the collection is a transcribed roundtable discussion with Scott and McCumber on her biographical novel, *Careers for Women* (2017). Lackey and poet and [Teaching Specialist Athena Kildegaard](#) also participated.

Through her group discussion, McCumber felt grateful to have the space to ask questions, be curious, and to discuss how Scott created a narrative that highlights stories that often go untold. "In an age of digital misinformation, it's really valuable to read something slowly, read it well, and read it with other people," she says. "It's a communal dissection of why a certain set of worldviews are behind a set of words." "

McCumber feels that the UMN Morris campus culture of support and encouragement embodies her willingness to seek out fulfilling opportunities. To McCumber, students at UMN Morris are naturally curious, continually expanding on their own worldviews, learning to think critically and intentionally.

"Working closely with students, giving them the opportunity to meet famous writers, and mentoring them through the process of high-level research--these are the most rewarding parts of teaching at UMN Morris," according to Lackey, "and it is students like Corinne who make me realize how much undergraduates can contribute to the rich world of ideas."

The pursuit of new opportunities has continued for McCumber after graduation. She took a position as an intern at the Congressional Relations Office at the Library of Congress during the fall of 2019, answering calls from Congressional staff regarding the Library, researching Members of Congress to create profiles, and attending a number of library events. She currently works as a high school tutor, a patient health screener at Twin Cities Orthopedics, and a volunteer grant writer for a nonprofit.