

Good afternoon, and welcome to the first *virtual* English Department Awards Ceremony and Sigma Tau Delta Induction.

I am Susan Goulding, and it is my honor and pleasure to serve as the Chair of the Department of English. This afternoon, in a world and time with so much sadness, challenge, and pain, we celebrate the accomplishments of our students. And while I ask you to reflect, in your own time, on the current context, I also ask that we recognize in today's event a celebration of distinct character—not merely a pause at the end of the semester, not merely a recognition, but a time when we may see in the accomplishments of the students honored here today, in their excellence, that we do not just wait for better days ahead but that we actively work toward those better days; what we celebrate in our students today in this year is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of those better days ahead. My thanks and appreciation to all of you for the work you have done to bring us together today. And so to get to that celebration, it is now my pleasure to give the screen to my esteemed colleague Alena Graedon, Assistant Professor and novelist, and chair of this year's awards committee.

Susan Goulding, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of English