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"As an extension of the Lafayette College community, the McKelvy Scholars Program strives to provide an alternative residential experience which fosters intellectual discourse and advocates personal growth and community development through ideological and cultural exchange."

*-McKelvy Scholars Mission Statement*

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Introduction

Over the past four years, members of the McKelvy Scholars Program have come together to publish The McKelvy Papers. That coming together has compelled students to confront the challenge of defining what type of product would be "appropriate" for publication in the journal. In so doing, students considered the meaning of "scholarship" and reflected upon the purpose of scholarly publications. This year, the debate over defining and redefining The McKelvy Papers has resulted in a change in the journal.

In past years, students submitting work for publication were required to produce evaluative papers. That is, the individual author was required to produce a paper that put forward and defended a thesis. Whether that thesis was supported by scientific data, social science analysis, historical evidence, or logical argument, contributors were expected to assert and then defend a proposition. Limiting papers to those of the evaluative type precluded the publication of such things as creative writing, art work, poetry, photography, and fiction.

That preclusion has, in my years of association with McKelvy House, always fostered debate and disagreement. Until this year, that debate has been resolved by the students in favor of continuing the traditional policy. For a majority of students in each of the past years, the argument for keeping with the evaluative style of paper stemmed from both the mission of the McKelvy Program (i.e., to encourage "intellectual discourse") and the fact that the journal was created as an outgrowth of the weekly discussions. Thus, students argued, contributors could not simply present works of creation or art, but would be required to focus on the intellectual dialogue and exchange that is at the heart of the Program. Just as a student leading a Sunday night dinner discussion could not simply display a work of art, the publications, too, would have to reflect an emphasis on discourse.

This year, the argument justifying what would be included in The McKelvy Papers has essentially remained the same, but creative and artistic works have found their way into the journal through a compromise. This year's Editorial Board agreed that, to be consistent with the original inspiration behind the creation of The McKelvy Papers and to maintain the connection between the journal and the weekly discussions, the submitted work must "foster discourse." However, fostering discourse does not necessarily preclude the inclusion of artistic and creative pieces. A student leading a discussion might bring in a work of art for display and then introduce a debate over the nature of

**The McKelvy Papers**  
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ANDREW PLATT

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## Examining Feyerabend's Farewell to Reason

In his book, *Farewell to Reason*, philosopher Paul Feyerabend attempts to critique the notions of Reason and Objectivity in Western thought and the influence these notions have had, particularly with an eye towards their influence with regards to the interactions between Western and Non-Western cultures. Whether or not he intends to present this work as a series of rational arguments against this “Reason,” this “Objectivity,” is not entirely clear, but it does seem that it can be fairly interpreted in this way. For Feyerabend, an avowed relativist, this point may be irrelevant. Yet for those who are not yet convinced of the overall uselessness of rationality, it may perhaps still be worthwhile to examine this debate from a rationalist perspective; regardless of Feyerabend's intention, it does seem that we can draw arguments of a rational form (logical, dealing in abstractions) out of this work, and we can see where the consideration of these arguments leads us — what sorts of issues they involve, what sorts of assumptions they make.

But beyond this general resolution that we can approach this work as containing arguments, it might serve us well to limit the scope of this discussion so as to avoid some of the (inordinately) large and overshadowing issues associated with arguments that lie on the borders of the rational — issues of relativism and the problem of self-justifying systems. As to the issue of relativism, it seems that we can delineate two over-arching claims throughout the work: 1) There is no absolute, universal truth, and 2) The notion of absolute, universal truth is somehow part and parcel of rationality (with a big R or a small r, in quotes or out of quotes). The first claim is central to what Feyerabend is saying, and plays a significant role in establishing the first premises of the arguments which we shall attribute to him, but in and of itself it is far too

## The McKelvy Papers 2000

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**History of the McKelvy Program and The McKelvy Papers**

The Lafayette College Scholars Program, which houses its members at the McKelvy House, has been in existence since 1962. The house, a McKim, Mead, and White design, was built in 1888. Ron Steiner '82 describes it as "one of the most beautiful and imposing structures on Easton's College Hill." Lafayette College acquired the house in 1960 from former trustee Frank McKelvy, and in 1961, Charles C. Cole, former Dean of the College, established the College Scholars Program after "intensive lobbying." McKelvy House was named "a place where students of special promise could live, work, and talk together to reinforce one another's curiosity and drive."

Members of the McKelvy Scholars Program join together at least twice a week during the academic year for dinner and discussion. These gatherings form the centerpiece of the Program. With student-cooked meals and student-led discussions, McKelvy House provides a residential environment that encourages intellectual discourse and the open exchange of ideas.

In 1994, Curlee Holton, then Assistant Professor of Art and Faculty Resident Advisor of the House, urged program members to document their evening discussions in the form of a journal. The '94-'95 McKelvyites accepted the challenge and created *The McKelvy Papers*, an annual journal of essays written, edited, and produced by the McKelvy Scholars.

In 1995, Volume 1 of *The McKelvy Papers* was published. In that and subsequent volumes, McKelvy students have sought to share with those outside the Program some of the conversations and ideas that have animated the House. McKelvy students hope you find within these pages the product of a community endeavor that reflects and reinforces the mission and spirit of the McKelvy Scholars Program.

The McKelvy Scholars Program, now more than forty years old, published its first edition of The McKelvy Papers in 1992. This edition has a new look that sets it apart from those past editions, but it honors the tradition of published papers that were inspired in some way by the dinner discussions held every Sunday evening at McKelvy House during the academic year. The topics and styles of this year's papers are various. They include a new, vibrant critique of various views of women's sexuality, a meditation on the nature of justice, a theory of humor, an inquiry into the value of the institution of marriage, a detailed analysis of recent developments in Chinese medical ethics, an essay on violence in our public schools, and much more. Taken together, the papers clearly underline not only the intrinsic value of the McKelvy Scholars Program, but also its long-standing role as a major contributor to the intellectual life of the Lafayette community. As faculty resident adviser at McKelvy House, I recommend this edition of The McKelvy Papers with pride and enthusiasm.

David Anthony Castelletti  
McKelvy House, August 2003

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