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Report on English Majors' Career Preparation and Outcomes

ADE Ad Hoc Committee on English Majors' Career Preparation and Outcomes

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Report on English Majors' Career Preparation and Outcomes

Executive Summary

The sources and data this committee reviewed offer compelling, decisive evidence that students who major or minor in English find jobs and earn respectable salaries and that the skills and abilities that these students develop in their courses of study translate into a wide variety of professional opportunities. Furthermore, high percentages of alumni of English departments report that they have fulfilling careers and lives. The information included in this report, in short, overturns the persistent negative myths that surround the topic of English majors and career outcomes.

This report also details a growing body of work on career preparation for English majors, led by innovative departments responding to known student concerns about job prospects. We can and should learn from these exemplary efforts, drawing on them as models for our work in local contexts. While we recognize that the challenges to this work are substantial and daunting, we would like to emphasize that even the smallest step toward improved career preparation activities within a department is a step in the right direction. We suggest a number of strategies that we regard as most effective, based on the available evidence, but even a modest effort—for example, planning and hosting one workshop for students on résumé writing—would be worthwhile.

Students who pursue the English major today are under pressure to answer the question of how they will be able to leverage their degrees into professional opportunities, material success, and financial security. As reported by faculty leaders around North America, "student concerns about job prospects" is the most formidable challenge facing humanities departments, including English (Muir, "Career Counseling"). While it is apparent to us that recruitment is enmeshed with career preparation, this report argues that we ought to be motivated primarily by an ethical obligation to our students, not by a drive for numbers in our programs. If departments turn their attention to doing career preparation work well and explicitly, they will both prepare their students for their lives and careers and be better positioned to recruit and retain students more effectively.

Much is at stake in that effort. If we do not make it clear that the English major leads to good jobs and economic mobility, as well as satisfaction in both work and life opportunity, we will not be well positioned to uphold our commitments to justice and equity. We have an ethical responsibility to all our majors to address career preparation because the concern cuts across every line of demographics and identity. In fulfilling that responsibility, we should take into consideration gender identity and its role in career outcomes, as well as the life contexts of first-generation students, Indigenous and First Nations students, and students from minority groups that have been historically and are still excluded from and underrepresented in institutions

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of higher education in the United States and Canada. When we place students, their concerns, and their authentic ambitions at the center of our focus, we find that career preparation is not optional or additional to what we do in English departments. It is imperative.

Our committee recommends that:

- English departments directly participate in the work of preparing their students for careers, and prioritize faculty development and resources in order to support instructors and advisers doing this work.
- Departments strongly consider engaging alumni networks. In our view, this is the single most effective way to undertake career preparation.
- Faculty members learn how to use the best, most authoritative data on salaries and career outcomes and circulate them to students, parents, public audiences, and internal institutional audiences. The dissemination of this authoritative information should be a communications priority of the department, from classrooms to advising, making this a collective responsibility.
- Faculty members help students become aware of the many skills they are developing in the major and explicitly connect these skills to the skills a wide range of employers seek.
- Faculty members and departments acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of career outcomes that English majors successfully pursue while recognizing that the options available to English majors can seem overwhelming to students at first. Curricular and cocurricular programs should be developed that step students through the career preparation process with clarity and support.
- Departments develop a sustainable program of career preparation that accounts for local contexts.
- Department and institutional leadership support career preparation efforts as an important form of faculty labor, with serious recognition of the particular demands and complexity of this work.

Report on English Majors' Career Preparation and Outcomes

Introduction

English departments today must contend with the persistent misconception that their majors have dim career prospects, graduating with employment options limited to service sector positions that do not typically require a college degree—a view that implies that the course of study has little value in professional settings. This outcome would be disheartening if it were true. In reality, the career outcomes of English majors prove this is a false narrative. Yet this myth is circulated with striking frequency in major news outlets and animates the deep concerns voiced by students and families about the connection between types of undergraduate degrees and subsequent professional opportunities.[1] In the light of the fact that humanities departments, English among them, cite "student concerns about jobs" as the most formidable challenge they currently face, it is critical for departments to accurately describe the value of the English major to students (Muir 5). This imperative is an ethical responsibility, particularly in relation to students who may perceive or experience pressure to understand their degrees in immediately marketable terms, such as first-generation college students, Indigenous and First Nations students, and students from historically underrepresented groups in higher education. The ethical obligation of departments to give serious and sustained attention to career preparation underpins this report.

It is difficult to ascertain whether popular misconceptions—what Robert Matz, professor of English and campus dean at George Mason University, Korea, has called "the myth of the English major barista"—are creating or responding to the sense of insecurity around the value of the English major when stated only in terms of financial return on investment. These misconceptions warrant our attention not least because they are echoed in the wider culture. Responses to them have become similarly routine, and in some cases misleading. For example, the data show that the idea that English majors eventually "catch up" to engineers, in terms of salary, over the course of their careers is not true. This information first gained wide attention through an article in *The New York Times* (Deming) and has been recirculated in derivative forms. Instead of replacing damaging myths with more flattering myths, we recommend departments respond to popular misconceptions by citing authoritative sources of salary and career outcome information. We recommend that departments make the dissemination of this information a strategic communications priority.

Faculty members, staff members, and administrators are best positioned to address student concerns about career outcomes by arming themselves with reliable data. To this end, we recommend that departments put practices in place to effectively describe the specific forms of career preparation they offer to students, from courses and workshops to internships and advising; narrate the diverse career pathways available to students; and further address this topic by doing the following:

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- Recognizing the concerns of students and their families as legitimate;
- Connecting students' personal interest in the major as well as their cocurricular activities and previous employment with career advising;
- Acquiring and maintaining an updated knowledge of salary outcomes for English majors to share with students and their families, such as the information included in this report;
- Contextualizing the salary data with information about the wide range of careers that English majors successfully pursue, ideally with an emphasis on alumni stories;
- Emphasizing the expansive ways in which English majors contribute to society across many sectors and professional positions and find satisfaction in their work—in other words, widening the framework beyond return on investment.

The discipline should recognize and promote the view that the study of English has intrinsic value *and* value on the job market. One way forward is to think about career preparation for English majors in the framework of the public humanities, in which undergraduate students are both a public audience and agents of humanistic inquiry and knowledge across many professional sectors. Another way forward is for four-year institutions to learn from and collaborate with two-year institutions in the area of career readiness. In short, when we succeed in preparing students for careers, we succeed in sending them confidently into diverse professional settings, where they represent and utilize the insights and values of their training.

For example, many of our students will seek employment in the field of education. A fifth of English majors go on to careers in this sector, and teacher training is a cornerstone of many departments.[2] This work is concretely aligned with the vision of preparing students to contribute to the public good, and in some departments, it is a great strength and historical legacy—one might look at the rich history of normal schools and teaching colleges. Many HBCUs, for instance, were founded on the ideal of preparing African American teachers for the public school classroom, while many religious institutions understand pedagogy as a core vocational calling. It is our sense that many of the students who aspire to become teachers will have already imagined a career direction as they move through their degree, one that is well-supported institutionally, with structured pathways and formalized requirements toward teaching credentials, experience, and job placements. It is also our guiding assumption that many readers of this report have the other eighty percent of students near the front of their thoughts: the students who major in English not necessarily to teach but rather out of personal interest and the expectation of strengthening skills in written and oral communication, critical and creative thinking, and appreciation of diversity—and then to pursue the diversity of professional options that are often far less immediately clear.

In March 2020, the Association of Departments of English (ADE), part of the Modern Language Association (MLA), convened this ad hoc committee, charging us to report on career outcomes for English majors and minors; to gather case studies and other forms of evidence of departments' effective strategies and curricular innovations for working with students on career preparation and professional development; to offer advice on how to prepare students to explain how their study has readied them for a variety of careers and developed in them skills and values that are needed by hiring institutions in a variety of economic sectors;

to coach faculty members to speak knowledgeably about such matters; and to help departments explain, to a variety of constituencies, how their work meets these challenges. We carried out this work throughout the pandemic and amid its challenges. Our report does not speak in any detail to considerations related to recruitment or to strengthening programs in English departments, though we regard career preparation as necessarily connected to these and to other areas that are simply beyond our scope. We also recognize that English departments contain many tracks, methods, approaches, and curricula but do not address this diversity here; instead, we address our work to the profession of English broadly conceived. In fulfilling its charge, the committee studied examples from the diverse range of two-year and four-year institutions represented by the ADE.

This report contributes to the substantial body of work on career preparation in the humanities, taking a discipline-specific focus while also drawing on information gleaned from humanities-wide sources. When data specific to English are not available, we consider information relating to humanities disciplines more broadly. We are particularly indebted to the excellent work of the National Humanities Alliance and Humanities Indicators, a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and we highly recommend that departments consult in full the major reports from these entities noted in our list of works cited.

Although students experience career preparation before professional outcomes, we have begun with outcomes—specifically, with salaries. Our reporting in this section is largely quantitative, drawing on authoritative sources that are based on national data sets held by the United States government.[3] We then turn to career preparation, and our report becomes much more qualitative, drawing on interviews and exchanges with colleagues to describe findings and showcase models being used in departments today. We also incorporate responses to an informal survey on the landscape of career preparation in English that was circulated to department chairs through ADE channels and the Canadian Association of Chairs of English (CACE). In the appendix, we have collected detailed case studies of career preparation efforts in English departments across many different institution types and locations in the United States and have provided visualizations of the most compelling source data. Readers of this report will also benefit from reading *ADE Bulletin* 160, which offers expanded case studies, reflections, and example curricular materials on this topic from additional institutions. Finally, we hope and expect that this report will serve as a perpetually renewable resource for departments over time. The databases of salary information, for example, will be updated by their respective organizations. Administrators should feel empowered to consult those sources directly, update their own numbers accordingly, and refer back to this report for important context and discipline-specific arguments about the value of the English major.

In our view, the work of career preparation for English majors does not need to take any specific form to be valuable and effective. It cannot be compressed or simplified into a single model that will function in every context. Rather, departments must assess their current career preparation activities and build on them—or, in some cases, initiate them. The key takeaway is this: Any steps departments take to begin and sustain career preparation efforts will make an enormous difference to students. In this report, we share a range of possibilities and recommendations, in the hopes that some will fit your departmental resources, needs, and contexts.

English Majors' Career Outcomes

The data about the salary and career outcomes of English majors show that majoring in English lays the foundation for an extensive variety of fulfilling and financially stable careers. However, there is no need to overstate the case: we are not saying, "Major in English because you're going to make a lot of money." We are saying, "Don't be afraid to major in English because you're concerned about being able to get a job, be financially stable, or find fulfilling work using the skills you've gained."

The data show that English majors are prepared to enter many different professions. The flexible and wide-ranging skills that students learn in our courses give them competencies that serve them well in a variety of fields after graduation. Intellectual adaptability is one of the strengths of our discipline. When advising students about career paths, however, this range of options can become intimidating without context and guidance. Counseling a bewildered student who loves to read and write and think critically but cannot imagine a career after college by saying, "English majors can do lots of things!" may be counterproductive. We can be more reassuring and helpful if we are more specific about how students can translate their skills into marketable attributes and viable career paths. It is easy for students and staff and faculty members to get overwhelmed by choices. We recommend making this diversity of outcomes more manageable by thinking about career tracks or categories rather than specific occupations and connecting specific skills taught in English courses with these broad categories, to provide conceptual clarity and help students envision themselves in specific professional paths.

Employment Rates

Contrary to popular belief, becoming an English major will not send you to the unemployment office. The employment rate of English majors is very similar to that of all graduates, including majors in math, science, and engineering. The National Humanities Alliance found that, in 2018, the unemployment rate was 2.17% for all college graduates and 2.3% for English majors ("Humanities Majors"). The unemployment rate for English majors is slightly above the rate for all humanities degree holders (2.13%); business, engineering, and philosophy majors (2.0%); and physical science and history majors (1.9%) and slightly below computer and information services majors (2.8%).[4]

Salaries

There are many sources of information on the salaries of English majors in the United States. They are unevenly authoritative and trustworthy. The committee recommends that faculty members and department administrators familiarize themselves with reliable information about salaries so that they can advise students and their families appropriately.

The committee consulted authoritative sources, including the National Humanities Alliance (www.nhalliance.org/), Humanities Indicators (in particular, the section on workforce data, www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/workforce), the Hamilton Project (www.hamiltonproject.org/), and the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (cew.georgetown.edu/). *Google* search results for English majors' salaries often lead to sites like *Payscale* or *Monster*, where the data are self-reported and therefore not reliable.

The salaries of English majors are comparable with those of many other majors, including business management and public policy, and median earnings at career peak are more or less the same for humanities majors as for all graduates. The Hamilton Project is one of the only easily accessible data sources to break out earnings by specific undergraduate major, including English. It also includes data for median annual earnings at career peak. In 2018 the median annual earnings at career peak for full-time workers was $78,000 for graduates of all majors; for English majors, it was $76,000 ("Career Earnings"). There is also a substantial boost in earnings for English majors who get a graduate degree in any field (45% of English majors go on to graduate or professional school programs, such as law or medical school [Sturtevant]). The median annual salary for full-time workers at career peak who also earned a graduate degree was $86,000 for graduates of all majors and $83,000 for English majors.[5] Figure 1 displays career peak earnings data for English majors along with those for full-time workers who hold high school diplomas (or GEDs) or associate's degrees.

The data on annual earnings reported by Humanities Indicators show similar figures for English majors all along the career trajectory, not just at career peak, in comparison with all majors. In 2018, the median earnings of full-time workers holding an undergraduate degree in English literature and language and a graduate degree in any field was $65,851. For majors in all fields who hold a graduate degree, it was $70,917. English majors are not at a significant disadvantage in terms of earnings when compared with majors in all other fields.

These outcomes are displayed in figure 2, which also gives income breakdowns by gender (which we address later in the report) and by quartiles of earners. These breakdowns reinforce the message that English majors earn good salaries that are comparable to most other disciplines: the earnings of English majors in each quartile are nearly the same as those for majors in all fields. The Humanities Indicators data for specific fields offer other important insights about career outcomes for English majors. The lifetime earnings of English majors are comparable to those of business majors, for example—an English major in the fifty-fifth percentile earns more than a business major in the fortieth percentile—but significantly below those of majors in aerospace engineering or management information systems and statistics.

Although the salary data provide encouraging outcomes that can reassure our students, there is no evidence that the lifetime median earnings of humanities majors ever achieve parity with the lifetime median earnings of business, engineering, or science majors, despite reports that, "although liberal arts majors start slow, they gradually catch up to their peers in STEM fields" (Deming). A 2021 report from Humanities Indicators contradicts the idea that humanities majors "catch up" with STEM and business majors ("Effect"). Humanities majors further along in their careers do close the gap with engineering, health and medical sciences, and business majors, but they never catch up, and they actually lose ground to life science majors. When making comparisons about salaries, it is important to remember the big picture: English majors have outcomes that are broadly comparable to their peers. It is important to remember, too, that these data refer to median salaries and that there is enormous variation within median salary data for each major. The total lifetime earnings compiled by the Hamilton Project, for example, show that, for English majors, the totals range from a low of $120,000 in the fifth percentile to $3.44 million in the ninety-fifth percentile ("Career Earnings"). Finally, it is essential to remember that while a good salary is an important outcome for students considering a major

in the humanities, other outcomes, such as job satisfaction and the sense that one is leading a good life, are important as well. According to Humanities Indicators, 84% of humanities graduates are satisfied with their jobs and 78% feel that they are living their best possible life ("Humanities Help").

Addressing the Gender Gap in Earnings

There is a significant gender gap in the earnings of English majors (fig. 2): in 2018, the median annual earnings of men was approximately $74,000, whereas for women it was approximately $61,000, or about 18% lower. Among the twenty-fifth percentile of earners, the difference lessens to over 15%, but for the seventy-fifth percentile it widens to about 25%.

This gender gap among English majors is underlined by the 2018 Humanities Indicators data for all humanities majors ("Effect of Gender"), which show that, among workers ages 23–32 with a terminal bachelor's degree in the humanities, the median earnings of women were 8% lower than for men ($44,000 as compared with $48,000). For workers ages 48–59, the gap was substantially larger, with women earning 22% less than men. The earnings gender gap decreases slightly when we look at humanities majors with advanced degrees: for workers ages 23–32, the median earnings of women were 5% less than men, whereas for workers ages 48–59, women earned 20% less than men. And, just as for English majors, there is a larger gender gap in income among humanities majors earning the highest salaries than those earning median salaries, especially for workers ages 48–59: among humanities majors with an advanced degree, men earning at the seventy-fifth percentile earned nearly 30% more than women.

The gender wage gap among English graduates is clearly visualized in the Hamilton Project's interactive tool "Putting Your Major to Work." The salary range for the highest-earning jobs reaches nearly $140,000, for the legal profession, and nearly $90,000 for "other managers." Breaking the data down further by gender shows that men with English degrees in their peak career earning years (ages 55–64) reach over $170,000 in a category called "Chief Executives and Legislators." The highest-paid category for women with English degrees is "Lawyers, Judges, Magistrates, and Judicial Works" (there is no "chief executives" category for women in this age range); women's average earning in this category is $105,000, as compared with $158,000 for men, despite almost an identical percentage of men and women having degrees beyond the BA (about 97%). Comparing other overlapping fields—in education and management, for instance—tells the same story: women in their peak earning years with the same credentials earn substantially less than their male peers.

It is instructive to look at these data on the gender gap in earnings in conjunction with the gender distribution of bachelor's degrees awarded in English. Women have constituted the majority of English majors since 1966, and in 2014, women received nearly 69% of all bachelor's degrees in English. In fact, since 2009, as overall numbers of English majors have declined, the share of degrees going to men has decreased more rapidly than for women ("Gender Distribution"). Thus, one way of understanding the available data is to recognize that the persistent gender pay gap women experience results in a lowering of the overall earnings data for English majors. These compositional effects have been noted repeatedly and consistently across the humanities by the Humanities Indicators (*State of the Humanities 2018* 4; *State of the Humanities 2021* 6). Although we find that some English majors do very well in terms of salary and

opportunities, there exists a telling discrepancy between graduates with English degrees at the top of the earning range and those earning in the lower percentiles, as well as between English graduates who work full-time and those who work part-time or fewer hours as full-time workers. Taken together, the outcomes and demographics data reveal that this discrepancy corresponds strikingly with the available data about women in the overall workforce. In blunt and broad terms: it is not simply that English degrees hold less value on the job market; it is that the majority of our students are women, who continue to encounter widespread and pervasive salary inequities in the workforce, as a result of persistent discrimination.

Data that compare English majors with other majors where women are less fully represented also support this finding. A 2018 report from Georgetown University—bleakly titled "Women Can't Win: Despite Making Educational Gains and Pursuing High-Wage Majors, Women Still Earn Less than Men"—finds that "even when [women] do everything 'right'—choose a high-paying field of study, pursue a high-paying major within that field, and get a job in a high-paying occupation—women still get paid less than their male peers" (Carnevale et al., "Women" 4). And this pay gap is even more pronounced for racialized and Indigenous women and for women with disabilities. The report claims that "[t]he wage gap between men and women exists at every level of educational attainment" and that it continues solely because discrimination in the workforce is allowed to continue. The data show unambiguously that white women with the same credentials earn less than white men, and racialized women earn less than white women in the workforce, thus facing greater compensation inequities.

It is the committee's belief that career preparation opportunities help all students find satisfying and rewarding employment sooner (which impacts one's career trajectory over a lifetime), and given that so many of our students face wage disparities, career preparation provides one way of both acknowledging these inequities and supporting our students beyond their degrees. Examples of gender-equity-minded career preparation for students might be offering information sessions in which the reports and data presented here are discussed; helping students learn to identify gender-coded language in position descriptions and avoid using it in job application materials; and teaching them to develop negotiating skills. When we provide career guidance to our majors who are women—most of our majors—we have an ethical obligation to raise their awareness of the gender pay gap and provide them with information and skills that might work to mitigate these gendered disadvantages in the workforce—disadvantages that disproportionately affect our field.

Addressing the Racial and Ethnic Gap in Earnings

There are many studies that document disparities in income for all workers based on race and ethnicity, including a report from the Economic Policy Institute showing that in 2019 Black college graduates earned 22.5% less than white graduates (qtd. in Austin). There is very little data available, however, on the earnings of English majors by race and ethnicity—and no data on Asian and Indigenous English graduates. Given this gap in the research, here we consider sources that provide information about humanities majors as a group. In *Latino Education and Economic Progress*, a 2017 study by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, the median earnings for humanities graduates aged 25–64 in 2011–15 is as follows: white graduates earned $53,700, Latinx graduates earned $47,600, and Black graduates earned $45,100 (Carnevale and Fasules 50 [table B.3]). These disparities become even more dramatic when the median annual earnings

are broken down by gender. While white men earned $59,900, Latino men earned $50,600, white women earned $49,300, Black men earned $45,800, Latina women earned $45,700, and Black women earned $44,800 (52 [table B.5]). That is, Black women humanities majors earned approximately 25% less than white men, and Latina women earned approximately 24% less than white men.

Three other reports from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce enable us to make a rough comparison of the earnings of English majors by race and ethnicity. African Americans are underrepresented in the highest-earning college majors, such as engineering and architecture, and the median earnings of Black English graduates ages 25–59 in 2010–14 was $46,000 (Carnevale et al., *African Americans* 7). The median earnings of Latinx English graduates ages 25–59 in 2009–13 was slightly higher, at $48,000 (Carnevale et al., *Hispanics* 5). The median earnings of all English graduates ages 25–59 in 2009–13 was $53,000 (Carnevale et al., *Economic Value* 93). These figures point toward a significant racial and ethnic gap in earnings: Black English graduates earn 13% less than all English graduates and Latinx English graduates earn 9% less than all English graduates.

There is likewise a significant racial and ethnic gap in earnings among humanities graduates: Black humanities graduates earn 16% less and Latinx humanities graduates earn 11% less than white humanities graduates (Carnevale and Fasules 50 [table B.3]). These income disparities are even greater among STEM and business graduates, as shown in figure 3 and in a 2021 regional study of almost 550,000 students who attended institutions throughout the University of Texas system between 2002 and 2018 (Austin). Among these students, Black, Latinx, and white humanities graduates earn about the same, both one year and fifteen years after graduation, but among STEM and business majors, there is a substantial racial gap in earnings: fifteen years out, white graduates were earning a median of $112,000, while Black graduates were earning a median of $83,500 and Latinx graduates $68,200. The University of Texas study suggests that humanities programs might offer opportunities for Black and Latinx graduates to find good jobs through mentorship and a broader alignment of transferable skills with the qualities desired by employers—opportunities that this report suggests should be part of career readiness, particularly with an eye toward equity.

Humanities Majors at Community Colleges and Career Preparation

When we think about productive ways to respond to the decline in English majors, and how to integrate this response with efforts to improve career preparation, it is important to keep in mind that the opposite trend is playing out in two-year colleges in the United States, where before the pandemic there was a steady increase in the number of degrees awarded in the humanities (though this does not necessarily translate to more majors graduating with bachelor's degrees). Humanities Indicators data show that in 2018, more than twice as many humanities associate's degrees were awarded than humanities bachelor's degrees: 413,246 associate's degrees in liberal arts and the humanities were granted, "the highest level on record" ("Associate's Degrees"), versus 202,665 bachelor's degrees in the humanities ("Bachelor's Degrees"). The number of associate's degrees in the humanities has been increasing since 1987, by an average of 4.3% each year. While the years of the COVID-19 pandemic have seen sharp declines in community college enrollments (Marcus), and a slight decline in the number of associate's humanities degrees awarded ("Undergraduate Degree Fields"), there are still indicators that the humanities are strong at two-year institutions (e.g., Herder).

Another important consideration is that a higher percentage of students of color and first-generation college students are earning humanities associate's degrees than humanities bachelor's degrees. Between 1989 and 2015, the percentage of students from underrepresented minoritized groups awarded an associate's degree in "a humanities discipline" increased by 149% ("Demographics"). In 2015, students from underrepresented groups accounted for 32% of associate's degree recipients, versus 22% of recipients of bachelor's degrees. Any attempt to address the racial and ethnic gap in earnings must integrate humanities curriculum and career preparation for associate's degree recipients from underrepresented groups.

In a reversal of the perception of the dominance of vocational and professional degrees at community colleges, beginning in 2015, the number of degrees in the humanities surpassed those in vocational and professional fields. Between 2012 and 2018, there was a steady decline in the number of vocational and professional degrees, dropping to 332,741 in 2018, the smallest number since 2009 ("Associate's Degrees"). In 1987, 25.7% of all associate's degrees were awarded in the humanities. In 2018, this figure rose to 43.7%. During this same period, the percentage of associate's degrees earned in vocational and professional fields declined from 55.9% to 31.7%.

The Humanities Indicators data on associate's degrees are not broken out by field, because the vast majority of associate's degrees in the humanities are not being granted in a specific discipline, although this is beginning to change:

> Unlike the humanities degrees conferred at the baccalaureate level, almost all of the degrees counted here were classified by the conferring institution as being in "liberal arts" and "liberal studies" rather than specific humanities disciplines. For instance, of the 413,246 degrees tabulated as humanities for 2018, only a tiny share was conferred in a specific discipline (such as English or history). Since associate's degrees are generally conferred with half the number of credits required for a typical bachelor's degree program, students are less likely to specialize in a specific subject area. Nevertheless, the number and share of associate's degrees conferred in specific humanities disciplines have been growing.

How should the rise in humanities degrees at community colleges influence the way we approach career guidance and recruitment of English majors? On the recruitment side, there is clearly a large pool of potential English majors who are graduating from community college with degrees in the humanities but who end up majoring in something else at four-year institutions, or who do not end up transferring at all to four-year institutions. Concerns about careers and future earnings are certainly part of the picture, but structural issues play a role as well. According to the Community College Research Center (CCRC), pathways beginning with an associate's degree in humanities or liberal arts are often opaque, a patchwork of poorly aligned articulations, leading to lost opportunities for students wishing to pursue majors in specialized humanities fields such as English toward a bachelor's degree (Bickerstaff et al., *Exploring*). Studies by the CCRC suggest that this flaw in the transfer process might contribute to the drop-off in humanities majors from two-year to four-year institutions. The CCRC recommends that guided pathways through transfer and careers be developed for two-year students and that employment outcomes be studied more systematically (16–17).

Yet there are two-year institutions, such as LaGuardia Community College (part of the City University of New York), where programs to prepare students to successfully transfer to four-year institutions with an English major, and a strong foundation in career readiness, are thriving (see appendix A). Partnerships between two-year and four-year English departments, such as that supported by the Michigan Community College Association—Strengthening MIHumanities (Bickerstaff et al., "Community Colleges")—can boost our commitment to making English a more inclusive discipline in which students of color and first-generation students feel welcome, and which they will perceive as a major that leads to a financially secure future and fulfilling career.

These programs and partnerships have the potential to yield innovative approaches to career preparation and to diversify the major. If two-year departments have more information—and the opportunity to provide input—about the kind of career preparation going on in the four-year departments to which their students transfer, they will be in a better position to enhance career preparation during the early stages of their students' college experience. Conversely, four-year departments can learn how to best provide career preparation for transfer students from their regional community college departments if they have firsthand knowledge based on relationships with their faculty colleagues at community colleges and a deeper awareness of the integration of curriculum and career readiness happening in humanities programs at two-year schools.

Career Pathways of English Majors

Career outcomes for English graduates are incredibly diverse.[6] English majors develop skills and habits of mind that are highly valued by employers in many fields: "Venture capitalists, Silicon Valley CEOs, philanthropic leaders, and business journalists all repeatedly articulate the worldview behind" the positive employment data for English majors; "humanities skills are indispensably foundational to innovation, design, and development" (Hanlon et al. 5). The committee regards this diversity as a disciplinary asset: our majors and minors prepare students to succeed in a wide variety of fields. Numerous studies show that students with humanities degrees are equipped with some of the most transferable workplace skills (see, e.g., the surveys cited in "Humanities Provide"). But the diversity of career tracks also presents a challenge to educators: How do we provide effective advice when the number of career options can be bewildering? The committee recommends that departments prepare students for an effective job search by grouping careers into types or tracks, such as education, legal fields, or writing, publishing, and editing. Ball State University's College of Sciences and Humanities, for example, has launched the Compass Advantage initiative, which groups jobs into five broad career pathways: business and technology; creative arts and communication; education and training; government and law; and human services (see appendix A). Furthermore, the committee recommends pairing skills learned by English students (now called learning outcomes in assessment) with skills required for professional fields and sought out by employers.

Data from George Mason University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences, compiled by Robert Matz and displayed in figure 4, provide a snapshot of the occupations of English majors ages 25–45 in the United States in 2017. Education, library, and training represents the largest professional field, capturing roughly 22% of graduates. Other fields include management in business, science, and the arts; office and administrative

support; arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; sales; business operations; and the legal field ("Find Your Major").[7] The 2018 American Community Survey data show a similar diversity of outcomes for the career choices of English majors of all ages. The ten most common occupational categories for English majors are as follows: elementary and middle school teachers; postsecondary teachers; lawyers, judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers; managers; secondary school teachers; education and childcare administrators; writers and authors; editors; secretaries and administrative assistants; and retail salespersons ("Field"; see fig. 5). Notably, the top five job categories account for only 26% of English majors. Moreover, although about 20% of English graduates go into education, 53% are working across a long list of other sectors and pathways; each of these work areas represents less than 1% of graduates, demonstrating a remarkably high level of occupational distribution. Making this career diversity comprehensible to our students requires us to do a little bit of organizational and interpretive work for them.

Just as the wide range of career pathways open to English majors may create anxiety among students, many graduates do not readily connect their professional responsibilities with the specific skills they learned in the major. Compared with graduates of engineering and the medical sciences, graduates from humanities programs see weaker connections between their degree programs and their work. The disconnect is worse among humanities graduates who are unhappy in their employment (*State of the Humanities 2018* 18). Although graduates are among an English department's best recruiting and career preparation assets, these graduates do not always make direct connections between their current employment and the skills they developed as students.

Approximately one-third of humanities graduates report that their jobs are not related to the material they studied (18). Yet the work skills most highly valued by employers match up very well with fundamental aspects of the learning objectives of most English programs. For example, according to a 2020 report prepared by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the "cognitive competency" most in demand by employers is communication, and the ability to communicate well is linked to higher earnings. "Problem solving and complex thinking," another competency identified among the top five most in demand, also plays a central role in English studies. The other three competencies most in demand are teamwork, sales and customer service, and leadership (*Workplace Basics* 15).

The report *Degrees at Work: Examining the Serendipitous Outcomes of Diverse Degrees* examines the relationship between the skills used in the workplace and the skills gained by undergraduates to address the disconnect that many graduates, especially in the humanities, perceive between their major and their employment (Coffey et al.). This report identifies "high-frequency skills" that appear most often among its database of over 100 million employment profiles (38). The most common of these skills are connected to management, marketing and communication, and sales and business administration, which also turn out to be the skills used most often in jobs held by graduates with degrees in language (including English), philosophy, and social science. Further, the report identifies "themes of work" related to the specific job skills; for language and philosophy graduates, the four major themes are educational product design, public relations, digital marketing, and nonprofit administration (14). On the basis of these findings, the authors assert that "humanities majors are specialists in areas where most people have a more basic and general knowledge" (38).

As we devise strategies for integrating employment outcomes data into career preparation for majors, we should strive to make students aware not only of the salaries typically earned by English graduates but also of the real-world work skills they will gain over the course of their studies. An English major prepares students for careers that they had not ever envisioned for themselves—and this outcome should be viewed positively, not as a disappointment. We should also pay more attention to one of the less obvious lessons of these data: career pathways are not predetermined by choice of major. In other words, your major is not your life. This insight can help English majors better understand how their degree does indeed prepare them for the careers they eventually pursue, even though this link may appear oblique if one looks at job titles rather than the skills being used in those jobs. In addition to analyzing the link between work skills and college majors, *Degrees at Work* examines the career pathways of college graduates by comparing the first, second, and third jobs held by workers who majored in six broad disciplinary areas: philosophy and languages, social sciences, business, communications, engineering, and information technology. The data demonstrate that career paths are often not linear or obviously linked to undergraduate majors, especially in English and other humanities disciplines. In fact, many humanities graduates end up working in the same fields as business graduates. Two key findings are that sales, marketing, management, and business and financial analysis are among the top ten most common occupational areas for all college graduates, regardless of their major, and that nearly half of all career outcomes can be grouped under the general category of "major business functions, which include strategic and tactical communication and operational or interpersonal oversight" (6–7).[8]

When we communicate information about career outcomes to our majors, we should emphasize that not being locked into a specific career path, as with many professional degrees, is an advantage that opens up many possibilities beyond occupations traditionally associated with English, such as teaching, publishing, and journalism:

> In order to help these graduates—especially those from the social sciences and humanities areas—chart intentional, effective career paths for themselves, we need to help them better understand where their educational background has taken them, and boost their confidence in the value of their labor-market foundation. Graduates from these programs need to see themselves as acquiring skills—directly related to the world of work—just like IT and engineering grads. This clarity will help them communicate their own value, find areas where they are likely to succeed faster, and pursue skills that enhance and complement what they acquired in college. (40)

That is, the connections between what students learn during the course of study in the English major and the skills they go on to use and further develop in the workplace are often unclear to students; it is our responsibility to make these connections clear and explicit.

Job Satisfaction and Life Fulfillment

The data on job satisfaction and life fulfillment for humanities majors demonstrate that, on the whole, they are just as positive about their jobs and lives as all college graduates are. Knowing this should reinforce an approach to career preparation that integrates accurate information about earnings with an emphasis on living out values and pursuing fulfillment and purpose in work. In 2019, 90% of terminal bachelor's degree

holders in all fields reported that they are very or somewhat satisfied with their jobs, compared with 87% of humanities majors ("Job Satisfaction"; data for English majors are not broken out). For humanities majors with an advanced degree in any field, the rate of job satisfaction rises to 91%. Although all fields except for business show a boost in satisfaction for advanced degree holders, the increase is largest for humanities majors (and smallest for majors in education and in health and medical sciences).

Breaking down job satisfaction into specific components—including benefits, job security, opportunities for advancement, contribution to society, degree of independence, and intellectual challenge—shows that the level of satisfaction among humanities majors is very similar to that of graduates in all other fields, ranging from about 65% (opportunities for advancement) to 90% (degree of independence). Humanities graduates are somewhat less satisfied with their salaries than their peers from other fields; 78% of all college graduates are satisfied with their salary as compared with 74% of humanities majors.

There is also an emerging body of literature that presents an alternative way of describing the outcomes of education in the humanities, arguing that studying the humanities builds empathy, leads to a meaningful life, and is critical to nurturing the values of democratic citizenship. However, researchers are only just beginning to gather empirical data to measure the links between the humanities, empathy, democracy, and life fulfillment (see, e.g., "Humanities Help"). In one recent effort to measure life fulfillment, broken down by college major, alumni were asked to rate how close they were to their "best possible life." Humanities majors show very similar responses to other college graduates. Respondents were asked if they believed "they are/will be at least 70% of the way to their 'best possible life'" now and in five years. Approximately 77% of humanities graduates said they had reached this point now, which was roughly the same as the rate for all graduates. This rate rises to about 90% for humanities majors when talking about five years in the future, which once again is very close to the rate for all college graduates (*State of the Humanities 2021* 28).

What Departments Can Do with Employment and Salary Data

Departments can use these data to refute myths of the unemployed English major and equip students, parents, faculty members, and admissions staff members with the facts about employment. The image of the unemployed or professionally frustrated English major is not supported by the quantitative data on salaries, employment rates, and occupations. Departments should use employment data not only to contradict the false beliefs about the career prospects of English majors but also to replace negative misperceptions with a more nuanced and complete picture of the career pathways that are open to our students. If we want to provide better career guidance, we need to understand these employment data, but we also need to develop strategies for using this information to change the narrative that majoring in English is a losing proposition.

Aaron Hanlon, Eric Hayot, and Anna Kornbluh, in a 2021 essay in the *MLA Newsletter*, capture the core message that should inform this career guidance:

> There is of course much more to a college education than the job students get afterward, but we should help students understand that majoring in languages and literatures or history or philosophy does not require sacrificing their future financial security. If students are choosing or being compelled

> to choose a major on the basis of impressions of its financial returns, rather than on the basis of what motivates and engages them, we can meet them on that terrain. (Hanlon et al. 5)

According to a 2019 survey, the number one reason students are not becoming English majors is they are convinced it will not get them a well-paying job (Muir 5). Another report notes that the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in English dropped below 40,000 "for the first time in three decades," from the high of 55,087 degrees in 2009 to approximately 39,000 in 2019, a 29% decline (Townsend 1). Even as these data suggest decline, however, a survey conducted by W. W. Norton of over 2,000 English majors suggests that students continue to major in English despite their uncertainty about career pathways. They do so with an idea of preparing themselves for professional fields often associated with English, such as publishing, but also with a love of literature and writing. They appreciate opportunities to develop creativity and empathy, and such values lead 96% of respondents to say they would major in English again (*Norton Survey* 6). The Norton survey further suggests that with more explicit attention to career readiness, students would feel even more positively about their choice.

We should be as prepared to engage with students and parents who are focused on financial security and career viability as we are to support students' personal interests and values. Effective use of employment data should therefore play a key role not only in career preparation but also in recruitment strategies, to reassure families that majoring in English can lead to a financially secure future. Karen Fish, an associate professor of writing at Loyola University, Maryland, offers this guidance:

> Prospective parents and students often don't know how to think about the humanities. I've found, and my colleagues have found, if one is able to re-script this . . . everyone is relieved. It's about providing context, articulating fears, and providing reassurance that study in the humanities is a good choice and why. (qtd. in Muir 11)

Challenging the myths of the unemployed, underpaid, professionally dissatisfied English major through careful consideration of available data supports students' interest in the major and may support departmental goals of reversing the decline in English majors.

Departments in the early stages of developing strategies for using employment data to improve career guidance might consider the following questions:

- Who should be responsible for communicating the employment data? If faculty members are expected to advise majors, how will faculty advisers be trained to talk about the employment data?
- Who is the audience? Possible audiences include prospective majors, current majors, parents and families, English faculty members, advising staff members, and administrators.
- What is the venue or situation? These might include one-on-one faculty-student advising sessions, department meetings, professional development sessions for faculty members, career-readiness courses, department websites, career events for majors, and presentations and meetings with administrators.

Although the national employment data look good for English majors, the reality is that it can still be hard for English majors to find well-paying jobs during their first few years after graduation ("Effect of Work

Experience"). We need to be doing what we can to prepare majors to negotiate this early stage of their careers and to help them understand what typical career trajectories for English majors look like so that they will not be surprised by the challenges they are more likely than their peers to face in the years immediately after graduation.

The employment data should be used to improve both career guidance and the recruitment of English majors. However, it is important to think carefully about the relationship between these two goals and to combine these outcomes data with arguments for the intrinsic value of the English major. The original impetus for developing more explicit attention to career guidance was the decline in English majors after the 2008 financial crisis. During this early stage, many in the discipline viewed career guidance, at least in part, as a strategy to attract students to English, which had traditionally placed much less emphasis on career readiness than business, STEM, and other fields. Now, however, we should shift our approach to career guidance to see it as an ethical duty rather than primarily as a recruitment strategy. We are obligated to provide students better career guidance, especially those students who face employment discrimination or wage gaps because of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic factors. If we are committed to equity and diversity, and if we want to make English as inclusive as possible, we should demonstrate that the major is a practical choice for students.

English Majors' Career Preparation

The existing data demonstrate unambiguously that English majors land jobs, find satisfying careers, and accrue essential and marketable skills over the course of their degrees. We believe that departments have a responsibility to help prepare students to translate the skills they acquire in our programs into the satisfying careers they seek and that career preparation is one important way of addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our discipline. For instance, early career support for underserved groups can have a profound effect on lifetime earnings; thus, any training we make available to our students to prepare them for the job market increases their chances for success and long-term satisfaction.[9] And we should be encouraging women to negotiate a better salary in their first job offer, since women not only start off at lower salaries but are offered a lower rate of increase in pay over time and rarely if ever catch up (Carnevale et al., "Women" 7). Career preparation opportunities, specifically networking with alumni and curricular collaborations with career services, as well as articulating the value of the skills acquired in English degrees, encourages our students—many of whom are women, racialized or first-generation—to learn what their skills are worth and what their education merits. The data confirm what most of us believe: postsecondary education provides an important path to social mobility. Effective career preparation recognizes that many—if not most—of our students do not have the privilege of not worrying about how they will find a job after their degree.

This section presents qualitative data gathered from interviews, conference sessions, and responses to an informal survey on career preparation circulated to departmental chairs. We examine successful approaches to implementing career preparation for English students, including the development of alumni networks, career preparation courses, extra- or cocurricular events and workshops, curricular innovations,

and collaboration with offices of career services and design and development. However, it would be an unbalanced representation of this work not to acknowledge the obstacles many units face in developing and sustaining initiatives such as those showcased in this report. As such, we begin with these barriers to provide context for the recommendation of effective solutions. These challenges are shared broadly by departments of all sizes and in a range of contexts; it is our hope that—armed with an awareness of some of the limitations as well as with examples of innovation—all English departments will be able to productively develop strategies suitable for their own communities.

Departmental Resistance

As the committee spoke with different constituencies, we heard repeatedly that the attitudes of faculty colleagues are a major challenge. Several survey respondents observed that many academics—especially but not exclusively more senior academics—have not been required to think much about employment opportunities outside academia, or at least not recently. Many tenured academics set their sights on an academic job from an early stage, focusing their career preparation on that one goal, and this mindset can be hard to shift.

Yet nearly all survey respondents indicated that their institutions of higher education have employment professionals on hand to provide support. Faculty members and department leaders should familiarize themselves with the general information about career prospects for English graduates, but they do not need to develop narrow expertise to provide basic guidance to students; they can and should partner with their colleagues in offices of career services, who are better or more versed in current employment trends and data than faculty members are. It is worth taking the time to make contact with the campus career service center in an effort to reduce faculty resistance to developing career preparation opportunities. Many of the case studies in this report provide examples of how a working relationship between career services and the English department can enhance professional training and mentoring of current students.[10] In addition, the articles in *ADE Bulletin* 160, on English majors and career dispositions, highlight the benefits of such a collaboration, from introducing English students to broader conversations on market trends to the finer details of styling a résumé (Campbell; Atkinson et al.). A strong partnership between career services and the department will help departments translate the skills taught in the classroom into a language understood by potential employers. Moreover, alumni, who have professional networks and retain an interest in their degree-granting institution, can also help departments with internships and other programming.

Departmental Ideology

We also heard from many people involved in this work that there is a perceived ideological distance between career preparation and the intellectual work of the discipline. Many faculty members believe that critical thinking, love of reading and literary analysis, persuasive or creative writing, and textual studies lose their force when they become workplace instruments. Some colleagues perceive career preparation as antithetical to the intellectual labor of the humanities degree. And while we heard concerns that our discipline is not a skills-based curriculum (and that we should reject taking up this direction in our support of students as indicative of larger societal shifts toward a devaluing of a humanities education in favor of

"employability" within narrowly conceptualized, market-driven metrics and assessments), we also heard from people who counter that our discipline is in fact a skills-based curriculum—only that we are not in the habit of naming the skills as we teach them or seeing those skills valued or named in our profession. This focus on skills is another area where career services professionals can support departments (see, e.g., Atkinson et al.). Actively identifying and claiming the skills our discipline teaches and articulating the value of those same skills to our students and to employers—as well as recognizing that many employers and industries already know the value of the skills English degrees give employees—is another essential strategy for changing the culture of the field.

Sustaining Initiatives

Sustainability is also a very real challenge for departments developing career preparation opportunities for students. Typically, a small group of faculty members lead an initiative, often with little or no support from other members of the department. If even one person goes on leave, retires, is seconded elsewhere (or takes a break to develop something else), there is no one ready to continue the work. The work of career preparation should not become too closely connected to a small group of faculty and staff members or to particular courses, nor should it depend on the willingness of a small number of contributors. This challenge is of course closely tied to the issue of institutional resources, in that the ability to nurture emergent and continued development in career preparation requires sustained institutional commitment. Department leadership must work with senior administration to develop ways to encourage, support, and reward faculty members for adding this work to the work they are already doing to teach and support students. Will institutions provide sufficient incentives for faculty engagement? Are teaching releases, or other means of supporting new curriculum and development of expertise, available? Will work in the area of career preparation and alumni connections contribute positively to applications for tenure and promotion? Will it be recognized and appropriately rewarded in institutional assessment exercises? To ensure long-term sustainability, department leaders in concert with more senior administrators must value this labor and spread responsibility for the activities equitably; support departmental collaborations with alumni and career services professionals and internship and job placement officers to further build and maintain institutional knowledge bases; and support collaborations across cognate departments or units.

Student Perceptions of Career Preparation Activities

Many departments we heard from communicated concerns from students who, despite recognizing the importance of career preparation opportunities, were reluctant to add work (particularly when presented as a credit-bearing course) into their already requirement-heavy programs; similarly, the expectation to include yet more extracurricular events into already packed schedules (academic and personal) can be daunting to students. Yet, every study we have considered, every survey we have encountered, and every conversation we have had with students confirms that they want and need this support. They want and need help in finding the language to show the value of the degree they have chosen, and they require support to develop the language they need to frame their achievements and the skills they have acquired in literature degrees for potential employers. The groups we canvassed insist that departments have an obligation to support students in the articulation of the value of their degrees to employers. Many English majors—especially

first-generation students—may have had to fight against pressures from family and friends to follow their interests through more "marketable" programs instead of following their passion.

A separate challenge in undertaking this work is reaching enough students or providing sufficiently broad access: respondents express concerns about creating sufficient capacity to make the opportunity accessible to more than a handful of students, while also recognizing the difficulty of stretching existing resources. In other words, departments worry that specialized career preparation courses may be effective but not widely enough available to change the narratives about "underemployed" English majors. Thus, we recommend integrating career preparation initiatives into courses throughout the curriculum, drawing on the expertise of career services professionals to ensure successful outcomes.

Approach 1: Alumni Networks and Stories

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of cultivating a department's alumni network for career preparation and improving awareness of outcomes for our students. This general proposition remains true for a wide variety of institutions, including regional institutions that serve underrepresented groups as well as private, highly selective institutions that draw students from national and international pools. In addition to equipping students with information about how broad professional categories build on English skills, departments should feature alumni success stories in various fields to give students a clear sense that the transition to professional life is conceivable and achievable. Such information ought to be readily available on department websites where career information is provided, and indeed many departments we surveyed already attempt this to a greater or lesser extent, with more or less success at keeping profiles up-to-date. Alumni stories should also be integrated intentionally as part of experiential learning and internship opportunities, as well as featuring in the department's curriculum.

What Alumni Bring to Students

Showcasing the stories of successful alumni may be the most persuasive way to convince prospective English students that there are viable career options after graduating with a major or minor in the field. Equally, connecting English students with successful alumni may be the single best way to prepare students for seeking employment and for navigating the complexities of professional development. Students who see what professionally successful program graduates do after their time on campus are better equipped to imagine satisfying careers and lives for themselves after graduation, giving them evidence that there are bridges between the work of the classroom and the work of the employed professional and engaged citizen. Strong alumni connections can also be a resource for networking that majors can use to find internships or even first jobs, continuing the cycle of employed alumni who might want to return to, share with, and support current students.

Apart from the obvious benefit of compelling success stories, alumni networks can enhance English departments in other ways. Alumni can be featured in a variety of career-oriented events and programs. These can be one-off events, such as attending a career fair or delivering a farewell speech at a graduation ceremony, or participation in systemic programs like workshops, career preparation courses, internship and mentorship initiatives, or department-organized informational interviews and work-shadowing programs.

Alumni have practical skills and knowledge that faculty members, many of whom have been on an exclusively academic professional track for decades, may feel they lack. Taken as a group, a department's alumni have an incredible array of work experience that they are usually willing to share with students. They have ideas about everything, from how to dress for a job interview to how to translate the skills learned as an English student into language the professional world will recognize. Indeed, alumni can mentor faculty members as well as students! Any faculty members who feel out of their depth when discussing professional development will learn a lot simply by listening to their graduates.

Not only can alumni mentor students from a wide variety of professional experiences, but they can also help promote English departments. Making alumni stories a routine part of department communications helps English departments articulate both the intellectual and the professional value of a degree in the field. We encourage departments to formalize relationships with alumni by convening an alumni steering committee or an alumni ambassadors program.

Obstacles to Connecting with Alumni

We recognize that there are obstacles to building and maintaining a functional database of alumni. Our discussions with department chairs and administrators suggest that many departments do not have alumni databases at their disposal right now. Historically, English (and other humanities) departments have been preoccupied with the things our students do in the classroom and far less concerned with what students do after graduation. And the turnover of staff and faculty members and administrators can leave many English departments unable to keep information about alumni up-to-date. Moreover, colleges and universities routinely discontinue the institutional email addresses of students who graduate, transfer, or drop out. It is too easy to lose track of students if there are no systems in place to keep them in touch with their alma mater.

Another challenge is faculty and staff time: many department administrators do not have the time to build or maintain an alumni database, and likewise the increasingly overworked members of their staff may not be able to take on this work. There is also the matter of what to do with an alumni network once a department has a collection of names in place. How do departments keep alumni involved without overburdening them? What can alumni be called on to do? A list of names, email addresses, and job titles does very little unless the department knows how to keep those people engaged and interested in mentoring current students.

As the committee studied this problem, it became clear that, at many institutions, the greatest barrier to assembling an alumni network is that the development office—responsible for fundraising above all else—jealously hoards information about alumni. English department administrators tell a consistent story of development offices limiting access to information about graduates. (There are, of course, always exceptions to the rule, and some institutions are eager to connect current students and faculty members with alumni, because alumni who feel connected with their college may be more likely to materially support the institution.) Many development professionals worry, perhaps with some justification, that individual departments, following their own interests, will spoil years of work on the sensitive cultivation of donor relationships by asking alumni for time, financial support, or other commitments. Persuading development

officers, who in many cases report not to the institution's academic administrators but instead to the financial officers, to share this information can be nearly impossible in some circumstances. Sympathetic deans can be enlisted to help, and of course some English administrators may try to build relationships directly with their institution's fundraisers. Luckily, even when these strategies fail, there are ways to circumvent these obstacles.

How Departments Can Work with Alumni

To start the task of collecting and then using alumni data, one must first determine appropriate roles. Who are the responsible parties? This work often falls to a department chair or to an administrative assistant. Career service professionals will also undoubtedly have definite ideas about how to access (and make best use of) alumni. However, student workers, if available, can and should be enlisted to help. Alternatively, this role could be a service assignment within the department. As departments determine who should do this work, they must be realistic about whether those who take on the task (with or without a formal appointment) have time to build and attend to this project. They should also be sure to consider the issue of continuity. How often do the people in these roles change? Student workers come and go with frequency, and even faculty administrators such as chairs, heads, and undergraduate coordinators change periodically. Given those constraints, departments ought to develop a plan for ensuring continuity, including identifying who is responsible for training successors, how information will be stored, how partnership with career services can create additional knowledge repositories, and how information gathered can be accessed by those who need it over time. Sustainability is an important part of doing this work. This is not a job one person can or should do alone.

With a continuity plan in place, departments should develop a simple exit survey for graduating students. Put the administration of such a survey on the department calendar and ask the faculty members teaching the graduating students to administer the survey in their courses alongside course evaluations. In addition to asking about a student's plans after graduation, requesting a personal email address is very important. Encouraging graduating students to stay connected through the department's social media platforms is also a great idea. The exit survey can be adapted and administered to alumni every few years to make sure the department stays aware of changes.

Many faculty members retain connections to graduates through requests for letters of reference, connections over social media platforms such as *LinkedIn*, or through disciplinary and local associations, and students often report their career progress back to the professors who influenced them as undergraduates. These connections are a valuable resource for building an alumni network, and department administrators should encourage faculty members to contribute information about the successes of their students to a growing and evolving departmental alumni database. One caveat: faculty and staff members developing such a database should be sure that they have the permission of alumni to be added and that they are in compliance with institutional policies governing the collection and storage of personal data.

Departments might consider using *LinkedIn* to find and connect with graduates in the workforce. As Gilles Bosquet, Lindsey Leigh Smith, and Caitlin Yocco-Locasio observe, the platform's stated goal of developing connections between professionals is perfect for the project of "collecting data on how graduates' academic

choices translated to their career" (Bosquet et al. 28). Because *LinkedIn* is a social networking site oriented toward professional development, graduates who create profiles typically present themselves carefully and in the hopes that their profiles will attract notice. Bousquet, Smith, and Yocco-Locasio report that 57% of 2000–15 graduates from the Department of French and Italian at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, maintained a *LinkedIn* profile. Mining *LinkedIn* for data about graduates will not reconnect a department with every graduate, but it can give access to the alumni who have successful careers and are most willing to share their experiences with others. Departments might also connect with their institution's *LinkedIn* group for alumni—or start their own.

Our survey responses reveal the effectiveness of these strategies.[11] For instance, Angela Vietto of Eastern Illinois University reports:

> It's very ad hoc. We survey students at graduation to find out if anyone already knows where they will land. Periodically we take lists of alumni for whom we don't have information and (a) ask faculty if anyone knows where any of those students landed and (b) search for them on *LinkedIn*, *Facebook*, or the Internet at large. We encourage students to connect with us on *LinkedIn* and to be proactive about letting us know. We maintain a database collecting this info and attempt to add to it every semester. Periodically we collect what we know into some statistical data.

Similarly, Melissa Ganz of Marquette University notes that her department's administrative assistant, with the help of work study students, "updates our list of alums, using information found on *LinkedIn* and other websites. We have also compared and updated that list with information from Career Services and University Advancement."

But a well-maintained list of graduates does very little if the department does not take advantage of its potential. To help keep graduates connected to the department's current faculty members, staff members, and students, departments need a communications plan that is sustainable and scalable; starting with a relatively modest annual or semi-annual newsletter featuring stories about alumni, faculty and staff members, and students is probably a manageable first step. Improvements to the department's website and then more regular social media messaging may follow once there is an infrastructure for creating and disseminating exciting material.

To take advantage of good alumni networks, English departments need to build them into the department infrastructure. Trusted alumni can be called on for special events, and the department's website can link to alumni narratives (see, e.g., Ball State University case study in appendix A). Alumni can be integrated into the curriculum as participants in experiential learning opportunities and professionalization courses. Departments could produce video interviews of alumni and incorporate them into a course, as Christine Cooper Rompato is doing at Utah State University.

Though the work of building an alumni database may seem daunting to many departments, especially in times of uncertainty and reduced administrative support, the benefits of connecting current undergraduates with at least some employed and happy graduates are clear. In the committee's opinion, developing alumni connections is the most important part of career preparation work. The good news is that—despite the obstacles—even building connections with a small group of alumni will reap considerable rewards.

Departments do not need to know what all graduates are doing—at least not in the first year. Getting started means learning what some graduates are doing, and departments can build from there. Featuring even three or four meaningfully employed graduates can significantly encourage current students as they consider their transition into the workforce and can significantly contribute to shifting a department's culture around career preparation. Building connections and featuring a range of exciting alumni career outcomes demonstrate to current and future students that we take their future successes seriously and that we also recognize—in material and demonstrable ways—the value of our disciplinary skills in the workplace.

Approach 2: Engagement: Departmental Websites and Communications; Events and Workshops

A department's website is an important landing site for prospective students, enrolled students who are prospective majors, and current majors and minors. All these students (and their families) will be interested in how the English major can lead to a fulfilling career. Instead of ignoring the question of careers, a department's website should address it directly. Common elements of an effective career preparation and outcomes page on (or linked to) your department's website include information about outcomes for English majors in general and your department's majors in particular, accompanied by specific alumni stories; a link to the career services center and your career services liaison, if you have one; and a list of skills that the major helps students develop, explicitly connected to skills sought by employers.

The department's website can also be a tool for faculty advising. We recommend adopting or adapting some of the existing interactive web instruments and visual aids for use in mentoring situations. Ball State University, for example, provides a rich navigable portal that allows users to click and scroll through particular interests, prominently featuring successful alumni stories (see appendix A). A more basic template, but worthwhile as a starting point, is W. W. Norton's "What can I do with an English major?" poster, which uses a skills-based approach to guide students into career clusters (cdn.wwnorton.com/marketing/college/images/English_EnglishCareersPoster_Q-503.jpg). This poster can be used as is or serve as a model for a visual aid specific to your institution. These tools help students make direct connections between their own interests, the skills developed in English coursework, and their career choices.

The departmental website is only one element in a broader communications strategy, which could include blogs and other social media tools. Cathy Day of Ball State University says, "When you tell more stories to more of your potential audience via more channels, you create more touchpoints. The more touchpoints someone experiences, the more they recognize and feel a part of your community"; this is what Day calls "digital caring." A robust communications network and digital community can benefit the department in a variety of ways: in relation to career preparation, it can help current students see possible futures for themselves, and it can build and maintain alumni networks, which can benefit current students as well. Again, this work should not have to fall solely on department chairs and faculty members. Instead, departments should make the most of their alumni offices, communications departments, and career centers; asking student interns to manage communications is another possibility.

Events and workshops, particularly those connecting current students with alumni or employers who recognize the value of the skills we teach, have the advantage of not impinging on coursework, which

may have other learning outcomes to prioritize, and not requiring as much sustained effort as ongoing initiatives. Events and workshops could be a good place to start for a department just beginning career preparation work or with limited resources. While it can be difficult for students and faculty members to commit to an extracurricular event, many institutions have found such activities to be worth the effort. Timothy Aubrey of Baruch College, City University of New York, notes, "Our most successful initiative has been the annual alumni panels we organize. We invite five to seven alumni back to campus and talk about their careers, how they found jobs, etc. They take questions from students and offer advice on how to network."

In addition to alumni panels, departments could offer workshops on topics such as résumé writing, cover letter review, and translating the skills students learn in English classes into various careers. At Kansas State University, for example, Karin Westman and Naomi Wood report that, for more than fifteen years,

> we have offered an annual career seminar workshop for advanced English majors and English MA students that includes students completing a skills inventory. Just the act of reflection and noting which skills they have is eye-opening for students, as they realize all of the skills that they have in hand from their academic work and from jobs, volunteer activities, student organizations, and hobbies. We then talk about passions, and how to join skills and passions together to identify careers. The final step of the workshop is to take students' self-identified career interests and identify alumni we can connect them to for further conversation.

Though workshops and events such as these may take some time to organize, some resources to effectively advertise, and some encouragement to persuade students that it will be worth their attendance, survey respondents indicate that initiating and maintaining regular extracurricular career preparation events meets the needs of students calling for more attention to career preparation. If faculty involvement is required or hoped for, then departments may need to include career preparation events in the development of plans for and recognition of other service commitments. We urge department and faculty administrators to attend to issues of equitable distribution of workload when designing career preparation workshops and events and to acknowledge the pressure on pretenured faculty members (who may be perceived to know more about the job market than members of the faculty who have been at the institution longer), minoritized faculty members, and women to contribute to these cocurricular, student-centered events. Acknowledging that the work of career preparation initiatives is a commitment to equity, diversity, and belonging in our discipline obliges departmental administrators to set engagement expectations and recognize contributions within the frame of equitable workload; too often it is the faculty members—early-career, minoritized, queer, women—whose research and teaching programs are deeply committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access to whom service work falls.

Approach 3: Teaching and Learning: Curricular Innovation, Skill Tracking, Internships and Experiential Opportunities, and Faculty Advising

Curricular Innovation

Given the many demands on faculty members' and students' time, integrating career preparation work into the curriculum may be the most efficient way to ensure that all students get some support in this area. But,

to include career preparation as part of the curriculum, one has to have the support of colleagues and, depending on the extent of the innovation, of those responsible for approving curricular revision. Also, if one designs specific career preparation courses that are optional, especially if they carry fewer than the standard units of credit, students may not be motivated to enroll. One might instead incorporate career preparation more broadly into existing departmental courses. First-year seminars could be a space in which to introduce what it means to be an English major and what careers it might lead to; similarly, capstone courses are another context in which career preparation, particularly reflection on skills acquired and practice articulating those skills, might take place. Responses to our survey revealed a range of curricular innovations that have been successful, from integrated career preparation material in existing courses to stand-alone career preparation courses, whether or not they were credit-bearing, elective, or required. An example of integrating career preparation material into existing courses comes from Christine Cooper Rompato at Utah State University, who reports that, in the mandatory introduction-to-the-major course, students watch short video interviews with ten alumni from different careers and write a brief reflection at the end of the semester that discusses at least three of the interviews. And Mary Shapiro at Truman State University reports that her department offers Career Seminar, an elective one-credit course in which students research relevant career paths and prepare résumés and *LinkedIn* profiles. At Eastern Illinois University, Angela Vietto reports that the department has two one-credit courses that incorporate career preparation. The first, designed for students' first semester in the major, includes early exploration of career options. The second, designed for students in the fall of their senior year, focuses on getting ready for the job market:

> Students learn how to read job ads and study them to learn about options and narrow choices; they consult individually with the instructor about their plans; they write and do multiple revisions on résumés, sample cover letters, and/or personal statements for graduate school; they discuss interviewing and complete mock interviews; create and get feedback on *LinkedIn* profiles; complete informational interviews with working professionals; etc. This course is our single best placement tool.

Curricular opportunities that engage with career preparation materials and develop discipline-specific job-search awareness provide students with essential opportunities to reflect on some of the possible careers and tracks that may be available to them, as well as to reflect on what they may want to do with the skills they acquire. Courses such as those described here and in appendix A allow students space to navigate a range of possible employment tracks during the course of their studies in English (see also Muir, "Humanities Education"; Meyers).

Skill Tracking

We need to help students become aware of the skills they gain as English majors and empower them to communicate those skills to prospective employers. A 2021 report from Humanities Indicators notes a troubling "lack of a perceived relationship between job and degree" (*State of the Humanities 2021* 27). We tend not to think of literary study, in particular, as a skills-based discipline, but we are teaching our students important skills and those skills are valued by employers. Why not have English departments claim and foreground that we teach our students skills that they will use beyond the classroom, including in their careers? We might begin by identifying and publicizing the skills majors develop across their

English coursework, perhaps putting together a list of core competencies, as the American Historical Association has identified in their "history discipline core" (Hyde). While it is beyond the scope of this report to enumerate a discipline-wide set of core competencies for English majors, we recommend beginning with the department's learning outcomes if these already exist. A stronger awareness of our own goals for majors would strengthen our graduates' position relative to employment, and it may also encourage a deeper sense of satisfaction with the major.

When advising students, it may be more helpful to connect specific skills and interests of English students with the broad career tracks or types of roles our graduates play in the workforce. Ideally, the learning outcomes identified in the department's curriculum and stated in course syllabi will provide a vocabulary for skill and outcome pairings. The process of pairing skills with outcomes is relatively straightforward in relation to career tracks such as education or publishing, but the process is also eminently feasible for a wide range of other professional sectors.

Kirsten Wilcox, the founding director of the University of Illinois Humanities Professional Resource Center, encourages students to think about their career prospects by asking the same sort of critical questions they are taught to ask in the classroom: "What problems do you like to solve? What information do you find interesting? How do you like to engage with the world?" (qtd. in Muir, "Career Counseling"). Thinking inductively about professional outcomes, by building up from tangible skills learned in English courses, helps give students a clearer sense that the things they value about their education can be directly useful to them as they seek employment. Figure 6 shows some examples of skill and outcome pairings.

Internship Programs and Experiential Learning Opportunities

Students who take advantage of experiential learning and internship programs will begin to see connections between skills and careers well before they graduate. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, internships are a "high-impact educational practice," one of a set of well-studied practices that have been shown to offer a significant benefit to college students (Kuh 11). They can be best understood as a type of experiential learning—one that is "increasingly common" (11). Across the humanities, there are many compelling examples of experiential learning components in programs, some but not all of which can be described as internships. Departments interested in building on models that emphasize experiential learning in their language and practice might consult the National Humanities Alliance report on recruitment, which recommends "efforts to infuse the undergraduate humanities curriculum with opportunities to experience the humanities outside the classroom to demonstrate the value of the humanities 'in the real world.'" Experiential learning draws on curricular innovation strategies, and could, for example, "involve partnering with local community organizations, grappling with complex problems, illustrating how the humanities foster valuable skills, and equipping students for specific professions" (Muir and Oliver 35).

We found that internships were in many cases well-established and that their structures varied considerably based on local contexts. Internal internships can serve as accessible models for departments to emulate. Kenyon College, for example, offers the *Kenyon Review* Associates Program, an internship open to all students but popular with English majors. This internship gives students "valuable experience in literary editing, publishing, and marketing. Participants work closely with *KR* staff on a wide range of projects and

initiatives, and benefit from special literary, cultural, and professional opportunities throughout the year." It is not connected to a course or required by the major. Internships can be one of the most effective strategies for working with undergraduates on career preparation. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower at Virginia Tech mentions an internship course "that scaffolds the internship with real career and professionalization materials." And Angela Vietto at Eastern Illinois University reflects, "If we could get all our students to take two internships, I think first-year employment trends could improve even more." Molly Hand, at Florida State University, notes that "internships are an opportunity for students not just to develop skills but also to really translate their bodies of knowledge and skills into many professional contexts" (see appendix A). Internships can support the work of tracking and translating skills, particularly if connected to a course that builds in opportunities for reflection. Of course, internships also equip students with practical experience, which employers desire: "internships lead the list of what makes employers 'much more likely to consider' hiring a candidate" (Finley 10).

There is also evidence that students in the humanities recognize the value of internship experience and appreciate it as a specific form of professional development while in the major. The National Humanities Alliance reports that one hundred percent of students who participate in The Humanities Edge, a multidisciplinary program at Florida International University that includes an internship component, agreed with the following statements: "I developed skills in this internship that could help me get a job; I feel confident articulating the specific skills gained by studying the humanities to employers; and I am aware of the types of jobs available to humanities majors" (Muir and Oliver 16). And there is highly compelling evidence that first-generation college students find internships to be even more valuable to their career preparation than their non-first-generation college student peers. A 2018 study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that "first-generation students are less likely to take part in internships than their NFG counterparts" but that those who did were "more likely than NFG students to report that their internship had a significant positive influence on all eight of the NACE career-readiness competencies." In other words, the evidence suggests that internships are valuable for all students but may "pack a bigger 'punch' for FG students" (Salvadge).

At many institutions of higher education, internships are managed centrally, through a career center or similar campus unit. On some campuses, however, internships must be conceptualized and built for students by departments. In either case, departments ought to account for employer preferences when designing internship programs. Holding internships before graduation is especially useful for first-generation college students, who rate the experience very highly. Wherever internship support exists, English departments should take advantage of it. Where it is absent, departments should consider creating opportunities specifically for English majors and evaluate partnerships with career centers for access to their resources. Internship programs that build in a concurrent internship course (as in the case studies in appendix A) necessarily include elements of curricular innovation, whether the internship course focuses on reflection and professional formation, skills specialization, structures of accountability, or other outcomes.

Faculty Advising

Many institutions implicitly expect that one-on-one advising with a faculty member will serve as a mode of career preparation for students. However, relying on faculty members to do this work is not likely to

be a sustainable approach. In addition to the many demands already being made on their time, many faculty members simply feel unqualified to advise about careers outside academia. Faculty advising can instead be usefully conceptualized as an important complement to other structures. It is essential to create infrastructure for doing the work of career preparation so that it does not solely depend on the passion of one person or a small group within a department, or on an adviser with particular interest or prior experience, and so that it provides faculty advisers with access to recent, reliable data, as well as to current information about internship and other opportunities available to their students. There is also value in connecting with advising offices; building relationships with staff members and including them in knowledge-building processes for student learning outcomes can better prepare them to support students in the humanities.

Beyond sharing general information with students, faculty advisers are often called on to guide undergraduate students on graduate and professional school pathways and to offer them support toward these goals by writing letters of recommendation on their behalf. The lifetime benefits that accrue to students who pursue advanced degrees are well established, and thoughtful letters of recommendation can be accurately described as one of the strongest forms of support that departments offer their students—and one that faculty members are uniquely able to provide. The act of writing knowledgeably about the strengths of an individual student is one that is deeply ingrained in the lives of faculty members, many of whom rightly regard it as a key responsibility to their students as they advance in their academic and professional lives. Departments should describe strong letters of recommendation as part of a larger context of career preparation available to students in the English major.

In closing, we recommend English departments take more responsibility for engaging with students' life and career aspirations. We also recommend better coordination between two-year and four-year institutions, both to more strongly advocate for the value of the English major within every type of campus culture and to create continuity for students who transfer from two- to four-year degree programs. English faculty members can speak in a unified voice on the topic of diverse career outcomes for English majors: students who receive degrees from our departments go on to a stunning array of jobs and work across sectors. They earn respectable salaries that are comparable with their peers in other majors. They are fulfilled in their work, having chosen to pursue a college major that helped them develop their core interests, strengths, ambitions, and values—a major that then connected them to meaningful professional careers.

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Notes

The members of the ADE Ad Hoc Committee and the MLA staff acknowledge the leadership of the late Doug Steward, without whom this report would not have been possible.

1. This idea is usefully summarized and refuted by Matz, "Myth."

2. These figures are from the Bureau of Labor Services, which draws on data from the 2018 American Community Survey ("Field"); see also Matz, "What Can I Do?"

3. Lamentably, we have been unable to locate comparable current data specific to Canada, and in their absence recommend that faculty members in Canadian institutions extrapolate from the authoritative US-based information compiled here. The Labour Market Information Council (LMIC; lmic-cimt.ca/) offers a partial view of the specific national context and has been collecting data on graduates since 2010. See, e.g., "Post-secondary Graduate Earnings."

4. The 2018 unemployment rates reported by the National Humanities Alliance are slightly lower than those reported by Humanities Indicators, which reports separately on the unemployment rates for terminal bachelor's degree holders versus graduates with an advanced degree. According to the Humanities Indicators report for 2018, "3.6% of the humanities majors who were terminal bachelor's degree holders (TBHs) were unemployed. This was somewhat higher than the 2.9% rate among all TBHs. TBHs who majored in the health/medical sciences or education had the lowest rates of unemployment, at 2.0%. (This compares to a rate of 5.3% among Americans ages 25 to 64 who completed high school but did not attend college.)" ("Employment Status"). Humanities Indicators does not break out the rate for English majors.

5. If part-time workers and unemployed graduates are included, the median annual earnings at career peak is $68,000 for graduates of all majors and $62,000 for English majors and, among those who earned a graduate degree, $77,000 for all majors and $67,000 for English majors.

6. The committee was not able to locate significant data on the career outcomes of English minors.

7. See also Matz, "What Can I Do?"

8. The five most common fields for language and philosophy graduates as they cycle through their first three jobs after graduation are as follows: education (17%), journalism and writing (10%), sales (10%), marketing (7%), and service-oriented nonprofits (6%). Education remains the top field across all first three jobs. However, although marketing starts as the fourth most common first job, it moves up to the second most common third job, while the share of journalism and public relations positions decrease significantly. Legal and regulatory services shift upward from the tenth to the sixth most common job. Also surprising is that for all three first jobs, among the top ten occupational fields for language and philosophy majors are business and financial analysis, human resources, and management (Coffey et al. 12).

9. See also the case study of UC Davis ENL 149, in appendix A.

10. Other successful programmatic models beyond English departments include C21: The Center for 21st Century Liberal Learning, led by Kevin Mihata at the University of Washington, and Creating Rich Transcripts for Career Activation, led by Fred Cutler at the University of British Columbia.

11. All survey respondents identified by name have given permission for their remarks to be published.

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Fig. 1

Median Annual Earnings at Career Peak

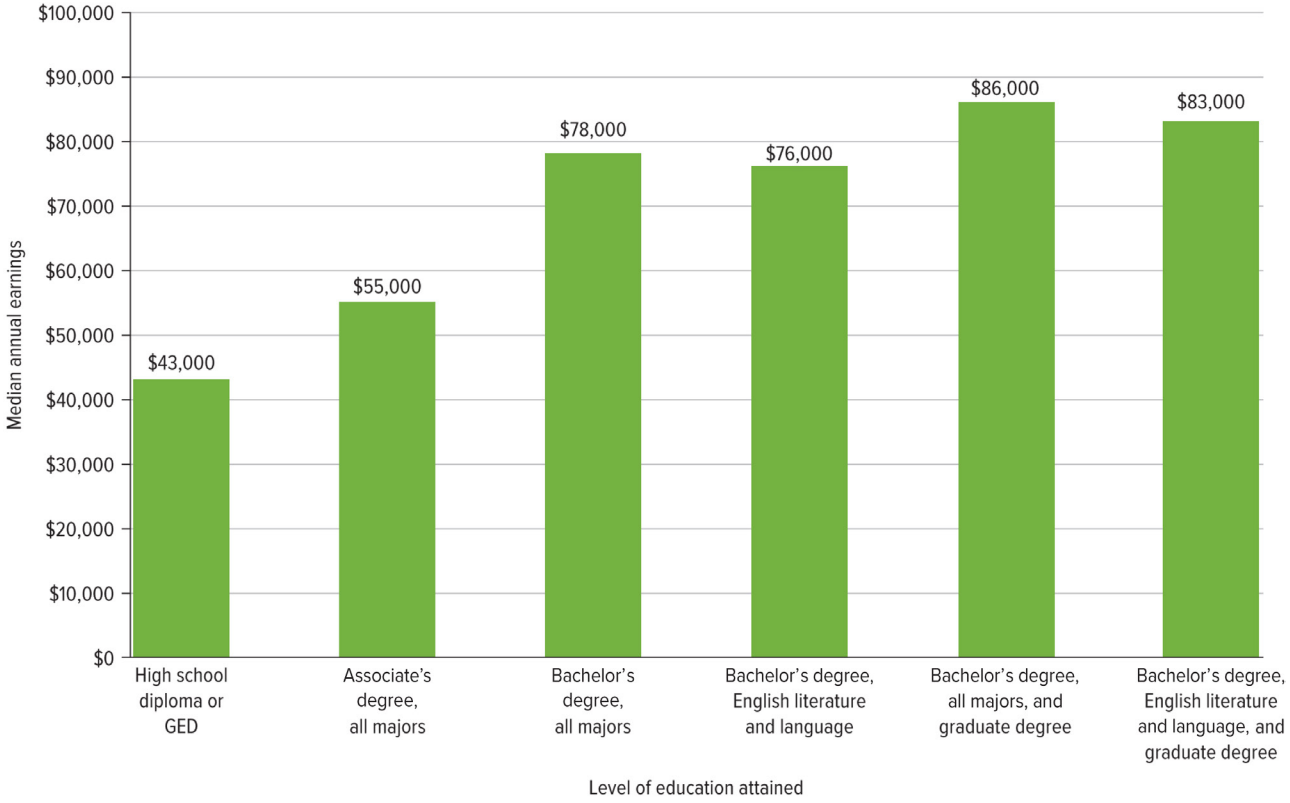
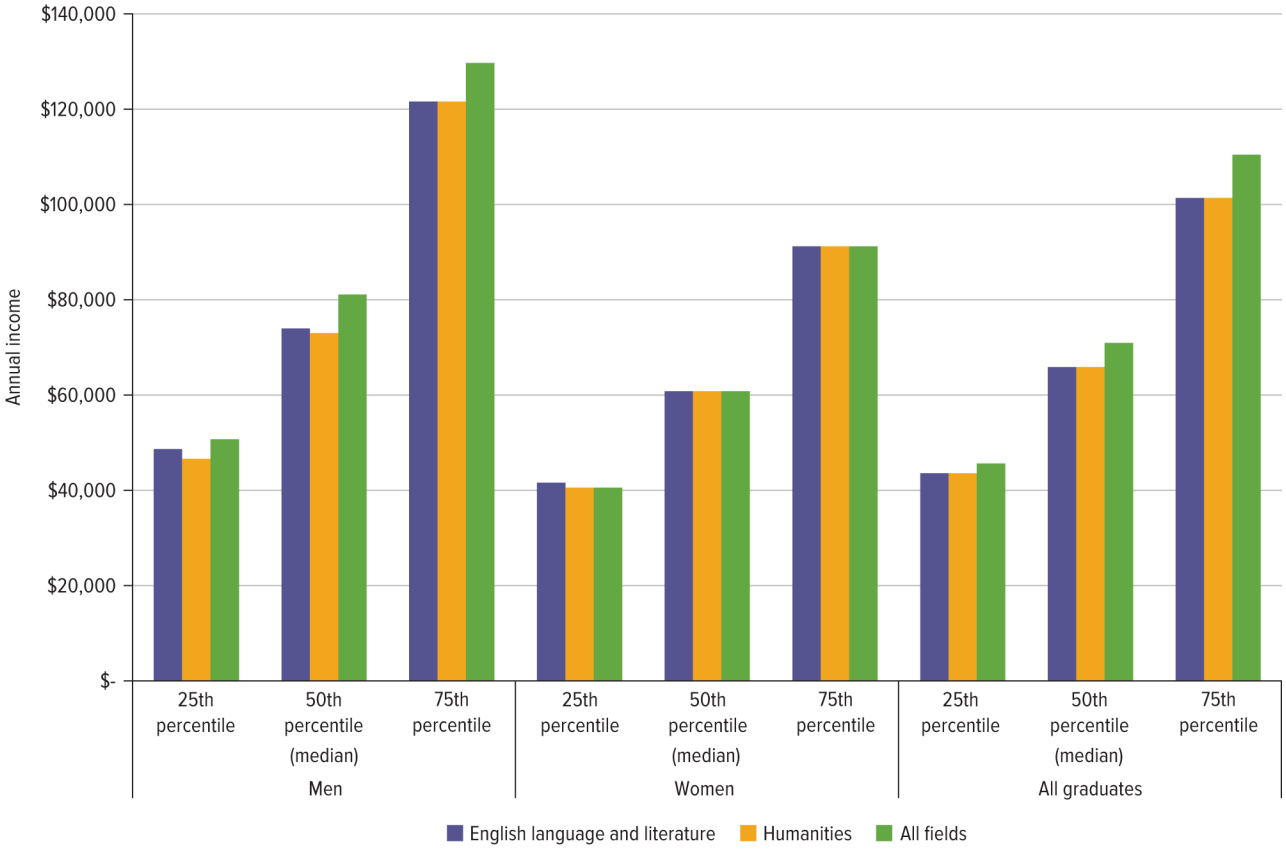


Fig. 2

Income by Field of Study, Gender, and Quartile



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey Public-Use Microdata Sample. Data analyzed and presented by the American Academy of Arts Sciences' Humanities Indicators (www.humanitiesindicators.org).

Fig. 3

Annual Median Earnings for Terminal Bachelor's Degree Holders (Selected Fields)

Field	White Graduates	Black Graduates	Gap between Black and White Graduates	Latinx Graduates	Gap between Latinx and White Graduates
All majors	$65,000	$50,000	23%	$51,000	21.5%
Architecture and engineering	$89,600	$67,100	25.1%	$64,100	28.5%
Computers, statistics, and mathematics	$82,100	$61,900	24.6%	$61,100	25.6%
Business	$70,600	$52,100	26.2%	$52,100	26.2%
Humanities and liberal arts	$53,700	$45,100	16%	$47,600	11.4%

Source: Anthony P. Carnevale and Megan L. Fasules, *Latino Education and Economic Progress: Running Faster but Still Behind* (*Center on Education and the Workforce*, Georgetown University, 2017, cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/latinosworkforce/), p. 38, p. 50 (table B.3). Data are for full-time workers ages 25–64 in 2011–15.

Fig. 4

English Major Career Outcomes

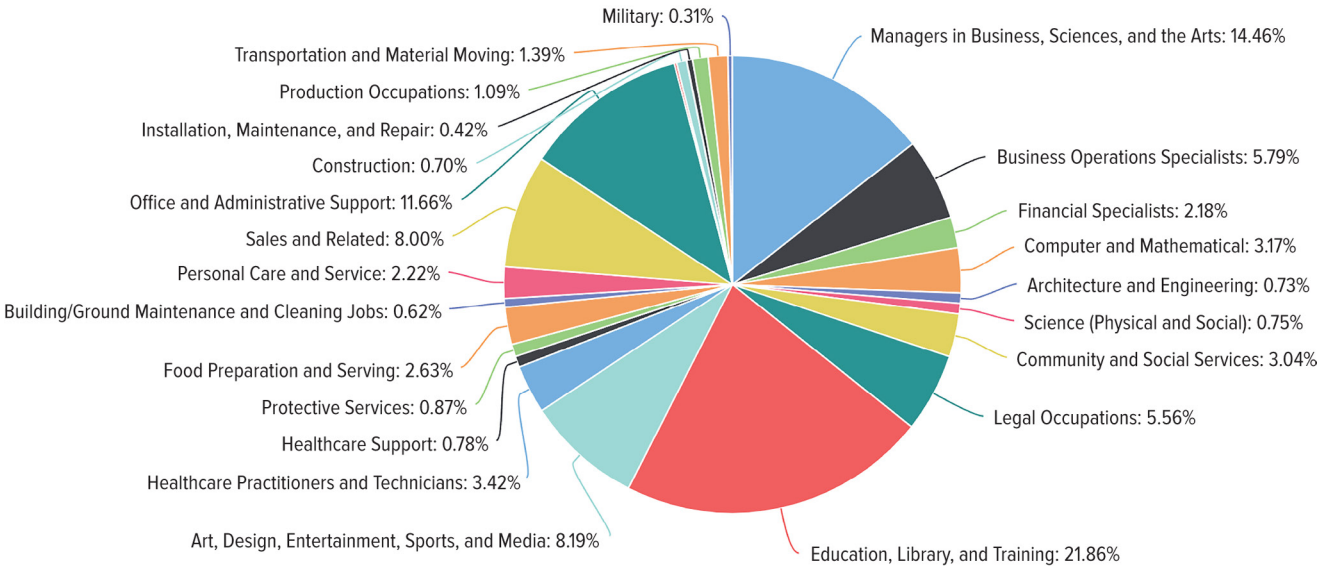


Fig. 5

Ten Most Common Careers for English Majors. Occupational Distribution of Undergraduate English Majors Currently Employed, All Ages

Occupation	Percentage of English Majors
Elementary and middle school teachers	8.77%
Postsecondary teachers	5.64%
Lawyers; judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers	5.24%
Other managers	3.7%
Secondary school teachers	2.85%
Education and childcare administrators	2.4%
Writers and authors	2.15%
Editors	1.8%
Secretaries and administrative assistants	1.67%
Retail salespersons	1.53%

Source: 2018 American Community Survey

Fig. 6

Skill and Humanities-Learning-Outcomes Pairings

Appendix A: Case Studies

Readers of this report will also benefit from reading ADE Bulletin *160, which offers expanded case studies, reflections, and example curricular materials on this topic from additional institutions.*

LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York

At LaGuardia Community College, the English department provides career guidance in three primary ways: the first-year seminar, the internship course for majors, and the cocurricular event You Can Do Anything with an English Major. In addition, the department is in the early stages of building its alumni network. Located in Queens, New York, and part of the City University of New York, LaGuardia is a Hispanic-serving institution where the overwhelming majority of students are from underrepresented groups with high levels of remedial need who are low-income, multilingual, and first-generation. The English department confers associate's degrees in two majors: English (since 2008) and the creative writing track in English (since 2012). It also oversees two liberal arts options in journalism (since 2012) and women, gender, and sexuality studies (since 2018). A new liberal arts option, ethnic studies, was launched in fall 2022. The web pages for all these programs feature a career profile that lists possible career paths, which are also emphasized in promotional materials. The department has served between 130 and 270 majors annually in English, creative writing, journalism, and women, gender, and sexuality studies, but faculty members reach nearly every student at the college through a required two-course composition sequence.

The department has recently started to track alumni, beginning with an exit survey administered in the required capstone course that gathers contact information and plans for transferring to a four-year program or entering the workforce. Between 2013 and 2020, 80% of majors transferred to a bachelor's program within three years of graduating. Faculty members have also worked with several alumni to create short videos of themselves explaining how being an English major has helped them in their careers. These will be displayed on the department website.

First Year Seminar for English

The First Year Seminar for English was developed as part of LaGuardia's Project *COMPLETA*, a college-wide initiative supported by a five-year US Department of Education First in the World grant of $2.9 million, beginning in 2014, to improve access, learning, and success for underrepresented, underprepared students. The centerpiece of the project is the First Year Seminar (FYS) program, which reorganized curriculum and academic support structures and engaged hundreds of faculty and staff members in professional development. The new FYS integrates an introduction to key concepts and careers in the major with intensive advisement, cocurricular engagement, peer mentoring, and an introduction to LaGuardia's technology systems, including student email, *Blackboard*, *ePortfolio*, and *DegreeWorks*.

The FYS for English is a three-credit course required for all English and creative writing majors offered in both the fall and the spring. Enrollment is capped at twenty-five and has ranged from twelve to twenty-five since first being offered in fall 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this first iteration was conducted fully online with a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

> *Course description*: This course is required of all English (including Creative Writing) majors. It introduces students to the major, campus culture, and the learning process, and it cultivates academic skills. Students learn about the college's policies and English courses and programs. It is taught by English faculty, with support from peers and cocurricular staff. The course is closed to students who are not English majors.

Although the FYS is not designed with an exclusive focus on career readiness, two learning objectives directly engage with career preparation. By the end of the course students will be able to do the following: "interpret the values and ethics of literary studies and creative writing, and discuss how these values and ethics directly influence personal, academic, and professional success in their careers" and "use the advising structure at LaGuardia to identify education and career goals and prepare an individualized educational plan, based on a structured exploration of personal interests, skills and values."

The FYS for English was developed and first taught by Jayashree Kamble, who drew on her extensive experience teaching the FYS for Liberal Arts and her three years as director of the English major. The main text is *You Majored in What? Designing Your Path from College to Career* (Plume, 2010; rev. 2017), by Katharine Brooks, and the course features invited speakers from the Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD), Campus Life, and Transfer Services. Kamble notes that these speakers "prompt students to think proactively about their career goals," while she "keeps students in the loop about on-campus events, including ones conducted by CCPD and Transfer Services. The FYS courses are set up so that students reflect on these events in short writing assignments, rather than just attending." The course includes two assignments that engage students in thinking about career pathways. The first, a 400-word reflective essay, might be used in an application for a scholarship or transfer to a bachelor's program. Drawing on what they learned from a video created by the CCPD, students create a portrait of themselves and describe the skills and resources that the FYS has helped them develop and that will contribute to their future success. The second assignment is a 1000-word fantasy autobiography in which students imagine that they are sixty and writing about the career and personal growth they have experienced since they left high school. Students learn to research their potential career fields through a library workshop that introduces them to career databases, including the US Bureau of Labor statistics. Students then use the findings from their research to describe the career they pursued in their fantasy life.

English Major Internship Course

The internship course was first taught in 2012 and has gone through several revisions that have made it a flexible component of the English curriculum. Although not required, this three-credit course can be taken as an elective that fulfills the Program Core requirements. It has an enrollment cap of fifteen, but it has been run with as few as three students. In 2015, the provost, Paul Arcario, supported the proposal made by the English chair, Gordon Tapper, to use the internship course as a curricular vehicle for producing the literary magazine and student newspaper. Prior to this arrangement, the magazine and newspaper were produced under the direction of faculty members who received no course release. Since 2016, the department has run two sections of the course every spring, with between five and fifteen students in each section, taught by the faulty member overseeing production of these student publications.

> *Course description*: The purpose of the English Major Internship course is to provide majors with internships with a faculty member in order to design and complete, or complete a significant portion of, a major scholarly, research, creative, or social project with the intent to publish, present, or otherwise make available the outcomes of the project. This project may take the form of a group internship course to produce an in-house publication, such as the student newspaper or literary journal.

Producing the Literary Magazine

The section of the internship course focused on the literary magazine (*The Lit*) was initially designed in spring 2016 by Lucy R. McNair. The course begins with students identifying their interests and strengths as they explore four activities—submission outreach, research, editing, and design—before deciding on their "major contribution." The team role they select, such as editor, art editor, or graphic designer, becomes their focus as they work together to produce a professional-quality magazine.

To deepen their understanding of artistic value in the selection process and articulate an editorial theme and creative ethics, students discuss readings in literary and visual aesthetics, comb through submissions, and work with art, design, and music faculty members to run contests and gain skills. A variety of off-campus visits have been incorporated into the course, including one to the New York Public Library's Periodical Room, where librarians introduced interns to artifacts from small press magazines. In 2018, HarperCollins invited interns to learn how to create a bestseller, defining roles and responsibilities that students took back to their work on campus. Submissions were invited from the larger community, including incarcerated men at a nearby correctional facility, where interns practiced the roles of editor and mentor. Each edition is presented to the campus community at a launch party and submitted to the American Scholastic Press Association's Student Literary Magazine Contest, where it received a First Place Award in 2018.

> "By the end of the semester, I emerged confident in what the group had produced, and in the newfound skills I had learned. *The Lit* gave me insight into different aspects of publishing and editing that I had not previously known. My dreams for after college were confirmed, and I began the process of applying to editorial internships. Having *The Lit* on my résumé helped me to get my foot in the door, and the experience I gained got me the job. Working on *The Lit* solidified my connection to LaGuardia and my peers. It increased my involvement on campus and introduced me to talented people I would have not known otherwise. Investing my time and energy in *The Lit* has by far been the most fulfilling experience I've had at LaGuardia."
>
> —Elizabeth Hubbard, LaGuardia graduate and associate managing editor at Macmillan

> "By combining an experiential internship course with a professional-style collaboration and a rigorous engagement, *The Lit* has become a transformative learning space and a tool for retention, belonging, and transfer, as well as a stepping stone to career opportunities. Respecting students' strengths, interests, and learning styles in a peer-driven endeavor, especially at an urban community college, *The Lit* internship provides a social context for risk-taking in ways that lead to gains in confidence and pride in an exquisite final product. It serves as a bridge to professional skills and creative exchange and empowers students to take charge of their learning. Our campus culture has benefitted hugely, and interns have gone on to internships and paid positions in publishing, education, and museum curation."
>
> —Lucy R. McNair, professor and *The Lit* coordinator

Producing the Student Newspaper

In the section of the internship course focused on the newspaper (*The Bridge*), students get hands-on experience working as journalists by filling the roles of reporter, writer, and editor and by collaborating to produce the newspaper. In addition to meeting with the professor once a week, students spend class time collecting stories, reporting, and attending campus events. They learn about journalism's core ethical values; gain experience navigating within a professional journalism organization; put into professional use the skills of writing, researching, editing, using social media, and reporting; demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society; interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information; work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives; and publish original content while also developing a portfolio of clips.

Schneps Media Group

In fall 2021, Bijoyeta Sahoriya Das, who has directed the journalism option since 2021, developed a new iteration of the course that gives students the opportunity to work as interns with Schneps Media Group, a leading news corporation in New York City that runs several media outlets. Open to English, creative writing, and journalism majors, the course allows students to research, write, report, work in social media, and interact with editors and other journalists. Students get professional experience, create a portfolio of published clips, build a professional network, and acquire references.

> "It was a joy to see the students blossom as professional writers during both the student newspaper and Schneps Media internships. Students took the assignments seriously; they knew that these stories would be published with their names and will remain online permanently. They put in extra effort and went out of their way to interview a broad range of sources and verify information and were meticulous in their writing. Internships give students a teaser of the real world. Students not only sharpened their journalistic skills, but they also developed confidence."
>
> —Bijoyeta Sahoriya Das, assistant professor

Cocurricular Event: You Can Do Anything with an English Major

The English Major Committee has organized the career panel You Can Do Anything with an English Major every year since 2013. Faculty members recruit professionals who majored in English to address how their myriad career paths were shaped by their educational experience. Past speakers have included the former CUNY chancellor James Milliken, representatives from the State Department, editors, professors, business executives, videogame designers, and senior LaGuardia administrators. Publicized through the college's and the program's social media platforms, these events have led

students in the audience—average attendance is about eighty—to think broadly about the utility of the major. Here is a sample of student attendees' responses to surveys about the event: "The English major is a lot broader than I thought it'd be and can be used outside of creative writing and teaching"; "I had no idea a career in diplomacy was possible with an English major; it seems extremely interesting. I always thought a degree in law was necessary"; "The panel affected my understanding of the importance of the English major; you will need reading and writing in most of your jobs and for the rest of your life." This overwhelmingly positive feedback from students demonstrates that departments can create meaningful change in perceptions of the English major through incremental efforts, such as this annual event.

University of California, Davis

For the past five years, English majors at UC Davis have had the opportunity to enroll in a career exploration and preparation course designed specifically for their needs. English 149: Career Decision-Making and English is currently offered annually, counts for the credits needed to complete the major, and serves about forty students each year. ENL 149 centers and creatively responds to student concerns about job prospects.

> *Course description:* This class will help provide answers to the perennial question: "What can you do with an English major?" In particular, the focus will be on career exploration and decision-making. Using the design thinking process, characterized by curiosity, trial and error, and collaboration, students will have an opportunity to explore a variety of traditional and innovative career paths and think critically about this process. While developing their own career narrative, students will research the career paths and decision-making of others. Students will prototype and refine career tools including networking, writing for the job search, and interview skills. Additionally, students will take self-assessments, read a variety of materials about the workplace today, and write critical reflections. Using such techniques, this class aims to help students in English understand and articulate the application of their major to the world of work.
>
> *Key learning objectives:* By the end of the course, students will be able to: • *Explore* career paths, jobs, and organizations by connecting with employers (*LinkedIn*, career fair, and informational interviews). • *Describe* their skills, achievements, and career goals orally (elevator conversation, Pitching to the Pros, and interviewing) and in writing (résumé, cover letter). • *Apply* design thinking and the mindsets of a designer to their career development (understanding values, prototype conversations/experiences, radical collaboration, bias to action, reframing). • *Use* lessons learned as an English major to help identify, secure, and enjoy work that is meaningful to them.

The course also gives the department a built-in mechanism for spotlighting members of its alumni network. Connecting with alumni gives current students exposure to successful graduates in English and their professional networks and also keeps alumni in touch with the program.

> "Letting alumni know about this class and inviting them to participate in panels and Q&A sessions with students has been a great way to keep them connected with the university and let current students see versions of their own professional futures."
>
> —Claire Waters, chair of English

The course has been successful in part because it connects meaningfully with two larger institutional priorities: meeting diversity, equity, and inclusion imperatives and participating in a campus-wide career readiness initiative called Aggie Launch. At Davis, BIPOC and first-generation college

students are seeing increasing representation, and the department is experiencing a concurrent rise of interest in English from these students. Many in the department have come to regard the integration of career preparation into the English curriculum as a way to better serve the needs of students who arrive on campus with fewer connections to the professional networks and elite, often exclusionary, forms of cultural capital that define a privileged upbringing. At the same time, ENL 149 builds on Aggie Launch, the stated goal of which is to have a 100% job placement or graduate and professional-school placement rate for UC Davis undergraduates. By committing to a career exploration and preparation course, the English department has demonstrated to university administration how it is contributing to campus-wide strategic initiatives and, as a consequence, has been able to advocate for resources to support such programming.

Although much has been achieved to date, this work also involves an interlocking set of challenges, at the center of which is the question of faculty buy-in. While many faculty members acknowledge the value of career preparation for their students, they feel overburdened and short on expertise about diverse career possibilities for students, and it may take time to find a course structure that authentically integrates faculty expertise in the discipline and proven approaches to career preparation. After a model is established, sustainability becomes a significant challenge. One enthusiastic faculty member might design a program, only for it to disappear when the faculty member goes on leave, takes another position, or loses interest over time. Relatedly, without broader faculty participation, scaling up a promising pilot can be difficult; at Davis, for example, there are six hundred English majors, and it is currently not possible to offer this course to all of them. Given these challenges, incremental development with a long-term vision of holistic, integrated practices of career preparation for students may be a realistic approach. The Davis model has proven successful to date because it is understood to be a first step on a longer path toward a more comprehensive approach to career preparation for English majors.

Marquette University

At Marquette University, career preparation is framed within the Jesuit concept of holistic formation. A stated goal of the Career Services Center at Marquette is "to encourage and support ongoing career discernment in pursuit of lives of meaning and purpose," in part by "guid[ing] the career formation of students as part of holistic formation of hearts and minds." Reflection on the meaning of educational and professional experiences is at the center of this approach, and in the English department, where the work of career preparation for majors is being taken up in increasingly formalized ways, a process of discernment is currently underway. This process has included reiterative conversations with students, culminating in the recent establishment of an undergraduate English advisory board, the solicitation of targeted feedback from students on career preparation activities in the department, and a general effort among faculty members to work collaboratively to persuasively articulate the value of the major. In January 2021, the department polled the majors and minors about what more they hoped to see in terms of career preparation.

The survey responses were highly informative: 16 students (43.2% of the respondents) indicated that they wished to see more social events in the coming year, 23 (62.2%) indicated that they wished to see more intellectual and cultural events, and 26 (70.3%) indicated that they wished to see more career-related events. The most popular career-oriented event possibilities were workshops for writing résumés and cover letters (30 respondents; 85.7%) and panels with alumni and faculty members (24 respondents; 68.6%), followed by a career mentoring program (16; 45.7%) and information sessions on law school and graduate school (13; 37.1%).

Last spring, the department held a résumé and cover letter writing session in partnership with career services and a panel on publishing with English department faculty members who spoke both about working in publishing and students' options for publishing their creative work. In addition, the department collaborated with other humanities and social science departments to host a very successful, well-attended, and inspiring (virtual) panel with alumni, From Classes to Careers, which featured six Marquette alumni (including two English majors) who offered practical career tips as well as reflections on the ways in which their humanities or social science coursework and majors translated into various jobs and careers after graduation. Although the English-specific sessions were less well attended than the multidepartmental event (perhaps because of scheduling), the department recorded them and sent the links to the recordings out to the entire department so the students were able to access them at their convenience and the event could reach a broader audience.

> "I am very pleased that we were able to respond to students' interest in and need for greater career preparation in our department. We are committed to building upon and expanding our efforts in this area and to continuing to help students understand the versatility and value of an English major."
>
> —Melissa Ganz, associate professor

In response to this strong student interest, one member of the faculty is developing a course on career discernment. Another is strengthening relationships with the Career Services Center and other departments with the goal of hosting cross-departmental alumni panels. Amid all these new possibilities stands a well-established internship program, which is, to date, the core offering of the department to its students for career preparation.

The three-credit writing internship course gives students practical hands-on experience in many different forms of writing, including marketing and advertising. Students have interned at a children's publishing house, for a political representative's congressional office, at nonprofit organizations, and on campus. The internship program emerged from the composition and rhetoric side of the department and as part of the writing-intensive major but has since been taken up across the three tracks (literature, writing intensive, and teaching). It is widely regarded as a win-win for students: they receive credit and may also get paid for their work experience. They do need to find a faculty sponsor; the faculty role in this program is to guide students in reflecting on the experience they are gaining writing in the workplace during the internship and then give direct feedback on a piece of professional writing they completed during the term. As one might expect at an institution with a strong emphasis on reflection, there is a component of metacognition: students write a journal on what they are learning and how they can connect their classes, the internship, and what they want to do next in their lives and careers. There is not an additional required class, as in some internship program models; instead, the experience functions as an independent study and does not require an extraordinary amount of work from the faculty sponsors.

The department also offers two classes that are related to career preparation. Writing for Workplaces, taught by several rhetoric and composition faculty members, including Cedric Burrows and Lilly Campbell, helps students craft résumés and other job search materials, and Radical Writing: An Invitation to the Self, designed and taught by Elizabeth Angeli, is dedicated to professional discernment and formation. Both courses invite students to engage in personal and professional formation through course assignments, including informational interviews, the writing of discernment philosophies, and public-facing projects. These courses enable students to see themselves as more than students and to bridge their academic experiences with the communities in which they are and will be immersed. In addition, the department's capstone class, required for all literature and writing-intensive majors, includes both a reflective and a forward-looking component.

In all these efforts, departmental leaders have learned a key insight: to build and sustain career discernment and preparation programming for students, the most important resource is time. For faculty members, this translates into course releases, which both purchase and recognize the time and labor being devoted to career preparation. The department was able to secure a course release for the director of strategy position, which Melissa Ganz held from fall 2019 to spring 2021, but it was a temporary position. She chaired the department's Strategy Committee and oversaw efforts to increase the number of majors and minors, to build community, and to enhance social, intellectual, and career-related events and initiatives in the department.

Florida State University

At Florida State University, internships are a defining experience for many English majors. The department offers degree programs on three different tracks: editing, writing, and media (EWM), which tends to have the highest enrollments; literature, media, and culture; and creative writing. Every student in the EWM track is required to complete a credit-bearing editing internship to complete the degree. The department makes this requirement a reality by working closely with the campus career center, which is large and has an internship coordinator, a role designed to interact with departmentally based internship coordinators across campus. The career center also places dedicated career liaisons in colleges across the university. This balanced, coordinated effort distributes the responsibility for internships widely. English faculty members do not directly place students into internships, but they do help them find the tools to seek their own opportunities, in conjunction with staff members from the career center staff. As in so many cases, institution-specific strengths are evident in the success of this internship program: Florida State University has a strong interdisciplinary network within its campus, internships are generally valued, and there is sustained and helpful support from the career center. The focus of the internship is on "gaining practical experience in editing, professional writing, and new media," but, per the program website, the directions students might take within that framework are conceptualized broadly:

> Students may intern at a variety of venues, including magazines, newspapers, publishing houses, television and radio stations, government offices, marketing and public relations firms, university departments and offices, law firms, and non-profit organizations. Students have opportunities to further develop knowledge and skills obtained through their course work in English; acquire real-world experience with professional writing, editing, and design; "test drive" a prospective career field; and build a professional ePortfolio showcasing their work.

Students have interned at *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, the Florida Senate and House of Representatives, and local independent bookstores and publishing houses and in campus units—including the FSU English department itself, where students update web content, manage social media and outreach, and conduct interviews with alumni. The results are impressive: each semester, anywhere from 60 to 125 students enroll for internship credit and successfully complete their internship requirements. And students describe the program as a meaningful part of their college experience. Kellie Gemmer, a graduate of the program, describes its value to her life and career this way: "I credit so much of who I am and where I am today to the EWM program and my internships. . . . [T]he program set the foundation for the well-rounded communications professional I am today."

It also advances the integration of knowledge and values, which might be understood to be disciplinarily specific to English, into society across the many sectors into which these graduates bring their educational experiences:

> "When I think about how we define success, I ask these questions: did the student, after completing the degree program with us, go on to a career in which they are happy? Are they doing something that is related to the subject they studied and feel passionate about? For example, when I see students who go into the worlds of publishing or marketing and establish themselves, then that is a way to define success. In a more intellectual vein we can think about students coming out of our department with certain ways of seeing and interacting with the world through a lens that values others and that promotes diversity and inclusion. Our majors bring to their careers a deep historical context and the ability to think critically about structures of power. These are less tangible but equally important markers of success."
>
> —Molly Hand, editing internship program director

A core insight of this program is that English majors do not need to develop career-readiness skills simply in pursuit of successful careers. Rather, they must do something more complex: translate their bodies of humanistic knowledge and skills into many professional contexts. Faculty members at Florida State University have discovered that they must therefore create significant space for students to develop self-awareness and the ability to articulate the value of the degree—and the specific contributions they might make—to potential employers. They have done so by developing not only the internship program but also a course that students take in the same term as the internship. The course has changed over time, increasingly encouraging students to pause and reflect on what they are building toward at the intersection of their education and their professional development activities, learning about themselves along the way. Students track their hours and work, participate in discussion boards set up for the class, write reflection essays, and compile relevant documents (including a résumé) into a portfolio to be submitted for review at the end of the term. This portfolio can serve students professionally in the job market as well. At this time, the program is only required for students in the EWM track but is open to students across the entire department, and a goal for the program might be that it would ultimately serve as a professionalizing capstone for all English majors.

Virginia State University

Most of the students who major in English at Virginia State University (VSU) plan to teach, an ambition informed by the historical legacy of the institution: VSU was established in 1882 to prepare African American teachers. In this sense, the Department of Languages and Literature has been meaningfully oriented to career preparation and focused from its beginning on concrete career outcomes for its students. At VSU, students majoring in English can also seek secondary-teaching credentials through a minor in education. These students are required to student teach during their final term before graduation. The School of Education arranges and oversees student teaching, and students take a three-credit-hour 400-level English course (ENED 402: Student Teaching in English) to receive course credit for their student teaching.

The department offers seven English concentrations developed in the spring of 2017. The ones of equal popularity are the English major with the minor in education, creative writing, and the flexible option that allows students to choose English courses they want to take in addition to the fundamental requirements. The concentrations and interests of first-year English majors are unknown because advising happens in a central unit, the University's Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), for all first-year students. Since spring 2019, there are typically twenty to thirty majors at any given time, less than half the number of majors in previous years (e.g., in spring 2018, VSU had sixty-one English majors, according to departmental advising records). Because many majors are future teachers, they

are looking for student teaching opportunities. But the benefit of gaining concrete professional experience during the course of study also extends to students who have different goals:

> "Internships are very important for students' networking and letters of reference. This gives them another resource outside the faculty. It also gives them an opportunity to see what kinds of jobs and work opportunities are available to them. The opportunities available to them are broad and may not be where they expect them to be."
>
> —Leah Thomas, assistant professor

The departmental internship program was implemented in spring 2015 and has been sustained by one faculty member, Leah Thomas, quoted above. The decision to lead the internship program was approved by the chair, but no course reduction was available—faculty members in English at VSU have a 4-4 teaching load—and no official role was developed within the department for work on the internship program. Thomas identified internships both locally and beyond the area. She met with local community leaders, including the director of the Petersburg Public Library. In addition to international, national, and state internships available to students, she set up internship opportunities with two literary journals, one print-based local publication and one digital journal. She also created internships for students to work as research assistants with faculty members. Many of the currently available internships are related to education, writing, libraries, and museums. However, Thomas is interested in building pathways to some of the other jobs to which an English major can lead, including technical writing and law. This work requires partnerships, and she has made progress toward coalitional associations with journals, the campus library, and local entities, especially for students whose financial situation may not allow them to travel beyond campus and the local area for unpaid internships.

Building this nascent program into the infrastructure of the department will become more urgent in the years ahead. In its current form, it does not have the support it needs to be a sustainable model. When the primary resource at hand is the commendable investment and energy of one member of the faculty, it is a signal that further resources need to be allocated. Furthermore, in its current iteration, the internship is optional, and many students do not take full advantage of the opportunity. Making it integral to the major would send a clearer signal of its value to students, the department, the university, and the community.

Several English majors have pursued internships other than student teaching during their course of study at VSU. Students can take an internship course with Thomas for three credit hours—Practicum in Writing—as long as they have an overall 3.0 GPA. This course rewards high-achieving students and makes it more likely that the students themselves will be reliable and successful, but the GPA requirement can function as a barrier for some students. The students who qualify for course credit, however, do not necessarily choose the course-credit option for internships. Since the program began in spring 2015, only three English majors, one English minor, and one biology major have taken the course. Thirteen students who majored in English held internships at high schools and libraries, with literary journals, and in sports writing and digital humanities; two students who minored in English also held internships. These internships were held between spring 2015 and summer 2019. No known internships have been held since fall 2019 and during the pandemic.

It should be noted that the relationship between the course and the number of students pursuing internships is at a major variance: most students doing internships (especially creative writers with the journal) are not doing so through the course, because of the GPA hurdle. For those who do enroll in the 300-level course, which fulfills an elective in the major, the focus is not on time in the classroom but rather on a structure of accountability for the professional experiences gained in the internship setting.

Each student receives a contract created as part of the course. Students bring the internship job descriptions to Thomas and take the contract to the internship organizations, where both supervisors and students sign the contract. Students then submit a one-to-two-page report along with optional, supplemental internship materials that they created at midterm, which is accompanied by a brief report from the internship supervisor submitted separately by the supervisor. The final is a one-to-two-page report by the students along with additional, again optional, supplemental internship materials that they created and a report by the supervisor submitted separately by the supervisor with a recommended final grade. The course is considered service; it is not taught as part of the regular course load and overload compensation is not provided.

Oberlin College and Conservatory

In 2019, Oberlin College and Conservatory launched a holistic, college-wide career preparation program that seeks to retain what is most valuable about a liberal arts education while taking seriously the demand for experiential learning and practical career preparation. The program's cornerstones reflect some of Oberlin's core values: integrating career preparation into a curriculum that values deep intellectual inquiry and using career readiness as an opportunity to redress social inequalities. In addition, the program is notable because it is premised on close collaboration among upper administration, the career development office, and individual departments, including English.

The highlight of the program is the Junior Practicum—a course and paid summer internship for college juniors. Students choose one of eight "career communities," or loose clusters, oriented around careers they hope to enter or global problems they wish to solve, such as arts and creative professions, education, and nonprofit and the public sector. After a weekend summit and a six-week course—aimed at preparing students to take full advantage of internship opportunities and featuring faculty and staff presentations and career materials prep workshops—students are guaranteed funding to support a summer internship. The program expanded in the pandemic to include virtual alumni panels, as well as a greater focus on complex problems as a framework for students to explore career interests, culminating with remote internships for students. The Junior Practicum began with 200–250 students, and, beginning with the class of 2022, funding for summer internships or related preprofessional experiential learning will be available for all juniors. While the Junior Practicum is the most notable feature of the program, it is important to stress that Oberlin emphasizes career discernment at each step in a student's progress to degree. Year 1 features peer groups on the transition to college life as part of the PAL (Peer Advising Leaders) program, year 2 encourages students to find a major with career discernment in mind, through SOAR (Sophomore Opportunities and Academic Resources), and year 4 involves Senior Launch, a yearlong series of workshops and activities that prepares students for the next transition.

Several considerations helped secure faculty support and involvement (not unlike professors at many liberal arts colleges, Oberlin's faculty members initially expressed some skepticism about instrumentalizing their fields of study). First, the data collected as part of an academic and administrative program review revealed the need to enhance career education and integration into the academic experience. Second, the stakeholders who designed Oberlin's career program, including the Junior Practicum, stressed the link between career exploration and the work of finding solutions to complex social problems and global challenges. The program is not just about how to get a job, but also about how to bring the skills and knowledge of a wide-ranging education to bear on problems of the twenty-first century, from health disparities to climate change. Third, faculty members were attracted to the diversity, equity, and inclusivity possibilities that better career discernment and preparation offer.

Oberlin wagers that students who are disadvantaged in terms of social capital or who will face discrimination in the workplace have a better chance to find meaningful careers if the institution does more to prepare them for the challenges they will meet.

> "Career development helps make good on the promise of social mobility, which is the basis of so much college recruiting."
>
> —Laura Baudot, interim director of career development, associate dean of arts and sciences, associate professor of English

Oberlin's career preparation is notable among our case studies because the institution is well positioned to sustain an expensive and logistically challenging paid internship component. Oberlin relies heavily on its alumni and parent networks to place up to 450 students a year in paid experiential learning positions. This work is a priority in the dean's office, which uses its clout and the expertise of the career development office to arrange so many attractive positions for its students. Not every institution will be able to count on this level of commitment and logistical support from upper administration. Emulating Oberlin's model will likely depend on working across rather than within departments. However, this highly collaborative dimension of the Oberlin model is one of its great strengths. It has taken hold and flourished because of the close working relationships between members of the faculty, upper administration, and campus career center staff. The curricular model of the "integrative concentration" (five courses plus a required internship and digital learning portfolio) in areas associated with complex challenges and career interest (global health, business, journalism, arts administration and leadership, international affairs, education) has been a key mechanism for building career considerations and preparation into the academic experience and for requiring collaboration between members of the faculty and career development staff. The career development center staff members also collaborate with faculty members on signature programming such as the Junior Practicum. As a result of such collaborations, the academic departments increasingly embed career preparation into the curriculum, starting with first-year seminars, and the career center staff members have opportunities to frame career development as a crucial element of a student's educational narrative—the element that in fact helps them reflect on the whole, the total effect of which is a robust, comprehensive approach to career exploration and preparation for English majors at Oberlin.

Westfield State University

Westfield State University's English department has focused on addressing career preparation through new course development, required experiential learning, and national conference travel. The major has three concentrations: writing, literature, and literature for English education. As of spring 2022, there are thirty-five majors in the writing concentration, nine in literature, and thirty-two in literature for English education. Each concentration, to varying degrees, integrates career preparation into required courses, and with each recent curriculum change the department has added more emphasis on careers for English majors.

> "The question I hear most from students considering the English major at Westfield State is 'what will I do with the degree after college?' Like students at other access-oriented institutions, our students seek reassurance right away that the degree they are pursuing will be practical and will lead them to a job. As a department we've become much more attuned to students' career concerns, and we continue to be more explicit through our course offerings and cocurricular programs about how what students do in our major can set them up for success when they leave. We're a small program with an active group of alumni, so what's especially rewarding

is telling stories of the paths our alumni have taken, often begun in courses or internships or co-curricular experiences we offer."

—Emily B. Todd, English department chair

The department's first effort at integrating career preparation into the major began back in 2010 with a single course. Faculty members developed the course Career Preparation for Writers (English 329), out of a recognition that students needed more guidance in navigating career opportunities. Over the years, around 150 students have taken the course, on average 15 each spring. The course allows for a high level of individualized work, reflection, and career exploration. Following a career exploration project, every student proposes an individualized project (learn about law school, publish a poetry chapbook, prepare for a career in healthcare communication) and that project structures their work for the semester, as they submit progress reports and prepare a final presentation. Throughout the semester, students gain experience creating a web presence for themselves ("a writer's platform") and a *LinkedIn* page, and they are required to produce job, grant, or graduate school applications and to visit the career center at least twice. Students also reflect on their goals and use of time, writing weekly journal responses to *Designing Your Life*, by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans (Knopf, 2016), and tracking how they use their time over 168 hours. One regular highlight is alumni presentations, which allow current students to network with alumni and learn about their paths from Westfield to successful careers.

At first the course was not required but encouraged for juniors and seniors. It is now a required course for all junior writing concentration majors and is in the career preparation area of the curriculum that includes the course and a required three-credit internship. About twenty students complete internships each year, both on and off campus. The process for applying, finding, arranging, and completing the internship is centrally concerned with career preparation and rooted in the department, overseen by two internship cocoordinators, who receive modest workload credit for each intern. These faculty members work with students on their résumés and cover letters, discuss career internships, and set goals and objectives; during the semester, they conduct site visits, receive review activity reports, and meet with the intern group at three required meetings. These meetings each focus on aspects of career preparation: networking, developing professional presentations, and meeting with members of the career center staff. It is also notable that almost every year at least one writing concentration student goes to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference in March, sometimes in conjunction with an internship.

English education students have always had specific career goals in mind: to become licensed teachers at the secondary level. In recent years, though, the program has focused more on teacher candidates' professional development and sense of agency as future teachers. Thanks to support from the university's foundation, the department usually sends two students each year to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference (not during the pandemic, of course) and buys memberships for all senior English education majors to the New England Association for Teachers of English. Students also take a required practicum seminar while completing their student teaching, creating space for reflecting on and analyzing their experiences as new teachers implementing some of the strategies learned in the program (e.g., anti-racist literature instruction, facets of linguistic justice in writing instruction). The department has seen the fruits of this professional development, as alumni become leaders in their schools and districts and continue to participate in NCTE.

Career focus for the literature concentration is less fully developed, though the department does create networking through the program's active participation in the Sigma Tau Delta annual national convention, to which we send on average ten to fifteen students each year from all concentrations. Literature concentration students also now have a required capstone, which can consist of an internship, independent study, or additional course connected to postcollege goals. In their second or third year,

these students take the course Gateway to Literary Study, which encourages them to consider the work of reading, writing, and teaching from various perspectives and across disciplines. The course focuses on five central texts, engages in close reading strategies, and practices working with literary criticism to prepare students for an independent research project. In the most recent offering of the course, students watched short clips of people from various professions introduce literary texts that have been meaningful to them, considered how the tools of literary study can be used across varied professional contexts, and wrote for public as well as academic audiences.

Ball State University

At Ball State University, a College of Sciences and Humanities initiative called Compass Advantage helps students in the humanities navigate from college to career. This initiative is the brainchild of Cathy Day, who has directed the special project since August 2020.

Day's Compass Advantage approaches career readiness in a number of unusual ways:

- It integrates career readiness with communications and alumni relations efforts, work that English departments have historically referred to university career centers, marketing departments, and alumni associations. Increasingly, however, administrators expect individual units to produce results (social media engagement, alumni outreach, and career placement) even though new resources to accomplish this work are rarely forthcoming.
- It relies on cross-department collaboration (anthropology, English, history, modern languages and classics, and philosophy and religious studies) to reduce the duplication of efforts and to marshal key resources for Compass's administration in the form of faculty course releases and student wages.
- It "bakes in" best practices in career readiness, communications, and alumni relations into member departments instead of "bolting on" a liberal-arts-focused career center or single career class.

History and Context

"Compass Advantage was born more of circumstance and necessity rather than deliberate intention," Day says, noting also that administrative course releases played a crucial role in both its development and implementation. The English department at Ball State is as large as some small, liberal arts colleges, composed of approximately twenty-five tenure-track faculty members, twenty-five non-tenure-track faculty members, and thirty-five graduate students. The standard teaching load at Ball State is a 4-4, but tenure-track faculty members receive a one-course release per semester for research, taking them to a 3-3. Because of the department's size and complexity, four of its primary department administrators receive two more course releases per term; thus, the chair, assistant chair of operations and director of undergraduate studies (DUS), assistant chair of programs and director of graduate studies (DGS), and director of the writing program teach a 1-1. "I've taught in four different English departments," Day says, "and I can't overstate this enough: in order for any academic department to achieve College and University goals, its administrators must be appropriately loaded for their administrative service."

In 2010, the department's DUS, Adam Beach, collaborated with the director of the writing center, Jackie Grutsch McKinney, to create a departmental blog, social media accounts, and a public relations internship for students paid out of the student-wage budget. When not answering phones or making copies, the PR intern(s) interviewed alumni about their postcollege career journeys for the blog, designed posters and course promotion flyers, posted events and articles to *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and

produced an annual alumni newsletter. These students were supervised by the DUS, whose primary job was creating the schedule for a large, multifaceted department, while also overseeing communication, alumni relations, and internships (among other responsibilities).

When Beach became department chair in 2014, he tapped Day as his next DUS. She brought with her self-taught skills in marketing strategy; she is a fiction writer who learned basic online-audience building to promote her books and who sometimes taught these skills in her classes. In the DUS position, she introduced best practices in online-audience building and expanded the number of PR interns as demand for their services grew. Some of these interns were then able to parlay the experience into postcollege jobs as marketing copywriters and social media managers. Enrollments, event attendance, and digital engagement grew to the point where the work of marketing the department threatened to overtake other aspects of the DUS position.

At this point, Eva Grouling Snider, a member of the professional writing faculty, created the experiential-learning course Jacket Copy Creative. Experiential learning (which Ball State calls "immersive learning") has been a university priority for over a decade, and the English department already had a number of these project-based learning courses in its curriculum. In these popular classes, students produced a literary magazine, an online undergraduate journal, and letterpress ephemera. The Jacket Copy Creative course mimicked an advertising agency, and the instructor assumed a role within the department as the de facto communications director. When communications work shifted from the DUS office to Jacket Copy Creative, Day was able to spend more time on the alumni relations and career readiness aspects of her duties. She incorporated professionalization activities and assignments into many of her classes and collaborated with a career coach to offer a monthly alumni career series that challenged false narratives about the practicality of majoring in the humanities. Promoted heavily by Jacket Copy Creative, the series was widely attended.

In 2016, Day attended the ADE Summer Seminar West at Arizona State University and became acutely aware that her department's growth was anomalous. In 2017, Doug Steward, the former director of ADE, invited Beach, Day, and Grouling Snider to give a plenary address, "PR 101 for English Departments," at the 2017 ADE Summer Seminar in Providence, RI. Shortly thereafter, however, Beach became the dean of Ball State's graduate school, Grouling Snider took a job at a marketing firm, and Day became the interim chair of English and the instructor of Jacket Copy Creative.

With the encouragement of Maureen McCarthy, the dean of the College of Sciences and Humanities, Day put together a proposal for Compass Advantage, which consolidated and expanded upon many of the English department's successful initiatives, such as the idea of a student-run marketing shop, an alumni career series, and plentiful opportunities for student community and professionalization. From her years speaking with prospective students and their parents, Day knew that potential majors needed *direction*, a sense of what industries and what job functions their degree would prepare them for. "You can go anywhere with a humanities degree," goes the Compass motto. "That's the Compass Advantage." Its integrated approach to career preparation forms its three pillars: communication, connections to alumni, and career readiness.

Communication

Jacket Copy Creative was renamed Compass Creative, and over time has added four more departments as clients: anthropology, history, modern languages and classics, and philosophy and religious studies. To accommodate the added workload, resources were provided to grant the Compass Creative instructor Kathryn S. Gardiner (the assistant director of Compass) a course release, pay seven students to serve as project managers, and provide laptop computers for the project managers. Each department designates one faculty or staff member to serve as the communications liaison (no course release)

between the department and Gardiner. In addition to running the social media platforms for five departments, Compass Creative publishes many alumni profiles as blog posts. These profiles are then added to the Compass Advantage website (www.bsu.edu/compass) to demonstrate successful career outcomes. Compass Creative's most important work is helping every humanities department publish a yearly alumni newsletter and encouraging graduates to join Ball State's *Cardinals Connect* alumni platform.

Connections with Alumni

Every alumni e-newsletter includes a call for alumni career stories. A self-sustaining cycle is created in which young graduates voluntarily get in touch with their home departments to share their story and to offer to speak to students "Our graduates know better than anyone how to pivot from a humanities major to a meaningful career," notes Day. "They want to serve as mentors and share information, professional advice, and internship and job leads in order to light the way for the next generation." These alumni are invited to campus for in-person panels or to virtual engagements as part of the Cardinal Directions alumni speaker series. Cardinal Directions is organized around five career pathways that represent where alumni have gravitated over the years: business and technology, creative arts and communications, education and training, human services, and government and law. Each member department designates one alumni or career liaison to communicate with Day about potential alumni speakers and career readiness topics for the Cardinal Directions series.

Career Readiness

The English curriculum at Ball State University has not historically focused on career preparation, but the insights of Compass Advantage now inform ENG 269 English Career Discovery, a new one-credit course that will be required of students concentrating in English studies, literature, and creative writing. The class helps students assess their interests and strengths, introduces them to the five pathways, and requires them to hold an informational interview with a graduate who works in that field. Day teaches this course and receives a course release for planning the Cardinal Directions series, which her students are required to attend and which is open to other majors as well. Day hopes that other departments will consider adopting the Discovery course but is also sharing her course modules in *Canvas Commons* so that other faculty members in Compass departments can more easily integrate humanities professionalization activities and assignments into their own classes.

> "Getting buy-in from faculty isn't easy. Some faculty are opposed to career preparation on principle. Others view it as a burden, something we're being ordered to do for survival's sake. I try to reframe career preparation for my colleagues by stressing that it's how we can ensure that a college education provides socioeconomic mobility to our growing population of first-generation students and in order to strengthen our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives."
>
> —Cathy Day, professor of English and director of Compass Advantage

Institutional support and cross-unit investment are key to sustaining career preparation efforts. Compass Advantage is a model of how an English department can lead the humanities on a campus toward the goal that so many faculty members in these disciplines share: to help students find their true north—where their deepest passions and skills intersect with a meaningful career.

The course descriptions, objectives, and texts described below can be adapted by faculty members in departments beyond Ball State to fit their local contexts.

ENG 375 Immersive Learning in English / Compass Creative (3 credits)

Course Description

Students in this immersive learning course will be responsible for managing the Ball State English department's digital community via social media, blog, weekly digest emails, an annual alumni newsletter, etc. You will have the opportunity to get professional experience in editing/publishing, content marketing, public relations, social media management, and strategic communications. You will work together in teams and with me to plan marketing strategies; create, curate, and edit content; conduct user research; discuss best practices and analytics; and make changes to our practices. Students will focus on writing and storytelling within a marketing context. Maintaining the #bsuenglish community will be your primary work. This class is like a group internship in strategic communications, so update your résumé's "professional experience" section and add this experience to your *LinkedIn* profile.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand and articulate key terminology in the fields of professional writing, corporate communications, content strategy, marketing, public relations, and social media management
- Identify and research an organization's audience, then write messages that reach that audience
- Work with an organization to determine the message and story of that organization and then disseminate that message and story
- Develop content strategies that take advantage of multiple digital platforms, such as social media, blogs, and websites
- Compose professional social media posts and manage an organization's overall online presence
- Manage complex projects in shifting teams with multiple deliverables and overlapping deadlines

Course Texts

- Austin Kleon, *Show Your Work!*
- Marty Neumeier, *ZAG: The Number-One Strategy for High-Performance Brands*
- *LinkedIn Learning* courses on blogging, social media management, design principles, etc.
- Kivi Leroux Miller, *Content Marketing for Nonprofits: A Communications Map for Engaging Your Community, Becoming a Favorite Cause, and Raising More Money* (but replace "nonprofit" with "your department")

ENG 269 English Career Discovery (1 credit)

Course Description

Provides a personalized framework for English majors to help them discover how they might apply their major after college. Focuses on student self-assessment, including personal attributes such as values, interests, personality, skills, and purpose. Students begin the process of exploring possible career pathways. No prerequisite, but students are encouraged to take the course as a parallel with the gateway course in their major concentration.

Course Objectives

Students who take this course will be able to do the following:

- Identify and explain their interests, values, disposition, and long-term goals through self-assessment
- List the skills gained in their major in professional documents and online, such as in a *LinkedIn* profile
- Conduct an informational interview with someone in their chosen career pathway
- Build social capital through networking opportunities
- Describe and evaluate professional and workplace culture

Course Texts

- Alumni profiles from the English department blog
- Katharine Brooks, *You Majored in What? Designing Your Path from College to Career*; Katharine Brooks, *What Color Is Your Parachute? for College*
- Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, *The Designing Your Life Workbook: A Framework for Building a Life You Can Thrive In*