

What is Needed to Succeed?

The educational system and more importantly, the ever-growing career fields of today's job market are dynamic and fluid, demanding an adaptive and experienced sensibility. Both students and those already in a given career field must ask themselves: "What must be known in order to be a competent individual in my field"? However, before one can determine what must be known, it is necessary to decide upon which academic path or career field to walk or maybe even run. Every individual has an academic curiosity in some field or perhaps a talent that they should seek to fulfill and enrich above all else. Luckily, the University of Nebraska at Omaha English Department offers several tantalizing choices. It is here a student, whether current or returning, can take classes with emphasis in one of the following English fields: British Literature, American Literature or Writing and Linguistics. In addition, Graduate students now have the option of obtaining certificates in Technical Communication or Advanced Writing. It is important to note however, that while these two specific programs are graduate level; undergraduate students may also take these program classes as valuable experience. Each offers their own advantages and possible setbacks, but taken with the implicit idea to obtain knowledge and you will emerge successful in whatever academic field you choose.

Whichever field of study one chooses, it is important to develop skills relevant to that field. This does not simply mean the general scoping knowledge of a particular subject, say writing, but rather the underworkings of said subject; how to reproduce quality work time and time again, but most importantly, the how and why to what makes good writing. This specificity of knowledge extends into other areas of intellectual development. For Technical Communicators it means realizing the how and why behind design (web and text based), layout, style, and even editing; what should be left in a document as relevant material and what should be eliminated. For those who take courses in the Advanced Writing program it is a more implicit knowledge of writing, what context will work best for the audience at hand, what research methods and tools one can utilize effectively, and how to present oneself as a competent writer in a chosen field. The Advanced Writing program opens up a wide range of possibilities and career paths and can even increase the effectiveness and work of a person already in a set career. Both these areas act as catalysts in improving upon skills a student already possesses and extending them into practical, business marketable areas. However, some students do not venture into these two off-shoots but stay the course in one of the particular English paths. These students do of course need to hone those skills synonymous with English curriculum, but also learn how to market themselves effectively since their career possibilities are more broad-scoping in type and number. The skills they develop over their academic career are valuable yet it may be hard at times to put them into words. How does one verbalize literary critique into something tangible? A suggestion would be to equate these with problem solving and analytical skills, both essential in the workplace. They must display their writing experience and skills in a positive manner, thereby adapting themselves to the job opening. English majors without emphasis in

either of the two specific areas need to perhaps be the most fluid in their field, modeling themselves to the position they desire most.

One may ask: How does desire play a role in career choices? Deciding upon a career is not simply taking whatever is offered, but actively searching for one that suits your talent, skill, and preferences best. The ideologies of the job market have shifted in meaning and power, thus creating two antecedent ideals, intellectual development and success by means of attaining wealth. These two ideas often clash on the forefront of the choices we make, rendering us subject to two distinct paths. Fortunately, these two ideals do not have to be distinct and separate entities, and the possibility exists where an individual can be happy with what he or she does and successful at the same time. In fact, one of the finest qualities an English student can master is writing. Employers are continually seeking competent individuals who can duplicate what they have learned and have something to show, that is physical evidence of what they have achieved in their college career. According to the U.S. Dep. of Labor, "Writers and editors must be able to express ideas clearly and logically and should love to write. Creativity, curiosity, a broad range of knowledge, self-motivation, and perseverance also are valuable". Everyone has these skills in some volume but it is how they display them that counts.

A good suggestion would be, that whatever path you decide upon, and whether or not you are a current or returning student, you should invest yourself entirely into what you enjoy doing. Find your niche in life, English or not, and face it head on. Someone who invests themselves entirely into what they do, will most assuredly enjoy it and attain the most rewarding knowledge from it. This mindset will stand out to employers and you can watch the possibilities unfold.