

# VMI English Majors: Where are they now?

A survey of graduates from the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies at Virginia Military Institute

The majority of my job comes in the form of PowerPoint presentations and briefings to superiors, ranging from captains to my brigade commander (full bird Colonel). I have also been tasked with instructing my battalion in basic written grammar. So, I am using my rhetoric concentration as well as my experience in the Teaching Writing Course to teach fellow lieutenants and higher-ranking officers.

## **Alec Roach '18**

**2LT Maintenance Control Officer**

Echo FSC, 2BEB, 3-1 ABCT

Camp Hovey, South Korea



**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

My time as an English major taught me how to draft and edit papers quickly and efficiently, while still ensuring that the content was of the highest quality. My background in Philosophy, including reading Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, directly relates to what I am studying now. My English major taught me how to study theories—the ways to analyze and question them—and to be able to write about them in an observant yet critical manner.

## Christine Ray '14

Project Manager/Estimator Gov't Contractor

Graduate student, MA in Globalization and Political Sociology, George Mason University

Chantilly, VA



English Majors

*Where are they now?*

In my job, I have to communicate effectively through a number of different vehicles (publications, emails, newsletters, etc.). The English major taught me critical skills, such as researching, planning, and storytelling, that all play a role in my ability to articulate important news and information to employees at a large company.

**Brandon Hartman '15**

**Communications Representative**

Northrup Grumman

Manassas, VA

The logo for Northrop Grumman, featuring the company name in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below the text is a blue curved line that starts under the 'N' and ends under the 'M', arching upwards in the middle.

***NORTHROP GRUMMAN***

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

My job is human resources-based. I use my English degree every day. I am responsible for handling all correspondence that comes through the HQ to the commanding officer. I am also responsible for editing summaries of action and citations for awards—one of the best parts of the job. I have several other jobs, including writing legal and investigations materials. It's a great job, and I really enjoy all the writing and reading that it takes!

**Kate Dixon '18**

**Adjutant**

Marine Aircraft Group 31 Headquarters  
Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, SC



**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

**My biggest takeaway skillset from being an English major is dissecting information and getting to the point. Army/Pentagon documents are very extensive, requiring you to read, research, and write for several specific tasks and sections while remaining organized, clear, and concise. I thank my English major for my abilities and confidence in doing exactly that.**

## **Flora Edelbrock '14**

**Government Consultant: Senior Analyst of Sustainment for Logistics Management Institute**  
Headquarters Department of the Army, the Pentagon  
Centreville, VA



**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

I pretty much use the skills I developed as an English major all day, every day. I teach English to grades 2, 3, 5, and 7, and life skills to grade 7. I also have to keep records of all my work and training to ensure that I'm being the most effective volunteer I can be. I recently used my Art History and Visual Culture concentration to start an Art Club at my school, and I am currently working on starting a Phonics and Literature club to improve reading and writing skills.

**Chelsea Sias '17**

**English Teacher**

The Peace Corps

Mokhotlong, Lesotho

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

I use my VMI educational experience in all my classes. I have tweaked some projects that I did as an English major for my high-schoolers; a technical communication crisis management assignment and an art history assignment are just a couple. I also use the many skills I developed while working in the writing center.

**Liz Affronti '15**

High School English Teacher and Coach  
Graduate student, Master's of Education  
Sumter, NC

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***



The skills in consistent and appropriate communication that I developed as an English major have definitely helped me. Assessing each situation and understanding what needs to be said or written, and how, is key. Being able to speak to large groups and give detailed answers to one-on-one questions is important. Additionally, I evaluate digital media and websites, so understanding the rhetorical situation has been important as well.

**T.J. Lighton '16**

Program Outreach Officer

VMI Alumni Foundation

English Majors

*Where are they now?*

The skills I use the most are editing and reading comprehension. Being able to read a large amount of text and digest it in a short amount of time is definitely a big part of the job. One of the many things my Proposals Team did in 2018 was submit 450 proposals in eight months for 150+ unique vendors and 70+ unique partners. This contributed to record company earnings of \$5.3 billion in 2018.

**Ryan Scott '15**

**Proposals Coordinator**

Carahsoft Technology Corporation

San Diego, CA

**carahsoft** The Trusted Government  
IT Solutions Provider®

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

My rhetoric classes have come in handy as I compose and deliver truthful messages to various audiences. The reading, analysis, precise writing, and effective communication skills that I learned in all of my ERH courses prove useful every day. My communication tasks are generally on a topic I am unfamiliar with and have a quick deadline, e.g., social media posts, an investigation report delivery for families of deceased crash victims, or a response analysis for the 4-star general.

## Emma Quirk '18

2LT, Public Affairs Officer

Scott Air Force Base

St. Clair County, IL



English Majors

*Where are they now?*

My English degree helped me learn a balance among rhetoric, ethics, emotion, and logic. The greatest skill I took away is the power to form ideas and express them in a logical way that people can understand. This skill is vitally important as a public affairs officer. Another invaluable takeaway is the ability to do rigorous research to find answers to questions and then communicate them clearly and effectively to others.

## **Fredrick D. Walker '15**

**1LT, Public Affairs/Outreach Officer**

3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing

Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, CA

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

The critical components of my job relate to communication skills in different mediums, aimed at developing relationships with our clients. Every day, I think about how I can convey an honest, compelling message to our clients, and I attempt to accomplish that through the writing, speaking, and people skills I learned as an English major.

**Cole Elliot '18**

**Regional Sales Consultant**  
RiverFront Investment Group  
Richmond, VA



**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***

I've used many skills that I developed in the English department, from dissecting a journal article to creating a sound argument using rhetorical strategies. In addition, I am using techniques I used for my Capstone for my Account Planning class, which involves ethnographic research. Lastly, the time limitations I had to handle at VMI have helped me immensely in managing my time here to get all the assigned reading and writing done.

## **Brittany (Woychak) Finn '17**

**Graduate student**, Master's Degree in  
Integrated Marketing and Communication  
Florida State University

**English Majors**

***Where are they now?***