
THE BROADSHEET

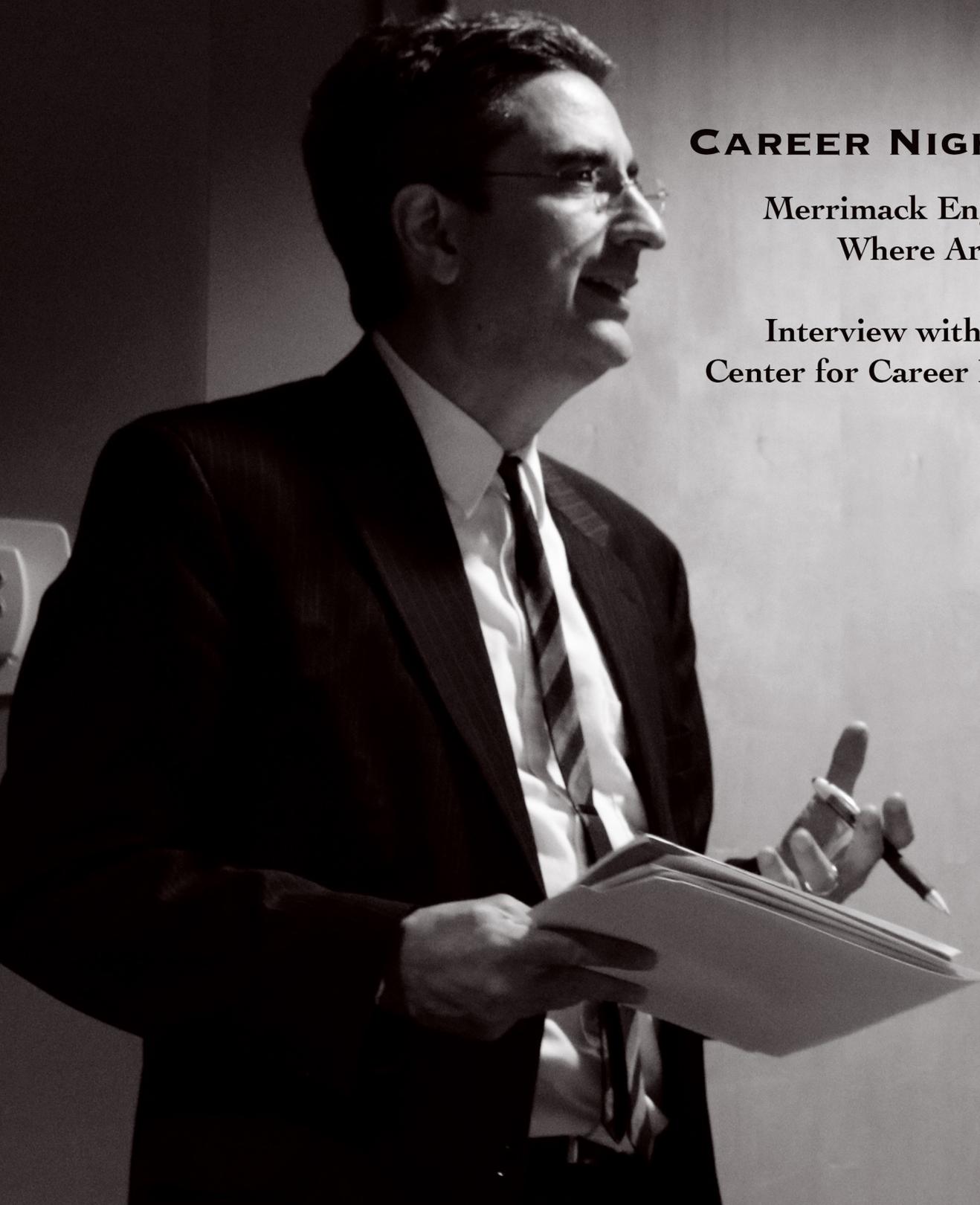
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Issue XXVI

CAREER NIGHT ISSUE

**Merrimack English Alumni:
Where Are They Now?**

**Interview with The O'Brien
Center for Career Development**



This Issue:

Editor's Note

Interview with Katie Fell

Four Career Night Perspectives

A Career Path Reevaluation

How Curricular and Co-curricular Programming Have Built Community in the English Department

Coming Attractions

Department News and Notes

The Broadsheet Staff

Kristin Cole

Calvin Evans

Cassandra Kacoyannakis

Emma Leaden

Daniel Roussel

Faculty Editor:

Professor Paul Vatalaro

Editor's Note

Originally supported by a Provost Innovation Fund Grant and produced by a team consisting of me and three co-curricular interns, *The Broadsheet* debuted in May of 2013. The English faculty conceived of the publication as the first phase of a larger initiative aimed at providing English majors and minors with opportunities to work closely with full-time English faculty, to be paid, and to cultivate crucial language, research, analytical, and supervisory skills that would make them even more attractive in an increasingly dynamic and challenging job market. The first step toward realizing that goal involved examining newsletters produced by other collegiate English programs, especially those we regarded as premier, and then imagining ways in which we might improve on the models we had surveyed. Our current mission statement reflects our early conversations. We set out to publicize program innovation, annual departmental events, faculty accomplishments, and to profile students and alumni. As inaugural editor, however, I also wanted our publication to engage with disciplinary issues and to showcase what students enrolled in our program could do. We cast our first issue (all *four* pages) in conventional newsletter format, with banner-style masthead and photograph, a lead story and table of contents. As you can see from the current issue, we have moved on from that model. *The Broadsheet* distanced itself from the newsletter genre by evolving into a feature magazine, in which our interns, in the tradition of public intellectuals, engage and review from a variety of critical approaches myriad forms of creative expression. We continue to cover departmental events and innovative initiatives, of course, but the idea of “digging into” topics and material that attract us serves as our prime directive. Media Center Director Kevin Salemme, with whom I shared our aspirations, recently provided me and my staff with a workshop focusing on basic principles of aesthetic design and photography. His slides and his recommendations inspired us to revise dramatically formatting for *The Broadsheet*, which we now regard as our Life Magazine-classic-rock-album-cover phase. We hope you enjoy our new look. Cheers!

Professor Vatalaro

An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published four times during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department's role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

EYE-OPENING STATISTICS REGARDING THE VALUE OF INTERNSHIPS: AN INTERVIEW WITH LIBERAL ARTS CAREER SPECIALIST KATIE FELL

BY KRISTIN COLE

The Merrimack community recognizes the O'Brien Center for Career Development's capacity for guiding students, as they plan for careers after graduation. From providing resume and cover letter templates to finding internships and career advising, members of the O'Brien staff serve as invaluable resources for Merrimack students. The following interview features information concerning career preparation provided by Katie Fell.

Katie Fell works in the O'Brien Center, specializing as a career advisor for the School of Liberal Arts. Fell earned her Bachelor of Science in Family & Child Sciences from Florida State University, and went on to earn her Master of Arts in Teaching Social Sciences at the University of South Florida. She worked in the Office of Career Services at Harvard before joining Merrimack in 2016.

74% of the class of 2017 Liberal Arts graduates was employed within nine months of graduation.

How long have you been working in the O'Brien Center for Career Development at Merrimack College and what can you tell our readers about what you've learned about the skills and marketability of students who graduate with specializations in the liberal arts?

I've been working at the O'Brien Center for Career Development for the past 2.5 years. Before that, I worked in the Office of Career Services at Harvard with undergraduate and graduate students for seven years. Almost all of my nine-plus years of career advising experience have been with students majoring in the liberal arts. A liberal arts graduate is well

poised for success in most career paths, due to the liberal arts' commitment to creating diverse and trained learners, promoting excellent communication and writing skills, problem solving skills, analytical & critical thinking skills, and innovation and creativity. The ability to learn, process, and adapt is something at which liberal arts students excel.

What are some notable professions (or notable places of work) that Merrimack liberal arts graduates have entered after graduating? Are any of these specific to English majors? Which professions would surprise the average person?

Roughly 74% of the class of 2017 was employed full time within nine months of graduation, and approximately 20% were enrolled or accepted into graduate school. Some notable organizations employing 2017 Merrimack College Liberal Arts graduates are:

AECOM, Amazon, Axis Communications, Biogen, California Psychcare, Concord Wealth Management, Essex County District Attorney's Office, HUB International, Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council, Raytheon, Regan Communications Group, Inc., St. Ann's Home & School, Tufts Health Plan, the United States Air Force, U. S. House of Representatives, Vinfen, Wilmington Public Schools, and YMCA of Greater Boston. Some graduate schools include: Boston College, Boston University, Colorado State University, Emerson College, Fairfield University, Merrimack College, New England School of Law, North Carolina State University, Royal Holloway, University of London, Salem State University, Spalding University, University of New Hampshire School of Law, and Worcester State University. And that's just the data we have on 2017 graduates! We have published authors, lawyers, special agents with the Department of Homeland Security, Peace Corps volunteers, and more.

At Career Night you mentioned some impressive statistics concerning internships and post-graduation jobs for students. Would you review those statistics for our readers?

Q: What percentage of college graduates who completed a paid internship received a job offer by graduation? A: 63%

Q: What percentage of college graduates who never completed an internship received a job offer by graduation? A: 35%

71% of employers offer paid internships

Employers begin recruiting interns an average of EIGHT MONTHS in advance of a start date.

On average graduates that did a paid internship have a starting salary 28% higher than those graduates that did not do an internship.

On average graduates that did a paid internship have a starting salary 28% higher than those graduates that did not do an internship.



What percentage of students in the liberal arts participate in an internship during their academic careers at Merrimack? (If you consider the number low relative to the number of students enrolled at the college, to what would you attribute that lower than optimal participation?)

72% of the liberal arts majors in the class of 2017 participated in at least one internship or co-op during their time at Merrimack. We would love to see this at

100%, as internships tend to be one of the best predictors of post-graduation full-time employment. Many students don't know that, depending on your major, you could complete an internship for academic credit. Or, if you complete an internship independently, you can register it with the O'Brien Center for Career Development via *Handshake*, and we work with the Registrar to get the internship listed on your official college transcripts.

63% of college graduates who completed a paid internship received a job offer post-graduation.

Please identify for us some of the notable internship opportunities available for English majors offered through the O'Brien Center

Currently in *Handshake*, the following opportunities are available: Editorial Internship, Aevitas Creative Management Copywriting Intern, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Nonprofit Digital Communications Internship, Toxics Action Center, User Experience Intern, Rocket Software, Booking Agency Intern, Music Works International, Curatorial Intern, and Custom House Maritime Museum.

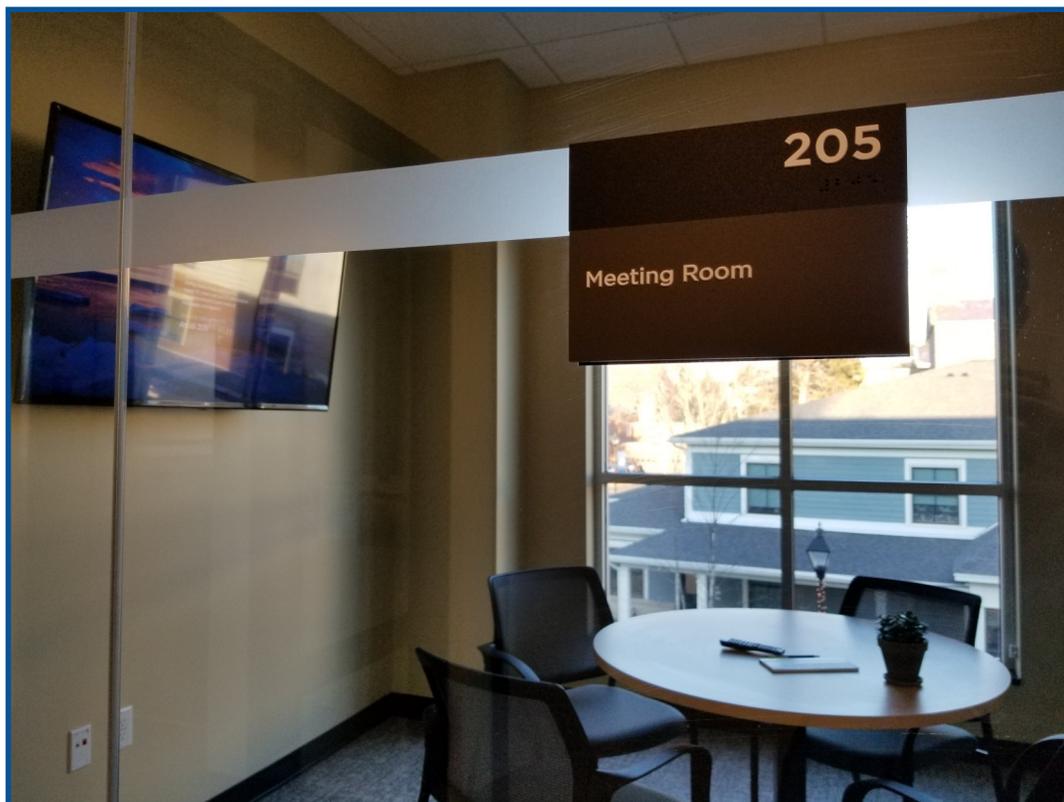
Additionally, each semester the O'Brien Center for Career Development partners with local non-profits to help fund internships through the Stevens Foundation Paid Internship Program. Examples in the past have included an Event Planning internship at the Alzheimer's Association, a Marketing and Communications internship with the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, and more.

Employers begin recruiting interns an average of EIGHT MONTHS in advance of a start date.

After attending multiple English Career Night Events and spending as much time as you have working with students enrolled in our program, what advice would give them about finding a job after graduation?

Come see us in the O'Brien Center for Career Development as early as possible! Looking for an internship or a job is a full-time job, and it's not as simple as pressing send in an online application. An effective internship or job search involves exploration, fine tuning application materials, researching organizations, connecting with Merrimack alumni or other professionals at the organization or in your target industries, following up, interview preparation, and beyond. Coming in sooner rather than later allows us to come up with a customized strategy that will allow you to balance the search process with your academic and extracurricular responsibilities. Complete an internship, preferably more than one! Also, don't undervalue the impact of an informational interview; it can help you stay open minded and consider careers you didn't even know existed.

Visiting during walk-in hours at the O'Brien Center on Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00pm-3:00pm or making an appointment with Katie through the Handshake portal are the best ways to reach her. Fell is also available by email, found on the website for the O'Brien Center for Career Development at <http://www.merrimack.edu/obriencenter>.



The O'Brien Center for Career Development staff moved into new offices in the Dr. Alfred L. Arcidi Center in October 2018.

FOUR CAREER NIGHT PERSPECTIVES: OVERCOMING THE NEED TO FIND CERTAINTY

BY DANIEL ROUSSEL

Merrimack College's English Career Night features a little bit of everything for everyone. This year I interviewed three students, all connected by their passion for the literary arts. Sophomore Kerry Reynolds declared a minor in English after wrestling with doubt concerning her potential just one week before Career Night. At the opposite end of the spectrum, strong-willed and confident Ashley McLaughlin, a senior English major, shared with me an honest post-mortem critique of the event (her fourth) and her perspective on the Merrimack English program. I was also fortunate enough to talk with English alumna and Career Night panelist Rachel MacKelcan (formerly of *The Broadsheet*), who commented on her life before and after graduation, offering encouraging words to the English community. Despite obvious difference in perspectives, common ground emerged in their comments. Specifically, each identified comradery and community as important characteristics of the Career Night experience.

"It really, honestly, makes me feel connected to the department when I'm able to see these people outside of classes," Ashley said. "We actually get to discuss life and things of that nature." The complex discussions she mentioned were no exaggeration; during the informal socializing that followed the panel presentations, I watched as Ashley and her classmates flitted between the open bar and various professors. I noticed how comfortable and engaged they were, for example, conversing with Professor Vogel. Before long, I noticed that Rachel joined the conversation. Not all audience members participated in the festivities, however. Kerry evidently preferred to watch from the sidelines.

"I did get to meet other English students," she clarified when pressed about her shyness at the event. Before this year's Career Night she confided to me that she had felt nervous about not knowing more than a couple of people from the English Department, a reason holding her back from declaring a major rather than a minor. "My friend brought me to Career Night—he and everyone there made me feel very welcome to the English community, even when I was nervous that, as a non-major, I wouldn't quite

fit in." Those nerves did not just suddenly subside for her. It took weeks of convincing her to attend, and at the event she speculated that she might not fit the narrative she had crafted about what English students were supposed to be like. Afterwards, I checked in with Kerry to see if any anxiety lingered about joining the community. "I don't think I have many [concerns] anymore." Obviously reassured (she characterized the event as "eye opening"), Kerry said she plans to join several writing-focused groups over her next couple of years at Merrimack, such as Writers' Circle and *The Merrimack Review*. Ashley



Students, staff, and faculty mix and mingle at the annual English Career Night

provided a longer view. "My favorite part is, honestly, seeing everyone who comes back," she observed. "A lot of the graduates don't have the time when I do, so I don't get to see these individuals as often as I'd like...so it's always something to look forward to. This year it seemed like there were a lot more people I know directly." She spent the night with friends, both new and old, including Brianna Wickard, who returned to Merrimack after two years studying in France, Bridget Kennedy and Kiera Dugan, two of last year's graduating seniors who spent many hours collaborating at the Merrimack Writers House with Ashley. Regretting that it was hard for all of them to find time to spend together beyond the reach of responsibility and busy schedules, Ashley wondered whether or not it would be possible to

extend the Career Night event to accommodate more time for catching up. “I’d also appreciate a longer Career Night; maybe earlier in the evening. That way, you have the chance to eat, mingle, drink, and then we have the panel,” she said. She indicated that she would also like the panelists to have more time to talk about the specifics of their jobs in greater detail. “We don’t get the time we really want to discuss the topics that really matter. I understand why it’s important that they explain their jobs, how [the major] applies, and then we ask questions, but what about examples?” She wishes “they [could] show me the processes they go through on a day-to-day. This way, I [would] have a greater grasp of how exactly my major is used and how I might be challenged.” Overall, Ashley believes the panelists could offer more insight if they had more time, though she understands that all of them are traveling to campus after putting in full days at work. Our alumni consistently emphasize that their training outfitted them with language and analytical skills that separate them from the pack; however, the understandably compressed nature of the Career Night event doesn’t afford time to get into detail about the nuances of what they learned as English majors and how that specific



Merrimack English Alumni Speakers Bethanne Cook-Cornell, Rachel MacKelcan, and Dan Sullivan

experience equips them to handle daily professional challenges.

Ashley’s desire for an extended Career Night serves as an indicator of the event’s value. “I think of all the conversations I’ve had,” she began. “Last year I spoke a lot with Dakota about plans for after graduation. He was pretty apprehensive, because he wasn’t entirely certain what he was doing, but we talked

about grad schools and places we were interested in—which had only come up once before.” Her conversation with Dakota exemplifies the way in which Career Night concentrates everyone’s attention on the purposes of the degree program. Ashley’s conversation with Dakota, someone with whom she had spoken many times, was likely one both would have neglected under ordinary circumstances, that is, in the ongoing rush to keep up with and complete course work. Ashley also highlighted a recent conversation she had with Rachel, during which they managed to reconnect and discuss Rachel’s experience searching for ways to balance work and creative writing.

When I asked Rachel what she valued most about Career Night, she said she loved the stories she heard. For her, the most memorable narrative involved an accident that befell Professor Scherwatzky, almost preventing him from serving as Career Night moderator. Rachel recalled, “When ‘Professor Scherwatzky came in with a bandaged hand and a glass of red wine, telling us a heroic story of how he had gotten into a three way battle between himself, his sink and a teacup...I was hooked.’” Throughout our conversation, Rachel was effusive in her fondness for the English community, the curriculum, and its faculty. I asked her if she had ever imagined being a graduating senior one year and then a successfully employed panelist the next: “Amazing. No. Never. . . . I am honestly just overjoyed that I had the forum and the family to share this new part of my story with.” But she didn’t always feel this way. She admits, “[a job] opportunity came to me in April, when I was most insecure about my future and felt like I couldn’t get anything right; but after my interview, and after meeting someone who would become my new roommate, everything fell into place.” Rachel raved about her new job at HealthyCapital and her personal blog, “Awkward & Adulting.” “Between my job and my blog, I couldn’t be happier or more challenged by who I currently am, and what the future will hold,” she said.

Stories of anxiety and success, such as Rachel’s, which form the backbone of the Career Night program, ease the minds of anxious students still here completing degrees. “I think I used to be nervous,” Kerry told me after Career Night, “just because of the usual idea that English majors and minors have a

hard time finding jobs.” However, the panel of employed English graduates instilled in her new faith. “The department is very dedicated to making sure students don’t feel that way, at least with my experience so far,” she continued. “It’s always daunting in college to think about what comes next when you graduate, and to hear all the different success stories is really reassuring.”

But thinking about the future often overshadows current experiences. It seems like Kerry, Ashley, and Rachel all had many things to say about the fears accompanying an English career path. However, none of them placed much focus on specific moments of joy on their way to degree completion. Those of us in the English program, students and professors, put our faith in one another as well as ourselves. We navigate a road often ridiculed, and on our merits we barter for success in the world. Query an English student you know; find out how diligently they work at internships, classes, seeing faculty during office hours, and more. I consider myself an involved student, and I understand Ashley’s desire to know more about how Merrimack paid off for those who navigated their way through the program. For all the effort we expended building our resumes, undergraduates understandably yearn for certainty. Kerry and Ashley each expressed apprehension about their futures, but also mentioned the connections they made at Career Night. Those connections speak to the heart of why English Career Night exists. This event

The first time I attended the event, I hid in the corner making small-talk with a handful of other students until some of my bolder friends brought me around to meet people.

introduced me to Professor Vatalaro, with whom I would take a class the following semester, subsequently joining *The Broadsheet* at his request. It also brought me closer to some of the frequenters of the Writers House, the place at which I would later intern, slam in, and virtually live in. Both these small encounters grew into much larger opportunities, one that likely existed for alumni in the past, shaping their experience and inevitably leading them into successful futures. This year, I got to chat with professors Pottroff and Scherwatzky, and getting to

know them better only made me feel more connected to the department. Witnessing the ease with which alumni interacted with them, as though no time had passed, inspired in me a feeling of fellowship. And, of course, there was some magic in hearing alumni of years past fondly recalling Professor Scherwatzky’s legendary *Paradise Lost* course.

No alumnus comes to Career Night unequipped, it seems. Any alum I spoke with offered course recommendations, funny anecdotes about the department, and well wishes for the future. Many asked about the new professors, new classes, and some wondered if Sullivan Hall, home of the department, had ever been renovated since their graduation. Each person, whether on the panel or mingling in the crowd, served as a wellspring of equal parts sage wisdom and intrigue. However, I do agree with Ashley that I wish there could be more time. The program permitted the panel time to address questions, but with so many people to see and speak with, it felt somewhat hectic. Everyone had some unique thought or memory to contribute, but I didn’t find everyone accessible in the busy space; after the night ended, I experienced some regrets about not speaking with the older alumni, whom I was certain had even richer stories to tell.

Overall, I understand why English Career Night seems intimidating at first. My first time I hid in the corner making small-talk with a handful of other students, until some of my bolder friends brought me around to meet people. But taking that initial step led to a running start and, like many English students before me, I outran the nerves of declaring the English major. At its core, Career Night revolves around a love for the written word, and how alumni and students alike express that love in their work. This year, I found myself able to engage in that passion with others—because, despite the impressive diversity of personalities and careers in the room, we all shared it as our common ground. I became one of the bolder participants, and in that, came into my own as a full participant in the community we share. Despite nervousness and improvements to be made, I find it undeniable that Career Night condenses generations of camaraderie and belonging into one inspiring event. It may sound tight-knit, or even occult, but what else could be expected from a group of writers? Without it, I suspect many of us would not appreciate fully the deep roots that have sprouted for so many moving through this English program.

A PERSONAL REVALUATION OF THE STRENGTHS OF AN ENGLISH DEGREE

BY CASSI KACOYANNAKIS

Children dream about what they wish to become when they grow up. I always wanted to become a teacher. A teaching career, similar to careers in astronautics or firefighting, remains a conventional aspiration; however, for me there was something about teaching that seemed special. Having the opportunity and the ability to enrich a child's mind, even at the elementary school level, seemed so rewarding. Specifically, I wanted the chance to help young children learn how to read. Reading has always represented for me the doorway to whole new worlds. Readers can introduce themselves into fantasy worlds, such as Hogwarts from the *Harry Potter* series and Panem from *The Hunger Games* and, reciprocally, books open young eyes to new ideas, wonders, perspectives and cultivates empathy. Furthermore, reading builds confidence, provides a sense of accomplishment, and confers admission to a larger community. I can't begin to explain how rewarding it has been to finish reading a book and know that I read *Game of Thrones* all by myself and had the knowledge to then discuss the narrative thoughtfully with other readers.

That being said, I was not always as passionate about embracing the responsibility of *teaching* literature and with it all the complex nuances involving interpretation. For a while during my late teens I experienced an odd period in which I contemplated becoming a lawyer. Someone reminded me that I would have to know every law like the back of my hand and that prospect failed to inspire me. The prospect of being able to quote John Keats whenever I pleased, however, elated me. When I transferred to

Merrimack for my sophomore year of college, I declared a double major in Education and English, because I was operating under the assumption that the two fields were attached at the hip.

The 2018 English Department Career Night confirmed for me that this was not the case. English majors don't necessarily have to become educators and it appears that new employment prospects are emerg-



English Department Chair Steven Scherwatzky addresses the crowd

ing every day. Many of those opportunities involve using creative and analytical writing skills and applying a keen awareness of audience to support commercial and non-profit ventures. Merrimack English alumna Jennifer Hanselman must have one of the most attractive careers I've ever heard about. She spoke about her responsibilities working for Amazon's Alexa project. Her duties include conceptualizing myriad ways a

human might ask the Alexa device to provide a weather forecast. Jennifer understood that Alexa would need to be programmed to respond to countless versions of "what will the weather be like today." The project engineers with whom she was serving did not. She had to educate them. Amazon promoted her this year. Jennifer now oversees those who perform her old job. Alumnus Josh Roberts also has an incredible job. He told the story of how he moved from an unpaid internship working for Marvel comics immediately following graduation to serve eventually as managing editor of an online travel site. Attractive career stories such as these got me thinking: Former teaching majors attended

Career Night, but not nearly as many as I initially anticipated. Three alumni in attendance this year talked about pursuing a teaching career. Two of them were still teaching, but only one, panelist Dan Sullivan, knew early on that he was cut out to be an educator. He piloted his career choice by substitute teaching and recommended that anyone troubled by doubts about whether or not teaching would be the right fit should consider applying for work as a substitute. This strategy puts aspiring teachers into a classroom without the pressure of making a lifelong commitment, he said. Substituting proved to Dan that the career choice he dreamed about earlier in his life was the correct choice. Everything worked out great; he found his dream job right out of college. Others who shared their stories, however, ended up following different career paths.

Caitlin Saad, for example, said she remained confident in her decision to pursue a teaching career...until she found herself in a classroom, the result of a practicum required by the Merrimack Education Program.. Saad knew almost instantly that she lacked the “teacher gene” or “knack” to manage and instruct a classroom full of young people. Her advisor was supportive and agreed that, if teaching proved an ill fit for her, she should consider alternatives. Her subsequent career opportunity surprised her, though. Caitlin’s current job involves processing lengthy documents consisting of sometimes difficult, technical material and creating from that material instruction manuals that can instruct others. Similar to what Jenn Hanselman began doing at Amazon, Caitlin relies on her ability to understand and process

English majors don’t necessarily have to become educators; new employment prospects are emerging every day.

her material and then to conceive of the best ways to deliver that material to an audience.

Similar to Dan Sullivan, panelist Bethanne Cook-Cornell also became an instructor; however, like Caitlin it came to her as a surprise career opportunity. Years ago she enrolled at Merrimack on a basketball scholarship and academics were not initially a priority for her. Eventually she took interest in English courses and considered applying to graduate pro-

grams for a Masters degree in English, until Professor Scherwitzky encouraged her to reconsider, observing that a career in teaching English might not suit her as well as she anticipated. Nevertheless, she ended up tutoring athletes, working at the China Blossom restaurant, and eventually earning Masters degrees in English and American Studies. The Wentworth Institute of Technology hired her to work in its Writing Center and subsequently hired her to teach language and literature and she now holds the rank

Jennifer understood that Alexa would need to be programmed to respond to countless versions of “what will the weather be like today.” The project engineers with whom she was serving did not. Jennifer had to educate them. Amazon promoted her this year.

of associate professor.

In addition to the panel, about 20 Merrimack English alumni participated from the audience. Each of them delivered a brief career story and I realized that there seemed to be countless career opportunities for an English major. Panelist Rachel MacKelcan, who graduated last May, landed a job writing articles for HealthyCapital, an online platform dedicated to wellness at which she interned prior to her senior year. In addition to composing articles on topics such as the benefits of goat yoga (her favorite, she said), she also analyzes health statistics from a variety of sources, and prepares briefs for her boss.

Career Night narratives encouraged me to reevaluate my career aspirations. If I decided that teaching would not be the best fit for me at this point, other opportunities would emerge. English courses introduce students to authors, literary works and literary periods. However, because they teach students to approach material from a variety of critical approaches, making students mindful of the complexities involved in all interpretation, courses in Milton, British Romanticism, or film outfit students to perform the complex kinds of analysis and processing required by so many occupations. Though teaching might still be my first and best option, my degree will have prepared me to do so much more.

HOW CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMING HAVE BUILT COMMUNITY IN THE ENGLISH PROGRAM

BY CALVIN EVANS

Going into career night, I was not sure what to expect. Despite being in my third year at Merrimack, and my fourth official semester as an English major, I had never attended the event prior to this year. My first year, I entered the college as an Early Childhood Education major. I became an English major in my second semester after extremely positive experiences in classes with Professors Duffy-Comparone and Plasse. After meeting with department chair Professor Scherwatzky about the possibility of becoming a major, I felt an instant connection to the department. Professor Scherwatzky's enthusiasm was palpable and I knew right away that I made the right choice. However, by the time Career Night rolled around my second year at Merrimack, I was still trying to find my footing. As a commuter who worked part time off campus, it was hard for me to find opportunities to settle down and really interact with other students. Luckily, in my third year, I found my place on campus and within the English program, alongside many English majors I'm proud to call my friends and professors whom I regard as mentors. But still, the experience of Career Night would be a new one to me.

Even when I had been out on the margins, I had heard the Career Night tales, especially the legendary story about Professor Scherwatzky cutting open his hand on a tea cup the day of Career Night. But in typical fashion, he insisted on moderating the event as he always had, painkillers, bandages, and all. Not all of the stories were so dramatic. Mostly I heard that it was a great time to see professors outside of the classroom. For as much as Career Night is meant to be about networking and the future, it also represents a chance to socialize and strengthen bonds that continue to form within the department. I witnessed the result of that formation when I heard stories told by many former students. Recent graduates, such as

Bridget, Kiera, and Jacques, returned not only to share how they were doing in their post-graduate life, but to visit with friends who are still at Merrimack and talk with professors. Even older alumni who had graduated more than ten years ago were delighted to talk about their own experience, how much has changed at Merrimack since their time here and how much has stayed the same. I recognized I was part of a community.

Though Career Night feels a bit like a family reunion, community did not form overnight. While faculty and courses bring students together, the Writers House and its inviting co-curricular programming cement connections among students and faculty. The Writers House provides a physical space specifically designed and designated for English majors to engage in creative work, individually and in groups. Perhaps in the same way that common time spent in a gym brings the athletes on campus closer to their teammates, time spent together at the Writers House helps to create lasting friendships among writers. It did for me. The Writers House is where I found my place on campus and where I grew closer to other English majors. Programs such as the Writers' Circle and Drop-In Writing allow students to compose and share pieces that they are working on, either from a prompt or as part of a personal project. Writers House Director Andrea Cohen and Associate Director Danielle Jones-Pruett have made it a safe space to supply feedback and encouragement. The Writers House also creates great opportunities to see professors outside of the classroom or their offices. Whenever a guest writer comes to speak at the Writers House, it's a sure bet that at least one, if not more, English professor (s) will attend, learning and asking questions just like their students.

I can even pinpoint the first night I felt like a part of the Writers House community. A few days earlier, I had been doing some classwork at the tables when Danielle came out of her office. She asked me if I wanted to go to the Night of Inspired Leaders, a poetry reading by leaders in business, politics, and entertainment in Boston, with her and some other students. I accepted her offer, but not without trepidation. The afternoon of the event, we took the train into Boston and from there took the T to the theater where the reading was held. I mostly hung back, listening and watching others interact, still unsure where I fit in. But before the event, we got dinner together. Sitting together at a table full of food makes it hard not to join in on the conversation and jokes. It was relaxing. At the event, we heard from amazing speakers, such as now-newly-elected Representative Ayanna Pressley, former UN Ambassador Samantha Powers, and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey. Something happened at that event. On the journey back to campus, I was joining in the conversations, laughing at almost going the wrong way on the Green Line with everybody else. But more than that, I *wanted* to participate. These people who had been my classmates just 12 hours earlier had become my friends.

Professor Scherwatzky's enthusiasm was palpable and I knew right away that I made the right choice.

I think it is also important to underscore just how much of an impact the professors of the English department have had on creating the community at Merrimack. Department mainstays like Professors Vatalaro and Scherwatzky featured prominently in many stories from alumni across the years at Career Night. Many a memory began with “I had no idea what to do after I graduated, so I went to see Professor Scherwatzky for help.” Even the legacy of professors who have retired, such as Dr. Branca, lives on through events like Career Night, with alumni talking about how much of an impact she had on

their college experience. Even new professors are making an impact with the new classes they are teaching, such as Professor Pottroff's American Witches: in Salem and on Screen and Professor Vogel's Science Fiction Cinema. When I was talking with 2018 graduate Dakota Durbin about my upcoming schedule, which includes Professor Pottroff's new class, he expressed regret that he never had the opportunity to take it himself. And beyond the prac-



tical and the academic, my personal experience with the English professors has been extremely positive. If I have a problem, regardless of what it is, they are always available to listen and help me work it out. It's this approachability that leaves a lasting impression and why alumni are so excited to come back and not only talk about their experiences, but to listen to ours. Exciting courses offered by faculty make the English department feel alive. The English major requires six 3000-level or higher English courses. If we all took the same six courses, we would all roughly know what our experience would be like before we even have it. By adding more courses, we can have conversations like the one Dakota and I had, in which we were still talking about the department even after one of us had graduated. It even increases the appeal of older courses, such as Professor Scherwatzky's Milton and the Culture of Revolution, because his passion for *Paradise Lost* has become part of the folklore of the English department. It goes from *having* to take the Milton class, to *getting* to take the Milton class.

My personal experience with the English faculty has been extremely positive. I remember one semester during my second year at Merrimack I was going through a rough time and my grades were slipping. At the time, I was taking Creative Writing: Fiction with Professor Duffy-Comparone and Contemporary American Literature with Professor Vogel. For both classes, I felt comfortable going to speak to them and explaining my situation. They both listened and worked with me to come up with a solution to turn in my missing work. At my previous college, this was not something I felt comfortable doing. Professors there had too many students and too little time. It's not like that at Merrimack. This approachability is what leaves a lasting impression and why alumni are so excited to come back and not only talk about their experience, but to hear about ours.



Liberal Arts Dean Sean Condon chats with English alums



Bethanne Cook-Cornell converses with English professors Emma Duffy-Comparone and Christy Pottroff

The 2018 Annual Merrimack English Career Night hosted students, English Department faculty, O'Brien Center staff, higher administrators and alumni



Coming in Our Next Issue

**Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Parts One and Two* have become Broadway hits. By the third week of previews, the production became the highest grossing show on Broadway. Producers based the show on the seven-book Harry Potter series and J.K. Rowling has collaborated in the production. The performance provides a sequel to the Rowling series. My article will perform a review of the Broadway production. [Cassi Kacoyanakis](#)

*In the summer of 2018, two movies featuring high school-aged gay protagonists came out: *Love, Simon* and *Alex Strangelove*. For my next article, I will be writing a comparative review of the two films through the lens of representation. Movies with a gay lead are rare, but they are becoming more popular, as their contemporaneous releases show. Both films tackle what it means to be gay in high school in different ways, and I aim to highlight what works and what doesn't in both movies. [Calvin Evans](#)

*For the past several years we have seen Hollywood investing more and more in big-budget 'safe' projects—remakes, sequels, prequels, and adaptations. To me, these trends culminate with the upcoming films *Detective Pikachu* and *Aquaman*: two recognizable properties, but difficult to adapt for the cinema. While this profit-focused environment may not always produce the most creative films, it most certainly can create entertainingly bad movies, and I cannot wait to see and review both *Detective Pikachu* and *Aquaman*. [Emma Leaden](#)

*My feature will recap season seven of *Game of Thrones* and deliver a preview of season eight, incorporating statistics involving the show's ratings, a summary of reviews, and reactions from series followers. I am looking forward to delivering my own prediction regarding who will sit on the iron throne and rightfully rule the Seven Kingdoms. [Kristin Cole](#)

*In October of 2017, Button Poetry's YouTube channel released "To the Men Catcalling My Girlfriend as I'm Walking Beside Her" by Andrea Gibson. As a new poetry fan, I found myself immediately enamored with Gibson's sharp delivery, biting wit, and acerbic admissions; these qualities carried through to her 2018 poetry book *Take Me With You*, in which she takes on themes of love, spite—and surprisingly—forgiveness through healing. In my article, I'll be discussing these themes as they find expression throughout the book, poems of note, and the ways Gibson inspires my own work. [Dan Roussel](#)



English Department News and Notes

***Professors Joseph Vogel and Emma Duffy-Comparone** will be speaking at the Merrimack College Writers House on February 26, 2019 at 4 pm. Professor Vogel will speak on topics he addresses in his book *The Man and the Music: The Creative Life of Michael Jackson* and Professor Duffy-Comparone will read from her original short story “The Package Deal.”

***Professor Marie Plasse** will be delivering a paper entitled “‘Be Yourself:’ Staging Masculinity in Michael Jackson’s *The Way You Make Me Feel*” at the April 2019 meeting of the Popular Culture Association of America in Washington, D. C. The paper represents part of Professor Plasse’s spring 2019 sabbatical research on Michael Jackson and performances of masculinity.

*Earlier this month, *Early American Studies* published **Professor Christy Pottroff’s** article “Circulations” in a special keywords issue of the journal. The goal of the issue is to give a conceptual genealogy of “material texts” scholarship.

***Professor Steven Scherwitzky’s** article “Samuel Johnson and Autobiography: Reflection, Ambivalence, and ‘Split Intentionality’” has been published in a new collection devoted to the work of Samuel Johnson called *New Essays on Samuel Johnson: Revaluation*. Ed. Tony Lee (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2018). Professor Scherwitzky’s article appears as Chapter Nine in the collection.

Editor’s Note: “Department News and Notes” debuts with this current issue of *The Broadsheet* and will continue in all subsequent issues. The purpose of the column is to highlight noteworthy activities and achievements by current and former full-time English Department faculty, current Merrimack English majors and minors, and English Alumni. If readers would like to report an accomplishment, send a brief note by way of email to Professor Vatalaro.



