

TEXAS A&M ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT

**THE
ENGLISH
AGGIE**

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The Many Paths of an English Degree

Kayla Wilford '21 on Advising, Teaching, Theater Production, and Free-lance Editing



Kayla Wilford graduated from Texas A&M University in December 2021 with a degree in English. Since then, she has been exploring the many avenues available to her as a recent graduate, including working in education, theater, freelance editing, and college advising. While Kayla was proud to graduate, she explained that it was also “bittersweet...because College Station became [her] home away from home very quickly.” Leaving the familiarity of campus, her college friends, and A&M’s supportive professors was a

difficult but necessary step. She appreciates Dr. Elizabeth Robinson in particular, as she “loved learning from her and being able to ask for help with post school questions I had or just advice in general.” Armed with knowledge and access to helpful resources, Kayla went forward into the world feeling completely prepared for whatever would come next.

“**College Station became my home away from home very quickly.**”

After graduation, Kayla first began working as a substitute teacher in Fort Worth, Texas. She discovered what it was like to be on the other side of the classroom as a teacher in her own high school. Substitute teaching during a teacher shortage was stressful, and Kayla found herself pulled in many different directions as the school attempted to cover all of the openings with not enough substitutes. While she does not foresee a career in education in her future, her experiences as a substitute teacher deepened her gratitude and appreciation for all educators. She urges students to “please give your educators so much praise and love! They have gone through so much, so please give them a gift card to their favorite coffee shop or tell them you appreciate them and all they are doing. It’s rough right now in education.” While she is not pursuing a career in teaching, Kayla will take gratitude for educators, experience working with students, and time management skills with her into her future career.

While discovering what the right profession for her is, Kayla

explored theater and freelance editing. She has been passionate about theater from a young age and frequently attended plays and musicals with her grandparents as a child. In high school, she participated in school theater productions. Now, she continues to express her passion for theater by writing plays and TV scripts “in hopes that one day [she] will see [her] play on Broadway or a TV show.” While pursuing a job, she has maintained and intends to continue to maintain her passion for theater.

Freelance editing was not part of Kayla’s plan. She posted on Facebook that she was available to help friends and family with writing, but she did not expect the high number of responses that she received. Due to high demand, she ultimately decided to begin charging for her writing and editing services. Kayla’s experience with freelance work made her more aware of the need for capable writers. She encourages graduating students to research companies that interest them on LinkedIn because “most jobs need an English major because they need someone to write for them.” Whatever field students may be interested in, all fields benefit from strong writing and communication skills. Kayla also recommends HireAggies to new graduates and to never turn down an opportunity to network.

“Most jobs need an English major because they need someone to write for them.”

Kayla currently works as a college advisor for high school students. “I went into college advising because I wanted to help students and be there to encourage them,” she explained. “If one student knows I support them and I am in their corner, I have done my job.” Kayla enjoys her work, and she hopes future graduates also find careers that bring them a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. She encourages students when applying for jobs to “think about [themselves] and how [they] will feel in that environment.... It makes a difference if you are at a place you actually enjoy working.”

“I went into college advising because I wanted to help students and be there to encourage them. If one student knows I support them and I am in their corner, I have done my job.”

One thing to learn from Kayla’s story is to not be afraid to

explore different options. While substitute teaching, she learned that teaching high school was not the right career for her; however, she discovered a different way to work with students through college advising. English majors work in education and law and business and film and so many other fields. Students should work to be aware of their options so you never limit themselves.

Consider starting by looking into the resources linked in the box below.

Are you wondering what paths are available to you as an English major or minor?

Visit the Texas A&M University Career Center online at <https://careercenter.tamu.edu/> for online resources, including information on how to build a resume and cover letter, career readiness workshops, and updates on future career fairs.

The next Arts and Sciences Career Fair will take place on January 31. Mark your calendar and be prepared to learn about career opportunities and meet potential employers.

Have you graduated and don’t know where to start your search for your next step?

HireAggies is an exclusive benefit to former students who have an AggieNetwork.com account, an A&M issued degree, and who aren’t current enrolled. It is a great way to connect graduates with employers.

Learn more at <https://www.aggienetwork.com/careers/hireaggies.aspx>.

Are you interested in applying to a graduate program?

Learn more at <https://grad.tamu.edu/prospective-students>.

Creative Writing is for Everyone

Q&A with Engineer Dillan Gay '24 on the Creative Writing Techniques Club

Q: It's interesting that an engineer is leading a creative writing club. What made you decide to do so, and where does your interest in creative writing come from?

Dillan: A creative thought process is essential to being a good engineer. I have had to reinvent how I approach the engineering design process through my mechanical engineering journey at Texas A&M countless times. And I wouldn't have been able to do that as effectively without a proper creative outlet in which I could familiarize myself with how I ideate and better my ideas. My passion for writing in particular started when I joined my high school writing club and eventually became the president of it. When I joined the Creative Writing Techniques Club (CWTC) at Texas A&M my freshman year in September 2020, there wasn't much else to do other than stress about catching COVID or not getting through ETAM, so I doubled down on my passion for writing and stuck to writing a high quantity of different short stories that kept me sane and emotionally engaged with school in a positive way. Joining RoboMasters my freshman year, a competitive robotics team that I am now also an officer for, also helped me engage in my passions, engineering and being creative with the engineering design process, in a healthy way outside of the virtual classroom.

Q: How does your background influence your writing? Does it give you a different perspective on your peers' writing?

Dillan: What I've noticed being in a creative writing peer group for so many years, is that everyone's perspective is

very distinct. It's rare that someone points out the same thing during a constructive critique, and there is no opinion that is "above" anyone else's. In fact, half if not more of our members have historically been STEM majors—their need to express themselves more creatively outside of an elective or two is exceedingly high—and that incentivizes them to interact respectfully with those like-minded, creative students they otherwise would've never met. These are the people who can help them the most in understanding themselves and their voice as a writer. One of my favorite activities at A&M is talking to and learning from these other students whose studies and backgrounds are wildly different from my own, it is this conversation that is crucial towards learning and writing about a wider range of perspectives in society.

Q: What genres do you enjoy writing?

Dillan: I enjoy writing short stories and poems primarily, but I've dabbled in other mediums that the other members of the CWTC are really good at such as screenwriting, novels, nonfiction storytelling, etc.

Q: What's your best writing advice?

Dillan: To simply write. This isn't really my advice since it's said a lot, but it is the best writing advice I could give because of how true it is. Many people are great writers or storytellers, but never learn until very late in life. Practicing how to write from a perspective, learning which perspectives and stories you're best at telling, and controlling language to in-



Pictured above: Members of the CWTC gathered in Evans Annex 239 for their weekly meeting. Join them Wednesday nights from 7:30-8:30, and follow their Instagram account @cwrctctamu for updates on meetings and other events.

fluence and understand how your audience reads it are all skills that transcend writing, and train someone to become a better human being.

Q: Are there any ways that creative writing helps you in your STEM courses?

Dillan: Thinking outside the box is not a skill that is exclusively learned under a creative influence like drawing, writing, sculpting, etc., but it helps. My admissions essay to A&M was, in hindsight, a cringey but endearing and honest account called “Writin’ Texas Aggie,” that details how passionate I was, and still am, about balancing my hobby of story telling with building and mechanical engineering. There is a very similar art to picking apart sentence structure and engineering the English language to form a captivating narrative as much as there is towards designing mechatronic systems and finding the perfect angle to solve that really hard engineering problem set.

Q: What are your career goals? How do you plan to continue your interest in creative writing after your time at Texas A&M University?

Dillan: By the time I graduate or maybe shortly after I graduate Texas A&M, I plan to complete a compendium of my best short stories that I have written during my time as an undergraduate here. I also have many other writing project ideas in the works, but who knows where they will go in the near future. My primary focus is to use the skills I’m learning outside of the classroom to my advantage so that I may do the very best I can in class, in RoboMasters, and eventually in my first job as a professional mechanical en-

gineer. Whether that be in continuing robotics, aerospace, or simple product design, the A&M mechanical engineering program, combined with my extracurricular pursuits, allow me to feel confident and comfortable to work for any type of industry.

Q: What is a typical meeting of the Creative Writing Techniques Club like?

Dillan: I always start with inviting anyone to share any work they want feedback on by reading it aloud or sharing online with us all for us to read silently. After a healthy amount of constructive criticism, we move on towards tackling a writing trope or concept. This could be anything from world building, character building, dialogue, and even an open discussion on how to write an anti-hero or a melody. A lot of discussion happens about a wide range of topics, and we do it all in sixty minutes. We do derail sometimes, but that happens when the discussion is as friendly, insightful, and inviting as ours can be on a typical week.

Q: What are the requirements to join the Creative Writing Techniques Club?

Dillan: Hardly any. Beyond the standard that we all make sure we’re passing our classes and committing to the conversation in a healthy and helpful way, I hold no bar for entry to the CWTC and keep it strictly inclusive. All creatives are welcome, from amateur artists to published novelists, from freshman to PhD students, as long as you are an Aggie that wants to engage with creative writing, you are welcome. Nobody is even required to attend meetings; I am happy to have someone no matter how frequently they come to Evans on those cool Wednesday nights.

National Novel Writing Month

What is NanoWriMo, and How Can I Participate In It?

What is NanoWriMo?

November is National Novel Writing Month, and since 1999, writers have entered NaNoWriMo. NaNoWriMo is challenge to write 50,000 words during the month of November. Signing up is free and gives you access to a global writing community and other resources.

Learn more at <https://nanowrimo.org/>

Does Anyone Actually Publish Novels Written During NanoWriMo?

Actually, yes! Some titles that you might recognize, like Marissa Meyer's *Cinder* and Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus*, were once NaNoWriMo projects!

How Can I Participate?

You can sign up with just an email address, username, and password. Once you have signed up, you can announce your project and start writing!

If you are deterred from starting later into the month, know that you have the option of setting your own writing goals rather than adhering to the traditional 50,000 words.

What Resources are Available to Me?

NaNoWriMo also gives you access to so many free resources, including writing prep handbooks, practice exercises, editing and publishing resources, and pep talks from successful authors.

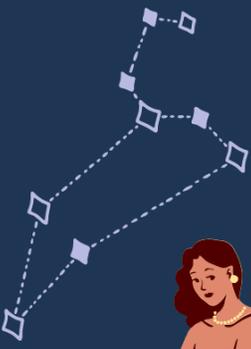
There are also in-person events, including an on-campus write-in every Tuesday of November in Evans Library! Join your fellow writers in Evans Library Room 210 from 6:30-9:00 pm and work on completing your writing goal.

In What Other Ways Can I Celebrate National Novel Writing Month?

Buy books, read books, and support your favorite authors!

Where Else Can I Find Writing Support?

There are various creative writing clubs on campus, including the Creative Writing Techniques Club (more information on pages 4-5) and the Creative Writers of Aggeland. These clubs are a great way to find a writing community and share your work with fellow creatives.



Science Fiction & Fantasy Contest

Accepts all forms of speculative fiction from science fiction to fantasy and more!

Winners will have the chance to perform their pieces at a public reading and win cash prizes!

You must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student at Texas A&M to submit. The word count is limited to 3000 words.

Submission link:

<https://forms.gle/4XSUcPqyLjFFx-kaJ6>

Submission deadline: Feb. 13, 2023

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