More Than Just Words: A Career with an English Degree

“So you want to become a teacher?”

That was the question that was asked of me all the time my senior year of high school when I told people that I planned on majoring in English. I would bite my tongue and politely reply, “Maybe, but you can do more with English than become a teacher. I want to be an editor.”

They would pause and then say, “Oh, that’s nice. You know it’s just that you won’t make a lot of money with a degree in English.” They would then notice my face start to fall and quickly say, “But it’s all about what makes you happy.” From their tone of voice, I could tell that even they didn’t believe what they were saying.

I graduated with my B.A. in English with a minor in journalism from Texas State University in 2013. From my time at Texas State, I learned, what I kind of already knew, that you can do so many things with English than just teach. I worked as a tutor at the Writing Center, where yes I helped students with their writing, but I also gained organizational, managerial, leadership, and customer service skills from that experience. I was put in charge of the Writing Center schedule, I led the GSP (grammar, spelling, punctuation) Review Sessions, I was put in charge of training new tutors, and throughout my shifts I worked as receptionist.

So yes, I was initially hired for my skills with writing, but I was given additional responsibilities because of what writing had taught me. You cannot simply dump words onto a piece of paper and call it an essay; you have to organize your thoughts and ideas and structure them into one cohesive thought. I was constantly having to organize my thoughts and ideas, so I was able to transfer that skill to organizing thirty tutors’ different class schedules and availability into one cohesive schedule that would work for everybody.

Around the same time I was put in charge of the Writing Center schedule, I was also asked to lead the GSP Review Sessions. My director’s reason for doing so was two-fold: I understood the rules of grammar well, and also I had demonstrated to her that I was capable of handling additional responsibilities given to me, like the Writing Center schedule. I had the knowledge necessary, but more importantly, I rose to the occasion and allowed my writing skills to be an asset, not limit myself to one skill set.

I recently graduated with my M.A. in British Literature from Texas Tech University. In addition to working as an academic advisor, I also teach English 1301 and 1302. I sometimes think about the questions I was asked as an 18 year old. In my current life status, yes I am a teacher, but I am also so much more than that. I am a friend, a counselor, a motivator, an encourager, and a life-long learner. Those people from my life eight years ago may have been right that as an English major I am not rich by monetary means, but I am rich in happiness and contentedness because I am using my knowledge and talents to help others discover and achieve their dreams and know that a major doesn’t limit you to one career path; a major unlocks doors to countless opportunities and careers, if you let it.