

Callie Compton, MA Rhetoric and Composition, 2016

By Melissa J. Rush

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“My hope is not a job title but a state: mentally stimulated and financially stable. Technical editing and writing provides that. I’m happy to continue along this track as long as I’m able to grow, advance, and build a long-term foundation for a well-rounded life.”

Callie Compton graduated with her MA in Rhetoric and Composition in 2016 and was given the award Outstanding Graduate Student for the 2015-2016 academic year. Her choice of Western Kentucky University for her MA came from the reputation of the program, as well as with the economic value and location. From her time as a graduate student she discovered the important lesson that while “students can drift; instructors sink or swim.”

Compton’s advanced degree in English is something she uses daily in her career at [Data Concepts, Inc.](#), where she works with other businesses to create document designs suitable for the internet, instead of traditional paper signage. Each component of her work entails reading, writing, and communicating. “I create how-to documents, marketing materials, and templates. I design diagrams and brochures. I research and organize info about competitors and clients. I teach myself how to use unfamiliar programs and then troubleshoot the results. Throughout these tasks, I collaborate with my coworkers: computer engineers, programmers, sales reps, and graphic designers.”

She has found that a degree in English can translate into almost any field in the real world. English majors become proficient, often exceptional, writers. The ability to think critically and view a concept from multiple points also comes with an extensive curriculum of English classes. “Without an English degree, I’d say only that I’m a member of several book clubs and occasionally draft stories in my spare time. With an English degree, I can tell you my education infuses the most mundane aspects of existence with significance and possibility, and in that sense, I use it constantly. This degree is a lens—a means of operating on a richer plane—not just a means to an end.”

All of Compton's professors at WKU have made a long-lasting impact on her life. She noted how she considers Dr. Jane Fife as her guru, while Dr. Fabian Alvarez kept her sanity in check while in graduate school. Other influences came from Dr. Sandy Hughes with an enchantment with whales and tales, from Dr. Lloyd Davies with an introduction to Satan, and from Dr. Angela Jones came an approach to rewire her job search. Dr. Deborah Logan took Compton on a literary journey through the British Empire and Dr. David LeNoir managed to surprise her with his dry wit. Compton also recognized Dr. Peggy Otto as her summer inspiration, Dr. Jeffery Rice showed her how to strengthen her arguments, and Dr. Wes Berry "fed me a damn good cheeseburger."

For current and future English majors, Compton gave two sets of advice. The more succinct list was to "Cancel your Netflix account. Sleep. Visit the [Writing Center](#) (Cherry 123)." Her longer version included getting out of the usual comfort zone most students fall into. "Breaking news: Cherry Hall wasn't my only home (gasp!). I was actually in a three-way with the English department, the music department, and THE MEDIA. I played bassoon with the symphony and wind ensemble and edited copy for the [College Heights Herald](#). In all seriousness, English folks, explore opportunities in additional departments. Your body will protest trips over the Hill, but your resume will thank you."

