

## Kellie McDermott, BA English Professional Writing, 2016

By Lauren Groves, Page Harrison, and Anna LaMure

### Technical Writer, Piramal Pharma Solutions

*"You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor." – Aristotle*



Kellie McDermott is a 2016 WKU Department of English graduate. She earned a BA in English with a concentration in professional writing and a minor in sociology. At WKU, McDermott prepared herself for the work field by interning with the [Society for Values in Higher Education](#), taking courses from multiple areas within the department, networking with professors, and writing in her spare time. She was also a finalist in the [Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing](#) contest. One reason McDermott loved being part of the Department of English is its diversity. She explains, "I changed my major and minor several times but always kept it within the English major...I think every class led me to where I am today...I would not be where I am today without every part of my past experience."

McDermott was offered a job one week before graduation and began work the following week. She works at [Piramal Pharma Solutions](#), a Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO) in Lexington, Kentucky. She says, "We make mostly chemotherapy drugs and drugs for rare children's diseases. I feel like I make a difference on a daily basis."

As the company's only technical writer, McDermott is responsible for a wide array of duties, including updating the company's documents; cross-checking every document for consistency; and writing new operating procedures, investigative reports, and customer-specific reports. McDermott says her most important role is to create batch records, "300-500 page documents" that are "essentially the recipe instructions for the manufacturing operators to make a specific drug." If these records are even one decimal off, the company could lose up to \$500,000. McDermott attends weekly client meetings about the progress of the batch record and works closely with engineers, scientists, and

operators to ensure accuracy. While this role might seem stressful to some, McDermott says, “I love my job and it is never the same from day to day.”

In the future, McDermott plans to take more higher education classes because she believes it is important for technical writers to stay up-to-date with current practice. She practices writing on a daily basis, both in her professional life and by writing a memoir in her spare time. As for other future plans, McDermott is excited about flying to Italy for PIRAMAL to learn about a new machine and write its standard operating procedure. She also looks forward to her academic writing being published in an upcoming issue of *Soundings*, the journal of the Society for Values in Higher Education.

On a 2016 visit to her alma mater for the inaugural Professional Writing Alumni Panel, McDermott advised current English students to remember the importance of networking and to never underestimate what powerful resources their professors can be. She also offers, “be versatile . . . an English major opens up so many doors for your future; make sure you explore them.”

