

**SURVEY OF ENGLISH ALUMNI AND ALUMNAE
1999-2007**

Report by

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Introduction

What careers do English majors pursue after graduating from Hartwick College? What do they choose to read? What would they recommend that we faculty do to strengthen the English major? Such are the questions that we asked in a questionnaire developed in 2008 and sent to alumni who graduated between 1999 and 2007. The 10 questions are mostly the same as those in the survey we conducted in 1999 and sent to graduates from the classes of 1989 to 1998. In the later survey, however, we dropped questions about computer training and career portfolios because they were no longer major concerns. In conducting both surveys, we wanted to assess the effectiveness of the major and gather useful information about graduates. Since a report will be sent to everyone who completed a questionnaire, we also will update alumni about the Hartwick College English major.

In 1999 questionnaires were mailed to 289 graduates from 10 classes, whereas in 2008 questionnaires were mailed and e-mailed to 176 graduates from 9 classes. Between 1989 and 2008 the average class size fell 9.3%, going from 26.2 to 19.6. The drop reflects the national decline in numbers of English majors during the past two decades.

Offsetting the smaller pool that we began with, a greater percentage of graduates returned their questionnaires, 24.4% compared to 21.4% in 1998. Yet, smaller class sizes and the inclusion of 9 classes instead of 10 yielded 43 completed surveys, compared to 62 in 1999. Despite the smaller numbers, the diversity of responses appears greater, as this report will show. The higher percentage of responses in 2008 may be partly attributed to greater access to the Internet, for many questionnaires were returned electronically this time. We also made a more concerted effort to reach graduates, telephoning some and sending a second mailing with persuasive hand-written notes by a few department faculty. Yet, many graduates have moved and changed their e-mail addresses so they were impossible to contact.

Although our numbers are smaller than in 1999, the detailed comments that the survey elicited will help us to assess the Hartwick English major. The body of this report presents the questions we asked in 2008, followed by summaries and samplings of the responses.

Question 1: What were your favorite books or authors in college?

The author most frequently selected as the favorite among graduates is William Shakespeare, the choice of 7 respondents. Three authors tie for second place: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Toni Morrison, and Walt Whitman, each garnering 6 votes. In third place is Joyce Carol Oates, favorite of 5 respondents. In the earlier survey the top choices were Toni Morrison with 21 votes and William Shakespeare with 16. A total of 67 authors are named in 2008 and 93 in 1999. The results of both surveys show broad reading tastes among English alumni.

Below are authors and titles named in the 2008 survey, with number of respondents who selected them in parentheses and blanks indicating that only one person chose that work or author.

| | |
|---|--|
| Adams, Douglas, <i>Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i> | Hemingway, Ernest |
| Alexie, Sherman | Homer |
| Anderson, Sherwood (3), <i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> | Houston, Pam, <i>Sight Hound</i> |
| Atwood, Margaret (2) | Ishiguro, Kazuo, <i>Remains of the Day</i> |
| Austen, Jane | Kafka, Franz |
| Beckett, Samuel | Keats, John |
| Benedict, Pickney | Kerouac, Jack |
| Bensen, Robert, <i>Children of the Dragonfly</i> | Kennedy, William, <i>Ironweed</i> |
| Berryman, John | Kidd, Sue Monk, <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> |
| Bierce, Ambrose | Kipling, Rudyard |
| Bishop, Elizabeth | Lessing, Doris |
| Brönte, Charlotte, <i>Jane Eyre</i> | Lewis, Matthew Gregory, <i>The Monk</i> |
| Brönte, Emily, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> | Lofton, Ramona |
| Carver, Raymond (3) | Lowell, Robert, <i>Day By Day</i> |
| Chaucer, Geoffrey | Loy, Mina |
| Cisneros, Sandra (3), <i>The House on Mango Street</i> | Melville, Herman (2) |
| Coleridge, Samuel Taylor | Morrison, Toni (6) |
| Collins, Wilkie | Nabokov, Vladimir, <i>Pale Fire</i> (2) |
| Conrad, Joseph, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> | Oates, Joyce Carol (5) |
| Cornwell, Patricia | O'Connor, Flannery |
| Dickens, Charles, <i>Great Expectations</i> | O'Neill, Eugene |
| Dickinson, Emily (3) | Plath, Sylvia |
| Dillard, Annie | Poe, Edgar Allan |
| Dobyns, Stephen | Pope, Alexander |
| Dorsey, Tim | Pratchett, Terry |
| Erdrich, Louise, <i>The Antelope Wife</i> | Russo, Richard |
| Eliot, T.S. | Salinger, JD, <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> |
| Faulkner, William (3) | Sartre, Jean-Paul |
| Fitzgerald, F. Scott, <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (3) | Sedaris, David |
| Frost, Robert | Sexton, Anne |
| Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> | Shakespeare, William |
| Haggard, H. Rider, <i>She</i> | Shelley, Percy Bysshe |
| Hawthorne, Nathaniel (6) | Silko, Leslie Marmon |
| Heinlein, Robert A., <i>Starship Troopers</i> | Spenser, Edmund |
| Heller, Joseph, <i>Catch 22</i> | Sterne, Laurence, <i>Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman</i> |
| | Stevens, Wallace (2) |
| | Stoker, Bram, <i>Dracula</i> |

Swift, Jonathan
 Swofford, Anthony, *Jarhead*
 Thoreau, Henry David (3), *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* (2)
 Twain, Mark, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
 Vonnegut, Kurt (4), *Slaughterhouse Five*
 Walcott, Derek, *Omeros*
 Welch, James, *Fools Crow*

Wharton, Edith (2)
 Whitman, Walt (6)
 Wilde, Oscar (3), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2)
 Williams, William Carlos (3)
 Woolf, Virginia, *Mrs. Dalloway*
 Wordsworth, William
 Wright, Richard
 Yeats, William Butler

Question 2: What have you read lately?

Responses to this question also are diverse, with 149 titles named.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the most frequently read author, selected by 6 alumni. Tom Wolfe is a close second, since he is named by 5 alumni. These 3 books are each mentioned by 3 individuals: Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. Top choices in the 2000 survey were Toni Morrison's novels (8), Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (5), and Rebecca Wells's *The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood* (5). In 1998 5 authors were each being read by 4 graduates: Jon Krakauer, Wally Lamb, Anais Nin, Joyce Carol Oates, and Leo Tolstoy.

What follows is a list of all the authors and literary works recently read by English majors graduating between 1999 and 2008:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ai | Capote, Truman |
| <i>Dread</i> | <i>In Cold Blood</i> |
| Al-Mohaimeed, Yousef | Carter, Jimmy |
| <i>Wolves of the Crescent Moon</i> | <i>Peace Not Apartheid</i> |
| Alvarez, Julia | Clampitt, Amy |
| <i>In the Time of the Butterflies</i> | <i>The Selected Letters of Amy Clampitt</i> |
| Austen, Jane | Coelho, Paolo |
| <i>Persuasion</i> | <i>The Witch of Portabello Road</i> |
| Ayer, Eleanor H, Heck, Alfons, Waterford, Helen | Collins, Jim |
| <i>Parallel Journeys</i> | <i>Good to Great</i> |
| Babbitt, Natalie | Cunningham, Michael |
| <i>Tuck Everlasting</i> | <i>The Hours</i> |
| Barry, Sebastian | Dawkins, Richard |
| <i>The Steward of Christendom</i> | <i>Ancestor's Tale</i> |
| Benioff, David | DeCandido, Keith R.A. |
| <i>25th Hour</i> | <i>The Art of the Impossible</i> |
| Bosman, Herman Charles | Dresch, Paul |
| <i>Into the Dust</i> | <i>A History of Modern Yemen</i> |
| Brinkley, Alan | <i>Yemen: Tribes, Government, and History</i> |
| <i>Voices of Protest</i> | Edwards, Kim |
| Brown, Dan | <i>The Secrets of a Fire King</i> |
| <i>Angels and Demons</i> | <i>The Memory Keeper's Daughter</i> |
| <i>The DaVinci Code</i> | |
| Burroughs, William | |
| <i>Naked Lunch</i> | |

Edrich, Louise
Love Medicine
The Painted Drum

Ellroy, James
The Black Dahlia

Enslar, Eve
Insecure at Last

Foer, Jonathan Safran
Everything is Illuminated
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Follett, Ken (2)
Pillars of the Earth

Gaiman, Neil
Smoke and Mirrors

Gemmel, David (2)

Geiger, Eric
Identity

Gentile, Derek
The Vanilla Envelope

Geras, Adèle
Troy

Gibran, Kahlil
The Prophet

Gilbert, Elizabeth (4)
Last American Man
Eat, Pray, Love (3)

Gladwell, Malcolm
The Tipping Point
Blink

Goldberg, Natalie
Writing Down the Bones

Harris, Joanne
Blackberry Wine

Hesse, Hermann
Siddhartha

Hosseini, Khaled
Kite Runner

James, P.D.
The Children of Men

Juchartz, Larry R., Rishoi, Christy, Stolarek, Elizabeth A.
American Dreams

Jones, Terry
Starship Titanic

Kafka, Franz (3)
The Trial
The Castle (2)

Kennedy, William J.
Ironweed

Kerouac, Jack (3)
Book of Haikus
The Dharma Bums
On the Road

King, Stephen
On Writing

Krakauer, Jon (4)
Into Thin Air (2)
Into the Wild (2)

Kunstler, James Howard
Made By Hand

Lee, Laurie
Cider with Rose

Lem, Stanislaw
His Master's Voice

Levitt, Matthew and Ross, Dennis
HAMAS

Lin, Grace
The Year of the Dog

Llosa, Mario Vargas
The Bad Girl

London, Jack
Martin Eden

Lowry, Lois
The Giver

Luna, Luisa
Brave New Girl

Mamet, David
Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia (6)
Memories of My Melancholy Whores
One Hundred Years of Solitude (2)
Love in the Time of Cholera (2)
Autumn of the Patriarch

Matheson, Richard
I am Legend

Martin, George R.R.
A Song of Ice and Fire

Mckenzie, Elizabeth
MacGregor Tells the World

McPhee, John
The Founding Fish

Melville, Herman
Moby Dick

Mistry, Rohinton
A Fine Balance

Meyer, Stephanie
Twilight

Millet, Lydia
My Happy Life

Moore, Christopher
Lamb

Mortenson, Greg and Relin, David Oliver
Three Cups of Tea

Mosley, Walter
This Year You Write Your Novel

Myers, Walter Dean
Monster

Nemirovsky, Irene and Smith, Sandra
Suite française

Neruda, Pablo
The Essential Neruda

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Niffenegger, Audrey | Simic, Charles |
| <i>The Time Traveler's Wife</i> | <i>The Voice at 3 a.m.</i> |
| Nin, Anais (4) | Singer, Sean |
| <i>Ladders to Fire</i> | <i>Discography</i> |
| <i>Delta of Venus</i> | Spinelli, Jerry |
| <i>Winter of Artifice</i> | <i>Stargirl</i> |
| <i>The Diary of Anais Nin</i> | Steinbeck, John |
| O'Brien, Tim | <i>The Pearl</i> |
| <i>Northern Lights</i> | Stern, Laurence |
| Orwell, George (3) | <i>Tristram Shandy</i> |
| <i>1984</i> (2) | Stevens, Kathy |
| Palahniuk, Chuck | <i>Where the Blind Horse Sings</i> |
| <i>Choke and Survivor</i> | Susann, Jacqueline |
| Peck, Robert Newton | <i>Valley of the Dolls</i> |
| <i>A Day No Pig Would Die</i> | Tan, Amy |
| Perrotta, Tom | <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> |
| <i>Little Children</i> | Tolle, Eckhart |
| Picoult, Jodi | Tolstoy, Leo (4) |
| <i>Nineteen Minutes</i> | <i>War and Peace</i> |
| Pinker, Steven | <i>Anna Karenina</i> (3) |
| <i>The Language Instinct</i> | Toole, John Kennedy |
| Plath, Sylvia (2) | <i>A Confederacy of Dunces</i> |
| <i>The Bell Jar</i> (2) | Vonnegut, Kurt |
| Pollan, Michael | <i>Cat's Cradle</i> |
| <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> | Vowell, Sarah |
| <i>In Defense of Food: An Eater's</i> | <i>Assassination Vacation</i> |
| <i>Manifesto</i> | Walls, Jeannette |
| Poole, Adrian | <i>The Glass Castle</i> |
| <i>Tragedy: a tragedy</i> | Weiner, Tim |
| Pynchon, Thomas | <i>Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA</i> |
| <i>Gravity's Rainbow</i> | Wharton, Edith |
| Roth, Philip | <i>Age of Innocence</i> |
| <i>Exit Ghost</i> | Wolfe, Tom (5) |
| Usher, Rod | <i>The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests</i> (3) |
| <i>Florid</i> | <i>My Name is Charlotte Simmons</i> (2) |
| Sacco, Joe | Yamanaka, Lois-Ann |
| <i>Palestine</i> | <i>Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers</i> |
| Sedaris, David | |
| <i>Naked</i> | |
| Other Texts | |
| Students' papers | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| Autobiographies | <i>The New Yorker</i> |
| Law Books | |

Question 3: Name any subjects, fields, or skills that you wish had been included or required in the English major when you were at Hartwick.

Satisfaction with the English curriculum is the most frequently expressed response to this question, with 8 people saying that they had been “happy” or “pleased,” or “impressed” with the courses offered. In fact, the only recommendation made by more

than one person is to add writing courses. Yet, fewer than 10% of respondents propose such changes. Here are the numbers of graduates who recommend additional writing courses and the specific courses they mention:

5 – more creative non-fiction

4 – computer courses for writers (including Power Point and Web sites)

3 – more journalism courses

3 – courses about pursuing a career in writing and publishing

There are 5 graduates who express a lack confidence in their writing abilities and would have preferred a requirement that English majors take one of the following courses: advanced writing, “Anatomy of English,” business writing, composition, or grammar.

Two respondents who have gone on to graduate school wish that they had taken theory courses, and a third wishes that there had been a greater breadth of courses offered. A variety of recommendations address the challenges faced by English majors as they search for careers after graduation. These are two specific suggestions about this area of advising:

“I would recommend trying very hard to make students aware that the courses they take in college could make a big difference in their future careers. Inform students about what careers are out there.”

“[There needs to be] More of a push by professors for English Majors to get involved in Hartwick’s literary publications.”

Two respondents suggest new courses that would prepare students for the struggles that writers face:

“I always wished that there had been an elective course about the logistics of pursuing a future career as a writer. It’s a very daunting career choice because writers often are forced to fend for themselves.”

“Make future writers aware of the struggle of writing. It is a very lonely job, and most beginners have enough rejection letters to plaster a living room wall.”

Question 4: Share any suggestions or other comments about the English major at Hartwick College (e.g. “A” courses, the Senior Project, writing courses, etc.).

Approximately 18.6% of the respondents, 8 graduates, say that they “loved the English major” at Hartwick College, and 4 say that they “loved the courses” offered. The Senior

Project is praised as the best part of the English major by 8 graduates, and 3 of them report liking the opportunity to concentrate on Senior Projects during January Term.

Here are a few typical remarks about the major:

“It is a wonderful program!”

“I loved the passionate faculty in the English Department.”

“I think that the Senior Project helped me immensely to prepare for graduate work.”

There are only two criticisms of departmental policies regarding Senior Projects: one graduate argues for more freedom in selecting a topic; another says that the process needs to be more “student-friendly” and less adversarial.

In the 1999 survey, graduates also praised English courses, faculty, and the Senior Project, and 27% praised business writing, journalism, and technical writing as useful in the work world. The most frequently expressed recommendation (10%) then was that there be more guidance in career preparation, which also was recommended in answers to Question 3 in this survey.

Courses praised by alumni

These two courses are praised by more than one graduate:

Creative Writing (3)

“American Ethnic Literature” (2)

The following 16 courses were each named by one respondent:

“A” courses

“Advanced College Writing”

“Anatomy of English”

“Creative Writing Non-Fiction”

Dramatic Literature

“Film and Novel Noir”

Internships

“Jane Austen”

Native American Literature

“Novel II”

“On Keeping a Journal”

Seminars

“Sensation Novels”

Tutorial

Ulysses Seminar

“Unruly Women”

Recommendations for expanding the English curriculum

Three individuals each suggest that we add more courses in one of these areas: genres, grammar, and writing. Three new topics courses also are suggested, each by a different graduate: humor, mystery novels, and utopian literature. One respondent suggests that we offer a greater variety of seminar topics. Another person urges the department to make editorial positions on *Hilltops* into a course.

Criticisms of the English Major

Two former majors say that some upper-level English courses suffered because students were either ill-prepared or uninterested in the subject. Here is each respondent's comment:

“Upper-level English courses were filled with people who didn't want to be there or didn't fully appreciate the level at which the class was intended to operate.”

“Ill-prepared students slow down the pace of a course.”

These two people both recommend instituting prerequisites for upper-level courses and limiting some courses to juniors and seniors.

There are only two other specific criticisms expressed: one person found the junior review unnecessary; another person notes that some A courses fail to cover critical approaches.

Question 5: What positions have you held since graduation?

The results of this survey demonstrate once again that English is a highly versatile major, leading to diverse careers and jobs. In our recent survey **education** is the field most frequently mentioned by graduates (72%), with **business** in second place (19%), and **writing and publishing** (14%) in third. These percentages add up to over 100% because people reported that they have worked in more than one field. Similarly, in responses to the 1998 survey, the four top positions were teaching (64%), publishing (44%), administration (31%), and business (31%). In the 2008 questionnaires no graduates say that they are lawyers, though 4 have attended or are attending law school.

Responses to our recent survey point to education as the field again chosen by most English majors, and a smaller percentage work in business and publishing and writing than 9 years ago. There also are fewer graduates reporting careers in finance, health services, management, and social services. The variety of fields and jobs reported by English graduates in the 2008 survey is apparent in the list below, which gives the number of alumni after each category.

Careers in Education - 31

Teaching - 20

Elementary Education - 7
High School English - 5
Special Education - 3
Substitute - 3

Language Arts - 2
Adjunct College Professor - 1
English Teacher in China - 1
Teacher's Aide - 1

Departmental Assistants - 5

Law Library at Hogan and Hartson - 1
Graduate School English Department - 2

Other positions in education - 6

College/University Administration - 2
Secondary School Librarian - 1
Secondary School Principal - 1

Careers in Business - 8

Human Resources - 4
Publishing Agency - 1
Retail - 2
General - 1
Sales Representative - 2

Careers in Writing and Publishing - 6

Editing - 5
Political Writer - 1
Newspaper Editor - 1

Volunteer Work - 4

Americorps - 3

Miscellaneous Fields and Careers - 8

Fundraising - 3
Grant Writing - 2
Associate Director of Development, Special Olympics - 1

Computers/Data Processing - 2

Data Entrant - 1

Food Industry - 4

Culinary School - 1
Dishwasher - 1

Government - 1

Analyst, United States Defense Department - 1

Other Fields - 7

Paralegal - 1
Costume designer - 1
Background Investigator - 1
Dog walker - 1

Law Department - 1
Library Science Department - 1

Hartwick College Internship - 1
Internship at Library of Congress - 1

Business Analyst - 1
Office Manager - 1
Office Receptionist - 1
Program Manager (Accounting Firm) - 1
Short-Term consultant - 1

Newspaper Reporters - 1
Press Agent - 1

Peace Corps - 1

Development Associate for PENCIL, Inc. - 1
Fundraising Consultant - 1

Web Designer - 1

Chef - 2

Personal Trainer - 1
Documentary film editor - 1
Personal trainer - 1

Question 6: Have you pursued graduate study in English or other fields? If so, please tell us the school and field.

A total of 23 respondents report that they have gone to graduate school, which represents a drop from 60% in 1999 to 53% in 2008. The increasing cost and competitiveness of graduate schools may account for the decline in numbers. Here are the graduate schools English majors have attended:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Binghamton University | St. John's College |
| Columbia University | Suffolk University School of Law |
| Dartmouth College | Syracuse University |
| Fordham University | Union College |
| Grand Canyon University (online) | University of Massachusetts at Amherst |
| Hollins University | University of New Hampshire |
| Liberty University | University of North Carolina at Greensboro |
| Mount St. Mary's College | University of South Florida |
| New England School of Law | University of Southern Maine |
| Northern Michigan University | Vermont College |
| Queens College | Wake Forest University (law) |
| San Diego State | |

There are 5 respondents who say that they plan to attend graduate school in the academic year 2008-09. These are the schools that they have chosen:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Golden Gate University School of Law | Plymouth State University |
| Lesley University | SUNY Cortland |
| Pratt Institute | |

These are the degrees reported:

| | |
|--|---|
| Master's in Art History - 1 | Master's in Library/Info. Science - 3 |
| Master's in Childhood Education - 1 | Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing - 2 |
| Master's in Education - 2 | Master of Science in Education - 1 |
| Master's in Elementary & Special Education - 1 | Master's in Secondary Education - 1 |
| Master's in English - 4 | Master's in School Administration - 1 |
| Master of Fine Arts in Scenography - 1 | Master's in Special Education - 1 |
| Master's in International Relations - 1 | Master's in Sustainable Education & Development - 1 |
| Master's in Journalism - 1 | |
| Master's in Liberal Arts - 1 | |

Question 7: Has the study of literature and writing been useful in your career or graduate study? If so, please explain below.

An overwhelming majority of 84%, 36 respondents, answer "yes" to this question, and only 3 "no." There are 3 who do not answer the question. The perception, among graduates, that English is a useful major has risen slightly in the past 8 years, for in our

first survey 82% said “yes.” In the 2008 survey specific responses to question 7 fall into 4 categories, each related to skills learned as a Hartwick English major:

Written and oral communication skills - 22
Reading skills - 12

Analytical and critical skills - 5
Research skills - 4

One graduate calls the value of the English major “priceless.” Here are several other typical responses:

“The study of poetry made me better than any of my colleagues, most of whom studied only journalism.”

“In my work with its emphasis on human dynamics and creating a green campus environment, I have to have an imagination.”

“Without my background in literature and writing, I do not know if I would feel like a whole person and, therefore, could not be as successful as I feel today.”

“I often have [other] colleagues come to me for grammar and editing, and suggestions on phrasing.”

“I am a good writer because of my studies at Hartwick.”

Question 8: What recommendations would you make to English majors regarding their career plans and job searches?

Though answers to this question vary, they could be grouped within 7 categories:

1. Remember that English is a versatile major. (13)

“I think that having a B.A. in English is the most versatile degree a person can hold.”

“Go out and pursue your dreams; your B.A. will help you get there.”

“Look at all your options. Businesses want effective communicators. Publishing can be rewarding, both in an editorial and creative sense. Expand your knowledge outside of your major author or concentration. Look at art, theatre, film, travel.”

“Be flexible. An English major can take you anywhere and be useful in any field.”

“When someone asks you, ‘What are you going to do with an English major?’ respond with the following: ‘Anything I want.’”

“I think the English major is a very useful and versatile major. No matter what line of work you go into, you inevitably have to communicate with others.”

“Don’t count on getting a job in publishing or writing the next great American novel. Don’t be afraid to take a job that doesn’t seem like the ‘right fit,’ because you might be surprised how often training in the humanities, and particularly in English, will make you stand out. An English degree provides you with a considerable amount of freedom.”

“English is a passion that can be turned into any profession.”

“Don’t think that there is only one job for you. See what is out there before you decide.”

“Don’t listen to what others say. Having a degree in English is great! Companies love it because they know you know how to communicate well.”

“You don’t have to choose what you want to do right out of college. . . . Being an English major is a great starting point for a number of areas including editing and the legal field.”

“The type of job with which you start out of college may end up not being your career. And that is really okay.”

“The best part about majoring in English is after you graduate you can branch out into many professions.”

2. Do an internship. (6)

“I started an internship at the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress . . . less than a week after graduation. When my internship ended, I took my current position as the departmental assistant in the Law Library at Hogan and Hartson LLP in Washington, DC.”

“Do an internship. It is perhaps the best thing you can do to test career goals, develop your professional network, and find job leads.”

“Intern while you are in college and don’t need a paying job to support you.”

“Jump into an internship the summer after graduation.”

3. Do what you love or enjoy. (6)

“Don’t become an English teacher as a ‘backup plan.’ If you love literature and you love writing, but you don’t see yourself in a classroom, then don’t become an educator.”

“Go out and pursue your dreams.”

“Follow what you truly want to do, because if you don’t believe in what you are doing, the long hours are not worth it.”

“It’s important to do something that you think you’ll enjoy, and if you don’t, you’ll at least have gained experience.”

“My advice is do what you love even if it means taking a pay cut.’

“Take something you love to do, even if you haven’t mastered it, and incorporate it into your career. The mastery will come with time.”

4. Use your writing and communication skills on the job. (5)

“Decide if you like writing. If you do, commit yourself to it.”

“Effective communication is the key to so many positions. A solid background in writing is helpful in almost any field.”

“My ability to communicate well, both orally and through my writing, has set me apart from my colleagues (and some of my superiors).”

“Businesses want effective communicators.”

“The ability to write well is an asset in any field.”

“Writing has been incredibly useful in my career.”

5. Take advantage of resources at Hartwick College. (3)

“Use the resources available on campus to aid you in your job searches and to help you find a career that suits you.”

“The alumni network is strong.”

6. Consider attending graduate school. (4)

As the first two comments below demonstrate, alumni may have opposite opinions about important decisions such as the timing of graduate school.

“Take a year off between graduation and entering either a career or graduate school. Get some menial job or live off your parents or a friend and read for pleasure or write your own poetry or novel.”

“I would recommend going on for a master’s before pursuing a career.”

“To prepare for graduate school, spend time on your writing sample. Read widely in the field—outside of areas of interest—to get a sense of the debates and the terrain of the discipline.”

“Even if you don’t think you would like to attend graduate school, look anyway. Take the GRE while you remember everything.”

7. Teaching brings rewards and challenges. (3)

“Develop yourself—travel, have adventures, play! Do this especially if you want to go into education. There are a million English teachers out there, and the ones who distinguish themselves are the ones who have developed themselves with interesting experiences.”

“I would also warn the very young and the very eager about the state of the job market for college professors.”

“If you plan to teach, be prepared for a lot of hours of grading.”

8. Miscellaneous recommendations:

“Be bold. If you don’t want to teach, think of non-traditional ways to enjoy your writing/literature. Put yourself out there, and don’t be afraid to take risks.”

“It is important to just take a plunge somewhere along the way. Take a big step or do something you’re not too sure about.”

“Work hard, search far and wide, stay active, be patient.”

“Take advantage of January Term abroad.”

“Narrow down exactly what you want to do when you’re out and exactly how you are going to go about it.”

“Take advantage of any connections you have.”

“Don’t be too proud. I started as a nighttime ambulance chaser at the city desk of my hometown newspaper, just because I wanted to get a job that would allow me to write (What else did I know how to do?), and it has become a satisfying and even lucrative career.”

Question 9: Would you be willing to participate in a career panel for English majors?

A total of 34 graduates (79%) say “yes.” Their names are available to College and Department planners on request to the Department Chair.

Question 10: What question should we have asked but didn’t?

Of the 12 questions suggested, 3 focus on the choice of an English major:

Would you choose English as your major again?

Why did you become an English major?

Is there life outside English? If you didn’t retain the major, do you regret having taken it in the past?

There are 2 people who suggest that we ask for opinions about professors:

What professors inspired you most?

Who was a favorite professor? Is there something you wish you could tell him or her?

Here are various other questions suggested:

[If you are a teacher] Do you plan on staying in the profession? Or will you choose a new location?

Favorite quotations?

Are there any courses you feel should not be passed up by an English major if s/he wishes to experience the field at its finest?

Where do you live now?

What is the one single thing you would have done differently as an English major at Hartwick?

What was your emphasis? Were you a double major? Why/why not?