

Association of Advisors of English

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NOTE

AAE at the MLA
December, 2002

Ned Laff from UIC, Walter Levy, from Pace, and Lee Davinroy from UT-Pan American presented a session at MLA on **What We Say About Graduate Study: Mentoring for Graduate Study in English**

Welcome to the AAE

The AAE has begun and is beginning modestly by a small group of people led by Dean Baldwin from the Behrend College at Penn State-Erie, Walter Levy from Pace University and I who proposed the organization at the College English Association, April 2000. Generated from work all us had been involved with and a special issue of the CEA *Critic* "Advising Undergraduates: What Should We Tell Them?" we sensed that answering this question is more complicated than it first appears, with entailments that range from the integrity of the English major and student's hidden intellectualism, to implications on full-time enrollments and our ability to hire full-time faculty.

AAE is not simply about advising. What does it mean to study English? There are no simple answers. They vary by campus settings and whether we talk about undergraduates, students preparing for graduate study, or graduate students. They vary depending on how we define what and English major is and how we think about the relationship among study within the field, study across the disciplines, and other learning opportunities available to students. They vary if we are sincere about recommendations made in the *Chair's Reference ADE and MLA Guidelines and Committee Statements* (Dec. 2002) to prepare graduate students hon-



estly and in the best ways to face the realities of job market. And they vary depending on how we would like to position, or re-position, the discipline itself within the dynamics of colleges.

AAE is trying to approach some of the critical questions facing the field

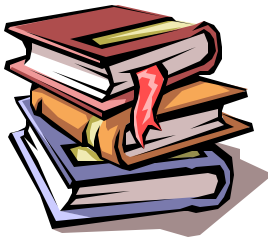
Classroom Advising: Integrating "Living Well" with "Making a Living"

No matter how good our armchair advising, richer opportunities await us in classrooms. The class is the perfect occasion to enhance learning, promote standards, and help students integrate the social, intellectual, and experiential communities in

which they live. We can show them how life of the mind and the workplace harmoniously intersect with the English major. It is a small step to show students how the right comment on a resume can illustrate critical thinking and problem-solving, or the relationship

between collaborative learning and cooperative teamwork. Academic skills are life skills that we know can help us "live well" as well as "make a living." Many classes lend themselves to this. Shaping interviews for peers or campus experts

Welcome—continued



from a different perspective. Our programs, what we hope to create in our curricula, do not come alive until students engage them, and engage us. And in a very real way, this challenges us to consider how we translate what we claim study in English to be and what we claim students get from study with us into the pragmatics of both undergraduate and graduate education. It challenges us to consider how a field of study emerges for students as we help learn how to compose the

learning opportunities into an integrated educational experience. And how we meet this challenge gives tangibility to our claims about the value of study within the field.

Is AAE just about advising? Hardly. AAE wants to reconstruct how we think about advising, thinking of it in terms of “teachable moments.” Our hope is to begin to share ideas on the different ways we can answer “What Does it Mean to Study English?” and we encourage you to join the conversation

at the CEA Conference in April, 2003 in St. Petersburg, FL. We will also be working to expand the ways we can create a dialogue on these issues and encourage you to join the conversation.

For more information about AAE, contact Ned Laff at nlaff@uic.edu or Dean Baldwin at dxb11@psu.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Ned Laff
nlaff@uic.edu

From an undergraduate's perspective, there is no difference to be had between what we claim for an English major and what is claimed from any other Liberal Arts major

The AAE at the CEA National Conference

The AAE will be running 2 sessions at the 34th Annual College English Association, April 3-5, 2003 in St. Petersburg, Florida. AAE will update members on talks with the MLA, developing a strategic growth plan, and outlining activities for the on-coming year. Contact Jill Gidmark gidma001@tc.umn.edu

“What Can You Do With an English Major” Wendy Mofat, Dickinson College, “Connecting Undergraduates, Alumni, and Careers,” Bege Bowers, YSU, “Professional Writing and Careers,” John Bauer, Kean University, “Advising Ed. Majors for a Second Major in English, Dean Baldwin, PSU-Erie will present a Bibliography of Resources .

“Where is the Curriculum” Lee Davinroy, UT-Pan American, “Literary Studies, First Generation Studies and the Value of the Undergraduate Experience,” Walter Levy, Pace University, “6 Positive Things We Can Learn from the Failure of Academic Advising,” Twila Papay, Rollins College, “Integrating the Tramps: A Senior Assessment Course on the Values of English

A Few Questions About the English Major



Faculty in English are pressed to make a case for undergraduates that studying English can prepare students for a the demands of a global economy. But we fall back on familiar themes that students learn to think critically, read critically, and write better. We claim that students learn to develop a better discriminatory

sense of cultural and aesthetic experiences. We argue that when students become exposed to a wide variety of human and social experiences, their ethical and moral awareness becomes fine-tuned. All of these factors lend themselves to the intrinsic utility and values we expect with a major in English.

From an undergraduate's view, there is no difference between what we claim can be had from an English major and any humanities or social science major. And when we look at many of our students' program we find that often they have no more reason than the convenience of the schedule.

Classroom Advising—continued

can trigger talk about interview preparation and rhetorical strategies about recasting learning experiences into job search strategies. Exploring critical theory can spark conversation on the role of theory in interpreting problems, shaping practical solutions or reaching compromises. Send students out to see class content connections through informational interviews, Job Fairs, and career development searches. Ask students to connect the content of a poem or the class dis-

ussion to their struggles in work relationships and employer expectations. We could ask students to consider an essay question on how class material will help them in concrete ways as they prepare for a job search or the quest for a “better life.” Occasionally we can even shape parts of our courses around how one learns and makes use of that learning. Students learn to reflect on their decision-making, material choices, and how they define “living well,” and the responsi-

bilities those decisions entail. To reflect on larger implications of learning enhances the very content of the curriculum. Perhaps the human problems of advising are best addressed in our offices, but if including these in class raises the level of conversation, perhaps we can integrate life planning into the intellectual and social lives of our students.

Twila Papay
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Interested In Joining The AAE?

**Yes, I would like to join
The Association of
Advisors
of English**

Name: _____

E-Mail: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please enclose a check for dues: \$15

Payable to: Association of Advisors of English

Please Mail to:

Terry Caruso
Treasurer of AAE
The Behrend College
Penn State—Erie
Erie, PA 16563

*“Students seldom
see why
we’re doing
what
we’re doing”*

*Twila Papay
Rollins College*

Tips From the Field—Notes from Kean University

Make sure that all offices that advise first year students have up-to-date information sheets with course recommendations spelled out—Keep close contact with El. Ed. and Early Childhood Ed. These students often declare English as a second major and this impacts course sequencing.

Focus attention on first years and sophomores—success here affect retention and how these students engage faculty in the department. Look at the ways you can employ grad. students and upper-class student as peer-advisors—Work on transfer articulations with your major feeder schools-

E-mail advising does work: it can save time, increase efficiency, and increase student contact.

A key factor is that contact is important; advising can be a good way to engage students in the department -

W. John Bauer
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AAE

AAE is looking for ideas for the Newsletter. Submit your thoughts and ideas—150 to 200 words to Ned Laff nlaff@uic.edu

Questions about the English Major—continued

More often or not, many of our majors are hard pressed to see the relationship between the courses they take to fulfill departmental requirements and the rest of their education. Too often they have difficulty talking about what they are claiming to study.

We know that after graduation students (many of them) do get jobs, and that they are generally successful—many times in areas we would never think an English major would provide preparation. All too often, our students land these positions on their own, or with help from the career development office,

or by happenstance. They piece together their education with courses across the curriculum and manage to wend their way through without us really understanding how they have done it.

Is the English major unmarketable? Do we do our students, ourselves, and our discipline justice by limiting our sense of “marketability” to teaching and secondary education, writing and editing, sales, or graduate school? Can we make a case for the idea of an intellectual pursuit, but with how that pursuit integrates with learning across the curriculum, and how

that integration can be “marketable?” Are these questions that we need to begin to ask and address? Can we, through advising — if advising is the right word — address our students’ desires for jobs and our belief in the value of life-long learning and the pleasure of intellectual pursuits? The AAE believes we can! I invite your thoughts and opinions.

Walte Levy, Pace University
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