

Alumni Spotlight: Allison Danielle Dolan

B.A. in English



Why did you choose UofL English?

I was a transfer to UofL originally. I had always loved English in school because it encouraged me to think in a way that I did not think about anything else. However, when I enrolled in college, I pursued other curiosities, but always came back to English and often took my extra electives in those areas since my other major courses were closed before I could register for them at my previous school. When I transferred, I decided I wanted to go ahead and pursue a double major in English and Communication after taking my first English class.

Please share a little bit about a favorite class or project you developed in English about which you are particularly proud.

My favorite class was African American Literature with Dr. David Anderson. It opened me up to all these amazing writers and themes that had been lacking in my parochial school curriculum. We explored the lived experiences of a marginalized and oppressed population through the lens of American history post-civil war. It was truly an enriching experience, and I still have the textbook on my bookshelf.

Share your best memory of being an English student.

I met a lot of amazing people in my program and the conversations we would have inside and outside of class are still with me today. Nerding out with people who like the same things you do is one of the best feelings in the world and it also helped me cultivate a love and respect for healthy debate when you disagreed with someone's interpretation.

What is the most important thing you learned while you were an English student?

The most important thing I learned was how to challenge myself to see far beyond what was in front of me. To not take things at face value, but instead look for other ways to better understand and explore how they are viewed or interpreted. This has been vital in the work I do today, in which I seek to understand complex issues to better serve the students, faculty, and staff I work with daily.

Describe your career path. How did your English education prepare you for what you are doing today?

It was anything but forward, I tell you that. I have lived many different lives in search of what was ultimately my landing place. Having a background in English was tremendously helpful as I navigated change, adapted to new surroundings, and ultimately decided how I wanted to serve. I am the Assistant Dean for Advising in the College of Arts & Sciences at UofL now and most days I feel like a professional problem solver. In retrospect, my English degree prepared me extremely well for the work I do now, from helping students navigate the university, to looking at challenges through different lenses, and recognizing that my first reactions or thoughts about something may not always be correct. I developed an analytical eye through my undergraduate work and that continues to serve me very well in my role.

What is one of your favorite professional accomplishments and/or most fascinating aspects of your job?

One of the most fascinating aspects of what I do is getting to hear people's stories. Having an English degree, I obviously have a deep love, respect, and admiration for storytelling, and being able to share space with students, faculty, and staff through my work allows me to listen to each individual's story in order to better understand who they are where their motivations may come from. I am always very thankful when people share those parts of themselves that make them who they are and help me understand them as more than a student or faculty member. Individualization is high on my list of strengths and when someone shares their story with me, as I can connect with them in a more meaningful way.

What advice would you give current students or recent graduates interested in pursuing a career in your professional field?

Be intentional about your experiences inside and outside of the classroom. The work I do is deeply rooted in relationship-building and that comes from all the avenues in which you engage with the world. Make sure you are cultivating those experiences for yourself so you can explore all the things that make people who they are as individuals. These moments will better enrich your ability to connect with others in a meaningful way.

What advice do you have for current students who want to make the most out of their experience in the Department of English?

Get to know your faculty, your advisors, your career coaches, and involve yourself as much as your schedule allows. Experience is absolutely essential. Take advantage of opportunities that expand your experiences and enrich your time here.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your time with UofL's English program?

Just enjoy the ride and pay attention to the things that make you curious. They can lead you down roads that you never imagined.