

Alumni Spotlight: Jessica Farquhar

M.A. English with Creative Writing Thesis (2004)

B.A. English (2002)



Why did you choose UofL English?

Great faculty and interesting courses! I was in the Kentucky Air National Guard when I started college, so it was also convenient and funded by the military / G.I. Bill.

Share your best memory of being an English student.

I spent so many years in the English Department as a student and employee that I don't have just one best memory. Something I am so fortunate to have after my time there is a lifelong mentorship with Jeffrey Skinner, who was my poetry teacher, Thesis Advisor, and wedding officiant!

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

Some of my favorite courses were Literary Criticism with Beth Willey, Radical Imagination with Marc Bousquet, and all of the creative writing workshops.

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

So much reading and writing taught me about language, which sounds obvious, but being in a corporate environment without a business degree meant that I relied on my decoding skills to understand this new lexicon; close reading skills enabled me to listen and afforded me the ability to truly understand what a customer needs - which is the secret to business success!

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

I spent the last 11 years working for a Fortune 50 company in health insurance, increasing my scope and impact. Most recently, as Director of Business Transformation, I founded an entrepreneurial startup inside the company, which required a lot of leadership, vision, and creativity. Some skills I learned as an English major that helped get me here: critical feedback - both giving and receiving (on work and performance); articulating ideas (often called Communication, whether a "hard" or "soft" skill); curiosity & critical thinking

What is one of your favorite professional accomplishments?

I have been able to keep my poetry vocation going even as I have turned to a "career" in "business." That is an accomplishment for me - and one that I have been intentional about by committing to a writing group, reading and writing new poetry, and submitting to journals and contests. I like to say I am my own patron.

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

Seek mentors. Build relationships. Talk to people who have careers you think you might be interested in.

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

Reading and writing will get you far! Build lifelong habits out of them, and you will set yourself apart in any field.

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

The faculty really is amazing!