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What Do English Majors Do Out of How They Do It, and What They

PETER G. BEIDLER

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bers in other colleges and universities with a basis for comparison with what has happened to their own graduates, should they seek to conduct a survey similar to ours.

Getting Started

After securing a com
partment to cover the c
I paid a visit to the di
high and requested tha
English department a
conduct a career survey
rector said she would I
were doing and would I
biggest help was the of
office coordinator, wh
the results when the q
come in. Then I called
University Alumni As
English major, class of
alumni clubs. She was
our English major alun
1980 and 2000. "We
right up to printing ser
the list separated by sex
replied, "That would
most of our English ma

The author is the Lucy G. Moses Professor of English at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. In 1983 he was named the national Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

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The survey was designed primarily to tell whether our students thought that their having majored in English had practical benefits for them. At least at Lehigh, where historically there are lots of business, science, engineering, and social science majors, students who major in English sometimes feel put down for selecting an impractical, pie-in-the-sky, lazy-bones, artsy-fartsy major. In the questionnaire we asked two questions to ascertain the practicality of a degree in English. The questions are reported in tables 4a and 4b. The responses to the first question were encouraging. When asked whether having majored in English helped our alumni to land their current job, three-quarters, or 152 of the 205 who answered this question, said that it had. The response to the second question, whether having majored in English helps alumni do their current job,

was even more encouraging. More than nine-tenths, or 198 of the respondents, said that it did. Curiously, of the men responding, not one said that having majored in English did not help him do his current job.

Curricular A

We also asked broader English responses, we with the students. The English extent to which relatively few age students one in some sense, but it want to do gationally resol the major, cments and o GPA and me at the gradua more courses we asked ou good idea to students cou loud and cle our alumni th an option; fe gle major in

Table 4A
Did Majoring in English Help You Get Your Current Job?

Answer	Men		Women		Men and Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	51	75.0	101	73.7	152	74.1
No	17	25.0	36	26.3	53	25.9
Total	68	100.0	137	100.0	205	100.0

Note: Thirteen respondents left this question blank.

Table 4B
Does Having Majored in English Help You Do Your Current Job?

Answer	Men		Women		Men and Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	69	100.0	129	96.3	198	97.5
No	0	0.0	5	3.7	5	2.5
Total	69	100.0	134	100.0	203	100.0

Note: Fifteen respondents left this question blank.

Table 5	Is It Single	Answers	Make Single	Total	Note:	Table 6	Secor
stu						Degree	
mu						Political scienc	
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74						Sciences, engin	
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Table 6
If You Were Back at Sophomore Crossroads Again, Would You Major in Your Major, Minor, Collaborative Major, or Something Different? Knowing What You Know Now, What Different Degrees, Foreign Language Courses, Whatever?

What	men	Women	Men and Women
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Works Cited

Appendix

Others who are
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- 2. Other maj
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 - master's
 - doctora
- 4. Your job ti
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 - Com
 - Eng
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 - Oth
- 6. In your ex
of majorin
 - Literary

- Understanding of human nature
- Understanding history of literature
- Personal growth as a human being
- Critical thinking skills
- Writing skills
- Social skills
- Public speaking skills
- Other

- 7. Would you recommend that current Lehigh students major in English?
 - No, because _____
 - Yes, because _____
- 8. Is there some advice you wish someone had given you when you were a junior English major at Lehigh? If so, what?

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- 11. Did maj
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 Yes, b

- 12. Does hav
 No, b
 Yes, b

- 13. If you we
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have mad
language

- 15. Are you interested in returning to campus to take part in a Career Night for English majors?
 Yes Maybe No

Name and address (optional, unless you want me to call you about helping with a Career Night)

Phone _____
E-mail _____