

English majors can do more than teach

by Sara Mitchell

"So, you're an English major. What are you going to do when you graduate, teach?"

Many Texas A&M English majors and other liberal arts students hear questions similar to this when discussing future plans. Contrary to popular belief, many English majors do not teach.

Dr. Claude Gibson, assistant professor and undergraduate adviser for the English Department, said many opportunities exist for graduates with good communication skills.

"Teaching is an obvious end to obtaining a degree in English, but that is not what all our students end up doing," Gibson said. He mentioned former English graduates in unusual occupations: an FBI special agent, a stockbroker, a factory manager, bank vice-presidents, a pilot and the mayor of San Antonio, Henry Cisneros.

"We teach reading, writing and analysis. People in management do a lot of report writing and analysis," Gibson said. He said English students often go into such fields as writing and editing, working for a newspapers, pre-law, pre-medicine and pre-dentistry. He also said many companies, such as banks and large corporations, are willing to train employees with a liberal arts background.

Dr. Sam Dragga, assistant professor of English and coordinator of the Writing Specialization Program at A&M, said English majors with minors in computer science and business are qualified for many jobs.

"Businesses find the research and analytical skills English majors develop useful," Dragga said. He mentioned that insurance companies often hire English graduates with business minors as underwriters.

Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux, associate professor of English, said English majors are sought for desktop publishing jobs, book sales and publishing. She said they are also in demand to develop on-line user documentation, training manuals and other technical materials.

Gibson said the College of

Liberal Arts found that its graduates were competing equally with specialized students five years after entering the job market due to good communication skills.

"They (liberal arts majors) may start in on a lower entry level, but due to their good communication skills and analytical ability, once they break into the position they are

generally very promotable," Gibson said.

Gibson said students should not go into a particular field just because it's the "hot degree" to get, such as petroleum engineering was a few years ago.

"A student has to determine where his talents are and develop those talents. The liberal arts student is a little

more flexible in that we require a minor," Gibson said. He said the student can tailor his curriculum to suit his interests and talents and the specialization of the degree can lead to many opportunities.

"I'm not sure that people always know what they're going to do with the degree, but they tend to do well once they get out there," Gibson said.

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Aggienizing Answers

How do you feel about the job market?

by Karen Kroesche
and Lydia Berzsenyi

One popular question posed during interviews causes many students to (a) become dumbfounded as blank looks cross their faces, (b) shift uncomfortably in their chairs as they mumble a reply or (c) look extremely guilty as they blatantly lie. The ever-popular interview question that can stump even the most self-confident person: "What do you see yourself doing 10 years from today?"

The truth is, most students just don't know. Although students get an education with the intent of getting a good job upon graduation, it is not uncommon to find third, fourth or even fifth year students with little idea of what they want to do with their lives.

We hit the streets this week to ask students what their job opportunities look like. Most seem optimistic about finding a job, although some, like Chris Johnson, a senior finance major graduating in December, realize the jobs they get may not be their first choices.

"It will be no problem finding a job, but it may not be exactly what I want," he says. "You can't be too picky."

Another business major, sophomore Kyle Toland, is also

confident that he'll find a job, but he stresses the importance of making contacts.

"I don't think it's what you know, it's who you know," Toland says. "That's the whole business world."

Senior Pete McDonald, an electrical engineering major who will graduate in May, says although he's already had one job offer, he's keeping all his options open.

"I'm using all my resources," he explains, "the placement center, myself and contacts."

In fact, Stephanie Patterson, a recruiter for MPI in Oklahoma City, says that versatility is a key to getting the job of your choice.

"The market is so competitive, employers can ask for higher standards of students," she says.

"Students should make themselves as versatile as possible when signing up for electives. They should keep their minds open to opportunities."

Andrew Pappas, a senior finance major, says he's not worried about finding a job, but that he plans to get some experience outside of Texas until the economy here improves.

He also emphasizes flexibility, saying that he's

keeping an open mind and "not looking for anything in particular."

Betsy Muir, a senior industrial engineering major, says the chances of getting a job depend on how much one searches and researches.

Fellow senior industrial engineering major Frank Medrano agrees, adding that getting a job often boils down to luck and situations.

Although both Medrano and Muir are optimistic about their job chances, they are concerned about the current problems in the stock market.

"Right now the job economy is at a peak," Medrano says, "but it may slow down since stock has dropped."

Sophomore Becky Bollfrass, an accounting major "subject to change," says her immediate worry is getting into upper-level business classes, since the overcrowded College of Business is tightening its standards.

Meg Reagan, a freshman general studies major is still doubtful of what she wants to do with her life, also.

"I don't know yet what I want to be when I grow up," she says with a laugh.

"But," she adds, "job opportunity will help determine what I decide to major in."