

Alumna Spotlight Interview:

Allison Underwood

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Allison Underwood, a former student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham sat down with me to discuss how the Professional Writing program can help current students reach further career goals. Underwood currently works at Good Grit Magazine here in Birmingham, Alabama as a digital media coordinator. This magazine focuses on an elegant and progressive reflection of southern heritage. Underwood stated, "I've lived here my whole life, but it wasn't until I started working with Good Grit that I fell in love with the South. Good Grit brings the Southerner out of the box – there's a place for everyone here!" Underwood has been employed at this magazine for two years coming this August.

Underwood started off at Good Grit working as a paid intern and is now a part-time staff member and currently the person in charge of running digital and social media. Some of the job activities include posting on social media sites such as Facebook, managing social profiles, emailing newsletters, and creating graphics for profiles. Underwood mentioned the previously taking Digital Media Capstone course which brought upon the unpaid internship. This allowed them to receive a job offer to be a part-time employee at Good Grit Magazine.

I asked about the experience that Underwood had prior to working at Good Grit. They gave credit to the background obtained in professional writing and how the degree has helped thus far. Crediting the professional writing major as being the reason Underwood was able to land the position currently obtained. The interviewee mentioned that they are thankful for having been introduced to the major early enough to pursue and finish the degree. Underwood went on to promote the degree by stating, "A person who chooses this major can do



whatever they want with it." Underwood listed: Technical writing, teaching, social media, and coding as some of the jobs that are relevant in the professional field.

The interviewee explained that in their particular job, there is not only writing involved, but coding, designing and editing documents. Although Underwood does not code for Good Grit Magazine, they have done some coding as a freelancer.

During the interview, Underwood explained that the courses taken while still working towards a Bachelor's degree allowed the opportunity to gain the experience needed for the job at Good Grit Magazine. Being that the internship was geared primarily towards digital media, they were able to use what was learned throughout courses such as Developing Digital Documents to better analyze the documents that were going to be distributed or posted onto the internet. This course allowed them to learn how to compare different font choices, colors, and proximities on different documents, making sure that the magazine is sent out looking its absolute best. This course allowed Underwood to become familiar with programs such as Adobe Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop which many magazine companies work with such as Good Grit Magazine.

Although all of these skills that were learned have helped Underwood reach a

stellar career goal, Underwood admits that these skills have made it difficult to not feel the need to analyze every document or advertisement seen. Underwood unabashedly stated, "I'll look at a billboard and think about what I would change to fix it." As someone currently taking the Developing Digital Documents course, I had to agree with Underwood in the fact, that nothing can possibly look the same once you've figured out all of the tricks and trades of designing a document. The interviewee agreed and said that this was in fact the gift and the curse portion of learning all of these skills. "Once you know how to do it correctly, you notice that the rest of the world does not."

The interviewee strongly encouraged current English majors to look into the professional writing program. Underwood has shown to be proof that with the right experience and education, the job that you yearn for can be the job that you obtain and thrive at.

Days after interviewing Underwood, they have just obtained a new position at Good Grit Magazine. While keeping most of the same responsibilities Underwood has added that their new position now includes managing interns, gift guides, developing campaigns for magazine subscriptions, and curating sponsored content. While still being actively involved in scheduling Facebook, Instagram, and the email campaign, Underwood has begun delegating a lot of these responsibilities and tasks to interns to be able to focus on the bigger picture. Good Grit is always looking for hard working students to fill internship roles.

On behalf of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, we wish Underwood the best of luck in continuing to further their career.