

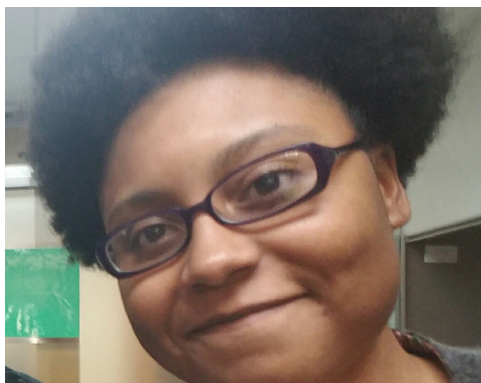
Alumni Spotlight: Sydnei Wheat

Danielle Ivey

UAB Alumna Sydnei Wheat was a Professional Writing student at UAB, and was the first winner of the Outstanding Professional Writing Student Award in 2016, for her research paper that she wrote concerning the visual representations of transgender women, specifically Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenneron, magazine covers (and within) and how the visuals and the narratives written about them perpetuate long-existing racial myths and discourse surrounding black and white women. After her internship with Good Grit magazine and during her time at UAB, she has since gone on to the University of West Georgia to work as a Library Assistant in their research library. *MEMORANDUM* recently caught up with Sydnei (pictured to the right with her colleagues), to learn about her experiences:

Why did you choose Professional Writing, and what were your favorite experiences as a Professional Writing Student?

Honestly, my initial decision to go into Professional Writing stemmed largely from wanting increased job opportunities and choices than actual interest in the concentration. I was previously in Creative Writing—from my freshman to mid-junior career—and while I did love the courses and the various prose, short stories, and poems that I wrote (I did after all, aspire to be a writer/editor) it just didn't feel like it was enough for me. After taking all the classes in the concentration and engaging in so much awesome interdisciplinary work, I fell in love with the major. Coding websites, filming and editing videos, designing promotional/advertising materials, even studying the human psyche and how Professional Writers or design architects have a hand in



influencing that and still getting to write?! To me, it was the best major ever!

What was your goal after graduation? How did you prepare for starting out in the professional world?

I always (and still do) want to be a book editor, but as many probably know the book publishing industry in Birmingham, Alabama is slim to none. The magazine publishing industry is thriving in Birmingham. And so in order to gain hands-on experience, Dr. Ryan—who is the Internship Director for the English department—set me up with a magazine editorial internship.

While I did enjoy my time at Good Grit Magazine along with learning about how magazines work, my love for books working with them didn't go away and so I decided to continue to pursue a career in which I could work around books whether through librarianship or publishing. If I'm lucky I might even be able to do both!

Honestly, I think the best way to prepare for the real world, is to not put your eggs all into one basket. Meaning: always have another career option for yourself. I have always wanted to be a book editor, but I also knew that that might not be as feasible

a dream as I wanted it to be. When I got a student job on campus in the research library in my junior year, I fell in love with the environment and knew that librarianship could be another option for me. I'm happy to say that with my new job I am now on the track to further advance that dream with a MLIS (Masters in Library and Information Science) education that will be fully paid for!

The Professional Writing concentration and the English major itself was a natural precursor to library and information studies. Dissemination of information is the main foundations of both fields and I find that both complement each other well. I even wrote an article on it for the digital *MEMORANDUM* site.

Tell me a little bit about the job that you have now: things like what your role is, what you like the most about your job, and the most difficult parts of your job.

I just recently accepted a job offer from University of West Georgia to work as a Library Assistant in their research library, in fact as I'm writing this, I'll be completing my first official week at my new job! I work in the circulation department, so the most difficult part of my job is actually talking to people, it's not my strong point. But the other employees are patient with me and answer all of my questions even if I asked them a thousand times already! What I like most about my job is the fact that I'm surrounded by so much information and I can actually use my academic/research skills and knowledge to help patrons locate items and even make suggestions on reading or reference materials.