THE ENGLISH AGGIE

The newsletter for Texas A&M’s English Undergrads

featuring:

Important April Events // A Black Box Experience
Thoughts on Graduate School // Poetry by Haley Walker
APRIL HAPPENINGS

Events you won’t want to miss!

4.5

FORMER STUDENT HANGOUT SERIES: LORI ELDER
Are you interested in a career in business? If so, join us as we hangout with Former English Aggie Lori Elder! After graduation, Lori became a corporate recruiter at Q Investments. She will be answering all of the questions you might have about a career in business. See the flyer on page 3 for more on her background.

4.6

FALL 2017 SPRING REGISTRATION BEGINS
Are you ready to start preparing for next semester? Schedule an appointment with one of the English advisors if you have any questions about classes or registration holds. Course descriptions can be found in the March edition of the English Aggie and also on the English Undergraduate website.

4.7

RING DAY
Congratulations to all the Aggies (about 6,200!) who will be receiving their Aggie ring this semester! Ring Day events will be happening all day, so prepare for traffic and a crowded campus. Around 40,000 guests will be coming to campus to celebrate this special day. Ring Day is not an excused absence, so remember this if you are planning on participating in Ring Day activities.

4.19

2017 MSC BIRTHDAY PARTY
From 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. our campus will be celebrating the MSC’s birthday! Head over to Rudder Plaza for FREE food, t-shirt giveaways, games, live music, a photo booth, and more. A valid TAMU ID will be required.

4.22

KYLE FIELD DAY
Come out for MSC FISH’s 7th Annual Kyle Field Day! Kyle Field day is an opportunity to share your service. From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. you can enjoy participating in fun service projects at Kyle Field. Participants will receive free food, a chance to win prizes, and play games in the “fun zone” presented by Aggie Student Athletes.
Former Student

HANGOUT SERIES

Presented by The English Department

7 PM
APRIL 5
LAHH 352
SNACKS & DRINKS
will be provided

If you’re interested in a career in
BUSINESS
Join us & hang out with an English Aggie Professional!

featuring:

LORI ELDER ‘14
Recruiter at Q Investments
Former Intern at Cushing Memorial Archives and Library
Former Intern at the Federal Emergency Management Agency
Former Intern with U.S. Representative Randy Neugebauer
Former Intern with Senator John Cornyn

Bring your questions & get ready for great advice from a corporate recruiter!

This will be the final event in the Former Student Hangout Series, be sure to join us!

Black Box Speaks

The Black Box Writer’s Residency is an annual, 6-week course in which four poets and four fiction writers are selected to meet with experienced writers and perfect a few pieces for a performance. Saelis Mercado, a senior English major, is an award-winning and published poet who was involved with Black Box this semester. Here’s what she had to say about her experience:

What Attracted You to Participate in the Program?
Gut instinct! To be honest, I hadn’t even considered applying—despite my teacher’s recommendation—because my anxiety towards performing is so terrible. At some point, something reminded me of the program, and with literally a few hours before the deadline, I just decided to go for it. I figured that it would be a good opportunity to build upon someday, since I had no plans for my future at that point!

What Was It Like to Perform Your Work at the End of the Six Weeks?
I had been dreading the performance since I applied to the residency! My dread mounted until the night before my performance, when I had a terrible, terrible panic attack. I feel that I’m a decent public speaker, and I don’t fear that people will dislike my work—my fear purely comes from hating the sensation of having all eyes on me! However, when I actually stepped into the room we performed in, I felt relatively calm. The performance itself ended up going perfectly, and I got a lot of compliments afterwards. What helped was constantly reminding myself that nobody would be attending that didn’t want to be there. Also, having a podium to stand behind!

What Skills Did You Gain from This Experience?
During the classes leading up to the performance, I learned to feel more comfortable speaking up. That’s something I’ve been trying to practice, though it takes a specific class environment for me to get into that mindset. I also feel that I improved my skills as an editor and continued to perfect my voice in writing.

Can You Describe Your Artistic Process When Writing Poetry?
I make notes of things that affect me—mostly negative things, because I find that putting them to paper helps me process them—and then I try to recall the things I felt in that moment and use imagery to bring those emotions to life. I have a trait called synesthesia (in which I can see music, words, numbers, smells, and physical sensations) and I often draw upon those unusual connections to better integrate color in my poems. I also pay attention to how the poem looks on the page. I like to break or structure the lines in a way that reinforces what I am talking about. Since I am also an artist, I enjoy adding an extra visual dimension to my work.

What Was the Most Rewarding Part of Your Experience with the Black Box Program?
The relationships I have forged! Everybody has been so supportive to each other, and I think that’s so beautiful. I’ve been more inspired to write than I have in a long time.

Interested in the Black Box Writers Residency? Learn more at writingcenter.tamu.edu.
It was raining.
The little droplets repetitively kissing the window, as if encouraging us to follow in their footsteps.
You were reading the paper in your favorite pajamas, the ones you owned long before I became the
favorite part of your nightly routine.
Residue of breakfast on both of our fingers as they gently touched.
You passed the coffee and let our eyes say good morning again.
We hadn’t spoken yet, and we both knew we didn’t need to. Our souls were off dancing somewhere in outer
space, and they didn’t want our words to interrupt.
I knew you were my soulmate. I knew it in this moment. Of course I knew it long before then, and I will know
it long after.
And of course we were just eating breakfast, but this meal had been made with just us in mind. Perhaps the
universe was made this way too.
CONSIDERING GRADUATE 
OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL?

We spoke with two Former English Aggies who made the decision to continue their education. Each program is different, but their stories may help anyone considering graduate education. Ellen Dickerson attends the Texas A&M University School of Law, while Molly McGee is pursuing a Master’s in Library Science at The University of Texas.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO FURTHER YOUR EDUCATION?

M: While I loved getting my degree in English and have found it infinitely valuable, I decided not long after graduation that I didn’t want to pursue teaching or marketing or technical writing or any of the traditional English major jobs. Thus, I began looking for a new career path. In the months that followed graduation, I digitized a special collection at the Bush Presidential Archive and then volunteered as a docent at the Bryan Museum in Galveston. I realized I loved working in an archival setting and began looking into getting a Master’s in Library Science (MLS), which is required for most library and archive jobs.

E: Today’s job market is flooded with individuals that have their degrees. I wanted to do something that set me apart in such a competitive market, so I chose to go to graduate school.

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT TO GAIN FROM GRAD SCHOOL?

M: I expect to gain a set of skills, knowledge, and experience that would help me achieve the career goals I seek. I also expect direction from career advisors and professors, as well as resources that will allow me to understand what options are available to me as a librarian or archivist. So far, I have not been disappointed.

E: I don’t know that I had any expectations (or I don’t remember them anymore), but I know that what I got was not what I expected. I’ve grown professionally and personally. My skills as a writer have been completely transformed – I look back on old papers from undergraduate and cringe at my writing! I’ve worked for multiple law firms as an intern that I couldn’t imagine working at. And I’ve made lifelong friends.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH SCHOOL TO ATTEND?

M: I chose University of Texas because its program is very highly regarded in library circles, and like Texas A&M, it has a worldwide network of alumni. Also, unlike many MLS programs, it offers on-site classes and hands-on learning experiences, as well as opportunities for master’s students to work as TAs or research assistants.

E: I wanted to write, but wasn’t sure if I wanted to pursue a graduate education in English. A professor encouraged me to consider law school because I would find more opportunities as a writer with a legal background.

It was perfect timing that Texas A&M bought Texas Wesleyan right as I started to apply. I ended up applying to five law schools – four in Texas and one in Tennessee. Once my acceptance letters arrived, I visited the campus of my top two. When I set foot on Texas A&M University School of Law, I knew it was where I wanted to be.

Continued on page 7
IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS STRESSFUL? DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR STUDENTS LOOKING TO APPLY TO GRAD SCHOOL?

M: The application process is only as stressful as you make it. My advice would be to do it quickly and not put it off until the last day applications are due (like I did...). Also, consider what you plan to do with your degree. If you don’t need to go into a hands-on field like preservation, you may consider applying for an online graduate degree, which gives you more flexibility when it comes to location of residence and jobs or other connections you might have.

E: I’m currently going through the application process again because I’m considering getting a Master of Laws, and it’s very stressful. It takes a lot of time and hard work to write a personal statement, fill out the applications, update your resume, and take whatever test is necessary for admission. I actually took a kaplan class before taking the LSAT, so I spent a lot of time juggling studying for the LSAT and keeping up with my undergraduate classes. It’s time consuming and hard work, but it’s also preparation for graduate school. Graduate school is time consuming and hard work - much harder than undergraduate was. My advice would be to take advantage of the resources the university provides for you. I believe TAMU has an office specifically for students trying to go to graduate schools that helped me through the process the first time. They’ll be able to assist you by reading through your application materials before you hit send. Also, visit the school you’re considering attending and take a tour. You’re going to be spending a lot of time on campus doing work, so make sure you like the environment before you say yes.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE THE CHOICE BETWEEN GRAD SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATELY STARTING YOUR CAREER?

M: When I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I lacked direction or passion for any of different jobs I found. I do think the two gap years I took were incredibly valuable in giving me confidence about my decision to get my MLS.

E: When I started law school, I was dating my husband who was finishing up his degree in College Station. So at that point in my life, it was easy to choose graduate school because I didn’t have any commitments to anyone but myself. I was honestly scared about getting out of school and having to find a job because I had no idea what I wanted to do. Graduate school was a way to put it off until later. It’s a little more difficult this time around because I’m married and it’s not just my decision anymore. My husband has a job that he likes and has the option for promotion when he graduates with his MBA in May. And we are considering schools outside of Texas because they are better ranked than the Texas schools, so he would have to find a new job. And I also have student debt. It’s hard to say no to a paycheck. We have things we want to do, like buy a house and travel. But I know that if I go to school for just one more year, it means that the paycheck will be larger in the long run, and I’ll have the option to buy that house and travel anywhere I want to. It also means I’ll get a job that I love doing, rather than tolerate, to get the bills paid. The student debt will eventually get paid. My advice would be to consider the age-old question - where do you want to be in five years? Ten years? You have to think long term rather than short term. Is graduate school worth the money and the time commitment in terms of your future plans?

WHAT FACTORS HELPED YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION?

M: I graduated with a degree in English, but had no real desire to teach, work in the technical writing field, or even find a job in marketing. Taking the time to volunteer at an archive and a museum helped me understand my professional interests, and once I realized I wanted to work in a library or archive, I began looking for MLS programs.

E: The location of the school and its proximity to my home town. I went from a five-hour drive from College Station to a two-hour drive from Fort Worth. And with law school being as stressful as it is, I felt it important to have my support system close by.

Class size! I learn better in smaller classrooms, so class size and student-to-faculty ratio was important to me. What the school could do for me. When I took my tour of the law school, I was able to ask questions about the resources available to me and what tools the school offered to make sure that I would pass the bar exam in the end. The school you choose should meet your needs to be successful. Job placement post-graduation and the career services department. TAMU Law was great to put me in contact with career services before I was admitted as a student to the university. It was important to me to find a school who was focused on post-graduation placement of their graduates.
SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US

STAR IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT VIDEO!

We are creating a video to show prospective students what it’s like to study English at Texas A&M. If you’re not afraid of being in front of a camera, we want to hear what you love about being an English major! Contact kirbiek3@tamu.edu if you’re interested in being featured in the video.

THANKS & GIG ‘EM

This publication is brought to you by:

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Hours of Operation:
Monday - Friday
8 AM - 12 PM
1 PM - 5 PM

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