

Morgan Eklund, B.A. English Creative Writing, 2011

By Sarah K. Miller

Program Assistant and Registrar, Governor's School for the Arts

Morgan Eklund graduated with her bachelor's degree in 2011. Soon after, she completed an internship with [Sarabande Books](#). "Sarabande Books was a valuable experience," she said. "During this internship, I gained a thorough overview of the publishing world. From author contracts to graphic design to marketing and fundraising—it was such a good entry into the nonprofit sector." Eklund said some of her favorite tasks were when she was working with writers. "I would coordinate with bookstores across the country to get Sarabande writers booked for readings. It sounds silly, but another one of my favorite things was mailing out galley copies to reviewers and contests. I loved being a part of the process to help a writer's work get recognized."



Her next position was for a year with the [AmeriCorps VISTA](#) program working for a nonprofit. "The AmeriCorps VISTA program was the best thing I could have done after graduating from WKU, and I highly recommend it to all college graduates," Eklund said. "I credit the year I spent in this program with where I am now. It's the perfect place for an English major because you're able to use your critical thinking and writing skills to solve problems in a community. For me, it was working at the [Center for Nonprofit Excellence](#) (CNPE) to help the Louisville nonprofit sector be successful and vibrant. I was exposed to so many wonderful organizations. From working on a capital campaign study to starting CNPE's social media strategy, I gained experiences to back up my valuable English degree." She went on to explain that at times it can be a challenge working in this program due to working at a poverty level alongside the clients served. "I found that the skills I gained made up for the lack of monetary compensation. It is a huge stepping stone into the workforce, one that people with liberal arts degree may need. Probably the best example was the work myself and another VISTA [volunteer] did with Eastern Area Community Ministries (EACM). For EACM, we developed a new intake process to better serve their clients in need. Through our system, we were able to better evaluate the need, beyond just needing food subsidies. We even laid out a plan for a reciprocal giving program. While

developing this new program, I was able to gain facilitation, project management, research and evaluation skills." Eklund went on to say that, "Through both AmeriCorps and Sarabande I gained valuable experience in website design, marketing and social media management."

She spent the next year as the marketing coordinator for a company in New Albany, Indiana. Since September 2013, she has been with the Governor's School for the Arts (GSA) as the Program Assistant and Registrar. "I wear so many wonderful hats at GSA," Eklund explained. "One of my main functions is working with our over 5,000 alumni. I get to manage an alumni fund that supports them in professional development and community based projects. I work on promoting alumni through performance opportunities across the state." Her position focuses on website management, social media, alumni relations and programmatic support for the entire program. She additionally works closely with the graphics department and development department. "GSA is busy all year with recruitment, workshops and alumni outreach," Eklund explained, "but we're most known for our three-week summer program that provides an intensive experience for rising high school juniors and seniors in the fields of architecture, creative writing, dance, drama, instrumental music, musical theatre, new media, visual art, and vocal music."

Eklund's use of effective communication has been essential to all of her positions since graduation, but especially working for GSA. "Communication is key in all of these roles," Eklund explained. "Working in a small team, we are always balancing between an intense schedule, a high need for productivity and a desire to work as a team, consistently checking in with each other. Since our schedule is a year-long cycle (we only do events once a year), we rely on everyone to remember procedures and details." She said that she is constantly challenged in the job to think about how she communicates and concentrates on speaking and writing clearly. "I have found communication to be individualized. When you're working with a team, you learn what the best way to communicate with each person. Some people need visuals and prefer text. Some people can easily process orally. During the discovery of other's communication style, you get a better understanding of your own. And that is essential." Her English degree has helped Eklund think critically and value innovation. "I think that English majors are set up for a successful transition into today's workforce because of their ability to be trailblazers. I think set career paths are rare today, and the liberal arts major has more success navigating it because of time spent reading, analyzing, discussing and writing. These skills can transfer over into so many different jobs." For her personally, working in the English department's main office was extremely valuable to beginning her career path she said. "As a student worker, I first learned about website management, photo editing, and marketing. The connections I made

with English faculty members in the classroom and assisting in the main office were some of the most important things I left WKU with. Learning to network and build relationships with mentors has been essential to me gaining employment.”

Eklund’s advice to current students is not to stress. “Breathe. The answer to ‘What can you do with a B.A. in English?’ is ‘Anything you want.’ Your career planning may be messy and not direct. You may need to go back to school, travel, volunteer--be an intern and a barista. But it is all life, and you’ll be reading and writing through it. While at WKU, build relationships with your professors. Go to their office hours and network with all students and faculty members.”

