

Jamie Ogles Slye, M.P.A B.A. English Language & Literature, 2010

By Sarah K. Miller & Madelyn Chambers

Director of External Relations, Volunteers of America Mid-States

“Critical thinking has been my biggest gain from my degree. I often take people by surprise by the questions I ask, the way I think outside the box, and the way I problem-solve. I owe this almost entirely to my English degree.”



Jamie Ogles Slye graduated from Western Kentucky University in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in English Language & Literature, minoring in Creative Writing. She also earned an MPA from the University of Louisville in 2016. Slye is currently the Director of External Relations for Kentuckiana at Volunteers of America Mid-States, which provides affordable housing and other assistance services to low-income people.

Slye feels that her English coursework equipped her for graduate school and her future career. “My ability to write, edit, and think critically has helped more than anything,” said Slye. “English garnished my ability to accept different ways of thinking—particularly problem-solving.” Slye believes that being an English major improved more than her practical skills. “Employers like those who can think on their feet, prioritize (rather than multi-task), and work comfortably alone or with a group,” said Slye. “I can't think of a better degree that nurtures those assets.”

After graduating, Slye obtained an internship with an international outreach group, where she mentored kids in inner-city Indianapolis, Indiana, and Belgium. She returned home from Belgium for five weeks before joining the U.S. Peace Corps. “I began my [Peace Corps](#) service in the Kingdom of Tonga (South Pacific) as an Education, Gender, and Development Volunteer,” said Slye. “From this, I learned I didn't necessarily want to teach, but working with non-profits to further the advocacy and action of social issues was my passion.” During her time in Tonga (pictured on next page), she taught primary school children English, physical education, and music.

After completing Peace Corps service, Slye served as the Community Outreach Coordinator/AmeriCorps Member and later the Program Manager at [New Albany/Floyd County Habitat for Humanity](#). These jobs provided a perfect segue to her current position at Volunteers of America Mid-States. “I manage fundraising, program development, government relations and community development,” said Slye. “On a daily basis, I am meeting with donors or business leaders, planning small and large events, writing grants, asking for sponsorships, or project managing.” She is also working to compose project plans and grant requests for a \$2 million “Capital Campaign” to open an addiction recovery service for pregnant and parenting women. Although she never imagined working as a project manager when she was a WKU student, Slye feels that her current position is a perfect fit.



In her free time, Slye enjoys growing her own herbs and vegetables to fuel her passion for cooking and cocktail-mixing. She also loves traveling, hiking, reading, and spending time with her cat.

Slye urges current English students to pursue opportunities with nonprofits. “[Nonprofits] are constantly needing people who can actively engage future volunteers and/or donors by social media activity,” said Slye. “If you have strong writing skills—especially if they can translate between creative and professional—you’re set to go.” She also recommends experimenting with specializations. “Consider adding a minor a little outside your comfort zone,” said Slye. “Looking back, I would have greatly benefitted from sociology, economic development, gender studies, or even criminology. You never know what might take hold and steer you in a different direction.”

