

Ericka Russell, M.F.A. English Creative Writing

By Brianna Hamilton

Content Writer & Editor Mass Media Designs Co.

“I love being a student, I love being in academia. I just look at everything as a learning experience and when it’s viewed that way and not more of as a task it all is just beneficial.”



Ericka Russell is currently in her second year of the Creative Writing MFA program and is thoroughly entrenched in as many disciplines that she can possibly be in. Russell thrives in an academic environment, so the choice to continue her education after earning her bachelor’s degree at Ohio University was never in doubt.

“I knew I wanted to be a professor and that takes a masters for teaching college level. I also knew I wasn't done with school. I love being in school, I never want to stop learning so I just always knew that I would go on to my masters,” Russell stated.

Russell, while completing her Creative Writing M.F.A. coursework, is also teaching, and completing an internship optimizing web content for companies. It’s this flexibility that English provides that drives Russell’s interest in the subject.

“I want to know everything and to be able to talk about everything. With English you can choose any topic. I can research for writing, I can I read student papers across majors, I just like that it's kind of the only area that lets you get a taste of all the disciplines,” Russell said.

Russell’s internship is a remote position at Mass Media Designs in Perrysburg, Ohio. Clients approach the company to enhance their web content and web engagement, and that’s where Russell steps in. It’s her job to write the content these companies will produce, improving their web content and helping them to move up Google’s results page.

Russell is on her own to research, produce, and edit articles on topics she often knows nothing about. But embracing the unfamiliar has only taught Russell more about her skills as a writer.

"It really taught me to like get down to the bare-bones of English...but as for the major thing [it] would be doing some research on a topic entirely new to me. I've done vascular access, roofing, tree removal, pharmacy, just all kinds of broad topics I'm not versed in," Russell explained.

And Russell has displayed this confidence a lot, as she is currently the only employee at the company, besides her own boss, who is currently doing this type of work. This may be a very daunting prospect for some, but for Russell, she thrives in her role as writer and editor, so much so that she plans to continue her position after her official internship is over.

Russell credits many of her professors for preparing her for this role, one of whom is Dr. Alison Jones, "I actually wouldn't have agreed to my internship if I hadn't taken her editing and publishing class. So that really helped me prepare for the other form of writing I can do, it's not all creative."

Russell has also found herself teaching English 100 in Cherry Hall this semester, but she didn't need as much convincing for that.

"I've been teaching forever. I taught my friends when I was in high school; they would come to me before a test. I helped my classmates or my friends in college with papers, I used to edit papers for friends or help them get started on assignments, I was a special education tutor for 4 years, [and] I was a preschool teacher as well. I was nervous for like five minutes and then I was like, 'Why are you nervous you've done this before it's just a different setting'," Russell said.

Russell may have a lot on her plate at the moment, but she is cherishing all the lessons and achievements from these opportunities that she can, stating, "Both just constantly keep me questioning why we write in certain ways and how we evaluate our audience. Maybe creative writers think you always have to be writing creatively to keep that skill but I'd say you can use multiple forms of writing. I concentrate in fiction, but I also dabble in poetry and nonfiction."

After Russell graduates from WKU, she plans to find a teaching position at a university, with a goal of one day establishing an MFA program at a college that doesn't yet have one.

Russell stated, "It took me two years to get into a master's program and those two years knowing I could have been in school it was really frustrating. I wanted to be back in that setting. That's another reason why I want to continue teaching, I can't leave the college campus. I want to be surrounded by intellectuals and people that will debate the oxford comma. It's the environment I see myself in so I just feel like I've always known this is what I wanted so any complaint about that would hinder my experience."

