

Sophia Charyna

B.A (Hons) 2020

"It's not about literature. It's about life."

Student and Faculty Perspectives on the Benefits of Undergraduate Study of English

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What valued skills and experiences do students attribute to their time in English Courses?
- How do professors understand the--often multi-disciplinary--experience of undergraduate study?
- What factors of professor-student relationships can contribute to mutual understanding and positive learning outcomes that extend beyond their discipline?

METHOD

1 invite

Invitation to participate done over email.

2 interview

In person if possible, skype, phone, or email.

3 analyze

Comparison of answers to similar questions. Emphasis given to responses regarding the Undergraduate experience and learning beyond discipline.

- With the focus of the research to be on the University of Saskatchewan Department of English, primary research was done in the form of in-person or phone interviews. Personal connection was preferred, but if it was deemed not possible, exceptions were made for emailed responses.
- Interviews were not strictly structured, lead loosely with open questions, and allowed (even encouraged) tangents.
- Segments from the conversations were transcribed in relation to the question that they were a response to. Early in research phase it was discovered that particular questions were gleaned exemplary responses. Those questions were favoured in later interviews.



: for Students:

-What is something you didn't expect to learn in an English Class?

- What do you wish your professors knew about being an undergraduate student?

- What have you learned from your course work--outside of academics? How has that knowledge shaped your time in university?



: for Professors

-What do most want students to learn in your class?

-What is something you want your students to know about undergraduate studies?

- How have mentors changed your academic experience?

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Multidisciplinary Benefits

Professors account the important of teaching critical thinking and curiosity--skills that will aid students for the remainder of their time in academia, and beyond.

"I think the biggest thing I want [students] to learn, to take away from my classes, is curiosity. Curiosity about literature, first and foremost. But really, a kind of curiosity about the world."

"For a number of them, this will be their last English class, so I try to help them see how those skills can transfer so nicely to their other classes -- and life in general, if I may make that generalization. I want them to come out of this class with confidence, having learned more than they expected to. I really think they will."

Mutuality

Students describe the want for understanding from their professors regarding the external and internal pressure on them, their lives, and academics.

"the pressure that students put themselves under is extremely high. We do have high expectations for ourselves. Navigating that level of pressure can be stressful, especially when you're taking a lot of classes at once. Knowing that and getting support and good feedback is really helpful and encouraging."

"I learned how to manage my time. Balancing two jobs, sports, a full course load, and relationships is hard! Especially when you have suddenly moved to an entire new city that you don't know and don't know anyone in. It can be intimidating, and there were moments in my four years that I thought I wouldn't get through it. But I learned in those four years how to be disciplined."

FURTHER RESEARCH

With preliminary research done, I have clearer questions, and greater background on the kinds of perspective I'd like to gain from my next participants. The next round of interviews will increase the gender parity of my research, as well as expand my sample.

Ultimately, I aim to isolate and interrogate the similarities and differences of opinion between students and their peers, as well as faculty and their colleagues on these topics.