

UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



Katherine Fredlund, Ph.D – Director

Lindsay Helms, Ph.D – Assistant Director

Gabrielle Alston – Graduate Assistant Director



@uofmenglish



memphis.edu/english

In This Issue:

- Happenings & Accomplishments
- Experiences on the Job Market (Addie Enlow, Assistant Professor of English, Chadron State College)
- Library Resources
- Classroom Grouping Strategies
- CAP Calendar

Happenings & Accomplishments

Mark your calendars for these and other events happening this month!

- **October 3rd at 9am:** Discover Your Major Day, UC Ballroom
- **October 9th at 3:30pm:** English Department Open House, Patterson Hall 456
- **October 24th at 5:30pm:** Naseeb Shaheen Memorial Lecture Series - "Some Notes on the Literature of the Civil Rights Movement: Maya Angelou's Reconsideration of History," UC 340
- **October 28th at 4pm:** English Department Colloquium in Patterson Hall 456
 - **Rebecca Adams, "Peer Learning in Second Language Acquisition"**
- **October 28th at 6:30pm:** The Pinch Presents Raye Hendrix Poetry Reading, UC Bluff Room

We want to celebrate you! Please send your upcoming conference presentations, publications, and defenses to Lindsay Helms (lldailey@memphis.edu).

Experiences on the Job Market

Addie Enlow, Assistant Professor of English, Chadron State College

“The job market is terrible.”

“No one is hiring in English departments anymore.”

“Good luck getting an interview, much less a job.”

These are pretty much standard responses and opinions when talking about the academic job market, particularly as it pertains to finding a tenure-track job in an English department these days. Well, I was enlisted to write this article to tell you all about what it's like being on the job market and [things I did or wish I did to make myself more marketable](#). First, let me start off by saying I graduated in May 2024 with a signed tenure-track contract with Chadron State College (Chadron, NE) in hand. So, it isn't impossible by any means, but I'm also not about to completely dispel the notion that it's slim pickings out there.

I want to start off by giving you all some stats: [I applied to a total of 94 jobs](#) from September 1, 2023, all the way through April 19, 2024. [Clarifying point: I was still applying for jobs in mid-April because my on-campus interview with Chadron didn't happen until April 10th and while going on campus means you're one of three or four candidates, there is still a chance you won't be offered the job.] Out of those 94 jobs, I had a first-round Zoom interview with 5 different institutions: non-tenure track faculty position with South Carolina School of Art and Design (SCAD); tenure-track Assistant Professor of English position with Colorado Mesa University; lecturer position with Louisiana State University (LSU); tenure-track Assistant Professor of English position with Lane College; and a tenure-track Assistant Professor of English position with Chadron State College.



Fun Fact: I'm on a reduced 3/3 load for my first year at Chadron (negotiated this into my contract before signing, and highly recommend). After my first year my teaching load will be 4/4 and I will teach 2 composition courses per academic year. My salary is \$61,000 (negotiated up from \$59,653).

I did not make it past the first round Zoom interview with SCAD or Colorado Mesa University. Since the position with LSU was lecturer, there was not another round after the Zoom interview, and I was offered the job in early June. In full transparency, the teaching load was going to be a 4/4 with a salary of \$40,000.

I made it to the second round of interviews with Lane College, which was going to be in early May on Zoom with the Vice President of Academic Affairs. At this point, I had already been offered the job with Chadron State College. I attempted to negotiate with Lane and emailed them about my Chadron offer asking if they could provide me with specific information about their position (i.e. salary, teaching load, moving expenses, etc.) to make a decision on whether to move forward with Chadron or continue interviewing for the position with Lane. They completely ghosted me and never responded to my email, so I accepted Chadron's offer.

Fun Fact: Out of 94 jobs, I never heard back (not even a rejection) from 36 of those jobs.

So, at the end of the day **out of 94 jobs I received an offer from two**: one lecturer and one tenure-track position. I want to be clear though, I only applied for 5 lecturer positions total because I was pretty dead-set on getting a tenure-track position. I chose 5 positions based on places I really wanted to live and/or if they were large, R1 institutions.

Now, here are some things about the job market: what I did, wish I did, and information that I think might be helpful.

1. **If your goal is tenure-track, you cannot be picky about where you live.** Meaning, you have to be willing to live anywhere. I am currently in Chadron, NE. A remote town of about 5,000 people that is almost 2 hours away from a Target and any other semblance of a metropolis.
2. If you accept a tenure-track job, **you don't have to stay there forever!** Take the job, build your resume, teach classes you've never taught before, publish, publish, publish. Then apply again. Which leads me to my next point which is another fun fact...
3. Probably 50% of your applications (especially tenure-track ones) aren't even being looked at because you're applying as ABD (all but dissertation). This doesn't mean you shouldn't apply to any and every job you're remotely qualified for, **it just means you need to apply for 50% more jobs than you anticipated.** In the job ads you'll sometimes see it say "ABD considered" which means they are actually going to look at your application and consider you for employment. If it doesn't say that in the ad, I would assume they likely are not. But, this means that if you do take a tenure-track job in a place you don't want to live forever, your next round of applications you'll not only have the PhD in hand, but you'll also have experience and an Assistant Professor title that will place you at the top of the pile.
4. **PUBLISH.** This falls into what I did and what I wish I did at the same time. I sent out two of my dissertation chapters to two different journals, but because it takes months for their decision, I was only able to indicate that I had sent them, not that they were accepted (which is the ideal scenario). So, as you complete your chapters, I encourage you to send them to journals to maximize your time and chances of hearing back with good news. Even a revise and resubmit is something positive to put on your CV and talk about in your cover letter.

5. **Writing the application materials:** it took me all summer, three solid months, to draft and finalize these documents. Again, I knew I wanted to begin applying in the fall, so I had to have them done by August/September. I worked really closely with my committee on these documents and had multiple rounds of feedback from all three members. Once they are finished though, applying to the jobs is just a matter of swapping out the school's name, position title, and the paragraph on which classes you're excited to teach/why you're excited about their particular school.

6. A few jobs asked me for a **research statement**, which was probably the most difficult document to produce for two reasons: 1) it's asking you to talk about your dissertation that isn't complete and for me, three-fourths of it wasn't even written or outlined yet. 2) you also have to talk about a second project that you're going to work on after your dissertation. This is difficult because all I could conceive of at the time was my dissertation, so I completely made up a project that I had never really thought about, and honestly haven't thought about since. Advice for this document: roughly outline your dissertation and specific chapters and talk them through with your committee. Even if you don't end up doing what you outline, you'll feel confident about this document and feel accomplished with your dissertation as well. Also, don't stress about the second project, just come up with something that you are excited about and that's related enough to your dissertation that you don't have to do extra research about to discuss if asked.



7. **Practice talking about your research.** My Zoom interview with Colorado Mesa was a disaster because I answered a question about how I would teach their adolescent literature course through the theme of monsters (because my dissertation was on young adult literature and witches) and then could not for the life of me provide any scholarship/theory on monsters when asked that as a follow-up question. I completely froze, and the interviewer knew it and proceeded to talk about how he had taught a class with the same theme and listed several scholars he used and their theory. I felt really dumb and underprepared, even though I wasn't. I had just rehearsed my answers and didn't really prepare for follow-up questions asking me to expand because Zoom interviews are so quick (30 mins) and they typically just ask a question, you answer, and then move on because of time.

8. **Practice your Zoom interviews with your committee.** Have them prepare interview questions and do a complete, 30-minute interview with them. I ramble and this isn't something that's ideal for Zoom interview answers. My committee was able to help me identify specific points in my answers that I could practice as well as a "formula" for answering them so I don't ramble. For example, if they ask how you would teach a composition class your answer should be structured something like this: "Teaching a composition class at College I would focus on three things, 1, 2, 3. Explain 1 with an example. Explain 2 with an example.

Explain 3 with an example. Let me know if you would like me to provide any further details." **The big**

takeaway for me was, signal the 2-3 points in the beginning and then provide an example for each. An example would be something like an assignment I did in class and why it worked, a reading I assigned and why it accomplished X goal, or a student's reaction or writing that proved my approach was successful.



9. **Apply to jobs even if you aren't 100% qualified for them.** I applied to 12 Professor of English Education jobs, and was technically hired for that position at Chadron. No, I have never taught 6-12th grade ELA nor have I ever taken an education college class. However, I do teach English and my specialty is in Children's/Young Adult Literature, which happens to be a large percent of the courses these positions were hiring for. I did have to do some research about teaching pre-service teachers and geared my teaching demonstration towards an education class, but I knew enough and received help from my committee. In the end, it worked out because the American Lit professor at Chadron left right before they offered me the job. Now I'm teaching all of the exact classes I wanted: American Lit and Children's/Young Adult lit courses.

Fun Fact: Last year (and this year) creative writing and comp/rhet positions were plentiful. [Take a look here.](#)

10. **Keep a spreadsheet of all the jobs you apply for.** This will also help you keep organized the due dates for all of the applications and if/when you hear back from the jobs.

This is long, again I ramble, but I hope it's been helpful! I can send job materials to anyone who's interested or answer more specific questions. You can email me at menlow@csc.edu.

You can read more about the job market from former graduates in [back issues of the CAPster](#):

- In February 2023, Shanna Cameron wrote about navigating the academic job market.
- The March 2023 CAPster includes tips for writing a successful cover letter.
- In April 2023, Ashley Rattner wrote a narrative about her experiences on the job market.
- In May 2023, Bess Myers wrote about her choice to leave academia.

Resource Spotlight:

Library Resources

Ashley Roach-Freiman shared some [library resources for both grad students and undergraduate students](#) in First-Year CAP on September 10th. Some of the key resources for faculty and TAs are:



[Request Library Instruction](#). Here instructors can schedule an in-person or virtual instructional session with a librarian. Possible content for the sessions include informational literacy, research strategies, etc. The librarian will work with the instructor to develop content that is most beneficial for a specific course assignment.



[Interlibrary Loan](#). Both grad students and instructors can benefit from ILLiad, a resource source sharing management software that is used to manage all borrowing, document delivery, and lending requests. If there is a source that you need for your course or your personal research, you can submit a request and borrow the source relatively quickly depending on availability.



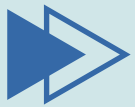
[Course Reserves](#). It can be helpful to place your textbook on course reserve, so that if a student is unable to purchase the textbook in a timely manner, they can complete their assigned reading in the library. There are three copies of both First-Year Writing textbooks already on reserve.



[Research Guides](#). The library has created a plethora of guides on a variety of subjects. Some popular research guides are course-specific such as the ENGL 1010 and 1020 guides. Other guides are more general and cover a range of topics such as AI in the classroom and search engine strategies. They are also beneficial in Lesson Planning if you need some fresh ideas. If a research guide doesn't currently exist for your course, you can contact a librarian to develop one!



[Research Consultations](#). The library also offers in-person or virtual consultations with a research librarian. Both undergraduate and graduate students can take advantage of this resource by making an appointment online. Research librarians can help you discover sources for whatever topic you are researching.



[Reserve Space](#). The library has plenty of reservable space for studying, dissertation writing, researching, podcasting, etc. Just fill out the online form to reserve.



Classroom Grouping Strategies

Tammy Jones

On September 24th, Tammy Jones shared with ALL CAP several ways to group students in the classroom in order to facilitate more effective group work, [reducing the cognitive load of students and instructors](#) while differentiating instruction when needed.

The four methods she focused on in the discussion were:

- Conversation Circles
- Carousels
- Jigsaws
- Choice Boards

[Click here to see the Tammy's PowerPoint!](#)

Here are some additional blog posts from Cult of Pedagogy with tips on how to successfully place students in groups:

- [17 Tweaks That Make a Big Difference in Group Work](#)
- [Making Cooperative Learning Work Better](#)

CAP Calendar

October 1:

First Year CAP meets PT 456

October 8:

First Year CAP meets in Cadres
Professional CAP meets in PT 315
Teaching CAP meets in Cadres

October 15:

NO CAP - Mid-Term Break

October 22:

All CAP meeting in PT 456

October 29:

First Year CAP meets in PT 456
Professional CAP meets in PT 315
Teaching CAP meets in Cadres

