

# write now

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## program notes

by jean grace, director

One of the best moments of any academic year is the English department graduation ceremony. At this event, PPW students and their families and friends join those celebrating the graduation of writing majors, literature majors, and film studies students. Each year at the graduation ceremony, one PPW student speaks briefly for the class. This year, Jennifer Brown spoke. Jen has been instrumental in developing our Service Learning in PPW initiative, and she has been an enthusiastic and engaged PPW student from the beginning of the program. We are very grateful for her work and engagement and for her representation of the program on April 30. I'd like to share her graduation speech for those who couldn't attend:

*Good morning. My name is Jennifer Brown, and I have been asked to represent the senior graduating class from the Public and Professional Writing program here at the University of Pittsburgh. Standing up here is an incredible privilege. I can see just about every student, every professor, every advisor that I have learned from and have been inspired by in the last four years of my college career. If I were to list each person that I wanted to thank, none of you who are actually going to the large graduation ceremony would make it. So I will refrain from doing so and just say this.*

*We are a community of writers. We talk about writing. We think about writing every day. We even write about writing. It's what we do. And we love it. Well, most of the time. I have written proposals, press releases, documentaries on middle class suburbia. And not a single art history test result or sociology presentation could ever compare to the accomplishment a writer feels after finishing a piece of professional writing.*

*Our generation, I feel, has a lot to write about. We have a social and moral obligation to research, interpret, and relay the information that molds our everyday lives from today until well into the future. I could choose to write a grant request, petitioning the Pittsburgh Foundation to provide \$1 million in funding to keep music and the arts in public schools. I could choose to write about my overwhelming urge to work in the nonprofit sector and sacrifice a large paycheck for a lifetime of happiness and satisfaction.*

*We could choose to write about a lot of things. Somalia refugee aid. World Can't Wait fundraising campaigns. Even advertising pitches for that next, big profitable business. But one thing is definite. We must write. We will write. And I know we will write well, because I have been honored and blessed to have been a part of such a strong, passionate, indescribably talented community.*

*I know great things lie ahead for us. And I have all of you to thank for that. So thank you. And congratulations on a graduation all of you undoubtedly deserve.*





## ppw grad facts

### ppw graduates for december 2005

We are delighted to present the bios of students to graduate with the PPW Certificate in April and August 2006. We wish them luck as they start jobs or graduate study.

**Derek Askey:** English Writing major (Fiction), Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Member of the Golden Key International Honor Society and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Student honoree at the 2006 Honors Convocation. Short story, "Right Next to It, Unharmed" published in the fall 2005 issue of the *Three Rivers Review of Undergraduate Fiction*. Winner of the 2006 Myron Taube Award in Fiction. Worked as a peer tutor at the Writing Center in spring 2006. Participated in a healthcare writing independent study with Jean Grace in spring 2006. Intern for UPMC Health Plan since the summer of 2003. After graduation, Derek will work in the proposal writing field in Pittsburgh. During his free time, he anticipates working on his fiction writing. He plans to go to graduate school for fiction writing in the near future.

**Jennifer Brown:** English Writing major (Creative Nonfiction). Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Service Learning volunteer, Public Relations intern, and part-time Human Resources Assistant for the Animal Rescue League of Western PA. *Collision Magazine* essayist, staff member, and Managing Editor. Volunteer and part-time Weekend Manager for Family House McKee. Teaching Assistant for the Service Learning component of the PPW program through the University of Pittsburgh's First Experiences in Teaching program. Worked at the University of Pittsburgh's Book Center. Was an intern for Squonk Opera, helping with grant writing, planning new performances, and working on media kits for publicity purposes. Pursued an Independent Study through the PPW program, studying the dynamics of the nonprofit sector, community involvement on a collegiate level, and future career paths and inspirations. Jennifer was one of the first students to become involved in the PPW program, and she contributed important ideas and energy to the program in its early life. After graduation, Jennifer plans to search for employment that will bring her financial and personal satisfaction while she continues to volunteer with local nonprofit organizations.

**Laura Cek:** Rhetoric and Communications major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate, Film Studies Certificate. Founding member and Business Manager of Lambda Pi Eta Communications Honors Fraternity, founding member of the Communications Club, member

of Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society, Mortar Board Honor Society, and former Secretary and Vice President of Programming of Delta Phi Epsilon Sorority. Student Honoree at 2006 Honors Convocation. Interned at the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society in fall of 2005 and has worked with many organizations such as WQED Multimedia, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD). Laura currently works for the University of Pittsburgh Press and holds a second job in retail while acting as a full time student. After graduation in August, Laura plans to live in Pittsburgh while working in the nonprofit field.

**Elizabeth Cervini:** English Writing major (Nonfiction), Public and Professional Writing Certificate, Nonprofit Management Certificate. Student employee of the Graduate School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology. Intern at South Side Counseling and Consultation, Inc. in the summer of 2005 and at The Sunlight of the Spirit (SOS) in the spring of 2006. SOS is a nondenominational organization that helps the relatives and loved ones of people who are addicted. Elizabeth was even offered a job to stay with SOS as their first Director of Development. However, she decided to instead accept a job as a Customer Service Representative at Rodgers Insurance Group, one of the largest insurance companies in Western Pennsylvania. Elizabeth plans to write and publish creative nonfiction in the next few years.

**Jamie Cortazzo-Sterling:** Politics and Philosophy major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate, Conceptual Foundations of Medicine Certificate. Recent inductee in Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society - Xi Chapter. Member of the Pitt Pathfinders and Freshman Peer Counselors. Former Student Government Board Off-Campus Housing Chair and member of Oakand Planning and Development Corporation. Worked as an editor and contributing writer for the *Pitt Political Review*. Interned for Victory Campaign 2004 in her sophomore year. Interned through the PPW program as an anchor on Pitt Law School's JURIST website the summer after her junior year through fall of her senior year. Volunteered at Magee Women's Hospital her sophomore year and East End Cooperative Ministry Tutoring her junior year. Currently employed as an LSAT teacher for Kaplan Co. She is also currently an editor and contributor to *Write Now*, the PPW newsletter. Jamie is planning on taking a year off to start her family before attending Pitt Law School to study Health Law. She would like to thank the PPW program for all the amazing

opportunities it has given her.

**Stephanie Eaves:** Film Studies major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Member of Pitt in Hollywood. Interned with Argentine Productions her junior year. Recently completed job as a Production Assistant on a feature-length independent film shot in Pittsburgh and has previously worked on student film projects through Pittsburgh Filmmakers and Point Park University. After graduation, Stephanie is interested in pursuing work in the film industry. She is looking to head west to Los Angeles and eventually enroll in graduate school for business.

**Nate Fernando:** BA in Communication/Rhetoric, BSBA in Marketing, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Former publicity chair for Pitt's "Up 'til Dawn" fundraising campaign for St. Jude's Hospital, Peer Educator for Sexual Assault Services, and National Residence Hall Honorary 2004 inductee and member. Participant on the summer 2003 voyage of Semester at Sea and recipient of the voyage's Student Leadership Award. Worked in the Office of Residence Life as a Resident Assistant (RA), Residence Life intern, and Senior Resident Assistant. Received the RA of the Year award two years in a row. Also interned with the Walt Disney Co., the Pittsburgh Penguins, and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Rounded off his educational and internship experiences as the project coordinator for implementing an on-campus marketing campaign for the Recording Industry Association of America in the Projects in Marketing class. After graduation, Nate will be training in the Management Development Program at M&T Bank in Buffalo, NY. Upon completion of his training, Nate will be working in the Marketing and Communications Department on the Brand Development team at M&T. In Nate's long-term plans, he sees himself attending graduate school and returning to the Walt Disney Co.

**Vanessa Gabler:** English Literature major and Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Worked at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic for three years. She also interned at the Creative Nonfiction Foundation as an Editorial Assistant. After graduation, she will continue working in the Outpatient Eating Disorder Clinic at Western Psych while she actively seeks a job in her own field. She would like to eventually move to Georgia or Texas and find a job as a proofreader in a publishing house.

**Lisa George:** Public and Professional Writing

Certificate. She graduated in 2002 from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with an Accounting major and a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences with a German major. Currently, she is working at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery as a Financial Analyst.

**Sarah Hall:** Communications major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Member of the Communications Club. Sarah worked throughout her college career to support herself, most recently at TGI Fridays. She also completed the Service Learning in Public and Professional Writing seminar by volunteering at the Make-A-Wish Foundation in downtown Pittsburgh where she served as a Program Services intern. In this volunteer position, Sarah assisted the program in fulfilling the wishes of children with life-threatening illnesses.

**Kaitlin Hravnak:** English Writing (Nonfiction) and Political Science majors, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Kaitlin was an editorial staff member of *Collision*. She participated in Amizade Center for Global Service Learning, working in community centers in Northern Ireland. She volunteered at Pittsburgh Cares and was a student employee in the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Kaitlin also served as an intern at Pennsylvania Legal Services, where she wrote press releases, public relations materials, case examples, and client vignettes. She studied abroad in the Pitt in London program in spring 2006. Kaitlin plans to go to law school in the fall. She wants to find a way to combine her interest in writing and the law.

**Tanya Joseph:** Communication Rhetoric major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Interned at the Hazelwood Initiative, Inc. Participated in a marketing team for Big Brothers Big Sisters in spring 2005. Volunteered repeatedly at Kuntu Repertory Theatre for the past four years. After graduation, Tanya plans to move back to New York, where she will work in either editing or public relations. She also plans to volunteer either at a hospital working with children or at a cultural nonprofit organization in the city. In the next two years, she plans to attend Emerson College or Boston University for a Master's Degree in Public Relations.

**Jeffrey Ryan Knox:** English Writing (Fiction) and Interdisciplinary Studies (Public Health) majors, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. President of the Pitt

## april and august 2006 grad facts, continued

Pathfinders, a student recruitment organization. Secretary and Public Relations Officer of Delta Chi Fraternity. PPW intern at the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Institutional Advancement. Assistant Copy Chief of *The Pitt News*. Undergraduate Instructor for Chemistry Department. Participated in international AIDS education research in Tanzania, Africa, during summers 2003 and 2004. After graduating with a BS and BA, Jeff will enter Pitt's School of Education to obtain an MAT in secondary English education. Afterward, he plans on teaching abroad in Europe for a few years.

**Sarah Kotzman:** English Writing major (Nonfiction), Public and Professional Writing Certificate, concentration in Photography. Also attends the Art Institute of Pittsburgh for her diploma in Digital Design. Photography Editor for Panther Prints yearbook. Member of The National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Honors on the Deans List. Interned at the Writing Center and worked as a Freelance Writer/Graphic Designer for *The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Magazine* in summer 2005. Interned at *Whirl Magazine* in fall 2006 and landed a cover story. Photographed the gallery currently displayed in the Writing Center. Works as Advertising/PR Assistant at Larson O'Brien Advertising and PR. Works as a Graphic Design Consultant for Tapis Rouge Events. After graduation, Sarah will concentrate on finishing her degree at the Art Institute. Then she plans on relocating to a warm climate and breaking into the national magazine industry.

**Kisa Kurtz:** Communications & Rhetoric major, Political Science major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. In addition to a full course load, Kisa works part-time at Buckhead Saloon. She volunteers each year for the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure. Interned at the Make-A-Wish Foundation in the Development Department. Kisa is enrolled in nine credits for the summer term to finish up her undergraduate studies. She is currently seeking a second internship position at another nonprofit organization in Pittsburgh. After graduating, she hopes to pursue a career in the nonprofit world working specifically in fundraising, event planning, and representing the foundation in the community where she can make a difference in the lives of people. She plans to reside in Pittsburgh, Phoenix, or any city in California.

**Karey Lizauckas:** Information Science major, Communication related area, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Officer for Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Society, member of Blue and Gold Society, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Pitt Program Council and the Pitt Pathfinders. Student Honoree at the 2005 and 2006 Honors Convocation, and 2006 nominee for the Emma Locke Memorial Award. Interned at Alcoa's Global Business Services Department

in the summer of 2005. After graduation, Karey will join Deloitte Consulting LLP in Pittsburgh, where she will work in the field of business and IT consulting. Her new career will allow her to travel throughout the U.S. In a couple of years, Karey plans on returning to school to earn her M.B.A. and sees herself someday working in corporate management. She is excited to return to Pitt and talk about her experiences in the professional world.

**Krystal MacIntyre:** Political Science major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Interned writing for JURIST at Pitt law school in the spring of 2006. Member of Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society and Pitt Ski Club. Volunteer at Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania. Completed one-credit service learning component at Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania. Also works part-time at Hillman Library and lifeguards at Marriott/Residence Inn in Oakland. After graduation, Krystal plans to spend the next year working and perusing her options. She hopes to attend law school in fall 2007. In five years, Krystal hopes to be a graduate of an accredited law school, embarking upon a very promising legal career.

**Caitlin Martin:** Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Marketing major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Caitlin interned at Federated Investors, YWCA and MARC USA in their public relations departments. She also interned at Clear Channel Communications and the Carnegie Library where she worked on marketing projects. Caitlin assisted with market research for the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance and a marketing campaign for Heritage Valley Health System. She has been involved in Women in Business, Delta Delta Delta and Students for Disaster Relief. She has lectured to students on marketing and public relations at Franklin Regional High School and College of Business Administration Freshman Studies classes. After graduation, Caitlin will be moving to Washington D.C to pursue a job in public relations. She will be an Account Executive at JDG Communications, a leading strategic marketing agency with clients including the House of Representatives, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Treasury, U.S. Air Force and PBS (her other offers included a Science Communication Specialist position with the EPA or marketing for a health education company). Her job at JDG will involve writing marketing and communication plans; doing all public relations for clients; and researching, designing and presenting proposals. Caitlin aspires to become an influential business communicator and hopes to inspire young people, just as mentors did for her. She thanks the special mentors, professors, friends and her family who have made her the person she is today.

**Mandy Miller:** Sociology major, Administration of Justice minor, and Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Interned at the Office of the Attorney General in the summer of 2005. After graduation, Mandy plans to go to law school and sees herself working in family or juvenile law.

**Rachel Muzika:** English Literature major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. During the spring of 2004, Rachel participated in Amizade's service-learning program and travelled to Queensland, Australia. She completed six credits in Research Writing and Independent Study and also formed friendships with many native Australians. Rachel was also active in America Reads during her junior year. For five months she was a literacy tutor for Somali refugee children in Lawrenceville. As a result of this experience, Rachel realized that she someday would like to travel to Africa and work to improve the conditions of refugees. Rachel was an intern with the Center for Latin American Studies in the fall of 2005. She created lesson plans and activities about Latin America for students in grades K-12. This reinforced Rachel's desire to become a teacher. In the fall of 2006 she will attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania to obtain a Master of Arts in Teaching. While at Pitt, Rachel was also active in the Golden Key Honor Society and received the Leadership Scholarship in 2004. She also remained on the Dean's Honor List from the spring of 2003 until the spring of 2006.

**Dana Nowlin:** Sociology major, Religious Studies minor, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Former public relations officer of Tower C's Resident Student Association (RSA), former chair of BASICS committee in the Black Action Society, member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Interned at Every Child, Inc. in spring of 2005. After graduation, Dana will work at Family Behavioral Resources in Therapeutic Staff Support. She wishes to apply to graduate school within a couple of years to obtain her Master's of Social Work. Dana wants to combine her PPW certificate with her degree as she strives to one day become the director of an agency. As a student who was confused and misguided for almost three years at Pitt, Dana is willing to come back and share her experiences and tips for success.

**Molly Panning:** Political Science major, Latin American Studies Certificate, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Intern with Corporate and Foundation Relations in the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Institutional Advancement. Public Relations and Marketing intern at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Completed the one-credit Service Learning component internship at the Animal Rescue League of Western

Pennsylvania. Congressional intern with Representative Joseph Hoeffel (PA-13). Participated in a three-month language and cultural immersion program in Guatemala. Editor and article contributor for *Write Now*, the Public and Professional Writing Program's newsletter. Molly is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and an alumna of the National Residence Hall Honorary (where she served as Historian for the 2003-2004 school year). After graduation, Molly will teach conversational English at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China (about four hours southwest of Shanghai). After her year in China, she would like to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector and hopes to find a position that will combine writing with travel and development work.

**Michelle Scott:** Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Michelle interned at Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. this spring after completing the PPW service learning program there this past fall. She has also completed internships at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development and at Vision Long Island, a smart growth planning company. While at Pitt, Michelle has been a member and Vice President of Pitt's Urban Studies Association. She also was a Senior Staff Writer for *The Pitt News* for two and a half years, during which she wrote articles on science topics and city affairs. After graduation, Michelle will be attending the University of Wisconsin – Madison to pursue Masters degrees in Public Affairs and Urban Planning.

**Teri Seigal:** Psychology major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Member of The Blue and Gold Society, Psi Chi National Psychology Honor Society, Pitt Pathfinders, and Theta Phi Alpha Sorority. University of Pittsburgh Scholar and Student Honoree at the 2006 Honors Convocation. Client Advocacy intern at the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in only three years, Teri will be attending law school next fall at Georgetown University. After Teri graduates from law school, she plans to work in a law firm specializing in corporate health law.

**Jessica Spears:** Marketing major, Public and Professional Writing Certificate. Winner of the 2006 Larson O'Brien Award for Excellence in Professional Writing. Resident Assistant at Sutherland Hall for two and a half years, former Vice President of Women in Business. Past internship experiences include positions at Creative Nonfiction Foundation, Ford Motor Company, PPG Industries, and Liberty USA. After graduation, Jessica will work at Norfolk Southern Corporation as a Marketing Management Trainee. ♦



## supporting families through an internship

elizabeth cervini works at SOS

by jamie cortazzo-sterling

*“A mother from an affluent area of Allegheny County is wearing her robe for the fourth consecutive day. She has read ten books about breaking addiction in those four days. Her son’s addiction to heroin is her only concern. Her own depression is severe. Her sleepless nights have drained her immune system and she is constantly battling illness. She and her husband fight constantly. The focus on her son’s addiction is tearing her family apart. She can’t see that her world is focused on her son or that her lifestyle has become unhealthy for her and the rest of her family.”*

“This story is true, and there are many more like this woman,” says University of Pittsburgh senior Elizabeth Cervini. “There are people who have spent their last pennies on sending their child to rehab and nothing has worked. Their depression and stress-related illnesses can be overwhelming.” These are the people that Elizabeth helped during her semester long internship at The Sunlight of the Spirit (SOS), a nondenominational, nonprofit organization with a mission to improve the well-being of family members of people with chemical dependence. Although the organization does not work directly with the addicted individuals, SOS believes that they, too, will benefit from a healthier family environment.

Elizabeth, who recently finished her English Writing (Nonfiction track) major and certificates in Public & Professional Writing (PPW) and Nonprofit Management, interned 12 to 14 hours a week at SOS. The Sunlight of the Spirit is an organization founded by two women, Diane Hurd, the Executive Director, and Maggie Gioffre, the Program Director. Both women have clinical as well as personal experience with the effects of chemical dependence on the family unit.

The Sunlight of the Spirit is a new organization; it just received nonprofit 501(c) (3) status last year. Elizabeth was a very busy intern at SOS; after meeting with the directors for two hours a week, she was responsible for writing newsletters, letters of inquiry for future grant requests, and cover letters for corporate sponsors. Furthermore, she researched and summarized material on chemical dependence. Eliza-

beth’s most challenging assignment was to write a grant that would potentially fund her salary as Director of Development.

Elizabeth had a very positive experience at this internship site, learning about an issue of which she had very little prior knowledge. The families of those facing addiction typically do not seek help, but they too require emotional support. Elizabeth notes that “it’s hard to stop that downward spiral of the entire family when one [member] jumps into the terrible world of addiction.” The Sunlight of the Spirit aims to stop this downward spiral through education and therapy.

Elizabeth highly recommends a PPW internship to other writing students. She believes that the PPW certificate truly prepares students to write in the workplace. “This isn’t like the typical internship when you’re running to get coffee for your boss and getting everyone in the office lunch,” she says. “You are hands-on and involved in major decisions. You’re valued as part of the organization.”



Photo: Jack O’Brien

Since graduation, Elizabeth has left SOS and now works at Rodgers Insurance Group, one of the largest insurance companies in Western Pennsylvania. In August, she will earn her license to sell various insurance policies as a Customer Service Representative. She found this job through American Business Centers, an employment agency located in downtown Pittsburgh. She highly recommends ABC to other students who are struggling to find post-graduation employment. She does give a word of caution to students considering using any employment agency: “Demand that your potential is met.”

Elizabeth is very optimistic about her new job: “The people are great, there’s a ton of room for advancement and I can still work with my past internships writing grants --and hopefully other organizations will want me to freelance as well.” With her ambition and positive attitude, we are sure that Elizabeth will not only meet her potential, but far surpass her goals! ♦



## winners of the 2006 ppw writing competitions many outstanding projects submitted for 2006

The judging committee met in April to decide the winners of the PPW writing contests for 2006. On the committee were Brenda Glascott, a compositionist who teaches Writing for the Public and Written Professional Communication; Heather Stewart, who teaches Written Professional Communication and the Language of Business and Industry; Beth Newborg, Outreach Coordinator for the Writing Center and director of the Freshman Engineering Writing Program; and Angela Sarkis, a PPW alum and winner of the 2005 Larson O'Brien Prize for Excellence in Professional Writing. Angela represented Larson O'Brien Advertising and PR, where she now works as a copy writer.

The judges agreed that it was hard to choose winners from a very strong set of submissions.

The winner of the Larson O'Brien Prize for Excellence in Professional Writing was junior Jessica Spears for her advertising campaign for Pittsburgh 250. She has won a \$300 prize, funded by Larson O'Brien, and was recognized at the PPW end-of-term celebration on April 19.

The Prize for Excellence in Writing for the Public Interest went to junior Jason Gawaldo for his adoption campaign. Jason has won a \$300 prize funded by Jean Grace and by John Newborg of the Newborg Law Offices. Jason was also honored at the PPW end-of-term celebration.

The judges felt that senior Laura Cek's



Angela Sarkis (L) presents Jessica Spears with the 2006 Larson O'Brien prize. Photo: Jack O'Brien



Jason Gawaldo with his award for Excellence in Writing for the Public Interest. Photo: Jean Grace

project, advertising a 5K run/walk to raise money for breast cancer research, was worthy of honorable mention in the category of Excellence in Writing for the Public Interest. Laura will receive a \$50 gift certificate to the Pitt Book Center, funded by PPW faculty member Heather Stewart.

The PPW program would like to thank all of the students who entered the contests and all of the sponsors who have made the contests possible. ♦

### the 2007 ppw writing awards

♦ Larson O'Brien Prize for Excellence in Professional Writing

♦ The Prize for Excellence in Writing for the Public Interest

• Open to students registered in the PPW program

• Submit projects written between 1/4/06 and 3/22/07

• Deadline March 22, 2007

• Two \$300 first prizes

Details <[www.pitt.edu/~ppw/contests.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~ppw/contests.html)>.



## tech talk

ppw faculty spotlight: debbie edwards  
by sarah kotzman

Deborah Edwards currently teaches Written Professional Communication and Writing in the Legal Professions, two courses that perfectly reflect her two different career fields (besides teaching, that is).

After graduating with a law degree from The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, Debbie left the small town of colonial reenactments to become a corporate lawyer. "It was a 24-hour door-to-door sale service," Debbie laughs, referring to the enormous amount of travel, buying, and selling companies had her do. "Toward the end of my career, I was traveling to Asia." Eventually, the hectic schedule of negotiating contracts, traveling, and working with translators simply wasn't fun anymore. "It's difficult to have a life here (in the U.S.) when you're gone all the time," Debbie remembers. That is when she decided to ground herself and return to school. Ten years ago, she found Pitt and began a new chapter in her life.

Once she acquired a Master's degree in Information Sciences, Debbie joined TechWrite. She had always enjoyed writing, but now her passion for it developed into a career. Debbie found her highly technical education beneficial as she began to write software documentation. "It's good to know what goes on behind the scenes," she says.

After two years, the dot.com boom caught her attention, and she moved on to FreeMarkets.com, one of the only companies to survive the dot.com bust that followed. In 2000, her web experience then helped her find a match with her current employer, ThoughtForm (formerly Agnew Moyer Smith Inc.), a design firm in South Side.

At ThoughtForm, Debbie collaborates with clients and designers to help create anything from marketing brochures to online training programs. Big name clients, such as McDonald's and Caterpillar, rely on the firm to mold complicated information into clear and engag-

ing speech. "For me, that usually means a lot of rewriting," Debbie laughs, explaining she must cut down lengthy, technical descriptions.

One type of publication Debbie contributes to is a "Fog-lifter." This is a large, single page that visually explains a complicated issue (for example, restaurant operation for managers). "There are not many words. It's our job to pick the right words," Debbie explains. She must also constantly collaborate with designers throughout the publication process, since most of the software she is writing training materials for is still being developed. "It's a moving target!" she says, explaining that in her job, designs and articles must be made with flexibility in mind. She even creates a little design herself, often working between two monitors: one displaying structured type, the other "tagged" with labels to later convert into xml.



Photo: Sarah Kotzman

All of the professional writing she does today must meet her company's voice, or what she calls "House Style." Though not her personal voice, "it's a useful style to have," she says, citing how it's less intimidating and more exciting. Through her professional writing, she thoroughly explains concepts, fairly similar to the practice of teaching.

Instructing at Pitt is the same thing, different audience. "You must analyze your audience," she says, referring to a concept she emphasizes in her classes. Perhaps some of the technique comes from her days as a lawyer, but Debbie believes that "good writers have a picture of their audience. Good writing is a conversation." ♦

*Debbie will be drawing on her experiences to develop and teach a new class in the fall: Language of Science and Technology. See page 9 for details.*



## language of science and technology

a new course and new emphasis in ppw

This fall, Debbie Edwards will be teaching Engcomp 1101 Language of Science and Technology. This course will launch a new emphasis on technical writing within the Public and Professional Writing program.

Pittsburgh has a very active technical writing community. The Pittsburgh chapter of the Society for Technical Communication <[www.stcpg.org](http://www.stcpg.org)> holds monthly meetings and special events. Look for news about STC next academic year. We plan to invite speakers to a special PPW event. Students are also welcome to participate in STC events at special rates.

Debbie, a member of STC, will bring her experience with technical writing to the PPW program via the Language of Science and Technology.

This course will allow students to develop the communication skills needed to present scientific and technological information clearly and accurately to a variety of audiences. Students will draw on fundamental principles of effective communication, such as audience analysis and information design to write and revise proposals, technical reports, user instructions, and news releases for both expert and lay audiences. The course will also explore the ways successful writers use emerging technologies and methods such as hypertext, structured markup languages, content management systems, and multimedia. This course is appropriate for students who have some experience with written professional communication, and who are interested in developing skills needed for writing technical reports, software documentation, and other technical communication. ♦



## big dreamer

spotlight on sarah kotzman  
by shannon durkin

For the past few years, Sarah Kotzman was one of the shining stars of the Public and Professional Writing Program. Sarah contributed to nearly every major PPW or Writing Center project since she joined the program two years ago. She spent countless hours writing articles, taking photographs, interviewing faculty members, and designing logos. She has been a huge asset to the program, and upon her graduation will be missed by faculty and students alike. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sarah, and to shed some light on her talents and generosity to the program.

Sarah's most recent contribution to the PPW program was a gallery of photographs currently on display in the Writing Center. For four years, the Writing Center featured bland white walls. When the Writing Center decided to spruce it up, Jean Grace immediately thought of Sarah. Jean envisioned a photo gallery of Oakland that would reflect the writing process, so she met with Sarah to discuss the various options.

Jean and Sarah brainstormed and made a list of words that

reminded them of writing; Sarah then used those words to create visual metaphors. For example, they thought about the word "balance" as it pertains to writing. Balance is something that all writers strive to achieve, and Sarah looked for a way to convey this concept through her art. She photographed a tiny grasshopper standing on a huge leaf, barely hanging on by its delicate feet. To represent the idea of "connection" in writing, Sarah photographed one of Oakland's beautiful old bridges. She explained, "Through color and associative thought, I hope to encourage the writer's process and inspire the writer's mind." The photos have

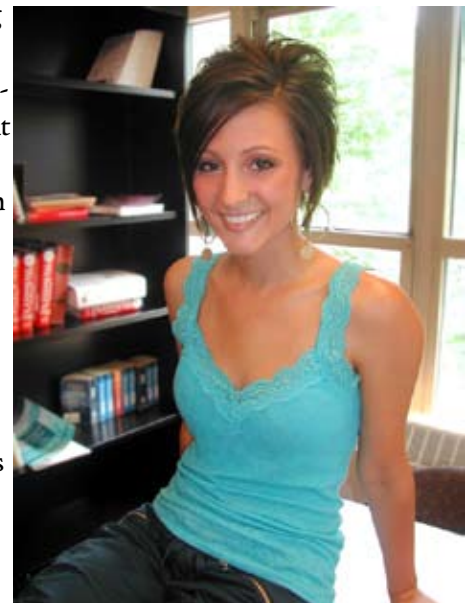




Photo: Sarah Kotzman

been a huge hit with staff and students alike; most people are shocked to learn that they were taken by a student. According to Jean, "A professional could not have done any better."

Sarah's contributions hardly ended at the photo gallery. She was instrumental in developing *Write Now*, the PPW newsletter. Last summer, as a Writing Center intern, Sarah single handedly converted the format of *Write Now* to Adobe InDesign, a desktop publishing program. The new program is not only user friendly, but it enabled the authors to add more artistic elements to their stories. Sarah also helped to develop *Write Now's* design and contributed many articles and countless photos. In addition to her work on *Write Now*, Sarah created logos for PPW, the Writing Center, and the Writer's Café. She also developed a Writers Café website, complete with her own photography.

Sarah recently completed a PPW Independent Study under Pam O'Brien, in which she researched how to land a job in the magazine industry. She interviewed several magazine

professionals, and received plenty of good advice on how to get started in the field. Always wanting to help out her fellow students, Sarah compiled all of her findings into an informative booklet, which will be made available on the PPW website. She calls her booklet "The Guidebook to Dreaming Big." Through the guidebook, she hopes to reach out to students interested in the magazine field, help steer them in the right direction, and inspire them to follow their dreams.

Sarah's website, [www.sarahkotzman.com](http://www.sarahkotzman.com), is a great way to check out her work. You can browse through her art and read a variety of written pieces. Some of the work was published in local magazines, such as *Whirl* and *Pittsburgh Metropolitan*. For anyone looking for a good laugh, check out the story about her stint as a Subway sandwich artist! Sarah has a sharp, witty writing style that complements her fresh, artful photography. When you see her work, you just know that she will succeed at fulfilling her big dream of working for a national magazine. ♦



Photo: Sarah Kotzman



## design-a-course spotlight on ppw independent study students by jamie cortazzo-sterling

Many students in the PPW program have very specific interests in the writing field. Many times, more broadly conceived writing courses do not fulfill students' educational needs. While all of the PPW courses do teach a wide variety of writing skills that apply to different forms of public or professional settings, students may desire more specific instruction in one particular subset of public or professional writing. These students are wise to take advantage of the PPW program's Independent Study option. This option allows PPW students with a proven track record of academic success to design a one-, two-, or three-credit course that is tailored directly to their writing needs. The course requires at least 25 pages of writing, reflection on the process, monthly meetings with students and sponsors, reading selected texts, and presenting work to PPW students and faculty.

This spring semester, five PPW students elected to utilize the Independent Study course option. Their course designs were geared explicitly to the areas of writing in which they are most interested. The courses also tie into each student's prospective future careers, as all of the Independent Study students are either working already or will soon enter the workforce. The writing skills acquired during these Independent Study courses should prove invaluable for these promising students.

**Healthcare Writing.** Derek Askey, a three year intern for UPMC Health Plan, was disappointed to find that Pitt did not offer a course that focuses on writing in the healthcare field. For his Independent Study, he designed a course that would give him more experience writing in this specific area. Derek composed an issue of the *UPMC Health Journal*, an online health magazine that discusses a variety of topics, including diseases, treatments, and related programs. Visit <http://healthjournal.upmc.com> for more information on the *Health Journal*.

For his journal issue, Derek wrote three full-length articles, a health quiz, and some ancillary materials. His goal was to create a final project that closely resembled an actual issue of the *Health Journal*. Hoping to pursue a career in the healthcare field, Derek added this Independent Study to his resume, which helped him to score a recent interview at UPMC.

**Writing for Nonprofits.** Jennifer Brown, a student who has been very active working for nonprofit agencies and the PPW service learning program, designed a course that would focus on these organizations. Her goal was to "create a more active, tighter connection between college students and nonprofits." Jennifer accomplished this by fulfilling the following objectives: she contacted between 30 to 40 nonprofit organizations, she identified available volunteer opportunities that are open to college students in the nonprofit agencies, and she made the information accessible to a wide base of students.

Jennifer also interviewed several nonprofit employees to gather information on employment in the nonprofit world. She created an educational packet that will be soon be available to students, especially those interested in volunteering for PPW's service learning class. Jennifer hopes that this project will give her an even better understanding of the nonprofit sector, which she hopes to continue working in after graduation.

**Careers in Science Writing.** Like Derek, Shannon Durkin

was disappointed to find that Pitt did not offer any classes geared toward science writing. Since she is interested in a career in the field, Shannon designed a course that would educate her about employment opportunities and improve her scientific writing skills. For her research, Shannon interviewed two science writers and read *A Field Guide for Science Writers*, an in-depth handbook published by the National Association of Science Writers.

Shannon's first writing project was a summary of this research. She also wrote two articles that a science writer would potentially write. The first was a newsletter article about an environmental restoration project in her neighborhood. The second piece described the emotional problems faced by adult children of alcoholics. This type of article would most likely appear in a health magazine. Although Shannon has a molecular biology background, she chose to step outside of her comfort zone and write on topics that were unfamiliar to her. She believes this course will help her in the future because she was able to explore a variety of career options and get an idea of what type of work she would like to pursue.

**Exploration in Magazines.** Sarah Kotzman knew she wanted to work for a magazine after graduation, but she was unsure how to initially break into the business. She designed a course that could answer that question and add an impressive piece to her employment portfolio. Sarah interviewed professionals in the magazine industry, including the Art Director of *Redbook*, the former editor of *Runners World*, a contract writer for *GQ* and *Readers Digest*, and the owner of *Pittsburgh Metropolitan*. She conducted her interviews in person and by phone and email, and the results were "amazing and really inspiring." Sarah compiled the interview results into a guide book, which will be available on the PPW website.

Sarah's second project was the creation of a mock up magazine. She designed the style, title, content, and the entire layout of the magazine. She wrote most of the articles, but also assumed a "pseudo-editor position" and asked other Independent Study students to contribute. She also created a huge "writing/design/photo" piece, which will be a valuable addition to her portfolio. Sarah now believes that she knows exactly what steps to take in order to land a job at a national magazine.

**Desktop Publishing Basics.** Caitlin Martin created an Independent Study course that will be a great help to her in the very near future. The goal of her course was to teach the non-design major how to design documents using the Quark Xpress program. Caitlin first taught herself the basic design elements necessary to produce an effective document. She then applied these concepts to several professional documents that she created using the Quark program.

As a Marketing major interested in the writing field, Caitlin felt that she needed to understand some of the basics of design concepts and how to use a desktop publisher like Quark. Caitlin recently landed a job in Washington, D.C. where she will write copy for a strategic marketing agency. Her experience and comfort level working with programs like Quark Xpress will likely be a great help to her on the job. ♦



## **credits**

Editor: Jamie Cortazzo-Sterling  
Copyeditor: Shannon Durkin

## **call for newsletter submissions**

We are starting to work on the next issue of *Write Now*. If you would like to submit an essay on your experiences as a PPW student or intern, essays that explore issues in public and professional writing, or art/photography, send an email to [ppw@pitt.edu](mailto:ppw@pitt.edu).

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