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## On Graduate Teaching Assistantships: Bailey McAlister, MAPW Alumna

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# Bailey McAlister



Bailey McAlister at the College English Association conference in St. Petersburg, FL

*Bailey is an MAPW alumni with a degree in Rhetoric and Composition and an Applied Writing supporting area. She Graduated July 2018. The answers below reflect Bailey's Spring 2018 semester.*

In a few sentences, please describe your GTA position, so that our readers get to know a little more about what you do.

I am a Teaching Assistant in our First-Year Composition (FYC) department. I taught ENGL 1101 last fall, and I now teach ENGL 1102. My first two semesters, I underwent training for teaching—this involved taking pedagogy classes, working at the Writing Center, and shadowing a FYC professor. Now I teach two classes each semester. In the fall, I taught rhetoric and style for ENGL 1101, and I used food/drink writing as my course theme. Currently, I teach research and writing in ENGL 1102.

How long have you been in this GTA program and how did you find out about its availability?

I have been a GTA since entering the program (fall 2016), and I heard about it as an undergrad here—I worked at the Writing Center, and the director informed me about the program and the GTA.

What was the process for you to apply and pursue your GTA position?

I applied for the MAPW program and the GTA position at the same time.

Are there any specific reasons surrounding your professional development that led you to this assistantship? If so, please share them with us.

When I was nearing the end of my undergrad education and going towards graduate school, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in academia, but I didn't know which specific career path I wanted to take. I knew a GTA would allow me to use my teaching skills (my undergrad degree is in education) at a level and in a subject that fit me better. I didn't know if I wanted to be a professor in the future, but I knew I wanted the experience, and I knew I'd be good at it.

How do you think this assistantship has helped you professionally? Any new skills or renewed skills that you may have developed as a GTA?

Now that I am teaching FYC, I feel like this is definitely a career option for me. I did not expect to like teaching so much. The biggest thing I've learned as a GTA is how to keep up with relevant information. As a teacher, it's important to be aware of current information in academia in order to best serve the students.

Any special stories about your assistantship? Funny moments? Insightful moments?

I actually experienced many special, insightful moments throughout my teaching. When I taught 1101, I was surprised everyday by how important rhetoric is in food/drink writing, and I was constantly finding new material for my students to work with—restaurant reviews, news articles, academic essays about food, recipes, menus, etc. One of the best moments was when I brought in a guest speaker—the students were very interested, and they asked him lots of good questions. Most of this semester's classes just involve me giving a bit of guidance about writing and letting the students go through the composition process on their own. I feel more like a mentor than a lecturer, and I'm intrigued by all of my students' research paper topics so far.

Have you participated in other assistantships or internships that may have provided you with professional development opportunities? If so, could you briefly tell us about them?

Over the summer, I worked with Loretta Daniels in the Graduate College as a writer and editor for the *Graduate College Magazine* and Graduate College Newsletter. This GRA was super important and super impacting. This was the first time I learned how to do PR work and journalism writing, which helped me develop my writing skills in other areas. I now am very good at figuring out how to tailor my writing skills to fit the needs of different writing fields. I also made many professional connections with people in graduate programs all over KSU—I would have never gotten to know these people had I not interviewed them for the Graduate College publications. There are so many graduate programs here that I had never even heard of! I plan to work with Loretta again this summer.