

What do Steve Wynn, Reese Witherspoon, and Brian Sandoval have in common?

They're all former **English majors!**

An English major provides, in the fullest sense of the word, literacy — that is, both an understanding of the marvelous variety of literary works in the English language and the ability to read sensitively, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, and argue persuasively. The major is thus extraordinarily broad in its scope, providing a foundation for success in almost any walk of life. The major is also both traditional — opening up the whole history of writing in English — and future-oriented — helping you navigate a culture in which forms of verbal expression are constantly proliferating in number and expanding in influence.

The skills developed through majoring in English — writing, editing, critical and analytical thinking — are highly valued by a great variety of employers, as well as schools of law and medicine and other post-baccalaureate schools and programs. As a recent CNN article asserts, **“The verbal and written communication skills that English majors possess remain in top demand at nearly every company in America.”**

Required major courses taught by exceptional faculty ensure you acquire those skills. Yet the major is also flexible, allowing you the electives you need to take your course of study in the direction that best suits your personal needs, interests, and goals.

Some students, for example, take courses in professional writing in order to open the door to work as a technical/professional writer or editor — one of the fastest growing areas of employment in the U.S. today, with positions available in business, industry, government, education, and publishing.

At the same time, the English major is not merely a vocational degree that sets you on one — and only one — career path. Rather, it fits you to adapt to, and excel in, any line of work and any kind of life. For ultimately, both the empathy for others and the flexibility of mind great literature helps us to cultivate are invaluable, whether we label this “imaginative capability,” “the ability to ‘think outside the box,’” or “cultural sensitivity.” Such qualities and skills, combined with the ability to communicate effectively in an ever-more-interconnected world, means that the English graduate will be uniquely well prepared for 21st-century work and citizenship.

For a good guide to career possibilities, see *Great Jobs for English Majors*, Julie DeGalan and Stephen Lambert (McGraw-Hill, 2006).