

In the fall of my fourth year as an undergraduate at Grand Valley State University, I had plans of attending graduate school the following year. I had taken the GRE, had a few schools in mind, and spent days on my portfolio. At the same time, I felt as though I had no idea what I was doing applying to graduate school. I knew then that I wanted to continue in the field of nonfiction, but I had no idea how to handle the graduate school application process, let alone selecting the right programs. Due to a scheduling conflict, I was not able to graduate at the end of my fourth year in college. This has proved to be the most important set-back in my life.

After accepting my situation, and understanding that I had one more semester remaining, I devoted my time to writing. Before long the idea of having a full year to save money and seek out a writing program that was right for me began to sound like a gift. The previous year had left me with very limited time to devote to either with the extreme credit loads I had taken. During this time I was able to be free of the pressures of my previous year and fully research the programs to which I was applying.

Over the last four years working towards my degree in creative writing I have been fortunate enough to work with many gifted professors. I have seen first-hand how these people share their knowledge and passion with students, and make long term connections with them. These professors get to teach the genre they enjoy working in every day. They come to work to talk about writing, and live within the genre. They get to be professional students.

After attending the 'Nonfictionow' nonfiction conference held in Iowa City this past year, my desire to teach nonfiction has grown greatly. I watched the writers I have loved for years conduct seminars, I spoke with them about their graduate programs and publications, and I want to be one of them. There is no other job I would want for the rest of my life then that of a creative writing professor.

The time I have been able to spend in the local community of writers here in Grand Rapids has greatly influenced my future. I have participated in many workshops outside the classroom as well as inside. I have logged many hours editing the work of my peers, and honing my craft as a writer. I have been featured in the December 2004 issue of *Connption* as well as the May 2003 issue of *The Reminder*. I have been a guest speaker for the student reading series here at Grand Valley five times in the last four years, and was the Master of Ceremonies for the 2006 Poetry Smack-Down.

I have been very fortunate to work with gifted writers and professors over the past few years. It is difficult to imagine continuing as a writer without the interaction with others focused on nonfiction.