



Samantha Curreli, Class of 2016

CB: *What do you miss most about attending Caldwell University?*

SC: I can't just choose one thing because Caldwell University, though I commuted, was my home for four years. I miss so much about the campus and the lovely people I met. I made so many wonderful friends with students and professors. There was never a moment on that campus where I felt lost or alone. I knew I had a home away from home there. Along with having a lovely college family, I also was lucky enough to fall in love with a good majority of my classes. I miss the excitement of arriving to campus, grabbing a (usually) Pumpkin Spice Latte from the coffee cart in Werner, and making my way to a course. I miss the classes and the usually witty, enthusiastic professors. While those days sometimes felt like one of those huge roller coasters everyone's a little anxious about riding, I wouldn't trade them for a thing.

CB: *After graduating from Caldwell, did you consider attending graduate school? If you have attended graduate school, which institution was it and what was your coursework like?*

SC: Yes! I graduated from Arcadia University's MFA in Creative Writing program in May 2018. It's a low-residency program which meets three times out of the two years it takes to complete the program, twice in Glenside, PA and once in Edinburgh, Scotland. Because most of the coursework was done through online platforms, it was easier to coordinate with my work schedule. However, the courses were tough, as we had a tight deadline to complete 60,000-word novels while writing approximately three fifteen-page short stories per semester and engaging in extensive online critiques each week. Of course, we also had our literature courses, which gave us a nice load of reading. But all of the rigorous, hard work paid off and I was fortunate to have made such good friends and connections. I feel like I have a bigger place in the writing community. I adored the program and am so grateful I had the opportunity to attend and graduate.

CB: *What was the interview process like for you while searching for a job after graduation?*

SC: During my time at Caldwell, I was fortunate to have created such a tight bond with my professors. Dr. Mary Ann Miller knew my interest in writing and music, which led to connecting me with The Aquarian Weekly, one of the oldest music magazines in New Jersey. After the initial summer internship, I was hired as a contributing writer and after moving to Florida, I was able to continue writing for the publication. After graduating from Arcadia, I was even more fortunate to have landed my position as a copywriter and content coordinator after one prior job interview. As a writer, the process can be grueling, but because I was prepared and had a full writing resume, I made my own luck.

CB: *What is your current position and what are your responsibilities in this position?*

SC: I recently graduated from graduate school and am now a copywriter and content coordinator for a fair trade art business in Florida. I write content for the website as well as their print catalog, create press releases, collaborate with the art department on various projects, draw plans for social media and marketing, and conduct research and apply it to my writing.

CB: *Is there one professor or faculty member from Caldwell that especially inspired you? Why?*

SC: Each professor had a huge impact on me. I was always in the department, so I got to know them all pretty well and I can't thank them enough for all they've done for me. However, I have two who really worked with me and always put up with my antics (writers can be quite dramatic). Dr. Mary Lindroth and Dr. Trish Verrone were always there and constantly offered guidance and support. From panicked emails regarding the English Compositions to celebratory notes about new publications, they quickly became a part of my little Caldwell family unit. Dr. Verrone spent hours with me discussing papers and my individualized major while Dr. Lindroth and I talked about Shakespeare and the theatre and combed through lengthy reports. Of course, the three of us (and usually some other students) also spent hours just talking together, discussing books and authors and plays. Dr. Verrone was mentioned often in my household while growing up because my father had studied under her as well. He would always gush about her and how interesting her classes are. Both Dr. Verrone and Dr. Lindroth have such energy and love for knowledge, which inspired me to go on for my MFA. However, there is this one special woman who was like a super-close aunt to me. I met her my second year through a couple of fellow English majors and she quickly became one of my good friends. Mary Ladany was always there to talk about anything and everything. Sometimes we would discuss literature or Calyx and others, we would just chat. I learned a lot from her, and if I dared begin to list everything, we'd have a book in no time.

CB: *Have you been successful in publishing any original work? If you were to be published, what type of genre would you choose to write in?*

SC: I took Sister Brigid Brady's creative writing course as a sophomore and I think that's really when writing clicked for me. I wrote a piece of flash fiction for the class and it was picked up for publication a few months later. Since then, I've continued writing fiction and have had good luck in finding my stories good homes in magazines and journals online and in print.

I grew up watching horror films (mostly the old Universal films), so I gravitated towards horror. I've only started branching out now to general fiction and some literature, but I would love to be the next Christopher Moore.

CB: *What skills that you gained as an English major at Caldwell have you been able to apply in your career?*

SC: Honestly, I had no idea I would grow so much as a writer within my first year of Caldwell. By the time I graduated, I'd been published, landed a job as a journalist, and was getting set to attend graduate school. I knew from day one as an English major that I would have to, at one point or another, sit for three hours to take my English Compositions, as my father had almost 20 years prior. So I took my writing and literature courses very seriously and worked with the professors during office hours so I could tighten my prose. This not only gave me excellent writing skills, but taught me determination and perseverance. I also learned how to take charge of what I love. In my sophomore year, I found myself taking the role as managing editor of Calyx Literary and Art Magazine. With help from the magazine's advisor, Mary Ladany, and many good and talented friends, we were able to continue the magazine and even held a few fundraisers for it. By the time I left, we had enough interest to host a few readings and a writing workshop.

CB: *How do your plans for your future as a freshman English major compare with where you currently are in your career? What changed and why?*

SC: As a freshman English major, I don't think I really knew what I wanted to do—and that was okay. As a freshman, you still have time to figure that all out. I knew I wanted to major in English. I didn't know what to do with that, which is why I bounced so much with my second major. But I think I always knew deep down that I wanted to write.

CB: *If you had chosen to double major at Caldwell with English, what other major would have piqued your interest?*

SC: During my time at Caldwell, I double majored in English and then I created my own second major with immense help from Dr. Verrone. Together, we created my "Professional Writing" major, which pulled different writing and journalism courses from other departments. I'd flip-flopped as a freshman from music to education to communications as second majors—but always stuck with English.

CB: *Do you have any plans or interests in perhaps teaching one day?*

SC: Yes! With my MFA in creative writing, I can teach at university level. I would like to run a writing class one day. I was a writing tutor for three years at Caldwell and loved every second of it.

CB: *What, if any, works are you currently reading?*

SC: Because I'm in the process of completing a young adult novel, I'm reading *The Disenchantments* by Nina LaCour, a young adult novel about a touring rock band.

CB: *What advice do you have for current English majors/minors in regards to attending college and developing a career after graduation?*

SC: Internships are a big deal because there are so many job postings that call for at least a year of related experience. The competition is often tough, so while you're in college it's important to prepare for your career. I would also like to recommend reading and writing as much as possible and connecting with your professors because they are so wise—they know how to help and will do everything they can to steer you in the right direction. And, as Scar taught us in *The Lion King*, be prepared!

CB: *Who is your favorite author, and what makes them so notable?*

SC: Christopher Moore. I love his sharp wit and sarcasm and because many of his novels involve extraordinary things happening to ordinary people. For as long as I can remember, I would imagine these awesome, fantastic occurrences erupting into my life, so his plots resonate with me. I also know that he is a very giving and kind man, as I've had a few exchanges with him over the years. However, I also have an equally soft spot for Edgar Allan Poe. In fact, most of the English professors have seen me attend class (usually during an exam or something relevant) with a little Edgar Allan Poe finger puppet. I worked my English Composition theme so that I could somehow incorporate one of his works because I knew I could certainly write something solid about his works. I've read them all!

CB: *Do you do any writing in your free time? If so, is there any short excerpt that you would like to share with the Caldwell community?*

SC: I like to say that I don't have free time because when I'm home, I'm almost always writing (while chugging my coffee and petting one of my cats). Whether I'm working on my novel or I'm figuring out a short story, there's always something brewing.

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