

Informational Interview Questions

1. What large questions does your discipline attempt to answer?

The Rhetoric and Professional Writing program attempts to answer the large questions of

- why and how people write in the workplace and in academia
- how technology, organizational structure, and constraints affect the form and effectiveness of workplace writing
- how to negotiate the ethical issues that arise when writing in organizations.

2. What are the department's entry requirements to become a Rhetoric and Professional Writing major?

Students wishing to enter the RPW major or minor must complete:

- RPW 110 and 111 (the required first-year writing courses), either by taking the courses or by testing (SAT or ACT)
- Introduction to Professional Writing (RPW 215W), the prerequisite for all other RPW classes.

3. Does the coursework mostly involved lecture, lab work, field experience, team projects, research and/or writing or some combination of these?

RPW courses focus on writing, which includes research, and reading about core concepts and their applications. Class assignments include both individual and team work. The RPW program also offers internship opportunities, which provide students with writing experience and mentoring in business or industry. Majors are required to complete a portfolio capstone course, which allows them to showcase their best work.

4. What types of programs, minors, and/or electives have students combined this major with?

Students have pursued double majors in RPW and

- criminal justice
- computer science
- English/creative writing
- history
- human services
- management information systems
- politics and government

Other Arts and Sciences majors that combine well with the RPW major include sociology, psychology, and modern languages.

Students with majors in health sciences, computer science, engineering, and biology have pursued RPW minors. Students in pre-medical studies cannot pursue a minor due to their credit requirements, but they can take RPW courses as electives.

5. What kind of skills, abilities, personal qualities and interests should a student considering this field have?

Contrary to what many people think, a student does not have to be a “perfect” writer to be well suited to this program. The student **does** need to be:

- interested in writing
- open to writing as a process (including receiving feedback)
- willing to work individually and as part of a writing/project team.

Our most successful students have had the personal qualities of curiosity, flexibility, and the desire to be effective communicators. Any area of interest or study has the potential to work well with the RPW major or minor, because every field in business and industry needs excellent writers and communicators—no exceptions!

6. Are there any courses or previous experiences that would help a student to determine whether to major in this field? What courses or experiences would you recommend for a student interested in further assessing this as a possible option?

No particular experiences are *required* for students wishing to major in RPW. The program will teach students what they need to know about rhetoric, writing, research, literacy, design, and collaboration. It is helpful if students have basic computer skills so that they can learn the more advanced tools available in our computer lab.

In general, a student interested in the RPW program tends to enjoy reading and writing, likes to see past the surface of issues, and is open to learning and practicing a variety of writing styles and formats.

7. What opportunities exist, if any, for students to gain experience in your field of study, i.e., internships?

All students enrolled in the RPW major or minor are eligible to pursue an internship. The program has a variety of contacts in business and industry, and students can work with an internship sponsor to determine length of internship, work schedule, and learning goals, and grading criteria for the internship.

A number of RPW graduates have been hired by their internship sponsor for full-time employment.

8. What do you see as possible career options should I major in your field of study?

Actually, very few jobs in this field come with the label “Writer.” Most of our graduates have other job titles—educator, fund-raiser/development officer, communication specialist, financial analyst, copyeditor, acoustical engineer—but their work responsibilities include a significant amount of writing.

Some jobs that do use the title include: grant writer, medical writer-editor, technical specifications writer, marketing writer. There are as many writing possibilities as there are job titles—that's how important writing is in the workplace.

9. What have recent graduates in your major gone on to do?

Our graduates have gone on to work for a variety of companies, including America Online, the American Lung Association, Air Transportation Association, Ensign Bickford, The *Hartford Courant*, Hamilton Sundstrand, Louis Dreyfus, Maimonides Medical Center, Oracle, Penguin Publishing Division, the Pennsylvania District Attorney's Office, and the U.S. Army.

A number of students have gone on to graduate school in fields such as technical writing, publishing, law, nursing, computer science/management information systems, and English.

10. What advice would you give a first-year (undecided) student considering this field as a possible major?

The Rhetoric and Professional Writing major (or minor), combined with a subject area of the student's choice, is an excellent way for students to differentiate themselves from all the other graduates in their field. As our society becomes more information-based, people who can communicate effectively, especially in writing, become increasingly important in a variety of workplaces.

Our students say that the program prepares them for the workplace and improves their writing skills for other courses at the university. They also say that RPW courses, with extensive one-on-one contact with professors who are also writers, are relevant, interesting—and fun!

Please visit the program's web site for more information: <http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/rpw/>