

Meg All, B.A. English Language and Literature, 2012

By Max Chambers

Student Chapter Lead & EDI Program Coordinator, SPIE

“Literature is a way to travel through time and space, into the minds of many, and live a multitude of experiences.”

Meg All graduated from WKU in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature. She is currently the Student Chapter Lead and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Program Coordinator for [SPIE](#), the international society for optics and photonics.



All started out as a Journalism major, then switched to English for Secondary Teachers, before she found her calling in the Literature concentration. “I trusted that the lessons gleaned from a host of characters sitting on my shelves would allow me to be more fully human. Even though I didn’t know what path that would set me on or what career it might lead to, I was open to the adventure.”

All appreciates the wisdom she gained from all of her English classes, particularly Professor Walker Rutledge’s *Honors Hemingway and Faulkner*. “He [Rutledge] is a lifelong learner whose passion for teaching makes you eager to read the material so that you can enjoy his musings. How did he acquire such a depth and breadth of knowledge? He said it was simple—he never stopped learning.” All acquired the same appreciation for life-long learning from *Film Adaptations of Literature* with Dr. Ted Hovet and *American Masculinities* with Dr. Kristi Branham.

After graduating from WKU, All left her position as a legal assistant to pursue permaculture farming, and she spent several years developing her farming business. Her career took a drastic turn when she accompanied her husband on the [American Climber Science Program](#)’s Peru Expedition in 2015 to collect data for climate change research. “I couldn’t have imagined the butterfly effect that the field work would have. The manager who hired me for my current position at SPIE had a stack of 100 cover letters on her desk and little time to review them. She saw the word ‘spectrometer’

written in mine, circled it, and read on. Had I not used the spectrometer to measure mineral content on the glaciers in Peru, I might not be where I am today.” All moved to Bellingham, Washington, in late 2015, and she has worked for SPIE ever since.

At SPIE, All holds two different positions—Student Chapter Lead and EDI Program Coordinator. As Student Chapter Lead, she coordinates workshops for 350 student chapters of SPIE around the globe. Her position as EDI Program Coordinator wasn’t in her original job description, but her interest in gender and women’s studies at WKU made it a logical addition. “Before I knew it, I was arranging for speakers on unconscious bias, interviewing constituents for our gender equity report, managing our annual [Women in Optics Planner](#), and coordinating workshops on salary negotiation and confident communication practices.”

Using her permaculture design background and community organizing skills, All serves on the board of a [local permaculture resource center](#). She also enjoys skiing, biking, kayaking, and reading nonfiction books like Yuval Noah Harari’s *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*.

All recommends that current English students look for opportunities to live their lives to the fullest and gain a wide breadth of experiences. “Let your life be your story to the world. Let it take you on an adventure or entwine you in a romance. Let it break your heart and then piece you together again. Turn the page, say yes to opportunities as they arise.”

