

**Shelly Toler Trent, B.A.
Government, minor in Writing,
1987
Master of Public Administration,
1995**

By Christina West

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Educator,
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“Don’t be shy to think outside the box about what it is you want to do because writing is something that is needed everywhere.”

Shelly Toler Trent graduated from Western Kentucky University with a B.A. in Government and a minor in Writing in 1987. She then obtained her Master of Public Administration with a concentration in HR and Training from WKU in 1995. She currently resides in the Louisville area in Southern Indiana, working as a career coach in her business, Your Career Collaborator, LLC.

Though writing was only available as a minor at the time, Trent completed an equal amount of credit hours in her major and minor. During her undergraduate years, Trent worked part-time in the English Department and worked there full-time over the summer. “It was a great place; I loved the faculty and staff,” Trent stated. After graduation, she worked on campus at the Center for Training and Development.

Trent went on to work in the HR field and drew heavily on her writing experience in her career. “I used my degree to review resumes as an HR person looking to hire. I did things like write employee handbooks, put together training slides, write performance reviews, and create reports related to HR.” For 17 years, Trent was employed at [The National Society for Human Resource Management](#) (SHRM) as a Field Services Director. One of her noteworthy projects was creating and writing a section of their website known as the Volunteer Leaders Resource Center.

Writing has remained a passion for Trent, and she has been published over 20 times with her writing on HR and career-related topics. She also worked as an Adjunct

Instructor at Indiana University Southeast, where she taught business classes on career planning for over ten years.

Trent is currently self-employed as a speaker, writer, and career coach at Your Career Collaborator, LLC, where she continues to use her strong written and verbal communication skills. Part of her career involves pro bono speaking at conferences and workshops with different organizations, including WKU and SHRM groups. “I’ll do presentations to a group on how to write a resume or a cover letter, how to have a better communication style, grammar refreshers, and things like that,” said Trent.

She also works with clients individually to assist them with advancing their careers. “I love to help people. Seeing people fulfilled in their work and knowing that I was part of helping them is really gratifying,” said Trent. One of her current clients she is advising, for example, is searching for a CEO position.

Outside of work, Trent enjoys camping and traveling with her husband in their RV, reading, and listening to music. She is also working on a book for the 50th anniversary of the Brandenburg, Kentucky, F5 tornado that hit her small town when she was a child. “That will be the first time I’ve written something that wasn’t related to my work. I just find a lot of pleasure in writing,” Trent stated.

Trent shares her wisdom with current English students, noting that a thorough understanding of grammar and mechanics is becoming a rare quality, and those studying English have an advantage in that regard. She also recommends utilizing the flexibility English provides. “You might think you’re going to be a writer — maybe you’re going to get a job as a writer or magazine publisher or something like that — but there are other ways to use that craft and those skills at many other types of jobs,” said Trent. “Don’t be shy to think outside the box about what it is you want to do because writing is something that is needed everywhere.”

