Justice Curry:

Greetings earthlings. And welcome back to another episode of Chat with WRAC, the only podcast about Michigan State University's Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures. I'm your guy, Justice Curry here to take you on another adventure within the WRAC department. Hi, and welcome back to Chat with WRAC. Joining us today is P2W alumnus, Shelby Smith. Welcome to the show, Shelby.

Shelby Smith:

Hello, happy to be here.

Justice Curry:

I'm so happy to have you on the show today. And to start off, I wanted to ask, what was your area of focus when you were a P2W student?

Shelby Smith:

I did the editing and publishing. So I was there when we made the transition away from tracks. So, I was kind of on the fence there between having a track and a focus.

Justice Curry:

And just to add some background information, tracks were something that P2W used to have in the major, which is essentially your area of focus just as Shelby mentioned editing and publishing. But Shelby, when did you graduate, and also weren't you a double major as well?

Shelby Smith:

Well, so my primary major was actually English. I was a double major. I didn't do a dual degree because I would've needed to pay for another semester. But so I was an English and professional in public writing major with a concentration in creative writing through my English major, and a focus in editing and publishing through P2W. And I graduated in May of 2021

Justice Curry:

For one, congratulations on graduating during a pandemic. Can you tell me a little bit more, what that was like for you, and also were you afraid of entering the job market? How were you feeling during that time?

Shelby Smith:

Yes, I would've been scared anyways, but it was way amplified. It was also just really anticlimactic like my brain in an effort to protect myself as I was approaching graduation was like, I'm going to do this post grad program and become a K through 12 high school teacher. And so I could keep my sanity of not having to go into the unknown when I graduated. But then I graduated and I was like, I don't want to do that. So I had the... What the fuck am I going to do? Graduation crisis, but like two months after I graduated.

Justice Curry:

That's the same boat that I'm in right now. I graduate next semester, and I just have no clue what I want to do after graduation. And it's been stressing me out so much and just keeping me up at night.

Shelby Smith:

I tried to figure it out and I was wrong. I did not expect to be doing what I am doing.

Justice Curry:

That's funny too, because I was just talking to my friend's parents who are professors. One of them is actually a professor here at MSU and another worked at U of M. And we were talking about how their kids did not figure out what they wanted to do with their careers until maybe five or so years after they graduated.

Shelby Smith:

Right. I mean with the way the world is right now, it's kind of just about how can I pay my bills in a way that hopefully doesn't suck my soul into the depths of hell. And seeing if you can figure out something to do until you figure out what you really want to do.

Justice Curry:

Speaking of finding a job that doesn't suck your soul dry, how did you find a job in an area that you were interested in working in?

Shelby Smith:

Well, both of my jobs I've had since I graduated, one I just left and one I just started, I found through people that I met in P2W at MSU.

Justice Curry:

For one, congratulations on your new job. And also that is absolutely amazing that you were able to get both of your jobs out of graduation from people that you knew here at MSU. And I was wondering if you had any advice for those that are approaching graduation or are graduating soon, for networking with other peers, and faculty at MSU

Shelby Smith:

Networking is such hell.

Justice Curry:

I agree. Networking gives me so much anxiety, which is why I am dreading it and also why I'm trying to figure out how to approach it for someone with social anxiety.

Shelby Smith:

Well, So the first one was, it was like a Slack channel that I was on, and someone was like, hey, I know someone who's looking to hire. And the second that I saw that message I texted him, and then I got that job a couple weeks down the line. So, I think a lot of stuff comes through like LISTSERVs and stuff like that. And if you're on certain Slack channels with certain professors or certain clubs or groups or whatever, or like from Casey Miles or Casey McArdle, you're going to get a decent amount of emails about jobs.

Shelby Smith:

If anything speaks to you, hop in on it, as soon as humanly possible. Even though we all hate sending emails more than most things in this world, I think it helps. Even once you graduate and move on, don't close your networks with the people that you know from MSU, because after I had graduated, I heard about both these things, and was able to do it because I had Slack channels open from my time at MSU with both these people.

Justice Curry:

I think it's really interesting that you got your opportunities through Slack and also through the LISTSERV. And I'm wondering, what is your opinion on LinkedIn? Are you on LinkedIn? All the professors are always like, oh, if you're not on LinkedIn, get on LinkedIn. What are your views on that for getting you a job?

Shelby Smith:

I don't know. I mean, I've never found anything useful from it, but I never have used it in earnest. I did one in high school and early college and then I just went so long without updating that. Rather than updating it, I just deleted the entire account because I didn't really want to mess with it because I kind of hate social media, and it's like work, social media, and I would rather not.

Justice Curry:

Yeah, I don't know about you, but for me being neuro divergent, it's really difficult for me to figure out ways to network that are comfortable for me. Do you have any advice for people maybe socially anxious or neuro divergent that just struggle with networking?

Shelby Smith:

I mean, in real person settings, no, because I really have done none of that. Virtually, I would say yes, I guess I just always try to be as personable as possible. And I'm pretty good at that. So trying to make someone feel comfortable talking with you, and feel like they want to have a conversation with you gets you far, but I mean, is that even advice or is that common knowledge? I don't know. Do I know how to network or do I just know a couple of people who I feel comfortable talking with?

Justice Curry:

Yeah. With the pandemic and a lot of things translating to online ways of communicating. I think it's definitely been a lot easier for us who do not enjoy networking in person to virtually network. I remember this was a huge reason why I left the business college was, for an assignment we had to go to a job fair, and we had to speak to, I think, five companies. We had to network with them. And the moment I walked in the door, and was approached by that first company. I was like, I can't do this shit. And I turned around, and I walked away because I was like, nope, this ain't for me.

Shelby Smith:

I'm generally pretty good at doing the whole conversation with strangers thing. And I still, it's just, there's something about networking that I just hate so much.

Justice Curry:

It feels very forced and unnatural. I definitely agree with that there, how everyone's always like, oh, keep in touch with your professors, keep in touch with your colleagues and stuff. And it's like, that's a lot harder than it sounds. At least for me personally, how does one... If I didn't really feel connected to them in the first place, how am I supposed to keep in touch with them?

Shelby Smith:

But in P2W, there are a lot of really good people that will build a connection with you if you try.

Justice Curry:

How do you recommend students to continue those connections with professors, at least, because for me, I get a little anxious thinking about still messaging my professors, and keeping in contact with them after I'm not in their class anymore. I don't know, for me, it's just a weird, like mental thing where I'm like, is this inappropriate, but how do you, I guess, get around that, and just continue to connect with them?

Shelby Smith:

Well, for me the gap was bridged because before I started working for the real estate company, *The Current*, which is run by the Cube through P2W, I worked on three semesters in a row as a student. And then over this past summer, I was working part-time with *The Current* as well. So then, I was keeping in contact with professors and people in the program. And then, there are certain people that I had known for so long that I would then Slack them a funny quote from *Bob's Burger*s or a cat picture. And they might do the same. So, I was able to keep talking with certain people.

Justice Curry:

I like that idea of just like, hey, let's send each other cat pics. Because I know a lot of people in WRAC who love cat pictures, and I also love cat pictures.

Shelby Smith:

Exactly. Who doesn't?

Justice Curry:

I mean, who doesn't want to talk about cats? I just feel like if you don't, like that you're just you're evil.

Shelby Smith:

Not my type person, at least.

Justice Curry:

Yeah. I don't want to shit on all the cat dislikes, but I'm going to shit on all the cat dislikes.

Shelby Smith:

And I will.

Justice Curry:

Kind of switching gears a little bit. From your experience in graduating, what advice would you give to your past self before you graduated?

Shelby Smith:

Don't be afraid if plans change. Don't be rigid about plans. It's not going to be what you expected, but that's okay.

Justice Curry:

Is there anything you wish you had prepared before graduation and before entering the job market?

Shelby Smith:

No. No, there really isn't.

Justice Curry:

Is there anything else that you would want to say to P2W students?

Shelby Smith:

Pretty much every single P2W major that I've ever met myself included is just way more stressed out than we need to be. So when you feel the fear, try to tell yourself that's bullshit, because, God, I guess even if it's not, it doesn't really help to feel it. Just do what you fucking can, and you'll be okay.

Justice Curry:

Thank you so much, Shelby for joining us today, or joining me today, not us today, that is-

Shelby Smith:

Well, so Kitty is there. So that's a good “us.”

Justice Curry:

This is true. This is true. Thank you so much for joining me and my cat, who does not do anything but live rent free.

Shelby Smith:

Yep. I've got two of them, and it was my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Justice Curry:

Thank you so much for listening to Chat with WRAC. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @Chatwithwrac, and tell us what topic you would like to hear next. Don't be a stranger.