

Preparation Meets Opportunity

I am proud to be a Thiel alumna. As a freshman, I never thought I would proclaim this statement. I did not have my heart set on Thiel during my senior year of high school; my college of choice was a large university. Thiel awarded me a generous scholarship, and I finally made the decision to attend the small liberal arts campus. I must admit, I was not entirely happy at first and informed my advisers that I planned to transfer my junior year. I suppose I was exuding my hard-headed freshman mentality of denying change and opportunity that I now see in some of my freshman students. Fortunately, my advisers recognized my potential as a student both in and out of the classroom. Their influence encouraged me to excel in my studies and immerse myself in the Thiel environment, which ultimately led me to where I am today—a graduate English student and teaching assistant at Gannon University.

The anxiety I felt before my first graduate classes quickly dissipated after excelling in assignments and class discussion. The graduate-level courses are more intense, but I find that I am extremely prepared for the course material. In fact, I am surprised to discover that some of my classmates do not have nearly the same foundation in English and the humanities as I do. I attribute this preparedness to the liberal arts education I received at Thiel, especially to the English and history disciplines.

I cannot give enough praise for these two distinguished departments at Thiel. I was continuously challenged and rewarded by the faculty and their diverse classes. Most of all, the professors structured their upper-level courses on a reading, writing and class discussion basis, much like the structure of graduate-level courses. These disciplines also gave me the opportunity to develop leadership skills outside the classroom through my involvement in Sigma Tau Delta, *The Phoenix* and Phi Alpha Theta, as well as provided me with cultural experiences through the Literary New England trip, the tours of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress and my internship at my county's historical society.

As a teaching assistant at Gannon, I have the privilege of teaching freshman composition. I may no longer feel anxiety about my graduate courses, but I often still feel nervous about teaching, which is only natural for a first-year instructor. However, the English and history faculty at Thiel afforded me with outstanding

Sheila Gross, originally of Sharpsville, Pa., graduated summa cum laude in May 2010 with degrees in English writing, English literature and history.



Gross outside the Writing Center where she serves as assistant director.

role models in teaching. My professors mentored me during my undergraduate experience, and they continue to do so. One aspect I deeply appreciate about Thiel is the relationships students can form with their professors.

Thiel also provided me with opportunities to learn essential skills outside the classroom. My four years of work experience at the Thiel Writing Center and Academic Success Center allowed me to develop teaching skills through tutoring students in writing and history. These skills qualified me to work at the Gannon Writing Center, where I will soon be assistant director.

By my senior year, I worked as a tour guide in the Admissions Office, and I often times told my story to prospective students. Whether I inspired those students to attend Thiel, I am confident that I portrayed the importance of taking advantage of a college education. Students at Thiel are constantly challenged as they progress to upper-level courses; the students who embrace the challenge succeed when they move beyond their undergraduate education. I embraced the challenge, and I am grateful for the education I received from Thiel College.