

Ingram Scholar Alumni Spotlight



GAYLE ROGERS, Class of 2001

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gayle-rogers-44344b14/>

DEGREES

B.A. English and Philosophy, Vanderbilt University
PhD in English, Northwestern University

CURRENT LOCATION

Pittsburgh, PA

CURRENT EMPLOYER

University of Pittsburgh

CURRENT OCCUPATION

Chair and professor of English

DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER PATH

After Vanderbilt, I pursued a doctorate in English at Northwestern, then after completing my degree, started teaching at the University of Pittsburgh. I study and teach mostly world literatures and theories of globalization and translation, and I have published several books in those fields. In 2019, I began chairing the Department of English, the largest unit on campus, which is actually an enjoyable managerial job, though it keeps me quite busy.

HOW DID THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY?

In a word: empathy. Serve others, which is impossible if you can't first try to understand and orient yourself to their perspectives, to try to feel as they do. I'll never succeed fully at it--it's a lifelong project. And we shouldn't ever fully succeed at it, since that's what makes us different as humans. But I came to the Ingram program from a small town in Mississippi with limited experiences but big dreams and wide-eyed ambitions, and the only way to square those two things was to learn empathy. What I learned came from generous, patient mentors in my program--students, staff, and faculty alike. Where I failed, I own it and continue to strive. But in my present job, I still find myself daily working to empathize with students who feel lost or slighted or angry, with colleagues who feel wronged, with college administrators who have grand visions, with people in the communities I serve as a nonprofit employee. I try to listen first, engage, and respond, and that's something that came straight from my Ingram experience.

IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM IN THREE WORDS WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

Ambition meets service

WHAT DOES THE INGRAM SCHOLAR COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?

My Ingram friends remain lifelong friends. I admire them still and measure myself by them, even though I don't measure up. But I do so out of admiration, and to remind myself to keep striving, and because I love and cherish them.

BEST INGRAM SCHOLAR MEMORY

A service project bringing art therapy techniques to in a pediatric oncology unit in Bangkok, Thailand. I was in over my head. I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't know the language and knew little about art therapy. I just wanted to make a difference. I don't know if I did, but it was the right project, at the right time, somehow.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS WHO WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR INGRAM SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE?

Worry less about what you can put on your resume from the Ingram program. Worry more about what the community you find yourself is telling you it needs from you. Where are you? In a school district, in a nonprofit, in a shelter, in an advocacy group? What do they need, and what are they asking of you specifically? Then: what can you deliver, realistically and

personally? That's where you can be. I wish I had known that--I promised the world and couldn't always deliver. Or I didn't listen long enough and thought I knew what others wanted. Find the meeting point: listen with empathy. It's a lifelong skill. And reach out to me and others if we can ever be helpful; don't hesitate!