



Featured Alumni

Manny Piña

Notable alumni **Manny Piña**, class of 2013, speaks about the support the MARC faculty offered him during his student journey and continue to offer as a graduate and fellow academic. Continue reading to learn more about his experience in the MARC program and tips he offers for incoming and current MARC students.

Currently working as an Associate Professor of English at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Manny Piña teaches a variety of courses, such as Technical and Professional Writing, Writing for the Web, and Document Design, that fuel his passions in research and teaching. Manny's research studies digital learning spaces from a materialist lens, specifically how online learning spaces, like Zoom and Webex, are mediated and made different by the material places that students inhabit. In short, he is researching why and how

matter matters in online learning environments. He is also involved in an exciting research project that observes antiracist teaching practices in technical writing classrooms.

When asked why he applied to the MARC program, Manny half-jokingly responds, "because... well, what else does a 20-something do with a bachelor's degree in English?," something many university undergraduates often ponder. But Manny wanted to continue his education beyond a B.A. So, he focused on finding rhetoric and writing programs. He decided on the MARC program because it had a disciplinary focus that was aligned with the areas of research and study that interested him most.

Experience

But how did the MARC program benefit his future in securing a position as a professor?

I attribute credit to the MARC program for introducing me to the theories and concepts within the discipline that currently make up my research agenda. Texas State really ignited my interest in the field.

The answer: curriculum and support



The MARC coursework prepared him for the academic rigor of his doctoral program at Texas Tech University. As Manny explains, “[it] laid a strong disciplinary foundation for my doctoral work in Technical Communication and Rhetoric.”

Further, Manny is grateful and feels indebted to faculty such as Dr. Becky Jackson and Dr. Deb Balzhiser for their continued support, guidance, mentorship, and friendship during his time at Texas State and beyond. He claims, “the hallmark of a good graduate program is the relationship that it fosters among students and professors... the professional relationships—both with fellow students and with the instructors—I developed through the MARC program have proved invaluable.”

Finally, Manny summarizes his overall experience with the MARC program as “highly enjoyable, productive” and says it prepared him well to become the professional that he is and hopes to be.

Tips

1

My perspective has always been this: in graduate school, **you get out what you put in**. If you enter into a program or even just a course with a positive mindset believing that this will be a productive use of your time, more often than not that will frame your overall experience.

2

Be kind. In graduate school you’re surrounded by people who, like you, are highly intelligent. Distinguish yourself by being kind. I think there’s a tendency especially in academia to be hyper-competitive, to tear things down and pick ideas apart. Be the person who builds people up.

3

Make absolutely sure that either this is the thing that you want to do for the rest of your life or that you need this degree to achieve your professional aspirations. Graduate school is a lot of time and a lot of money for something that you might be interested in. It won’t work unless **you’re all in**.

4

To anyone thinking about getting an MA because they want to work in academia, again, be assured that it is absolutely what you want to do because higher education appears to increasingly be governed by neoliberal austerity measures. So, make sure that research, writing, and teaching are where your **heart truly lie**.