

## Tenure Portfolio Narrative for Dr. Daisy Pignetti

### **Introduction**

Reflecting on my six years of teaching freshman, upper level undergraduate and graduate writing courses here at UW-Stout, my primary purpose has been to help students of all majors realize the importance of being able to use writing to shape their futures. Because my current intellectual inquiries have focused on emerging media, I also aim to produce students who are effective users and questioners of technology, especially on a laptop campus like ours where access is not an issue.

In this narrative, I will detail the connections between my teaching and research activities, highlighting the emphasis I place on technological literacy. I will also discuss my service to the Department of English and Philosophy, specifically my increasing responsibilities within the Bachelor of Science Program in Professional Communication and Emerging Media [PCEM]. Finally, I will describe my current service to the University and Profession as well as ongoing Faculty Development activities.

### **Teaching**

I was hired in 2008 as a Composition and Rhetoric generalist, but my Spring 2009 teaching of the upper-level course, ENGL 371-Advanced Rhetoric, gradually led to more PCEM courses, primarily those related to the Digital Humanities. Soon after my hire, the Master of Science in Technical and Professional Communication [MSTPC] program was approved by the Board of Regents. In 2009 I was part of a team of English department faculty who were awarded an \$8,000 Curricular Incubation Center grant to begin work on eight graduate course proposals. I earned graduate faculty status in September of 2009 and began teaching 700-level courses in Spring 2010.

Stuart Selber's *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* (2004) has most influenced my pedagogy, and I continually work to create a classroom atmosphere that promotes reflection so my students begin to situate technology in more socially aware terms. Selber believes, as many proponents of Web 2.0 do, that we are in an era in which we all have the ability 1) to have a say in the design of technologies we use and 2) to shape how we think about and engage in discourse-related activities online. As such, both my face-to-face and online students read, write, and interact in various genres beyond D2L, e.g. WordPress blogs and Twitter accounts, to better understand the multiple literacies required in both academic and workplace environments.

I find it fascinating that the ways our students compose with social media changes each year I am here at UW-Stout, but I firmly believe public writing, composing for a broader readership than their professors and peers, teaches them valuable lessons in audience and collaboration. For instance, my face-to-face students use their blog sites and Twitter timelines to state opinions, develop ideas, pool their resources, and extend the conversations we start in class. For the online cohort, these sites provide a greater sense of classroom community and, as a result, these students sometimes rely upon them to ask questions about upcoming assignments and reflect on the challenges they face as students in a course that never meets in person.

I will elaborate on how my teaching with social media continues to influence my research activities later in this narrative, but would like to mention my MSTPC thesis and field project advising here since it is a duty on top of my 4/4 teaching load and not all faculty are familiar with its demands.

You can see from my Curriculum Vitae that I have had the opportunity to be a thesis/field project advisor to several graduate students over the past three years. (In fact, I also worked closely with two graduate students not listed whose writing projects never came to fruition.) All of these projects showcase the interactive and social capabilities associated with HTML and web 2.0 applications; consequently, they illustrate the way the field of technical communication has expanded to embrace, explain, and use emerging Internet technologies.

While rewarding, graduate advisement is labor intensive and challenging, particularly from a logistical standpoint. The thesis is a 6-credit requirement, and the MSTPC program is a “fully online degree designed for working professionals,” meaning that our communication often happens during the evenings and weekends. I have managed these projects well by scheduling frequent Skype calls, utilizing Google Docs to develop outlines and timelines of completion, referencing the Graduate School’s website for the necessary forms and the research paper template, and, perhaps of most value, attending the January 2012 Graduate Research Advisement at UW-Stout Panel Discussion, which featured a “Directing TPC Research at a Distance” workshop with Dr. Kelli Cargile Cook from Texas Tech University.

### **Research and Scholarship**

As already indicated, much of my classroom practice has found its way into my scholarship, chiefly how contemporary culture has been shaped—and is still in process of being reshaped—by the growth of web and mobile technologies. My publications and conference presentations, the grants I have written to obtain travel funding to those presentations, and the on-campus support I have received for my emerging technology efforts, are all outlined below.

### **Publications**

I encourage you to reference my Curriculum Vitae for the full list of publications, many of which appear in leading book series as well as print and online journals in the field of computers and writing. Below is an update on my recent publication efforts that indicate a return to my doctoral research, specifically the writing, literary and otherwise, published by New Orleans locals since the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

- While at the Popular Culture Association conference in April 2012, I was invited to meet with the University Press of Mississippi’s acquisitions editor. We discussed revising my dissertation manuscript into a book for their longstanding list in Louisiana studies. In October 2012 I received feedback, specifically about using a more rhetorical approach rather than one rooted in mass communication. Correspondence with that editor waned; however, in June 2013 I was contacted by his replacement who was eager to see a revised plan [Attachment 1]. This editor approved my proposed changes in late-September 2013 and I am currently working on implementing that plan. When I submit the first few chapters, he will put that material under review.
- My proposed book chapter, “Dramatic ‘Belated Immediacy’ in the works of John Biguenet,” was accepted for *The Literature of Katrina* essay collection in October 2012; however, the editors changed their direction to make it a retrospective collection entitled *10 Years After Katrina*. In late-October 2013 Lexington Books offered the editors a contract and I am now writing to meet a Spring 2014 final manuscript deadline.

In the last sentence of my original 2012 abstract [Attachment 2] I argued that audiences of Biguenet’s three Hurricane Katrina plays, *Rising Water*, *Shotgun*, and *Mold*, were bearing witness to the playwright’s own catharsis; however, when I interviewed him in New Orleans

in December 2013, he clearly stated the playwriting itself was **not** cathartic. Rather, he was driven by the necessity to depict the ongoing impact of the levee breaches in so many neighborhoods. Doing so reminds audiences that this disaster should not be portrayed as “a hurricane story” the way mainstream media would like. I’m thrilled to have the chance to share these insights alongside my theoretical examination of his groundbreaking trilogy.

### **Presentations**

In addition to publishing my work in print and online publications, I maintain an active conference agenda, including regional, national, and international meetings. The Curriculum Vitae lists all meetings I attended, but below are descriptions of my two most recent speaking and moderating appearances.

- I was invited to be part of the *Thursdays @ the U Lecture Series* at UW-Barron County in Rice Lake, WI. I spoke on “Blogging for Recovery after Katrina” and the October 10<sup>th</sup> presentation was recorded for the Rice Lake public access community channel. You can view this video at <http://tinyurl.com/pignetti> or click through my slides [Attachment 3].
- Later in October I attended the annual conference of the Association of Internet Researchers in Denver, CO, USA. Inspired by the recent (and quick) creation of a “Social Media Guidance for Teachers” statement here on Stout’s campus, I proposed a “Fishbowl Session” entitled “Requiring Social Media in the Classroom: Tales of Resistance and Appropriation.”

Moderating a discussion that featured professors representing ten different universities, not to mention ensuring audience members’ voices were heard, was not an easy task, but the conversations were inspired. From cultural differences associated with sharing opinions in public and stigmas from not having access to the internet beyond mobile devices, I was reminded of the different reasons students, especially those not on laptop campuses like ours, might resist assignments that involve social media. However, I was also reminded of the extent to which social media has become not only a fundamental tool for communication, but also a must-have skill in a multitude of industries, which is more than one can say for learning management systems such as Blackboard and Desire2Learn.

As mentioned in my abstract [Attachment 4], I closed the 90-minute session by summarizing the discussion and encouraging all participants to add their expertise to the creation of social media policy statements on their home campuses. Given the recent incidents at [Michigan State](#) and [University of Kansas](#), I am interested in pursuing the relationship between social media policies and academic freedom as a topic of study.

### **Ongoing Faculty Development**

I alluded to my research of and teaching with blogs earlier, and my current project for the Curious Stout Innovators [CSI] program<sup>1</sup> illustrates these ongoing efforts. Although extensive, I think you can best understand the scope the work through my IRB paperwork [Attachment 5].

Until the Fall 2012 semester I had only required my graduate students to blog. That semester I

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<sup>1</sup> As described by the Nakatani Teaching and Learning Center: “CSI is a UW-Stout yearlong program that supports faculty scholarship while simultaneously establishing a ‘Best Practices’ research support system. Participants are those individuals who applied for that year’s Wisconsin Teaching Fellow and Scholar [WTFS] program and submitted highly rated, well designed, and thoughtful research proposals but were not accepted as a Scholar or Fellow. Applicants meet throughout the year for the purpose of further refining their research ideas and identifying useful resources.”

taught ENGL 335: Critical Approaches to Digital Humanities, the first course offered in the Digital Humanities concentration of the PCEM program. The course was a hybrid one that relied on Tegrity to “capture” the face-to-face meetings and share those recordings with the online students. However, to increase student engagement, I asked both groups of students to participate in “virtual Fridays” where they discussed readings and course goals on a WordPress blog, <http://engl335digitalhumanities.wordpress.com/>.

While some may critique assigned or “forced blogging”<sup>2</sup>, this exercise was intended to emulate the burgeoning field of Digital Humanities, which defines itself as a social one composed of people with “a shared interest in texts, and the use of computational technologies to explore and understand them (as opposed to merely creating or distributing them)” (Alvarado).

This first cohort of Digital Humanities students flourished in their “open” posts, the ones that were to draw their classmates’ attention to online artifacts related to course goals, while their posts designated to react to the assigned readings lacked originality and often were not even proofread. As such, my work with Renee Howarton in the CSI program initially aimed to create a set of best practices when using the course blog again in the Fall 2013 semester, this time with the added intent of networking with Digital Humanities students at other universities.

Due to lack of enrollment, however, I ended up *not* teaching ENGL 335 again in Fall 2013. Instead I was assigned two sections of ENGL 121: Intro to Professional Communication, the first required course all PCEM majors. This switch ended up working in my favor. Not only did I have a greater data set, but at the heart of the course was the goal of “understanding how technologies mediate communication.” For freshman and transfer students new to the major, frequent and focused blog writing *and* commenting upon the writing of others in the class opened their eyes to a new genre, one that offered them the space for much more depth and engagement than other social media profiles, i.e. Facebook statuses and Twitter updates.

Therefore, I revised my CSI research project to investigate the extent to which weekly blogging showcased these PCEM majors’ creativity and helped cultivate their professional online presence. For several years now industry and academic experts in the field of technical writing have advised students and young professionals to create and maintain a blog, citing the ways it can help with a job search. I am still combing through the data collected, *not* from students’ individual blog posts, but from responses to the final exam, and am pleased to see reflective comments that support my hypothesis that weekly blog writing pushed them to craft and design posts that were both meaningful and professional.

In addition to the CSI Program, I have attended the following faculty development seminars:

- Graduate Program Assessment Institute, June 2013.
- AASCU Initiative on eCitizenship, 2009-2011.
- Learning Community Workshops, August 2010 and August 2011.
- Center for Applied Ethics Workshop, May 2010.
- UW-System Symposium on "Supporting and Retaining Diverse Faculty: Research, Scholarship, Mentoring, and Tenure" hosted by the Institute on Race and Ethnicity at UW-Milwaukee, April 2009.
- UW-System Conference “Liberal Education: A Unifying Mission for the 21st Century University” held at UW-Madison, November 2008.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2004 Dennis Jerz defined this term as follows: “Since a ‘real’ weblog is a license to write whatever and whenever you want, an instructor who assigns the topic, frequency, or length of blog entries (in order to facilitate grading) violates the spirit that draws voluntary bloggers to their avocation.”

## **Grants**

In support of my research and conference travel, I have successfully applied for and obtained the following Professional Development grants through Research Services:

- 2013, \$1,000 for travel to Denver, CO, for the Association of Internet Researchers conference. ["Just in Time"].
- 2011, \$2,855 for travel to the United Kingdom for the Oxford Internet Institute's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary symposium.
- 2009, \$500 for travel to Milwaukee, WI, for the Association of Internet Researchers conference. ["Just in Time"].
- 2008, \$1,541 for travel to San Francisco, CA, for the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

The Provost's and Dean's offices, as well as the Department and MSTPC program, have assisted my travel to the following meetings:

- American Democracy Project National Meeting. Denver, CO. June 2013.
- [ROFLCon](#) at MIT in Cambridge, MA. May 4-5, 2012.
- Popular Culture Association Conference. Boston, MA. April 2012.
- Loyola New Orleans' [First Annual Alumni College](#). June 22-24, 2012.
- Computers and Writing Conference. Sweetland Center for Writing. Ann Arbor, MI. May 2011.

I have also been awarded two Emerging Technology grants through the Nakatani Teaching and Learning Center:

- 2010, \$100 to explore using Blogs in the graduate course, Communication Strategies for Emerging Media.
- 2009, \$100 to explore using Twitter in Freshman Composition courses.

## **Service to the Department, PCEM Program, University, and the Profession**

Since my first year here at UW-Stout, I have been active on several committees, both at the department and university level, and am currently on two editorial boards ([Writing Commons](#) and [eJournal of Public Affairs](#)).

A full list of my Service activities appears on my Curriculum Vitae, but I wanted to call attention to my work on the Department's Advanced Writing Committee. In my years as co-chair and chair (and co-chair again!), I have overseen several student test-out and credit-for-life-experience exams; reviewed a number of PCEM course proposals and revisions; created a textbook policy for Instructional Resources to reference; supported the creation of a special section of ENGL 415-Technical Writing for Applied Science majors; and updated the English Writing, Journalism and Technical Writing minors.

I believe it is my ardent interest in upper-level writing that led to my role as core faculty, advisor, and, beginning in Spring 2014, Program Director of the Bachelor of Science in Professional Communication and Emerging Media while Dr. Matthew Livesey is on sabbatical. I attended Program Director training in August 2013 and am ready (and anxious) to see what opportunities this new position will bring as I very much enjoy working with this talented group of students.

*Thank you.*

*I look forward to meeting with you on January 24<sup>th</sup> to take any questions.*