

December 27, 2025

Dean Kristen Lillvis  
Provost Amy Gort  
President Ginny Arthur

Dear Dean Lillvis, Provost Gort, and President Arthur,

I am writing to enthusiastically support Dr. Suzanne Nielsen in her application for promotion to Full Professor. I have had the pleasure of working with Suzanne in a variety of contexts, and value her dedication, professionalism, and commitment to student success. In particular, I will highlight her work in Criterion IV: Contribution to Student Growth and Development.

Attending readings for *Haute Dish*, for which Suzanne is the faculty advisor, is a joy. I choose this word intentionally, because Suzanne infuses her work with a sense of joy. Our creative writing students are serious about their craft, but the readings are about celebration, community, and mutual support. This is the ethos Suzanne brings to her work. Often, Metro creative writing alumni return to read at the *Haute Dish* events, and the welcome extended to alumni is a testament to the value of the community that she has built among creative writing students. Suzanne understands the importance of developing the competency of the student editors of *Haute Dish*, and as a result of working on the publication, the students cultivate a range of skills in editing, design, organization, and marketing that provide them with experience and knowledge that they can leverage toward careers in publishing. Each year, Suzanne tables with the student editors at the *Haute Dish* booth at Fall Fest, and I marvel at how she engages with attendees and also connects her editors to other individuals and organizations on campus.

Her efforts to build a sense of community and connection among creative writing students extends beyond *Haute Dish*. Given the busy lives of most Metro students, it is challenging to get students to regularly engage with each other outside of class. With the *Get Lit* Sunday night writer's group, Suzanne has created a space where students and alumni meet to freewrite and workshop with each other. As an extension of *Get Lit*, Suzanne has initiated the yearly 70 Poems in 70 Days challenge that starts on January 1 and runs through March 11. This event, open to alumni, students, faculty, and staff, provides an opportunity for participants to mutually commit to a daily writing practice that culminates in the creation of a poem every day. All participants share the titles of poems weekly, and the *Get Lit* participants share poems in progress during their Sunday Zoom meetings. Last year, Suzanne asked each participant to contribute a few poems to an anthology that she created, and the library hosted a 70 Poems in 70 Days celebratory reading during National Poetry Month in April. As a participant in last year's challenge, I was impressed by the level of enthusiasm and dedication among participants. When students would at times share particular challenges in meeting their weekly quota, Suzanne would affirm and encourage the participants, and assure them that every writer experiences creative blocks as well as periods of productivity.



For the last two years, I have served as a judge for the Carothers Distinguished Writing Award. Suzanne does a superb job managing the process. She solicits and collects student work, prepares the submissions for the committee, and guides the judges through each step of the process. By the final meeting when the winner is selected, the judges have been oriented to the process and are clear on criteria. Suzanne skillfully facilitates the final meeting, making sure that all judges are heard and that the group is able to reach consensus.

Suzanne is an incredible coach, advisor, and mentor to her students. She shows her students, by example, how to cultivate a writing life that is built upon hard work, and also joy. But don't take my word for it. The following quotes are from discussion posts made by a student enrolled in my INFS 338: The Craft and Commerce of Book Publishing course during the fall 2025 semester. In an introductory post the student wrote, "My chosen major is in Technical Communication & Professional Writing with a minor in Creative Writing. I've had an off and on appreciation for reading in my life. It's only in the last five years or so that I was able to embrace the role of being a writer. Then last year I took a class called Writers as Readers with Professor Nielson here at Metro (highly recommend it). In the class, we studied not only writing, but how being excellent readers could make us better writers. Since then, my affection for reading has reignited. A few classmates and I began meeting up for a writing group. I also joined a book club with some former coworkers." Later in the semester in response to a prompt asking how individual reading habits have changed and what influences have affected these shifts in engagement or discernment this student wrote, "...Then I took a class here at Metro called Writers as Readers where I learned the importance of being an avid reader to be a good writer. I really took to it and began trying to casually read more fiction to grow. One series that I'm developing takes inspiration from the Hardy Boys, so I've read a number of those the last two years for inspiration." In my years of teaching, it is uncommon to have another course recommended with this level of enthusiasm. It is even rarer to have a student so clearly articulate how a faculty member has changed their relationship to their work, as this student has done in praising Suzanne's course. It was no surprise that this revelation led the student to a book club and a writing group, since Suzanne is so skilled at building and highlighting the value of community.

Our institution rightly places a high value on being student-centered and promoting student success. At her core, Suzanne is student-centered, and as I hope I have demonstrated, she is willing to put extraordinary effort and dedication into work that serves the best interest of our students. Suzanne embodies the very best of our institution. I feel immense gratitude for the opportunities I have had to collaborate and learn from her. She inspires me and challenges me to not only want the best for our students, but also to undertake the work needed to make it happen. Simply put, Suzanne makes Metro State a better place. I look forward to working with her for years to come.

Thank you, and please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely, and with joy,

Michelle M. Filkins  
Professor, Reference and Instruction Librarian  
Metro State University

