

## Criterion IV: Contribution to Student Growth and Development

### Brief Narrative

It is my passion to contribute to student growth and development on campus and synchronously. One recognition I look forward to in spring is the Outstanding Student Award. Since my tenure I seem to always have a graduate each year from the program to nominate for the Outstanding Student Award (OSA). I was so pleased that two of my nominations went on to win the CLA OSA Award last year, and in 2022. I nominated a student this spring again. Although my student didn't win in spring, he really appreciated the recognition. This award and recognition mean so much to our students, and I am proud of their success. My contributions included within this criterion start with recognizing the honor of the OSA Award, followed by my role as faculty advisor for *Haute Dish*, Metro State's Arts and Literary Journal, participating in Metro State Writers Group, *Get Lit*, the first Sunday evening of every month, chairing the annual Carothers Award, my role as an advisor for creative writing majors, and my ongoing alumni connections.

*Haute Dish* continues to deliver a literature and arts magazine that represents the diverse voices of Metro State University students. Each year the students who serve as volunteer editors, including those that receive a small stipend, bring with them a new awareness to the lens of editing due to the diversity our editors represent. A huge commitment of time and energy goes into the production and layout of each semester's magazine. The student submissions vary, but generally we receive several hundreds of pieces for review over the year.

As the advisor of the magazine, I ask students to commit to publishing at least two issues of the magazine. Over that period their skills with editing, design and publication leave an imprint on their resumes, as many go on to work as editors after completing their degree. The hands-on experience is essential, and important for your resume/vitae.

Many of our student editors attend our monthly *Get Lit* Sunday night workshop. In 2018 Metro's Sunday Night Writers Group formed from a small group of creative writing students soon to graduate that spring. We met initially in the Student Center, room 201 the first Sunday evening of the month from 5:30-8:30 pm. This is a monthly commitment that alumni and current students continue to invest in, and since covid we meet monthly on zoom. We have an average of nine students a month, and as many as 17. The alumni lead it by assigning a freewrite to kick the evening off, and then it's an intense workshop event. Many of the students and alumni are in the process of writing world building novels, and over time they continue to develop their writing, and add experience to their writing vitae.

Each spring I facilitate a student-recognized award called the Carothers Distinguished Writing Award. This is sponsored by MinnState, My role as facilitator include forming a group of experienced judges representing diverse backgrounds within the university; gathering and organizing all student submissions, verifying all the information is attached, taking any identification off all entries as this is a blind submission for judging; having updates with the

team of judges during the 6 week submission period; organizing a meeting initially before the process begins, and then again at the end to select a winner and a possible honorable mention. This is an honor to receive this award, and the ingredient that always excites me about this process is that students submit up to 15 pages of work in a specific genre, and many of the colleges within the university are represented. I enjoy every aspect of the award process.

This spring we are launching a makeover for Haute Dish. Our volunteer staff of 10 editors has also decided on a theme for entrees, and this publication will be in competition with other major university literary journals. Students will have an option to work in synch with WRIT 390: Writing for literary Publication as a SDIS with a 1-2 credit option.

Another area where I contribute to the growth and development of our students is through advising. I advise all the creative writing majors, and this offers me the opportunity to get to know each and every one of them quite personally. I love advising. It reminds me of my years of service working in the Center for Academic Excellence, where incredible tutoring and learning occurs. Working one-on-one with students is all about listening. Every now and then there's need for suggestions, but mostly students want to be heard. Since covid most of my advising is done on zoom. I regularly meet with advisees weekly, sometimes with a slew of questions, other times wanting a pep talk or to be listened to. Students often will ask me what are employment options inside a competitive writing world, and the options for students vary. I have students pursuing double majors, adding minors, going on to graduate school, doing internships, writing monthly columns; I also have students that live in three-generation households, and are responsible for the livelihood of several extended family members. We write letters for them. Letters that may assist them in the job market, letters for graduate programs, letters that validate who they are. The best news is that they then go on, and write their stories.

Since March 2020, I grieved my open-door office hours policy. I missed those visits. Before March of '20 I saw students regularly face-to-face, and I liked this because I felt connected to the lives of my students and their semester's progress. They work hard. They brave resistance; they search for deeper meanings to life and contribute to its ever-evolving existence. This past year I'm seeing more students face-to-face. Just this week I had a student visit my office who I had never met face-to-face because he is doing a SDIS with me and is a Social Science major. He came by because he wanted to introduce himself face-to-face and I so appreciated this.

My advisees are remarkable each in their own unique way. Helping them set up a reasonable schedule toward earning their degree humbles me and makes me aware after each and every meeting how fortunate I am to serve in this capacity. As they achieve their goals, I hear Paul Wellstone overhead say, "Learning can ignite a spark in a child's life that, if gently shielded from the winds, can generate a lifetime of creativity and accomplishment. Extinguishing that spark is the cruelest and most short-sighted thing we can do" (*The Conscience of a Liberal*. 2001, p. 79).

The last theme I want to address within this criterion is the continued commitment our students honor once they become saturated by the world of writing and reading. Please find an essay titled My Life as a Klutz. Mid-summer, '24 I received this email from Carmelle:

Hello Suzanne,

This is Carmelle. I took a few of your writing courses a couple of years ago. Recently, I cleaned out my OneDrive and found a hilarious piece I created in 2017. I don't remember if I spoke or even wrote about this during one of your classes, but if you're having a bad day, this piece should help you bust a gut and brighten your day.

NOTE: I cuss a lot and make no excuses for it. If that offends you, don't read this piece. However, should you decide to proceed, I assure you, you'll have no problem remembering me.

Take care,

Carmelle Abron

Go on, read the piece because it will make you smile and laugh out loud.

**ATTACHED DOCUMENTS:**

Brief narrative

- a. Letter from Michelle Filkins
- b. OSAs
- c. HD Information
- d. Metro Sunday Writers Group (Get Lit)
- e. Carothers
- f. Student Piece
- g. PDPs/PDRs
- h. Misc.