

March 26, 2021

Professional Development Plan for Academic Years: 2021-22, 2022-23

re: Suzanne Nielsen

Dear Brian and Doug:

Never did I think we'd be continuing to teach online Spring, 2021, yet here we are building a community of zoomies. And, it could be worse; it could be zombies. At least I've had the option of synchronous, which gives a hint at a sense of community, and in times like this community is essential. I miss the collegial connections face-to-face, the hallway dialogues with colleagues on pedagogical issues, meeting students face-to-face for advising questions and check ins, however these events continue virtually through zoom. Thank you, zoom.

This spring I have participated in three search committees. I've served as equity champion for a math assistant professor position, and I served as a faculty member on the TCID assistant professor, as well as the current dean search in CLA. It has taken up more time than I thought, and this fall I intend to follow the covid recommendations, so I will be teaching synchronously.

My priorities for the academic years, 2021-22 and 2022-23 are to continue developing a sense of community among CW majors through my teaching and extracurricular activities to include advising the literary magazine, *Haute Dish*, scheduling student readings, promoting and participating in student/alumni Sunday writing group, *Get Lit*, researching possibilities for future course offerings, and setting up a mentoring program in creative writing with Johnson high school graduates. I'm also eager to continue serving on the MLS Advisory Committee, the LAM Committee, and the IFO Women's Caucus.

I recently participated in an Equity Champion training refresher, and I intend to continue serving on search committees for the academic years '21-'22, and '22-'23.

Below lists more specifically my academic intensions for continued development as a strong and effective creative writing assistant professor in the college of liberal arts.

Criterion 1: Effective Teaching

1. I will teach the following courses fall, 2021-22, as well as fall, 2022-23: *Writers as Readers*; *Short Fiction*; *1000 Words or Less*. In fall, 2021 I am delivering these courses synchronously through zoom. In fall of 2022, I intend to go back and teach all three of these courses face-to-face, hopefully on the St. Paul campus.
2. In spring, '22 I will be teaching WRIT 300, *Creative Writers, Identity and Race in the Twin Cities* as well as WRIT 356, *Writing Humor*. This will be my first time teaching WRIT 300. I look forward to developing a syllabus for this class after I research books for required reading. I'm currently reading *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, as a possible selection.
3. In spring, 2023 I plan to apply for sabbatical. If I am not granted my sabbatical I intend to teach the following: *MLS 620-50: Liberal Studies Explorations: The Graphic Novel*. This class will be synchronous and offered on Saturdays from 9-12. This will be my second time co-teaching this course with Bev Hill. I will also teach *WRIT 359 01: Creative Writing Boot Camp* on Fridays from 9:00 – 5:00; 1-15-23 to 2-26-23. I hope to teach this face to face on the St. Paul campus.
4. I will continue adapting a rubric for LAM proposal/portfolio reviews that I currently use for *Writers as Readers* focusing on the following components of writing: Ideas/Content; Voice;

Organization; Word Choice; and Sentence Fluency/Conventions (adapted from the 6+1 trait writing from the National Education Association. I see this rubric as a source of evaluating LAM proposals and LAM portfolios to adhere to the elements of quality writing.

5. I will engage students in multicultural texts and assigned readings/discussions for all CW courses.
6. In addition to a class syllabus, I will type up weekly agenda sheets for each of my classes as a way to address invisible disabilities challenged by organizational tasks.
7. I will invite throughout the semester guest speakers to join our class discussions. Lynda Barry and Sarah Cooper have both penciled-in a visit to the MLS class via zoom in 2023.
8. I will provide prompt feedback weekly for all writing assignments due.
9. I will continue to evaluate semester student portfolios for each course I am teaching to assist me in determining individual writing processes (in place of a final). This assignment is a requirement for each of my courses and a clear example of writing being a recursive process.
10. Brainstorm and begin developing a course for the Creative Writing major. I am interested in developing a topics course, or an MLS course about Mary Shelley.
11. Schedule conference calls with various authors we will be studying for my *Writers as Readers* class as well as my *1000 Words or Less* class. The students' express interest in dialoguing with authors.

Criterion 2: Scholarly or Creative Achievement or Research

1. I intend to routinely send creative work (poetry/fiction) to a minimum of 10 journals for ongoing publication.
2. I will welcome the publication of my new poetry collection, *Face Up*, due for publication May, 2021.
3. I will brainstorm a potential sabbatical plan for spring, 2023.
4. I will guest speak at St. Kate's Writing Fiction class taught by Gay Herzberg during October, 2021-22.
5. I will continue to advise *Haute Dish* over the next two academic years through regular scheduled meetings with the editorial staff and through attending *Haute Dish* readings, both on campus and for our scheduled spring readings at Open Book. I will work this fall with a new managing editor with *Haute Dish* ideas as well as I will continue recruiting new editors and a managing editor for the school year, 2022-23. This is a student-paid position of minimal amount.

Criterion 3: Evidence of Continuing Preparation and Study

1. Attend commencements: December, 2021-'22 and May, 2022-'23.
2. I benefited so much from attending the following six advising workshops over the '20-'21 school year: Effective Advising (9-17); Academic Planning/Registration (part 1;10-18); Academic Standing (11-19); Graduation Reviews/Process (1-21); Advising Tools/Communication (2-18); Academic Planning Registration (pt. 2; 3-18), which offers me more confidence through advising my load of 46 students majoring in creative writing.
3. I will continue to work hands on as the faculty advisor for Metro's literary magazine, *Haute Dish* over the next two academic years.
4. I will continue to attend the student writers' group, *Get Lit*, which meets the first Sunday evening of each month throughout the calendar year. This event is open to current students as well as alumni. Current monthly numbers range from 10-21 students/alumni.
5. I will continue writing letters of recommendation for students applying to grad school(s) and scholarship funds.
6. I will be active in the writing community, and to collaborate on community literary events promoting Metro State's creative writing program/students.
7. I intend to be active in the scheduling of student creative reading events annually for fall semesters, '21-22, and spring semester(s), '22-23.

Criterion 4: Contributions to Student Growth and Development

1. I intend to continue serving as chair for the annual Carothers Award. This involves forming a committee of three faculty and staff to read all blind submissions, averaging between 18 and 42 per year. Once the committee is formed I then collect, record identification, and make certain all entrants are saved as blind submissions. I send out all submissions the following day after deadline, and offer the committee at least a week to read and work using a prepared rubric, until a winner is determined at the final meeting. I enjoy this process. It is tedious, yet an annual event that honors student writing. This year my student, Fatima Mohamed, was an honorable mention in the event (although this information is not yet public).
2. I will continue recruiting students to serve as editors for our literary magazine, *Haute Dish*, published bi-annually. This is determined on face-to-face interviews and writing samples.
3. I will work on developing a creative writing project with Johnson High School seniors. This will come after developing a student-student mentorship program, perhaps taken as a course for credit (a course proposal forthcoming).
4. I will continue to stay current on student growth by keeping track of alumni through Get Lit monthly meetings, and recognizing students' continued publications.
5. I will continue to nominate students for the president's award bi-annually.
6. I will welcome, after this long covid, an open door policy for advising and check ins after using a virtual open door policy. I enjoy my student check ins, especially face-to-face.
- 7.

Criterion 5: Service to the University and Community

1. I will serve on the IFO Action Committee for the next two academic years.
2. I will serve on the MLS Advisory Committee
3. I will serve on the LAM Committee for the next two academic years.
4. I will attend monthly IFO Womens Caucus meetings.
5. I will attend all professional meetings monthly: CLA; Fine Arts
6. I will attend all IFO meetings to work on collaboration with other faculty.
7. I will continue my role for adjudicating the MN Writing Region for the 2022-23 Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards.
8. I will continue to participate in Equity Champion training refreshers annually.
9. I am excited to add my collection to the larger collection of Minnesota poetry with my book launch in May, 2021. Thank you to Oleb Books for this publication opportunity.
10. I will continue to explore the benefits of D2L as well as its inhibitions over the next two years, especially when Bev Hill and I co teach because Bev Hill is the maven of D2L, and it's what we are using this spring for our MLS 620 course, and it's the very first time I've used D2L for a class before. I've become more open-minded to the idea, although I am not certain I would prefer to use D2L for every teaching opportunity it (im)poses.

I intend to go forward with these qualities in mind: justice, self-control, prudence, humility. . . Thank you for serving as our Chair, Brian. I will miss you terribly and I thank you for all your years of mentorship that I hope will continue. Below is an addendum in case I might be approved for sabbatical.

Addendum

Plans for 15-week Sabbatical Application:

If I am granted a sabbatical in spring, 2023, I have some thoughts on what disciplinary/teaching research I would like to pursue over the 15-week semester. Whittling is defined as "an addictive hobby that is practiced by millions of people across the globe." On March 16, 2021, my son called me from Florida

and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was currently whittling a comfort bird. “Stop talking crazy,” my son said. After several exchanges, to include texting photos, we found out that we both took up the hobby of whittling on the same day in March. He’s making wizards. I’m making a connection, as far-fetched as it may seem, to a poetry project I want to explore with a working title, *Whittling*.

1. Goals and Objectives

I have always admired the poem by Langston Hughes titled *Mother and Son* for several reasons. Major themes in Hughes’ poem address hardship, hope, and courage. “The poem explores the dignity and determination of a person when facing problems. “The speaker compares her life to a ragged staircase and conjures up an idea that one should not give up. She says that life is full of tests, challenges, and confusion and a person should confront with courage and determination. Throughout the poem, she instructs her son to continue his struggle with patience, resilience, and hope, giving her own life’s example” (Wikipedia).

2. Evidence of Preparation

I have a poetry collection due for publication in May of this year titled, *Face Up*. This project initially started out as a re-issue of my last poetry book published by So’ham books titled, *I Thought You Should Know*. As the project developed over six months’ time my editor and I have selected 40 new poems inspired by themes of 20 original poems. Needless to say, this is a new collection with a few reissues. The project was a huge undertaking, and perhaps my strongest collection theme-wise among my previous collections. In my new collection I break the book into two parts revealing and exploring subjects from an interior life and a life among society. This prepared me for moving into a new unexplored collection of poetry with the working title, *Whittling*, to combine two generations; a mother and two sons.

3. Project Plan

I want to explore point of view in this project, as well as explore some of the same themes expressed in *Mother to Son*, such as hardship, hope, and courage. I want to make this collection accessible to many audiences, not to just include mothers and sons, and I think one way to achieve this is through exploring point of view. My goal is to break this collection into two parts as I did with *Face Up*, focusing on each son. Some of my perspectives will be single parenthood, West Point, and delinquencies. My overall theme will focus on perseverance and finding your voice.

4. Timeline

I would like to travel to Florida/Key West for eight weeks, spending a month’s time with each of my sons. One lives near Tampa; the other lives in Key West. For the remaining seven weeks I would like to draft and revise a collection of 60 poems, and to then find a publisher for that work. I intend for this publication to be ready for publication in May, 2023.

5. Benefit to your department/other departments

I will need to develop how this project will benefit my department and other departments, but I will work on this.

Mother to Son

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’ve been a-climbin’ on,

And reachin’ landin’s,

And turnin’ corners,

And sometimes goin’ in the dark

Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.