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Professional Self-Assessment

The six years since my tenure and promotion to associate professor have been rich with opportunities to build on existing interests and explore new practices in teaching, scholarship, and service. In all three areas, I have traveled (literally) outside of my formal training: moving into cultural studies, pedagogical research, and the medical humanities; co-leading field study courses and classes in Career and Life Planning; and serving in leadership roles in faculty governance and academic program administration. These explorations have been tremendously rewarding for me, but I also hope they have helped to diversify the curricular offerings at Rollins and to support a broader sense of shared mission among faculty.

Teaching

If there are thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, there are probably as many ways of looking at teaching excellence and none of them can quite capture the thing itself. A review of my Course Instructor Evaluations will reveal several recurring adjectives: engaging, passionate, challenging, knowledgeable, funny (sarcastic), dedicated, harsh but fair, intimidating, and available. I recognize myself in this composite picture and acknowledge even the contradictions contained within.

As I prepare for teaching in the coming year(s), I am focusing on questions of rigor and relevance. Although students describe my courses as demanding, some of their accounts of time spent preparing outside of class are soberingly low. I am also motivated to do better by this comment from fall 2015: “She is so passionate and well-versed in this field that it may be hard to remember that not everyone else is.” I don’t believe I am alone in these struggles, but I am asking myself: How can I better align my expectations of workload with theirs? Have I so privileged an engaged classroom that I’m letting non-readers off the hook? And what tools (beyond grades) do I have to drive home the relevance of cultural analysis, argumentation, and writing proficiency? I know that many of these classically liberal arts values may be felt by some students well beyond the close of CIEs for the course, but I hope to continue a reflective teaching practice that keeps pace with an evolving student body and doesn’t simply fall into lament about “kids these days” and the impossibility of reaching them.

Since 2013, I have continued to enjoy teaching courses in American literature, but have also branched out in three new areas: 1) drawing from my research interest in literature and medicine, 2) comparative frameworks often supported by team teaching and/or field study courses, and 3) career and life planning. “Body Snatchers: Literature and Medicine” has become a signature course and one that I have adapted for students in the major (ENG 234), honors students, and rFLA. The course expresses my interest in interdisciplinary study, an approach achieved through both the content and the diversity of perspectives among students in the class. Students read fiction and poetry about death, dying, and illness, but also analyze paintings, read Jessica Mitford’s expose of the funeral industry, anthropological accounts of black-market egg donation, and newspaper stories of brain death and organ exchange. A recurring touchstone in the Body

Snatchers class comes when I assign my students to ask three people what they want to happen to their bodies when they die. Typically, this assignment falls over Thanksgiving break. When they return, we talk about the answers they heard as well as their own plans and then discuss how a conventional church funeral or adding your skeleton to a coral reef are reflective of different values and priorities. This kind of discussion works at the two levels on which I hope to engage students in all of my classes: 1) I want them to think about the real-life stakes of the topic at hand *and* 2) I want them to know that all aspects of their life and culture are reflective of ideology and open to examination.

This push toward interdisciplinarity in my teaching (and scholarship) has also led to collaborative opportunities in the classroom. I have team-taught or linked courses with Paul Reich (Southern Lit Road Trip), Laurel Habgood (Culture and Chemistry of Crime), and Jana Mathews (Sex, War, & Plague; Americana; Literary Expats). All of these courses involve important examples of experiential learning and many of them have embedded field studies. With Paul and Jana, I have travelled with students through the American South, and to Scotland, Ireland, Peru, Spain, and Italy. In class visits to NASCAR, Cracker Barrel, and Disney World, my ENG 304: “Americana” students analyze how themes of independence, choice, and freedom manifest in inspiring and troubling ways. Continuing this search for new lenses of examination, I designed ENG 321: “Literary Expats” in the summer of 2016, but class began in the winter of 2017 as Trump was being inaugurated. Suddenly, this meditation on the intellectual tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism took on an entirely new urgency. And, when our class traveled to Spain, we learned more about the nationalist movement for independence in Catalonia. Using a comparative framework to explore the complexities, evolution, and cultural embeddedness of these questions opened up a new sense of “global citizenship” for my students and also helped them to make sense of the most pressing political questions of their lives. Finally, in ENG 234: “Sex, War, & Plague” Jana and I use our divergent perspectives as a medievalist and postmodernist to both make the distant past feel familiar to students and to make strange mainstream patterns in contemporary life.

Perhaps my most unlikely teaching assignment, but one that has been most quietly influential, has been team-teaching CLP 102: “Making Any Major Marketable” with Todd French, Jenny, Queen, and Destinee Lott. I have come to believe that the skills of good essay writing are very similar to good cover letters, resumes, and interviewing techniques (and that I am, therefore, well-qualified to teach this course despite only ever working as an academic and a library page in high school). More profoundly, though, teaching CLP 102 has changed the way I think about advising and student learning. I now believe it is impossible to underrate the importance of making learning visible to students and offering them opportunities to speak and write about its value. From teaching CLP 102, I have changed in small ways. For example: on the last day of most of my classes I will typically take 20 minutes to ask students, “How did something you learned in this class prepare you for your ambitions after college?” I then critique the *form* of their answers and remind them that the same elements I sought in their academic writing should inform their interview answers—memorable claims, specific evidence, clarity, and fluency. But I have also been inspired in large ways. My collaboration with CFAM to produce an exhibition with students in winter 2019 and my ENG 328: “Behind the Music” course were experiments designed to offer more opportunities for students to see how cultural expression and critique have public implications. In “Behind the Music,” students produce short and long audio essays

that have many of the same elements of good, analytic writing, but also think very differently about audience.

Research and Scholarship

I found it impossible to write the preceding paragraphs on teaching without dipping into my research. Since tenure, I have lived the liberal arts dream of an integrated teaching and research agenda. My second monograph, *Transplant Fictions: A Cultural Study of Organ Exchange* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), will be published in the Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science, and Medicine series. Alongside this substantial research project, I have also explored pedagogical and curricular scholarship and written in collaboration with colleagues. In order to be recommended for promotion to full professor, the Department of English expects candidates to have published a book or five articles by peer review. With the publication of *Transplant Fictions* and two articles co-authored with Paul Reich, I have fulfilled the expectations of my department for continued scholarly output.

Transplant Fictions brings together a diverse set of cultural representations to understand how organ exchange becomes possible. “Possible” here does not mean the history of vein suturing, tissue typing, and immune suppression that has made this once-radical surgery now relatively routine. Instead: what concepts have emerged that allow us to overcome the profound ideological violations represented by transplantation? Despite its relatively common practice, removing an organ from one (typically dead) body and placing it in another living body challenges our most widely held and foundational ideas about the boundaries between self and other, individual and social identity, life and death, health and illness. How did we overcome this sense of violation to imagine organ donation as a technological and moral victory? How has organ retrieval evolved from the plot of a horror story to being ubiquitously viewed as a “gift of life”? Medical historians have told the story of technical challenges and scientific breakthroughs, but what is missing in these clinical accounts is a broader narrative of the cultural complexities and nuances of organ exchange. In order to conduct this research, I had to move out of my comfort zone in American literature and place my work in conversation with medical anthropologists, historians, sociologists, ethicists, and some truly bizarre works of popular fiction and film. The classroom became an important place to test out some of these ideas and I was able to achieve familiarity through repetition, student and faculty interlocutors, and lots and lots of reading.

If *Transplant Fictions* was something of a marathon, co-authoring essays with colleagues has been a refreshing relay race. My first experiment with collaborative writing was “Taking the Text on a Road Trip: Conducting a Literary Field Study” with Paul Reich. Published in the leading journal in the field, *Pedagogy*, this essay argues for the value of travel with students as a kind of laboratory for the skills of close reading they gain in the classroom. Paul and I collaborated again with “#DrySeptember: Reading William Faulkner through the Lens of Black Twitter” (*Studies in American Culture*, October 2018). This essay makes the somewhat surprising move to compare the contemporary discourse community of Black Twitter to William Faulkner’s 1931 short story, “Dry September.” We argue that despite apparent differences of time, technology, and authorship, both the form and content of the story and the social media phenomenon serve as examples of racialized discourse communities. Reading the canonical Faulkner through the lens of Black social media opens up new reading practices and

interpretations and can bring nuance to a conversation around racial violence in the American past and present.

I have forthcoming or in progress several additional projects:

- I was invited to contribute an essay to a volume on David Foster Wallace for the Cambridge University Press series Literature in Context.
- This past year I had the opportunity to tell the story of curricular innovation in the Rollins Foundations in the Liberal Arts program, to be published in spring 2020 in a collection called *Redesigning the Liberal Arts* (Johns Hopkins UP).
- This summer I am also working on two collaborative writing projects. One, with Steve Schoen, Nolan Kline, Amy McClure, and Nancy Chick documents the results of a lesson study project completed in Spring 2019. In this project, this group of faculty taught three sessions of a shared lesson on sexual assault for our rFLA 100 classes.
- I am also working with Nancy Chick and Lucy Littler on an article describing our attempts to surface disciplinarity in general education programs; we will bring readers through the background and goals of our handout on disciplinary research and understanding the whys behind citation rules.
- In another instance of collaboration, Jana Mathews and I have also received acceptance of an essay called “Following Tour Buses: Unconventional Travel Experiences on the Tourist Circuit” in an edited collection on “Out of the Box Student Travel” (Rowman and Littlefield). This chapter argues for the value of turning a critical lens toward the most common form of travel: tourism. Specifically, we illuminate how guided tours, museum displays, souvenirs, travel brochures, and websites become the subjects of critical inquiry and close reading in 3 case studies: “reading” the *Book of Kells*, the layered footsteps of exploration to Machu Picchu, and confronting Americana in our Orlando backyard at NASCAR and Disney World.

The department also expects candidates for full professor to engage in a “pattern of continuing scholarly activity.” Since promotion to associate professor, I have served as a peer reviewer for 5 different journals and been on the editorial board of *Disability Studies Quarterly* since 2015. I have also worked to support local intellectual community, accepting an invitation to present my scholarship to visiting colleagues from Jindal University in 2013, chairing sessions for the Zora! Festival in 2017 and 2018, and presenting our “Body Snatchers” exhibition in a public talk at CFAM in March 2019. In a rare example of following the advice I often give to new colleagues, my life since tenure has required priority setting and recognition that saying yes to some projects would mean saying no to others. I have turned down invitations to write encyclopedia entries because I knew it would pull my focus from completing a book chapter. Family circumstances have made it essential to ration my travel: I have said yes to field studies, but limited my conference attendance and used more long-distance methods to secure feedback on scholarly work in progress. In the past year, however, I have been more involved in conference attendance, both at a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference in January and at the AAC&U general education annual meeting in February 2019. In the coming year, I will be co-presenting work at the iSoTL conference in October and am serving as an invited member of the planning board for the AAC&U general education meeting in February 2020. I have been energized by these opportunities to showcase the good work being done at Rollins and look forward to doing more in this vein in the future.

Service

Since 2013, I have had the opportunity to serve the college in several roles, most notably as Vice President of the A&S and then CLA faculty (2015-2017); Co-Chair of the Diversity Council (2013-2015); and Co-Director of the Honors Degree Program (2015-2017). As a member of EC+, I am tremendously proud of the work we did to unify the campus under the banner of the College of Liberal Arts. Under new campus administration, we were able to imagine different possibilities for organizing ourselves and to bring together constituencies who felt they had little in common in the years before. Many of the ideas I brought to the table didn't make the final version of the bylaws. And there were times I lamented what felt like the conservatism of my colleagues as a body. But those two realities confirmed for me the messy but exciting process of working collaboratively to develop a set of principles, imagine alternatives, generate buy-in, listen to feedback, revise, and drill down into the nitty gritty so that others don't have to.

In addition to this example of very consuming service, I have taken on other rewarding roles since tenure. Serving as co-chair of Diversity Advisory Council (2013-15, member 2016) gave me a rewarding taste of the process of coming up with a new idea and bringing it to fruition. We created the Diversity Infusion Grants, administered and presented the results of the campus climate survey, and developed a protocol for responding to bias incidents on campus. I have also been recognized for excellence in advising several times and teaching RCC several times in a row has meant that I am often in the top five of advising loads on campus. This one-on-one mentoring work with students is essential to the value of their Rollins education and I pride myself on offering both correct and caring guidance.

The creation of the Associate Dean of Academics in 2017 combined roles previously served by faculty: the directors of the RCC, Honors Degree Program, and rFLA. As the first person to hold this position, I have carried over many of the priorities and approaches that are bred from teaching full time. I am not seeking "credit" for service accomplishments during my time in Warren Hall, but I do want to share how my day-to-day has felt something like a re-balancing of a typical faculty role, especially since I have continued to teach each semester. Much of the work in my first year was spent with faculty governance to pass a series of revisions to rFLA program architecture. These changes were necessary to allow Rollins to deliver the innovative program the faculty had spent a decade designing. I also convened a faculty committee to revise the Holt general education program. The most rewarding aspects of my position are organizing the faculty development opportunities that are built into the structure of both rFLA and RCC. In collaboration with Nancy Chick and the rFLA faculty coordinators, we have delivered sessions on teaching the mission-centered common read anthologies, working with a diversifying student body, facilitating difficult conversations, assignment redesign toward critical thinking, classroom exercises on information literacy, and integrative learning. My hope is to contribute to a new golden age of collegiality and pedagogical exchange at Rollins, a goal that will continue to animate my service as full professor.

My temporary relocation to the Dean's Office has driven home the fact that the role of a tenured faculty member is exceptional. Through over a decade of work at Rollins, I have had the good

fortune of mentorship from several outstanding full professors and I am eager to return this service to the college and my colleagues. In re-reading years of CIEs in preparation for this review, one comment from a student has stayed with me. An initially resistant student wrote: “she made me feel like my thoughts were important.” I can’t offer a more succinct or true statement of what I hope to achieve as a professor.