

STEP 3: SUBMIT RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING ESSAY QUESTIONS DIRECTLY TO PROFESSOR ----. EACH RESPONSE SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN ONE PAGE IN LENGTH.

a. What are your professional goals?

To work as a professor. I believe this is the best way for me to be able to do what I love to do: learn, teach and create educational media. I believe that educational technology is the best way I can use my strengths in this regard. Essentially this is an attempt to "humanize" technology while I refine my understanding of what that means to me. To date, I think it has a lot more to do with social psychology, emotions, and communication than we realize. Ultimately I believe this is some of the most important work we humans will do in the next 50 years as technology grows up, because I think this kind of work is really teaching technology how to teach us -- the education of technology, vs. educational technology, if you like. And in order to be able to teach technology about us, I want to understand more about how we learn and how we interact with our new tools.

b. What areas of knowledge and skills do you expect to develop while in the doctoral Program, and how will these be useful to your professional plans and goals?

I would like to build a strong foundation in cognitive science as it relates to theories of learning and teaching, and to develop the academic research and writing skills needed to communicate my contributions to the discipline. During my doctoral studies I intend to discover new and better ways to use technology as a teaching tool.

c. What academic, personal or professional experiences have led to your interest in pursuing a doctorate in educational communication and technology? What considerations led to your decision?

I've had three paths that have brought me here. At the time each of these paths seemed to me to be very different, sometimes even clashing with the previous one. I now see that a pattern of communication, education and technology runs through all three and converges logically on educational technology.

My first major path was attending a consensus run alternative school and being raised by a pack of wild hippies. This has left me hamstrung in some ways, such as low GRE scores, and strong in others, such as: having a deep understanding of people and understanding the need to carefully mix goals, structure, individual empowerment and freedom. I value both group dynamics and my own intuition. I think I have a fairly active and open mind.

Second: my early employment exposed me to film and video production beginning in 1985, to freelance technology writing, and to Web site production beginning in 1994. In hindsight I can see that media production provided me with the structure I wanted along with the creative freedom I needed.

Third: my discovery (ironically after completing my undergraduate degree) of my love of writing and the academic life. My Masters in Educational Technology from San Diego State was, simply put, a whole lot of fun. At least what I consider fun — learning, teaching, creating, writing, and working with groups, within a free environment that also has clear goals and structure. Lately I've been either working in business doing work relating to educational technology or else working in education doing technology work. Ultimately though, business leaves me a little cold and bored, and K-12 education leaves me a little stifled and short on time to create and to do research.

d. Summarize the area of knowledge, set of issues or problems, and body of literature in the field of educational communication and technology or related fields with which you are most conversant.

I am most conversant with the production and consumption of Internet delivered media and communication -- specifically, Web development and computer-mediated communication.

On a non-academic level I've been building Web media since 1994 and have written about and studied the process through which media are developed by groups. It always strikes me as remarkable that the oil of art can mix with the water of money within a matrix of group dynamics.

My Master's evaluation project was on Web usability using the Think Aloud method of usability testing, captured by picture in picture video, to evaluate the effectiveness of an educational CD-ROM for 4th graders.

I have been involved in online community organization and creation since 1996 and focused on this subject in my Masters study. My experience in online community has provided me with opportunities to publish two papers, freelance articles for Wired, Salon, Omni, Tech Trends, etc., speak at conferences, and be interviewed in two books. I've also studied how gift economies, common goods, social psychology, and self-efficacy effect online groups.

In addition I have used story-telling theories and Joseph Campbell's work on successful story structure in making Web-based prompted writing tools.

e. In what areas do you have an interest in research and theory? In what content areas or for which audiences do you have an interest in designing educational media programs? What experiences led to these interests?

After forming a foundation of current cognitive science, I'd like to research how issues within cognitive science affect digital media and social psychology. I believe that too often educational technology treats the user like itself: as mechanical, cold and emotionless. Being part of many online communities, working in schools, and designing instructional media has made me suspect that human beings' fallible, emotional storytelling and discursive social nature needs to be respected and understood by future

technologies if we are to more effectively use technology to teach and inform. I'd like to find better ways to teach, not just with technology, but by way of humanized technology. I'd like to use that knowledge to teach teachers and instructional designers.

f. Describe your position on what is effective instruction, the relation of media and technology to instruction, and the theoretical or conceptual frameworks you find most powerful and useful to support your position.

This question brings up precisely why I want to get a doctorate. I'm not sure of the answer, especially when it concerns technology. So much of learning for me has to do with human emotions and psychology in a real-time, full bandwidth face-to-face situation that I think we've got a lot of work to do before we can make effective instruction with technology easy to define.

I've achieved effective instruction by being a motivated teacher who has time to create well-structured and challenging classes, with clear expectations, a dash of entertainment; in a supportive environment that stresses constructivist theory, project-based experiential learning, and positive group dynamics. And on a basic level, effective instruction to me is instruction that intrinsically creates motivation and confidence to learn and provides resources (teachers, equipment, etc) to support that learning. In this sense, I would say that life itself is a form of effective instruction, because once the motivation and resources are there people seem to figure out how to learn in the most unsupportive environments, e.g. humankind's early evolution. Motivation comes in many forms, from wanting to simply live another few minutes, to wanting to graduate high school and escape one's parents. It often isn't pretty, but I believe that life, public schools, and the military provide effective instruction based simply on motivation and resources. And the more motivation and resources you have, the more you learn.

The best motivation I've seen is the love of learning, which usually seems to be imparted infectiously by patient adults who lead by example and make you think. The best resource I've seen is usually a gifted mentor or teacher that can make a personal connection with a student. But this is too rare to be counted on to solve our education problems.

The second best resource I've seen is technology and media. So I feel that the relationship of media, technology, and instruction comes down to the very same things that provide effective instruction -- resources and motivation. Technology and media can provide resources and motivation learners. But we've got a lot to learn about how best to do this.

g. Describe one or more significant academic or professional situations in which you have encountered the problem of improving learning or instruction. How did you identify and analyze the problem, and how did you or would you have solved it?

I've solved two major, and lots of minor, problems of improving instruction. For example, I taught EDTECH 541, Multimedia Development at San Diego State University

for a year after my Masters. My mentor and I had to take the class from using Director to using the Web as a development medium. We developed a project-based curriculum as a core that was both printed and online, and then combined it with Web resources and class email support lists. For the online version of the class we added live video streaming of lectures with simultaneous Java chat, allowing students to "raise" their hands and ask questions. In high schools I've solved the problems of teaching modern, urban work habits by coordinating an aggressive internship program and publishing a paper on it. I am currently working with the problem of establishing a media literacy program in an experimental high school.

In most situations I've improved instruction by providing some sort of project-based learning, by providing situations for group work and user-centered design, setting up very clear and sane goals and expectations.

h. Describe one or two critical problems that, in your view, impede effective learning or instruction in a particular setting or type of institution. Outline briefly how you would approach research on these problems, including useful theoretical frameworks and methodology.

#1, Personal Empowerment. In high school I don't recall anybody asking me if I wanted to be there, and I sadly never asked myself, or I would have done a lot better! Even the military has more empowerment than high school because you had to make the decision to sign up, so while you're in the mud, you know it was by your choice. I have had great success working with high school students by simply empowering them fully, while also providing clear results of the actions they choose. Often just having an adult treat them as powerful and free people seems to provide them with empowerment that increases their willingness to learn.

I'd approach research on this problem by exploring how technology or media can change people's psychological motivation. Would a simple question like "Are you ready to learn?" before a piece of educational technology help? It would certainly help me, if only because some computer bothered to ask before it launched into teaching me.

#2, Instructional Design of Training Media

There's a lot of mind-numbingly ineffective online and digital educational technology out there.

I would approach this research by learning more about how our brain works on a base level so that we can provide instructional designers with simple tools and data about how to design materials. I also think research on how ineffective products end up that way would be a valuable addition to the best practices out there, specifically looking at how involved actual users were in the cycle of development, testing, and evaluation of the products.

i. Describe your technology skills, e.g., skills in computer-based multimedia, web, or productivity tools, video, etc.

I can effectively use digital still and video cameras and Photoshop, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere to edit and process media for full resolution or Web delivery. I'm proficient in front end Web design, production and implementation by hand (HTML, FTP, etc), or with Dreamweaver or GoLive. I also know Mac IT networking and OS maintenance and am comfortable using Windows XP. I am current with all the MS Office applications, as well as applications like Inspiration, End Notes, Final Draft, BBEdit, Transmit, IM clients, etc.