

Statement of goals, aims, and interests of study

Recorded by Brendan Guenther upon entry to HALE MA 7/2006

I enter the Masters program in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education as a working professional in the field. Already, I have completed nine credits of coursework related to the program that I hope to count towards the degree. Even before taking formal coursework in this area, I had already begun to absorb knowledge and wisdom based on my experiences on the job. As a lifelong education student, I selected courses that seemed particularly interesting or pertinent based on the curiosities and interests that emerged from my professional practice. Based on my current experience with the curriculum of the HALE program, I will attempt to organize this statement on my course of study around two core topics of my learning. I will conclude with a statement on my current writing ability.

Administration of Higher Education Organizations

I have always been a student of organizations and remain fascinated by what people can achieve when aligned formally by something larger than themselves. I used to approach this largely from a paramilitary or business understanding. My learning as a lifelong education student in the Higher Education Administration course (EAD805) gave me new perspectives on higher education organizations. The complexity inspires me to see more and look deeper at decision-making and precipitation of outcomes. I would like to study in greater depth the roles of different administrators and processes at various levels of academic organizations. Administration of higher education organizations is a strong interest area since my position involves responsibilities of administration at the department level, service and collaboration with academic departments, and advocacy between departments and the central administration. Deeper understanding gained through study will help me to achieve the agenda of my unit's specific mission within the larger organization and contribute value to others missions. I have realized that achieving this with less effort and stress requires perceiving and applying to my advantage the complex forces of the institution instead of bluntly pressing forward.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning is my other core interest area in which I see myself as a consultant to instructors, a teacher and mentor to others, and as a learner struggling to keep up with a rapid pace of change in an environment of complexity. I have spent a significant portion of my career in close contact with instructors facing challenges in their teaching, which cause them to seek new opportunities to facilitate learning through adoption of new technologies. Many find it difficult to stay abreast of new technologies in the knowledge economy. When dealing with education the context compounds these difficulties. Given the highly debatable value of technology, professionals in the field constantly re-evaluate doctrine and methods of application, and it remains difficult to obtain a clear rubric that indicates success. Often I find myself learning how to apply new technologies, then immediately trying to learn what worked and what might be improved. I hope to gain a deeper understanding of theories and methods related to

learning, learners, teaching methods, and educational research. Understanding gained through study will help me to better diagnose methods applied in practice, which methods could help improve the situation, how technology might apply, and how to measure and assess learning for reflection and improvement.

Writing Ability

I have a decent vocabulary and a solid understanding of how to apply the English language to inform, inquire, or persuade. While writing essays I am comfortable stating a thesis, discussing counterpoints, and providing evidence to support my claims. I am comfortable with research and have a well-refined understanding of an artifact's credibility and relevance to my work. If you are still reading this, you may claim I have a love affair with words. This wordiness can become a liability, and I am prone to having too much to say on any given topic. I challenge myself to organize my thoughts, reduce redundancy, and become more poignant and direct with my phrasing. I need to improve my referencing of evidence to connect directly to my argument, aiding reader comprehension. As a lifelong learner, feedback on my papers has already been helpful and I fondly anticipate the opportunity the HALE program will provide to study my areas of interest while gaining coaching from elite authors and scholars on my thoughts, ideas, and writing.