

SELF-REFLECTION FOR PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

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August 2021

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Introduction

“Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.” -Saint Teresa of Calcutta

I cannot possibly put into adequate words how much I’ve grown in ten years at the University of St. Francis—as a person, as an educator, and as a servant leader, though I strive every day to “pay it forward” by pouring all that God created me to be into my profession and my many roles at the university. After receiving tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor in 2016, I have worked tirelessly to succeed in the sometimes mystical arena of “sustained excellence” that is required for applying for promotion to the rank of Professor of Education. This comes with just cause, as the title in itself is indicative of an individual who is not just an expert in their field, but has dedicated their life and lent their passion wholly to servant leadership in teaching, scholarship, and service. Put simply, through individual growth, collegial collaborations, and following example of my peers who have earned this distinction, I believe I have met all requirements for promotion to Professor of Education.

My purpose in submitting this self-reflection and portfolio is **to apply for promotion to Professor of Education at the University of St. Francis**. My career at USF began as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in 2011 after I had served in the K-12 field for six years as a middle school science teacher. I was about halfway through my doctoral program in Curriculum Leadership at Northern Illinois University at the time and had long wanted to become involved with “teaching the teacher” after serving as mentor to new teachers in my former school district many times over. I received tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in 2016, and completed my tenth overall year of service (and fifth year as Associate Professor) in 2021. I am now eligible to apply for promotion to full professor, but more importantly, I have fulfilled or exceeded all requirements to be ready to do so.

In reflecting upon my journey in relation to the three tenants of the professoriate, I have found that there is a distinct interplay between each in becoming a truly Franciscan educator. For example, my teaching or service often inform my scholarship; my service informs my teaching and scholarship, etc.

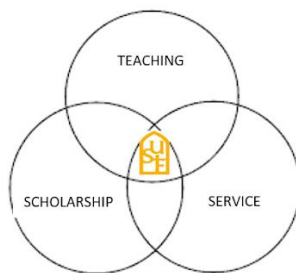


Figure 1. Tenants of the Professoriate

To that end, beyond “just telling” what I’ve done in my ten years at USF, I believe strongly in justifying with a preponderance of concrete evidence across all three tenants; thus, please note that my narrative closely follows the structure of my e-portfolio, triangulating robust data from multiple sources to illustrate my sustained excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. All artifacts and evidence referenced throughout this document can be accessed within my e-portfolio, and my narrative will give specific instructions on where to find each item referenced to help the process of reviewing my materials flow smoothly. To you, the reader, thank you for lending your time and expertise in reviewing my work over the last decade at USF.

My Philosophy of Education

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” -Aristotle

At the core of what teaching is, it's all about relationships. I can no longer count the number of times I've said this since I first began my teaching career 16 years ago as a middle school science teacher, but it forms the foundation for all that I do—no student will be impacted by the teacher more than by the relationship that is (or isn't) formed. Thus, education must be approached holistically. Whether a student is learning about science, classroom management, or how to properly format a resume, they must first know that their teacher cares about not just teaching content, but also in the valuable and necessary investment that comes with getting to know students on a personal level. What supports will help each student to be successful? What might be going on outside of the classroom that is impacting their learning? Who are they as an individual? What strengths and challenges do they possess of which they may not be aware yet? Our core job as educators is to find the answers to those questions and use them to help our students grow as learners and, in my case, as future educators. As a parent, in addition to having content expertise, I want my sons' teachers to have empathy, compassion, kindness, and understanding. I never lose sight of that in the ways in which I choose to teach as well as how I choose to mentor future teachers on the path into the profession.

My teaching philosophy also aligns with that of a middle school science teacher in terms of content methodology because I strive to “teach the teacher” in such a way that they can emulate my pedagogy in the field in a very practical and realistic way. My teaching style is constructivist-based, following the likes of seminal researchers such as Piaget and Vygotsky and more recent researchers such as science education theorist Roger Bybee and cooperative learning expert Spencer Kagan. In a constructivist-based environment, students essentially build their own knowledge base through planned experiences that are carefully orchestrated by the instructor. Experiential opportunities are provided and students are encouraged to engage in hands-on inquiry in order to come to their own conclusions related to the topic of study. This type of learning requires extensive teacher modeling, guided inquiry, questioning techniques, and performance-based assessment strategies. As evidenced in my teaching reflection and artifacts, I am able to successfully cultivate this type of learning environment by engaging students with a variety of materials and experiences that are then applied to a real-world classroom context to allow for maximum practicality, relevance, and depth.

From a Franciscan perspective, my teaching philosophy has been shaped by that of our patron Saint Francis. I am an advocate for building a community which “serves the underserved” in terms of my work in local, high-needs schools. In addition, I structure my classroom utilizing the concept of *Fraternitas*, which refers to the fellowship among individuals related to the oneness that we all share as part of God's creation. In essence, I strive to create a family in my classroom. We lift each other up with encouragement and affirmation and we use our collective gifts to be of service to others—both at USF and in the field. Modeling the Franciscan way of life to students helps to prepare them to be compassionate and dynamic educators in the field, and happily, the relationships we build and the bonds of *Fraternitas* have continued to bring us together even long after my students have left USF. These relationships are among the most treasured experiences of my life.

TEACHING

According to the university's policy manual, excellence in teaching is the highest priority among the tenants of the professoriate. I have proven to excel in teaching based on the myriad of artifacts and data that I will present in the following sections. Among my greatest strengths as an educator are my content expertise as well as my ability to develop engaging and innovative curricula, both within the COE and beyond. I have also received numerous recognitions and affirmations from students and colleagues regarding my teaching excellence as an educator who holistically teaches to the heart of the individual and builds relationships that foster students' ability to delve deeply into the content that I teach. The sections below provide further elaboration and justification by pointing back to the collection of artifacts I have included in my e-portfolio to illustrate *sustained excellence in teaching* throughout my ten years at USF.

Early Accomplishments in Teaching

As noted on my CV (found in the "CV and Credentials" folder on the main page of my e-portfolio), my first six years included developing and teaching a variety of courses within the COE and a variety of other accomplishments related to teaching. Select artifacts that showcase excellence in teaching from my tenure portfolio are included in my e-portfolio under "Teaching" and then "Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6." These artifacts are all related to the "sustained excellence in teaching" that I discuss in the next sections.

Table 1: Courses taught years 1-10 (up-to-date syllabi for all can be found in my e-portfolio under Teaching → Course Syllabi:

COURSES	Hrs	MY ROLE	WHEN	FOR WHOM
EDUC100 Human Relations for Educators	2	Developed/Taught	2015-present	UG (all programs)
*EDUC385/MEDU 685 Elem Science & Soc Studies Methods	3	Developed/Taught	2011-2015	UG/Grad (Elem/SpEd)
EDUC384/MEDU 676 Elem Science Methods	3	Developed/Taught	2016-present	UG/Grad (Elem/SpEd)
EDUC379/MEDU 678 Elem Methods of Tchg Social Sci	1	Developed/Taught	2016-present	UG/Grad (Elem/SpEd)
EDUC392/MEDU 661 Elem Classroom Management	2	Developed/Taught	2011-present	UG/Grad (Elem/SpEd)
EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Lrng Enviro	2	Developed/Taught	2017-present	UG/Grad (Elem)
EDUC476/MEDU 699 Professional Growth Seminar	1	Developed/Taught	2011-present	UG/Grad (all programs)
**EEND/MSED613 Differentiated Instruction	3	Instructor	2015-present (load variant)	Grad -REAL
**MSED650 Designing Effective Instruction	3	Instructor	Summer 2018	Grad -REAL

*EDUC385/MEDU685 was part of our EDUC program before a complete redesign in 2015; EDUC 384 and EDUC 379/MEDU678 now fully replace this course in our new program sequence.

**Courses taught for REAL are developed by expert curriculum writers and are implemented similarly across all sections/instructors each semester

Additional Select Teaching Accomplishments, Years 1-6: (artifacts for each are in my e-portfolio under Teaching → Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6)

- Served as a field experience supervisor for Internship I and Internship II Experiences for elementary and middle school science candidates (2011-2016 as teaching load allowed)
- Nominated for the USF Excellence in Teaching Award in 2015

- Developed experiential teaching opportunities and partnerships in the field, which continued into years beyond tenure (discussed in “sustained excellence” section below)
- Designed and led a “STEM Family Night” at St. Ray’s School
- Regularly visited the “Science for Educator” courses (PSCI 102 and BIOL 112) to present a “Lesson Planning Crash Course” to assist with the teaching portions of the general education science courses
- Developed a calendar to capture the scope and sequence of the Elementary Internship I Methods Block to help candidates better-understand the interrelated nature of field and courses
- Developed immersive, experiential projects that partnered with local schools in courses such as iSTEM in Elementary Science Methods
- Chosen as a “favorite instructor” for a COE marketing photo shoot in (2013)
- Student-chosen faculty spotlight in USF Encounter Magazine (2015)

Teaching Goals Set at Time of Tenure

Looking back at the narrative I submitted as part of my tenure portfolio, I set clear and meaningful goals for myself to work on throughout the next five years in the area of teaching. Below, I articulate each of these goals and discuss my accomplishments related to each:

Table 2: Teaching Goals from Tenure

Goal for 2016-2021	Progress	Notes
Continue to use the evaluation data provided on the iSTEM unit to improve scaffolding process of supporting candidates in integrating STEM into their field instruction and preparing for the consequential edTPA	ACCOMPLISHED!	The iSTEM was developed pre-tenure based on my dissertation study and has continued to go through revision/improvement over the years, which is discussed in more depth in the “Sustained Excellence in Teaching” section below.
Develop and teach the newest course for elementary education majors (EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment) to be implemented by SP17.	ACCOMPLISHED!	EDUC 394 was taught for the first time in Spring 2017 and has evolved into an immersive course that delves into topics such as equity, inclusion, and culturally-sustaining pedagogy—all topics that are essential in the field and are highly sought after by administrators. More information provided in the “Sustained Excellence” section below.

Sustained Excellence in Teaching

After accomplishing all that I did in years 1-6 leading up to tenure, I was eager to take on the goals and challenges that I set for myself for my next five years of service for years 6-10. The USF policy manual suggests that one must demonstrate “Sustained Excellence in Teaching” in order to meet the requirements of applying for promotion to full professor. Per the policy manual, this can include

activities in developing content expertise, course design, course management, and motivating/mentoring students. The artifacts I've chosen to showcase and discuss, some of which are new and others which extend from my tenure accomplishments, fall within categories of course syllabi, innovative teaching practices, assessment tools, evaluation data, letters of recommendation/peer reviews, and additional recognized excellence.

Content Expertise and Course Design

Among the many important facets of being an exemplary teacher is remaining current and refining one's own practice with continued lifelong learning. As noted previously in Table 1, I teach numerous courses in the COE, mostly for our initial licensure candidates in the elementary and special education programs. My teaching assignments have mostly pertained to my areas of expertise as a K-12 educator in the field, such as elementary science methods, social studies methods, and classroom management. My own undergraduate education, which I completed in 2005 at Illinois State University, focused on elementary and middle school education and led me to a teaching career as a middle school science and social studies teacher for six years prior to being hired at USF. While teaching full time in a middle school, I obtained my Master's degree in 2009 from Northern Illinois University in Curriculum Leadership with an emphasis in environmental education. The recognition of being awarded as one of two Master's Students of the year in the College of Education at NIU for my dedication and contribution to the field of education inspired me to continue on to pursue my doctorate at NIU, which I completed in 2015, placing emphasis on elementary STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education within my dissertation research. During this time, I also earned my "Type 75" licensure endorsement in K-12 Education Administration as well, completing my culminating internship at Joliet West High school, one of USF's partner schools—all while teaching full time on the tenure track at USF.

Additionally, I am consistently reading and researching (i.e. Science and Children journal published by the National Science Teachers Association; articles published by the National Center for Restorative Justice; Professional Development School Partners Journal published by the National Association for Professional Development School Partnerships; etc.) to stay up-to-date with content related to the courses that I teach. It is very important to me to stay apprised to new initiatives, state/district mandates, and state/federal trends that directly impact teachers in the field so that I can best-prepare our candidates for the realities they will face as teachers.

All of the above experiences contributed to my growth in teaching pedagogy and content expertise and helped me to become the successful educator I am today. Within the "Teaching" section of my e-portfolio, I have housed all of the most recent iterations of the syllabi for the courses that I regularly teach (see Table 1). I will delve more deeply about highlights from those courses and revisions from year to year in the "Innovative Practices" section later in this reflection of my teaching.

Course Evaluations

Each semester, I collect course evaluations from every course that I teach, analyzing the data to determine my overall effectiveness. The data allow me to determine what I can retain in each course as well as areas in which there is room for improvement. In my e-portfolio under Teaching → Evaluation Data, you'll find all evaluations from 2011-2021, complete with my analysis of the data in a separate artifact titled "Course Eval Analysis – Brief Summary." While the details of this summary are articulated

below, the artifact will provide a glimpse into how I went about drawing data-driven assertions from the mounds of data collected over ten years, whittling things down into succinct representations of quantitative data and pulling key statements from qualitative data to be coded into themes.

One thing that I noted as a challenge before tenure was achieving adequate response rates from my evaluations. As of tenure in 2016, the cumulative average of my response rates across all courses was 60.8%. As Figure 2 illustrates below, my cumulative averages have increased by as much as 30% over the years, providing a much more reliable data set from which to draw conclusions. I have managed to accomplish this by providing time in class for students to complete the evaluations, adding the evaluation as an assignment in the week before finals week and providing a small amount of points for students who submit a screen shot showing proof of submission (NOT their actual evaluation, but the “thank you for submitting” screen), and, well...begging, when necessary.

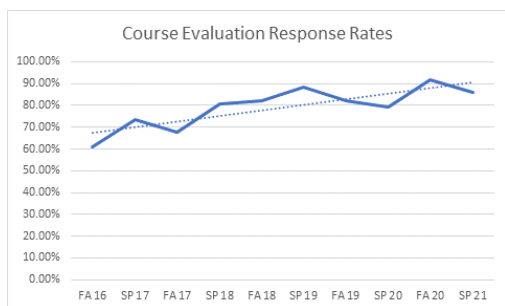


Figure 2. Course Evaluation Response Rates Post-Tenure

Having such high response rates with my course evaluations allows for much more valid and reliable data from which to draw assertions related to my strengths and areas of growth.

Overall Strengths

Student evaluation data for my courses suggest that I have strengths in three major areas: being a caring and conscientious educator, showing expertise in my field, and providing beneficial feedback related to the valuable learning experiences in my courses. These themes have emerged over ten years across three different evaluation systems: The “old” eval system from 2011-2014, IDEA from 2014-2020, and the new “My Eval” system from 2021. I manually aligned and synthesized all data cumulatively across all evaluations in an excel document to help me come to these conclusions that are represented in Table 3 below. As the table shows, I chose to “chunk” my highest-scoring indicators into three themes for the purpose of succinct discussion.

Table 3: Cumulative Areas of Strength, 2011-2021

Cumulative Survey Responses Post Tenure						
Caring	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Maintained High Expectations	95.80%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.40%
Sensitivity to Backgrounds and Differences	100.00%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	89.30%
Respect for All Learners	100.00%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Available to Answer Questions	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Excellent Teacher	95.80%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Expertise in Content and Course Design	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Course Was Well Organized	95.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Excellent Course Overall	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	92.90%
Thorough Instructor Knowledge of Content	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Valuable Activities	95.80%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Modeled Best Practices	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	92.80%
Student Gained New Knowledge and Skills	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	96.40%
Learned How to Better Serve Community	100.00%	100.00%	77.70%	100.00%	100.00%	89.30%
Communication/Feedback	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Clear Expectations	95.80%	100.00%	77.70%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Constructive Feedback	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Please note that I did not include cumulative averages for the two courses that I have taught through REAL (found in Table 1) because of the sporadic nature of teaching those as well as the fact that I was not involved in the development/revision of either. As noted in the evaluations housed under Teaching → Evaluations in my e-portfolio, the themes outlined above are mirrored in the evaluations for those courses.*

When reviewing the data on a Likert-style scale, I identified my strengths by noting how many evaluations “agree” or “strongly agree” that I am consistently meeting each specific indicator. Thus, the percentages shown above are indicative of how many students rated me in the top two marks for each indicator between 2011-2021.

Caring

Across ten years of evaluations, the most major theme that shines through my evaluations is that I am a caring educator. I define caring as modeling compassion, understanding, empathy, showing kindness, being giving of self in time and energy, holding candidates to high expectations, and respecting the individuality that shines through when building relationships with others. Cumulative averages for the quantitative indicators related to this theme (showcased in Table 3) range from 88.9%-100% of candidates agreeing or strongly agreeing that I am caring and respectful. Qualitative data also indicate that I am a Franciscan educator with regard to caring and respect in the relationships that I build:

Prof Evans is always willing to spend extra time with us to assist with whatever we need. She was constantly looking for feedback on how she could better help us. –EDUC 392, FA12

...she believes in us and loves our successes. –MEDU699, SP14

Dr. Evans is willing to invest lots of time with her students! -EDUC 379, SP21

Understanding and open-minded professor! –EDUC394, SP21

Dr. Evans is one of the greatest teachers in the COE. I wish she could be even more involved with secondary and middle-level majors, but I am very happy she was one of the first teachers I met (HRE) and one of the last (this class). –EDUC476, SP21

By having qualitative data that back up the quantitative data, I am provided with robust evidence that I am an effective educator who positively impacts student growth and achievement. Other data sources point to this assertion, too. For example, my colleague, Dr. Cathy Nelson, noted in her letter of recommendation for my promotion, “Erin goes above and beyond to meet the needs of her students” and notes that students in her classes have said in conversation how much they value their relationships with me (Cathy’s letter can be found in my e-portfolio under Letters of Support → COE).

Finally, I have received numerous letters and messages from students over the years that specifically mention that my caring nature helped them to be successful at USF (these letters can be found in my e-portfolio under Teaching → Kudos & Inspiration → Student Affirmations). For example, Lacey from SP21 writes, “your constant encouragement, care, love, and knowledge have shown me how to be an amazing teacher. Every class session I had with you, you demonstrated how to treat your students and handle a classroom.” Stephanie from SP20 writes, “You have truly made one of the largest impacts on my life...thanks to you I have come further than I thought I would [in trusting others more]...I wanted to quit, but after we talked, I felt like someone cared and believed in me.” Finally, Matt from FA17 writes, “If there is one thing I’ve learned from my teaching experiences, it’s to take certain qualities from teachers you admire and apply them to your own classroom...you are well aware that life happens to your students...I admire this trait you carry.”

Expertise

Cumulative course evaluation data from 2011-2021 also indicate that I am an expert in terms of content and course design. Quantitative data from Table 3 points to 77-100% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that my course was well-organized, thorough, provided valuable activities/experiences, and that I modeled best practices that helped candidates to develop new knowledge and skills. Qualitative data also support this assertion:

There was never an assignment in this class that did not help me as a future teacher; I really liked that the assignments were planned to help us and not just be busy work. -EDUC 394, SP21

I liked the way that there were lots of ways to engage in learning even though it was done online. - EDUC379/MEDU 678, SP21

Screen casts were fantastic. Being able to watch and do my work step-by-step while feeling like I was being taught live made this feel like a regular in-person class! (EDUC 379/MEDU 678, SP21).

She knows her stuff! I was able to use what I was learning to teach my CT [in the field]. -EDUC384, SP15

In addition, in COE Associate Dean, Dr. Cindy Sloan’s letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, she notes, “Whether online or in person, Dr. Evans is a beloved professor who has the extraordinary ability to create optimal learning environments ripe for critical thinking, collaboration, and self-discovery...she employs a variety of research-based best practices in teaching such as guided lecture, storytelling, reflective questioning and listening, and cooperative learning experiences.” As noted in a letter from Sara in SP20, “You work so hard to bring us these awesome, engaging lessons and it definitely

shows.” Further discussion of my innovative teaching practices is provided in the “Innovative Practices” section of this narrative. (Cindy’s letter can be found at Letters of Support → COE Letters, and Sara’s letter can be found in Teaching → Kudos and Inspiration).

Communication/Feedback

Cumulative evaluation data across my ten years of teaching indicate that my third top area of strength is communication and providing feedback, with 77-100% of all candidates indicating that I have clear expectations and provide detailed enough feedback to bolster their depth of learning. Qualitative feedback supports this assertion:

The fantastic feedback that was always given on every assignment truly helped me, and will continue to help me in the future. I felt that every time I submitted an assignment, it was read through and given a lot of thought to provide feedback for which I appreciate so much. I am in this class to learn and gain many new perspectives and I have never had a teacher who has given such great quality feedback before. Check-ins also helped; I enjoyed receiving those emails as reminders of what was going on for the week. (EDUC 379/MEDU 678, SP21).

Being able to get constructive feedback on ideas from the instructor and other colleagues and getting to brainstorm with each other was great. (EDUC 394, SP21).

Specific Areas of Growth

Everything noted as a strength falls consistently in the upper 80-100% range for performance except for science methods, in which I had some scores falling below 80% (understanding expectations and understanding how to serve the community). I believe this may be due to the nature of the iSTEM project in which candidates are asked to develop and teach a science unit for an assigned class of students in the field at one of our local, high-needs partner schools. Understandably, it would be difficult to be able to know exactly what the cooperating teacher is expecting or what the needs of the students are if candidates are placed into a classroom with little time to gather contextual information about the school/community/students. Thus, a change I have begun making is that candidates will teach their iSTEM units in their field placement classrooms for Elementary Internship I. This way, they will truly know the context of their classroom/students to be able to meet these needs in a more comfortable and informed way. I will continue to monitor this data specifically for science methods to see if this improves candidates’ experiences from here.

Other changes I have made based on evaluation feedback over the years include reviewing the time of class sessions. For example, there have been several notes over the years in EDUC100 HRE and EDUC476/MEDU699 Professional Growth Seminar that indicate that some students feel the class sessions are too long, thus, in those courses specifically, I began “flipping” the classroom. Candidates now tackle more direct content on their own outside of class, giving us less lecture time in class and more time to engage in application activities in cooperative learning groups. I will continue to monitor in-class and evaluation feedback to determine whether or not this improves candidates’ experiences from here.

Finally, something I have been working on since tenure that is not necessarily shown in the evaluation feedback for my courses is helping students critically analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments,

and points of view other than their own for the purpose of helping students better understand how to become equitable and culturally-responsive educators in the EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment course. As shown in Figure 3 below, scores within that specific course for those two quantitative indicators hovered around 80% of students “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that the course was successful in helping them grow in this area, with the lowest scores falling in Spring 2017. Fall 2017 was when I began integrating content into the course about implicit bias, equity, restorative practices, inclusion, social justice, and culturally responsive teaching—topics that had before not been as explicitly embedded into the course.

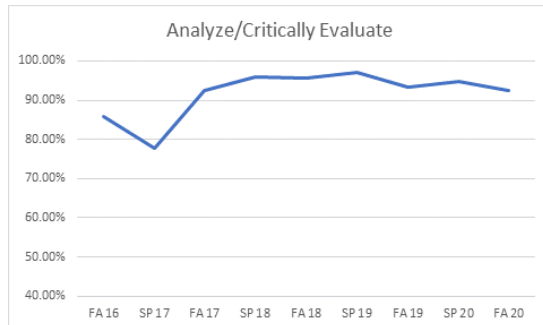


Figure 3: Analyze/Critically Evaluate

As I continued to lean into this content and students began learning more, with me asking them to always look at each topic covered through multiple lenses, scores have risen in this area into the 90th percentile. I will continue my efforts and will monitor future assessment data to make sure candidates are still looking at topics like these through multiple perspectives, as the dip that was encountered was due to two things: the topics not being as “at the forefront” of what we were studying, and the topics being heavily laced with political contention. Once I began asking candidates to analyze topics through various sources to understand, for example, how media outlets present similar information differently, it genuinely seems to be helping candidates to think critically about how information can be biased from one outlet or person to another. There is still, however, much work to be done in this area, and our college is working together to better integrate these skills and topics throughout our curriculum.

Innovative Practices

In the sub-sections below, I have listed a sampling of innovating teaching practices within my courses that illustrate my dedication to constructivist-based pedagogy and hands-on methodology to cultivate transformational, Franciscan teacher candidates who are fully prepared for the realities of the field as licensed educators by the time they graduate.

Embedded Course Innovations

Elementary INT-1 Methods Calendar

Part of who I am as an educator revolves around being highly organized and paying attention to detail. These character traits proved to be an essential component to our Elementary Internship I “Methods Block” in which I have become what Dr. Lisa White-McNulty refers to in her letter of

recommendation for my promotion as “the super organizer of Elementary Internship I” (Letters of Support→COE Letters→LWM). In the semester before their final student teaching experience, elementary and special education majors enroll in Elementary Internship I in which they spend an increasing amount of time in the field as they master content that is taught in the “methods block” of courses. These courses are designed to help them learn to apply various methodologies in the content areas of math, science, reading, classroom management, and technology integration. Prior to my employment at USF, the methods block was quite compartmentalized and there was minimal collaboration amongst the methods professors.

Since I have become a part of “the block” in 2011, I have been able to encourage team-based collaboration to provide more continuity for the candidates by organizing a semester calendar (see Teaching Artifacts→Innovative Practices→INT-1 Methods Calendar to see the latest iteration of this document). All professors on the methods team, including our field experience coordinators Tracy Spesia and Kristin DeBoer, are able to map out our course sequences and align them to the increasing responsibilities that candidates will be undertaking during their field experiences. This collaboration allows us to understand when candidates may be more overloaded (so we make appropriate adjustments in our courses) and it also allows us to plan opportunities to co-teach and present a united front of support for our candidates. For example, we always begin and end the semester with “whole family meetings” to set clear and consistent expectations and to celebrate candidates’ successes as a team. Such experiences did not take place before I became a part of the block, indicating that my addition to the methods team has been integral in fostering more of a team-based atmosphere, likely due to my experiences at the middle school level before transitioning to higher education. Candidates have often expressed their appreciation for having instructors who are so in tune with what is happening across all courses and in the field, allowing us to provide wrap-around support between us, cooperating teachers, and supervisors, to ensure candidate success. In addition, we are also able to build a cohesive scope and sequence to allow flexibility for front-loading of content when field requirements are lighter and to provide balance as field requirements become more rigorous.

iSTEM

Among the largest innovations that I have undertaken since beginning at USF in 2011 is the Integrated STEM (iSTEM) Unit in EDUC384/MEDU676 Elementary Science Methods course (see artifact in my e-portfolio under Teaching→Innovative Practices→iSTEM Handbook). When I was first hired, I inherited a large-scale project in the science methods course in which candidates have been charged to develop an interdisciplinary science unit for a fictitious group of students. The interdisciplinary nature of the unit was utilized because elementary teachers in the field are often integrating science with other subjects (mostly English Language Arts--ELA) during the school day, as there simply is not enough time to dedicate to all core subjects with the heavy demands in math and ELA. I immediately saw an opportunity for candidates to engage in an authentic teaching experience that would not only allow them the opportunity to put research into practice, but it would also allow them to engage in the Franciscan tradition of serving the underserved by partnering with a local high-needs school as part of our Joliet Professional Development School Partnership (JPDSP). Utilizing an authentic experience in which candidates would use daily formative assessment data to drive their instruction based on real-life classroom contexts aligned well with my constructivist teaching philosophy, so the direction of iSTEM was a natural evolution for me as the instructor for the course. In fact, my dissertation study, “Preparing Elementary Pre-Service Teachers to Integrate STEM” studied candidates’ experiences during iSTEM in

terms of learning how to teach science to elementary learners. Rather than teaching science by means of reading non-fiction texts and focusing on reading comprehension when integrated with ELA, candidates were instead asked to teach science as the verb that it is—embedding inquiry-based learning and lab-based content into their lesson plans. As a result of teaching the iSTEM, my study quantitatively and qualitatively found that engaging in authentic STEM-based planning and teaching positively influences pre-service teachers' perceptions of STEM, confidence in teaching STEM, and allowed them to master the ability to design and teach STEM-based lessons.

In addition to providing authentic teaching practice utilizing the Next Generation Science Standards (2015)—notably in an area in which elementary candidates traditionally do not gain much exposure or experience in their K-12 experiences or in many teacher education programs—the iSTEM also provides scaffolded support to prepare candidates for the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) that they must complete in their final student teaching semester in order to obtain licensure in the State of Illinois. A middle school science edTPA was modified for the purpose of iSTEM to allow candidates an opportunity to engage in edTPA practice while also fulfilling the required components of the science methods course. This practice has helped our elementary and special education candidates to enter their final student teaching semester with ample practice (and thus, added confidence) to be able to tackle their licensure edTPA with greater ease and sophistication.

Candidates have responded very positively to the iSTEM experience through the years, as evidenced by comments from my course evaluations such as:

I thought iSTEM was a great support to my learning throughout this course because I had to apply a lot of material that we were learning to my project. It was a bit challenging, but I was motivated to do my best on it and it paid off. This project was rewarding and allowed me to form a science unit which is something I have never been able to teach before. (SP21)

I wouldn't have had an opportunity to teach science, especially not science as a verb like the iSTEM requires, had I not taken this course. (FA18).

Colleagues have praised iSTEM for its innovation, rigor, and overall effectiveness at preparing candidates for what is to come beyond the Internship I “Methods block.” For example, in her letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, my colleague, Dr. Lisa White-McNulty, discusses iSTEM as a “groundbreaking project” (see Lisa’s letter in my portfolio at Letters of Support→COE Letters→LWM). Lisa notes that iSTEM has allowed me to build and maintain relationships within our partnership with Joliet District 86 and that the structure of the unit provides excellent preparation for candidates as they transition to their final Internship II semester upon its culmination. Additionally, Cindy Sloan, COE Associate Dean, discusses iSTEM in her letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, noting that an experiential project like iSTEM keeps my teaching at the forefront of relevance and provides excellent preparation for our candidates (Letters of Support→COE Letters→C Sloan). Finally, Erin McDonough, a COE alumni and District 86 teacher with whom I have frequently collaborated for iSTEM after her graduation (she now serves as a cooperating teacher for the experience) reflected in her letter of recommendation for my promotion that “iSTEM was something that many candidates could not otherwise do in the field had the experience not been built into science methods” (Letters of Support→Outside of USF→E McDonough). In fact, Erin’s assertion has led me to continuously search for syllabi at other institutions who offer a similar course, and to date, I have not

found a single university in the State of Illinois that offers such an opportunity for candidates to so fully integrate research-based practices related to inquiry-based science at the elementary level in their field experiences.

I have had to make alternative plans for iSTEM during the 2020-2021 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic in which schools were remote and most elementary teachers were no longer teaching science in a hands-on or inquiry-based way. The changes over the last two semesters included not actually teaching iSTEM in the field and instead designing the lessons and critiquing each other's work within the Professional Learning Community in our methods classroom. That said, because the experience of actually getting to *teach* the iSTEM to *real* students within the elementary context has proven to be so valuable that it will be fully reinstated in Fall 2021 when K-12 schools have planned to return to full-day in-person learning. Doing so may require that candidates know and understand how to implement inquiry-based learning within the context of a socially-distanced classroom, so I have taken steps to prepare candidates for this type of teaching, as discussed in the "Lab Bag" section later in this narrative.

Social Studies Methods Course

A programmatic change made by the COE several years ago was to split the former "Elementary Science and Social Studies Methods" course into two separate experiences, as it was just too much to try to cover methodologies for both content areas within one three-credit hour experience. Thus, when our program was redesigned in 2016, I began implementing EDUC 384 Elementary Science Methods (3 credits) and EDUC 379 Elementary Social Studies Methods (1 credit) within the elementary and special ed programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The social studies course falls in candidates' junior year and it taken concurrently with EDUC 330 Classroom Planning and Assessment in which candidates learn how to properly design and assess standards-based curricula.

I approached this course with an "outside of the box" perspective when designing it for implementation in the sense that it is a methods course, yet it is offered completely online in asynchronous format. The reason is because although we had not yet faced circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning, I always felt that providing supports for students remotely would be a beneficial support for chronically absent students, those who required extra structure and support outside of school, and parents who want to stay apprised to what is happening in their child's classroom. Thus, the course is designed in such a way as to show candidates what online learning *can* and *should* look, particularly for young learners. For example, each module of the 8-week course is arranged as such that candidates are provided with video screen casts walking them through that week's expectations and timeline (hard copy materials are also provided for candidates who prefer to have additional visuals). Then, rather than providing materials in the traditional sense in which candidates are given materials to read and interpret independently, I provide online screen casts that candidates can utilize that walk them through each portion of the content step-by-step, including the application portion of the lesson. Their weekly assignment usually includes select readings to cover independently, a response guide that they work on concurrently with the screen cast, and the screen cast video. Essentially, the class functions identically to an in-person class, as the screen casts will often provide instructions like, "*now that you've read about ____ and we have discussed it in depth in this video, please look at question five from the response guide that asks you how this strategy might be taught in the elementary context. Hit pause on the screen cast as you record your thoughts on what you might do as a teacher if this were*

your classroom, and be prepared to reflect further on the strategies you think you'll use in this week's discussion thread."

Candidates have consistently expressed their perceived value of these experiences, citing that they have not experienced online learning like this before, as indicated by comments such as:

Screen casts were fantastic. Being able to watch and do my work step-by-step while feeling like I was being taught live made this feel like a regular in-person class! (SP21)

Screen casts were engaging and not like anything I have experienced with online learning before. (SP20)

I felt like Dr. Evans was right there with me the whole time I was working through this course. (SP19)

Comments like the ones listed above tell me that this class was a bit ahead of the curve in terms of preparing alumni candidates who had already entered the field for some of the realities that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, and I believe that it will continue to help candidates to think about the possibilities of e-learning differently as time goes on. Evidence of the canvas structure of the course as well as sample screen cast videos for weekly overviews, assignment descriptions, and weekly screen-cast content can be found in my e-portfolio at Teaching→Innovative Practices→SS Methods Screen Cast Evidence.

21 Days of Equity Challenge

In an effort to expose candidates to important topics such as implicit bias, equity, inclusion, and culturally-responsive teaching, I began delving deeply into these topics myself in 2016, just after my EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment class had begun. I knew these topics were important, of course, and they had begun appearing across various districts' professional development frameworks as the unrest in our country had already begun to spark important conversations about these topics. A colleague with whom I collaborated in this effort was Dr. Tracy Spesia, our COE Field Experience Coordinator. She and I have worked together for several years now not just building these topics into this particular course, but also EDUC100 Human Relations for Educators and her Beginning Field Experience course. As noted in Tracy's letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, "Dr. Evans is not one to roll out a previous iteration of a course without thorough review and updating of outcomes and instructional plans...I am continuously energized by her willingness to revisit, reconsider, and reaffirm course content to ensure relevance and engagement" (see Tracy's letter in my e-portfolio in Letters of Support→COE Letters→Spesia). Tracy and I have co-taught several class sessions together over the years to better support our candidates' learning by providing our shared expertise.

A problem that I noted, though, was that any time topics about race, equity, or social justice came up, there were ample misconceptions and assumptions that perhaps the conversation might be getting a bit "political." From time to time, I would have candidates question why we were talking about these topics at all, which told me we were not doing a good job of stressing their importance or the ways in which they infiltrate everything around us. To that end, I developed an assessment called "21 Days of Equity

Challenge” (see artifact in my e-portfolio: Teaching→Innovative Practices→21 Days of Equity Work Sample). Candidates are asked to do their own research on any of the topics from class related to race, culture, equity, inclusion, social justice, restorative practices, culturally responsive teaching, etc. I get them started with an ample list of suggested “neutral resources” from which they branch off and continue to research on their own. A student’s research is meant to give them topics to consider and how they might impact their future elementary classrooms. The catch, though, is that for every topic they investigate, I encourage them to review it from multiple perspectives via the media or resources they pull. No, these topics aren’t political by nature, yet they have been politicized by some in our communities. Thus, they are asked to use a media “spectrum” to investigate issues from a liberal, neutral, and conservative perspectives, focusing on what all those media outlets have in common versus where they differ. From that point, they are encouraged to think critically and draw their own conclusions.

From course evaluations, feedback on the discussions of these topics has been overwhelmingly positive. While some students are very uncomfortable with these topics (admittedly, I am myself sometimes), candidates leave feedback such as, “this assignment and the course in general allowed me to look at culture and race in a different way and I’m able to use that in my classroom” (SP21) or “it was nice when class flowed naturally and allowed for us to have real conversations about things like implicit bias or trauma-informed teaching” (SP21).

It is noteworthy that these topics are ones that we as a college aim to integrate across ALL courses in ALL programs in the near future as part of our OGSM goals. To that end, when it came to my attention that Dr. Gambro wished to have our college explore these topics in depth through personal research and discussion at our college-level assembly meetings, I was able to send him a website I had used extensively for my own research that had proven to be incredibly informative and transformative, Project READY (<https://ready.web.unc.edu/>). The conversations we had as a college based on the contents of this website have been instrumental in helping us shape our beliefs and goals for revising our current curriculum to better-integrate these important themes into all that we do as Franciscan educators.

Mock Phone Call Assessment

It’s difficult to prepare future teachers for *everything* they will encounter in their own classrooms, but when a gap is discovered, I pride myself in getting creative to help candidates fill it. As I continued developing EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment, one of the topics we delve into deeply is family engagement. Among the topics that fall into this category, effective parent communication is one that I found candidates to be quite lacking. Upon further investigation, I found that candidates make very few or even no communications with parents in the field—their cooperating teacher usually takes charge, especially when it comes to delivering difficult or negative news to families, such as that about a child’s poor behavior at school. Because of this, I developed a performance assessment in which candidates would be given a fictitious but realistic scenario about a mock student/classroom context, and they would have to actually call the parent (me) and engage in effective communication through a role-playing activity.

To complete the activity, candidates sign up for an appointment time in which they will call me on the phone. I do not break character and the phone call feels as authentic as “the real thing,” with the conversation flowing according to how well the candidate is building rapport, delivering negative news, asking questions, and building a plan of action with my input. Candidates are often extremely nervous for this experience, yet they walk away not only feeling more confident that they can successfully navigate

these communications in the future, but they also value the very detailed feedback that I provide them after the phone call is over (see artifact in my e-portfolio: Teaching→Innovative Practices→Family Engagement Work Sample). There is no other time in a teacher's career that this level of feedback will be given on a parent phone call, so this is truly a once in a career lifetime experience for them.

Pandemic Teaching Innovations

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, elementary teachers in the field thought little about teaching through computer screens and instead focused on teaching students face-to-face. Obviously, COVID changed all of that, and in 2020, educators across all sectors were scrambling to make adjustments in pedagogy to incorporate e-learning methodologies—no easy feat when working with very young learners in elementary schools. It was a tough time and shined a very bright light on the fact that as teacher educators, we needed to do more to help prepare candidates for this reality. Below are the innovations that I built into my courses to accomplish this.

Lab Bags

Science is a verb. This means that you don't just sit and learn science through telling and absorption; rather, you DO science. It's meant to be hands-on, inquiry-based, and interactive. Thus, in order to accomplish not only proper preparation of our teacher candidates but also to provide the most high-quality and effective experience for them as college students within my science methods course, I prepared "Lab Bags" for each student to be utilized during each class session from the time of the initial shut down in Spring 2020 through the Spring 2021 semester, whether classes were to meet face-to-face or online synchronously. For every class session that I teach, no matter the modality, candidates are asked to apply the content that they have read about and that I had lectured about in class within a hands-on, inquiry-based activity involving cooperative learning strategies. The Lab Bags were packed full of materials that I provided for each student for the duration of the entire semester out of my own pocket. They were organized such that each baggie housed all materials needed for candidates to participate in guided-inquiry activities during class (see photos below).



During class, when it was time to engage in the lab-based inquiry activities, I would go over instructions with candidates and then, if face-to-face, candidates had all materials provided in such a way that the activity could be accomplished safely in a socially-distanced context. If we were online via Zoom, candidates could complete the activities as they would in the face-to-face socially-distanced context as a whole group, or I could put them into Zoom breakout rooms to do the activities cooperatively with their peers by utilizing their camera placements and discussion strategies for comparison and analysis of results. This methodology was considered innovative enough that I was able to write an

article for peer-reviewed publication in the Journal for Success in High-Need Schools (2021). More information is discussed in the scholarship section of this reflection, and the article can be found at Scholarship Artifacts→Publications→No Matter the Modality, Science is a Verb. In addition, my course evaluations for Spring 2020-Spring 2021 include ample and overwhelmingly positive feedback related to the use of Lab Bags. When looking at Fall 2020 evaluations as a sample ($n = 14$), Lab Bags were cited over a dozen times in the qualitative feedback as being the single most important resource in the methods course as well as being a best practice that candidates could see themselves taking with them into their future classrooms. Qualitative data from all three semesters also indicates that candidates not only had a more engaging e-learning experience themselves as students, but that they felt they were able to apply similar strategies in their own student teaching placements, whether by utilizing school supply pickup days for families or even by hand-delivering supply bags of their own to their elementary students, a practice that the elementary learners were particularly excited!

Feedback from student evaluations as well as letters of recommendation related to the Lab Bags are as follows:

The Lab Bag materials for remote learning were very helpful. (SP21)

Having the Lab Bags made class so much more engaging. (FA 20)

Having the hands-on material was so helpful to my learning. Breaking into groups to talk about what we were doing and thinking helped me think of questions I might ask as a teacher [during similar e-learning experiences] and also gave me ideas about the content. (FA 20)

Lab Bags with the interactive components really helped me connect to the methods [we were learning about]. (FA 20)

During the pandemic, Erin created Lab Bags for her students...that she had them use while performing hands-on activities in cooperative groups via Zoom rooms. This is exactly what we would want our teacher candidates to do with their own students, and Erin was able to model this for her students and talk through why she made the instructional choices that she did [to help them learn]. (Cathy Nelson; to see her full letter of recommendation for my promotion, see Letters of Support→COE Letters→C Nelson)

From here, I do plan to retain at least one class session per semester as a dedicated “Zoom session” to allow candidates the opportunity to experience hands-on learning via synchronous e-learning format. Not only do we “never know” what the future holds, one thing that is certain is that while e-learning is not what is best for K-12 students on a day-to-day basis, it *is* possible and it may be an effective strategy to use in the future for emergency days, such as closures due to inclement weather. As such, I believe it is imperative that we keep at least some level of preparation in our program for candidates to be able to build their capacity for experiencing, designing, and implementing high-quality e-learning for their students in the field.

Virtual Classroom Design Project

Another remote learning experience that I designed for elementary pre-service teacher preparation was to have candidates consider how elementary learners might be most motivated to engage with online content via unique presentation of information. This was accomplished in Fall 2020-Spring 2021 with the introduction of a Virtual Classroom Design project in EDUC392/MEDU661 Elementary Classroom Management. Candidates were asked to design virtual classroom spaces to house content for remote-learning in the field that included a visual depiction of themselves, provide some interactive content such as a welcome video for students/families and some “about me” information, and also organize curricular materials that they would be sharing with students on a daily basis. Many candidates did this by creating a cartoon-inspired “Bitmoji” of themselves and placing their avatar in a colorful classroom space. Then, they integrated their “Bitmoji Classroom” with the Google Classroom space that was already a part of their district’s required learning spaces for students. A sample of a Bitmoji classroom space can be found under Teaching→Innovative Practices→Virtual Classroom Sample.

At first glance, this project may appear to be “just for fun” or even “kitschy” in a sense because one may wonder whether teachers should instead spend their time developing curriculum rather than a “cute” or “cartoon-like” classroom space. However, ample research in the field from the likes of Cooperative Learning theorists like Spencer Kagan (2009), or even differentiation specialists like Carol Ann Tomlinson (2017) suggests that K-12 learners—elementary learners in particular—tend to be more motivated and engaged by “gamified” learning settings in which they can see, click, and experience the space in a more app-based manner than the traditional Google classroom space often allows. This combined with the fact that many of the candidates’ cooperating teachers were utilizing platforms to create gamified virtual learning spaces for their students led me to create this project, and candidates reported anecdotally as well as in course evaluations that they not only used the virtual classroom space in the field during remote learning, but they also planned to bridge the practice into their future classrooms—pandemic context or not—to make their communications between home and school for students more engaging for young learners.

Virtual Mock Interviews

In candidates’ final student teaching semester, a course that they all take, EDUC476/MEDU699 Professional Growth Seminar, includes a capstone Mock Interview experience meant to help them apply all they have learned about the job application and interview process to successfully land their first teaching jobs. Practicing teachers and administrators as well as students from our COE Principal Prep and Doctoral programs regularly volunteer for this event, providing current COE graduate students valuable experience in conducting interviews and allowing practitioners from the field the opportunity to review our candidates and their credentials related to the job openings they may have in their schools. Traditionally, this experience has been held on campus in an in-person format, allowing candidates to practice their interview skills from the initial hello handshake through the remaining components of professional interviews. As schools shut down and continued to stay in remote learning modalities, it became evident in the past year that we would have to think differently about Mock Interviews if we were going to continue to offer this incredible experience to our candidates.

A call for Mock Interviews was sent out to COE alumni via our private COE Teacher Candidates and Alumni Facebook group (created by me in 2013 with nearly 400 members to date) and dozens of

alumni teachers and administrators volunteered to help with the experience. Interviewers were paired with candidates based on their area of expertise, and candidates were given the contact information of their assigned interviewer for an initial greeting, providing their resume, and requesting to schedule an interview. Once scheduled during an agreed upon week within the course syllabus, the interviews took place for approximately 45 minutes via Zoom, with all aspects of the interview being “real world” from the candidate’s dress and Zoom background to their ability to navigate using their e-portfolios to show artifacts that justified their responses to the interviewer’s questions. Interviews generally lasted 30 minutes followed by fifteen minutes of feedback to the interviewee and a Q&A session for the teacher candidate.

As in previous years, candidates enter this experience as bundles of nerves related to interviews, and they leave with such valuable feedback and insight that their confidence in approaching future interviews soars. Additionally, some candidates were able to secure subsequent interviews and even job offers from this experience (due to the current teacher shortage, administrators view this experience as one in which they can serve the university while also finding high-quality teachers for their schools). The experience mirrored the exact interview modality that was utilized in the field leading into the 2021-2022 school year, thus candidates were able to practice interviewing in a way that was less familiar in the past. I will continue to monitor current practices in the field and will tailor the Mock Interview event accordingly in future semesters, whether offering it remotely, in person, or a combination of both.

The structure and a sample communication with a virtual mock interview volunteer interviewer can be found in my e-portfolio under Teaching→Innovative Practices→PGS Virtual Mock Interview.

1:1 Prof Chats in HRE

Getting to know students on a personal level, checking in with them about how things are going, and finding out what kinds of supports they think they might need to be as successful as possible are all integral components to retaining students and providing the highest quality experience for them. I try to utilize every minute I can while on campus, finding opportunities to chat 1:1 with students who stop by my office, while waiting in line for lunch at the Bistro, while walking to and from the parking lot, or by greeting them at the door of the classroom as they enter. This was a key aspect of socialization that I found was sorely missed during Fall 2020-Spring 2021 when much of campus had transitioned to remote learning for many of our courses. The impact of this was felt in all courses at all levels and across all programs, but never more in my opinion than it was for our freshman and new transfer students who were experiencing USF for the first time...during a pandemic. Thus, I implemented an experience in EDUC100 Human Relations for Educators (HRE) to allow me to formally check in with every single student while also meeting specific outcomes of the course.

I have implemented Prof Chats pre-pandemic, but never to the extent to which I did during the pandemic. Typically, students meet with me for about 10-15 minutes, chatting about how things are going and following up on conversations that we have been able to have during our regular face-to-face sessions. Because the course was offered remotely for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, I extended the Prof Chat experience to include the usual 15-20 minute 1:1 interaction via student:professor appointment, but I also asked students in small groups of 2-3 to meet with me in the 10 minutes before/after each class session during the semester to conduct informal check-ins and schedule additional 1:1 appointments as

needed. Additional information about Prof Chats can be found in my e-portfolio under Teaching→Innovative Practices→HRE Prof Chats.

Understandably, new COE candidates seemed to struggle more with connecting to campus, building relationships, and feeling overwhelmed during FA20-SP21, so the 1:1 check-ins I was able to provide allowed them an opportunity to have real conversations beyond large group Zoom sessions that started and ended more abruptly than face-to-face sessions could. During these sessions, I was able to identify students who were struggling emotionally and providing them with information about our wellness center, those who were struggling with managing their online course loads and providing them with strategies for organization, time management, and prioritization, and students who felt disconnected and providing them with opportunities to pair up and work with other students or pointing them to campus events as they became available for small groups. Cindy Sloan, COE Associate Dean with whom I have co-taught many sessions of HRE over the years, noted the importance of this level of interaction with students in her letter of recommendation for my promotion, stating, “Erin serves as an authentic mentor...she prioritizes STUDENTS, not just subject matter,” noting that I am “a beloved professor” who is “instrumental to the fabric of the COE” because of how I do what I do, including stopping at nothing to support our candidates.

Innovations Beyond the COE

Over the years, I have had unique opportunities to collaborate with colleagues beyond my own college for the purposes of co-teaching or providing expertise related to their courses. Two of these collaborations highlighted in the sections below include my work with the “Science for Educators” general education courses at USF and providing interview expertise within a course at American University in Washington, D.C.

Sci for Ed NGSS/Lesson Planning Screencasts for Flipped Learning

I am one of few members of the College of Education whose pedagogical expertise lies in the content area of science, which is why I teach the elementary science methods courses in our initial licensure programs. As such, I have been uniquely poised to collaborate with faculty from the College of Arts & Sciences related to two general education courses that many of our candidates enroll: PSCI 112 Physical Science for Educators and BIOL 102 Life Science for Educators. Taking these two courses is meant to not only meet Illinois licensure requirements for science content, but the courses are also meant to bridge into the elementary science methods courses, with candidates mastering the content necessary to implement the curriculum aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards in the field.

Within both Science for Educator courses, there are also embedded teaching experiences in which teams of candidates are able to implement mini-lessons related to the respective course’s content in the field at Farragut Elementary school. As noted in Susan Renner’s letter of recommendation for my promotion, she discusses how the design of the teaching experiences does not exactly match her expertise, stating, “My knowledge base is in science...I have no formal education or training in teaching elementary school students. Dr. Evans has been extremely helpful to me with the teaching portions of [Science for Educators].” Because of this, I have worked with Susan over the years as well as the various instructors of the Life Science for Educators course (Bill Bromer and Jackie Wittke-Thompson) to provide time and resources to help better support students in the courses for the highest-quality experience possible.

First, I began by visiting the classes in person at the start of each semester to provide candidates with a “crash course” in the USF lesson plan structure and content. I then gave my contact information to candidates and asked them to come to me for help with any portions of lesson planning that were needed. What I found was that candidates often came with questions that might have been easily answered with access to better resources. Thus, I created a screen cast video tutorial of the lesson plan that candidates could refer back to throughout the course, as needed. In addition, I knew that this was the first time candidates would be experiencing the Next Generation Science Standards and that Susan and Jackie’s experience with the document was limited due to the lack of time they had to devote to learning about the standards. To that end, I also integrated content into the screen cast introducing candidates (and instructors) to the NGSS, explaining the syntax of reading and interpreting the information as well as reviewing how one might go about taking content from a college-level course and developing an inquiry-based lesson that would be appropriate for elementary learners.

Susan mentions in her letter that she values and continues to use these resources with candidates and that they have been proven to be helpful in supporting them in the course, especially with regard to *when* they were created for their first use during the COVID-19 pandemic. As all of us scrambled to move our courses to remote modality in Spring 2020, even though I knew students in these courses wouldn’t be able to teach in the field, I knew they would still be asked to develop lesson plans aligned to NGSS. Because of this, I created the screen casts to be utilized as part of a Flipped Classroom model that Susan and Jackie switched to during the pandemic. As Susan states in her letter:

I can attest to how difficult and time consuming it is to create quality videos [for classroom supports]. Dr. Evans did this on her own without being asked...this action took the value of compassion to a new level; I already had material from Erin that I could have limped by on, but the video ensured that my students [got what they needed]. This may seem an extraordinary action from a great colleague in extraordinary times, but this is just who Erin is and what she does every day. She has repeatedly put effort into helping me design and improve my courses purely because it will benefit students. (Susan’s letter can be found in my e-portfolio at Letters of Support→USF Letters→S Renner).

As the Illinois State Board of Education continues to revise requirements for teacher licensure, including the Elementary Content Test with science-specific content that candidates are expected to master on the test, I have also worked with Susan and Jackie related to revising their course content and outcomes based on what candidates will specifically need to know as teachers in the field. Specifically, I reviewed the outcomes in the courses and compared them to the outcomes of the Illinois State Board of Education’s Elementary Content test to identify any gaps, comparing it also to the content in the NGSS. Evidence of this comparison can be found in two artifacts: ISBE Content Test Outcomes and NGSS Road Map, which was created in collaboration with students in my Elementary Science Methods course in Fall 2020 to help them understand the scope of what they would be teaching in grades 1-6 as licensed elementary teachers (see the following three artifacts in my e-portfolio: Teaching→Innovative Practices→Sci for Ed NGSS & LP Support; NGSS Road Map; Sci for Ed Outcome Updating). These documents helped Susan and Jackie make sure that their course outcomes were up-to-date with state licensure requirements and, as Susan mentioned, it was all done in the spirit of supporting our students with the most practical and current information possible.

Mock Interview Session at American University, Washington, D.C.

In Spring 2021, I received a phone call from Tracy Spesia, who serves as part-time field experience coordinator for the COE at USF, but who also teaches at the American University School of Education in Washington, D.C. in which she helps to prepare pre-service teachers for careers in education. Her phone call was inviting me to participate in an event she was planning for the AU students and she asked for my involvement because of our successful collaborations in the past, whether presenting at conferences, supervising teacher candidates in the field, or co-teaching in various courses. Tracy asked if I would be willing to help facilitate a Mock Interview Event via Zoom within a course that she teaches at AU that is very similar in structure and content to the EDUC476/MEDU699 Professional Growth Seminar course that I teach at USF. I jumped at the chance to not only collaborate with my colleague, but also to provide support to teacher candidates beyond USF. During the event, I conducted two practice interviews for elementary teacher candidates, after which I participated in a panel discussion giving advice about best practices for interviewing. Tracy was grateful and the teacher candidates with whom I worked expressed appreciation for the feedback that I gave. My participation in the event illustrates not just teaching expertise but also a commitment to service that models a professional commitment to developing new teachers for the greater good of the profession. Evidence of my involvement in this event can be found in my e-portfolio at Teaching→Innovative Practices→AU Mock Interview.

Recognitions and Affirmations

It goes without saying that I LOVE WHAT I DO and building relationships is my favorite part of teaching. My inspiration board in front of my desk is filled with quotes that inspire me and smiling faces of my students taken at graduation each semester. They are my “why” and the relationships we build extend far beyond graduation (see artifact: Teaching → Kudos & Inspiration → Inspiration Board). I also receive frequent letters and notes of encouragement from current students (a practice that I prescribe to regularly that seems to rub off on them as well) and keep every single one of them in my office to keep me motivated and inspired to keep doing what I do (see artifact: Teaching → Kudos & Inspiration → Bucket Filler Jar / see also Student Affirmations). To provide evidence of the level of relationships I am able to cultivate with my students – no doubt a factor that influences their ability to be successful at USF – key highlights from these interactions are provided below:

Your passion is so inspiring and gets me excited for every single class...I'm so grateful for all tht I have taken away from your classes...you work so hard to bring us these engaging lessons that are for US, and it definitely shows. (Sara L, SP20)

Your constant encouragement, care, love, and knowledge have shown me how to be an amazing teacher. Every class session I had with you, you demonstrated how to treat your students and how to handle a classroom. (Lacey G, SP21)

You have truly made one of the largest impacts on my life, both personally and professionally. You have taught me so much about life, professionalism, and relationships...I feel like I have grown so

much...my life has always seemed like one thing after another and everyone has always gotten so easily frustrated with me, but you have taken the time to help me understand and grow. (Stephanie E, SP20).

I say it all the time in my class sessions: "Teaching is ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS." We cannot expect a student to be successful if they are not able to build positive relationships with at least one trusted mentor. Happily, I believe I serve in this capacity for many students and will continue to do so for years to come, as the relationships are what make this profession so incredible. Every single one of the letters of recommendation that have been submitted for my promotion to full professor point to my passion for cultivating relationships for the purpose of getting to know students to show that I care and to support their individual needs.

Looking Ahead: New Goals in Teaching

After reflecting on my teaching, my goals in the next five years at the university are as follows:

Table 4: Future Goals in Teaching

Goals in Teaching by next review in 2027
1. Continue to delve more deeply into topics of implicit bias, equity, and culturally-sustaining pedagogy, and integrate those topics into all of my courses across programs in the COE (aligns with OGSM, COE goals, and future direction of field).
2. Update the social studies methods course, which is the only one of my courses that has not been as thoroughly reviewed and updated within the last year.
3. Continue cultivating relationships that allow me to build 1:1 supports to help students achieve success in the COE, at USF, and beyond in the field.

SCHOLARSHIP

My scholarship endeavors have consistently aligned to various forms of scholarship as defined by Boyer (1990) and the USF Policy Manual, including scholarship of teaching (in which a *significant proportion* of scholarship in the COE falls due to the nature of our work), scholarship of application (which encompasses both service and scholarship tied to one's area of expertise), scholarship of integration (collaborative, interdisciplinary work or analysis of data for the purpose of meeting requirements of an external entity), and scholarship of discovery (activities that fit in the traditional definition of basic research so long as it is consistent with our mission in the COE and complement our primary responsibilities as faculty). Complete details of how the COE defines scholarship and the guidelines I have followed since their completion by the COE in 2013 can be found in my e-portfolio under Scholarship → COE Standards for Scholarly Activity. As for my narrative below, I discuss various forms of scholarship that span the areas recommended by Boyer as defined by my college.

Early Accomplishments in Scholarship

As noted on my CV (found in the "CV and Credentials" folder on the main page of my e-portfolio), my first six years included my most massive undertaking to date, which is designing and implementing my dissertation study as well as completing my doctoral degree. In addition, I managed to

present and publish in years 1-6 leading up to tenure. Select artifacts that showcase excellence in scholarship from my tenure portfolio are included in my e-portfolio under “Scholarship” and then “Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6.” These artifacts are all related to the “sustained excellence in scholarship” that I discuss in the next sections.

Select Scholarship Accomplishments, Years 1-6: (artifacts for each are in my e-portfolio under Scholarship→Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6 and are organized by presentations, publications, and new courses developed by Year + First 3-4 words of project title)

Presentations, Years 1-6

Peer-reviewed Presentations (years 1-6)

- Evans, E. (2016). *Teacher candidate perceptions of embedded supports in preparation for the edTPA*. Presented at the Illinois Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium State edTPA Conference, Normal, IL.
- Evans, E., Nelson, C., Kieffer, A., & McLaughlin, A. (2016). *Teacher candidate perceptions of the edTPA: Before and after*. Poster presentation with undergraduate students as part of the SURE (Summer Undergraduate Research) program, presented to the University of St. Francis Board of Trustees, Joliet, IL.
- Evans, E. & Spesia, T. (2015). *Conquering Task 3 of the edTPA*. Presented at the Illinois Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium State edTPA Conference, Normal, IL.
- Evans, E. & Nelson, C. (2014). *Preparing elementary pre-service teachers for the edTPA: An integrative approach to methods courses and professional development school partnerships*. Presented at the Midwest Association for Teacher Education Regional Conference, Champaign, IL.
- Evans, E., Nelson, C., & Metlicka, D. (2014). *Collaborating with professional development school partnerships to prepare pre-service teachers for the implementation of the edTPA*. Presented at the Professional Development Schools National Conference, Las Vegas, NV.
- Evans, E., & Metlicka, D. (2013). *Professional development school partnerships: A hands-on approach to methods instruction*. Presented at the Professional Development Schools National Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Evans, E., & Nelson, C. (2013). *Preparing elementary pre-service teachers for the edTPA: A team-based approach to methods courses*. Presented at the Illinois Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Conference, Normal, IL.

Invited Presentations (years 1-6)

- Evans, E., & Schroeder, A. (2016). *How personality influences professional communication and decision-making*. Presented at the Fall 2016 College of Education Chrysalis Retreat, Ingleside, IL.
- Evans, E. (2016). *How to prepare (and successfully defend) your dissertation*. Presented at the Summer Dissertation Workshop Series at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.
- Evans, E. (2015). *The Next Generation Science Standards and STEM: A professional development overview*. Presented at the STEM Family Night faculty development session at the Cathedral of St. Raymond School, Joliet, IL.

- Barwa, R., & Evans, E. (2012). *University of St. Francis lesson plan workshop*. Presented at the USF Clinical Supervisors' Training, Joliet, IL.
- Evans, E. (2012). *Education: Then and now*. Presented at the USF Future Teachers Summer Academy, Joliet, IL.

Peer-Reviewed Publications, Years 1-6

- Evans, E. & Nelson, C. (2016). Practice makes prepared: Scaffolding pre-service teachers for the edTPA through an authentic methods course experience. *Critical Issues in Teacher Education* (23). Joliet, IL: Illinois Association of Teacher Educators.
- Evans, E. (2015). *Preparing elementary pre-service teachers to integrate STEM: A mixed-methods study*. Doctoral dissertation. Northern Illinois University.

Grants, Years 1-6

- 2016 Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Advisor at the University of St. Francis with two undergraduate candidates with a \$3,000 research stipend (project: Teacher Candidate Perceptions of the edTPA) – *funded proposal*
- 2014 Secured a \$1,000 mini grant from Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom for class sets of environmental science resources and children's literature to supplement elementary candidates' field experience curricula – *funded proposal*

Professional Development, Years 1-6

- STEM Professional Development Day, Illinois Math and Science Academy, Aurora, IL (2016)
- National Science Teachers Association STEM Forum & Expo, St. Louis, MO (2013)
- The Next Generation Science Standards Training, Argonne National Lab, Lemont, IL (2013)
- Project Learning Tree Educator Training, Douglas-Hart Nature Center, Charleston, IL (2013)
- Growing Up WILD Educator Training, Douglas-Hart Nature Center, Charleston, IL (2013)

Scholarship Goals Set at Time of Tenure

Looking back at the narrative I submitted as part of my tenure portfolio, I set clear and meaningful goals for myself to work on throughout the next five years in the area of scholarship. Below, I articulate each of these goals and discuss my accomplishments related to each:

Table 5: Scholarship Goals from Tenure

Goal for 2016-2021	Progress	Notes
Continue to develop a research agenda by submitting manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals as well as applying to present at professional conferences at the rate of at least once per academic year	Accomplished	I have consistently presented at least once (sometimes twice) per academic year at professional conferences with the exception of 2020 due to the circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic. I have published four articles and one book chapter since tenure and have developed a sixth manuscript that is currently in review for 2021.

Develop a prototype for “STEM-in-a-Box project and apply for a grant for the purpose of gathering materials/resources for a series of NGSS-aligned boxes to be used by COE teacher candidates in the field and potentially practicing teachers to supplement their curricula.	Attempted	After serving as the principal investigator on a team (Frank Pascoe, Gina Stevens, Susan Renner, myself) to build capacity for the STEM-in-a-Box initiative as part of a collaboration for the Science for Educators courses and Elementary Science Methods, our grant application was unfunded and due to Gina’s retirement from USF and changing circumstances with teaching loads and university roles, we decided to change course and pursue other opportunities not related to this initiative.
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Sustained Excellence in Scholarship

After accomplishing all that I did in years 1-6 leading up to tenure, I was eager to take on the goals and challenges that I set for myself for my next five years of service for years 6-10. The USF policy manual suggests that one must demonstrate “Sustained Excellence in Scholarship” in order to meet the requirements of applying for promotion to full professor. Per the policy manual as well as the Standards for Scholarly Activity document created by the COE in 2013 (see artifact under Scholarship in my e-portfolio), this can include scholarly publications, presentations, grants, applied study, and current works in progress. The artifacts I’ve chosen to showcase and discuss, some of which are new and others which extend from my tenure accomplishments, fall within each of the aforementioned categories.

Peer-Reviewed Presentations, Years 6-10 – *artifacts for each bulleted item are provided in my e-portfolio at Scholarship → Presentations → _____ (Year of presentation + First 3-4 words of the title of the presentation)*

- Evans, E. & Nelson, C., & Deaton, G. (2019). *From theory to practice: Transfer of teacher candidates’ knowledge from methods courses to the field*. Presented at the Center for Success Summer Institute for Educators: Reimagining Education in Illinois and Beyond, Naperville, IL.
- Evans, E. (2018). *Adopt-a-Prof: One professor’s journey in meeting unmet needs within the local community*. Presented at the Association for Franciscan Colleges and Universities National Conference, Joliet, IL.
- Evans, E. & Nelson, C. (2018). *Supporting academic language in math and science*. Presented at the Midwest edTPA Regional Conference, Normal, IL.
- Evans, E., Nelson, C., Kieffer, A., & McLaughlin, A. (2017). *Teacher candidate perceptions of the edTPA: Before and after*. Presented with undergraduate students at the Midwest Association for Teacher Education Regional Conference, West Lafayette IN.
- Evans, E. (2017). *Preparing elementary pre-service teachers to integrate STEM: An authentic methods approach*. Presented at the January 2017 Association for Science Teacher Education International Conference, Des Moines, IA.

My presentation endeavors are all informed by my teaching. Those outside of the profession must keep in mind that my discipline is teaching and learning, and the two cannot be separated; thus, my scholarly activities center around the teaching and learning process as well as Boyers other areas of

scholarly work. The above presentations are grounded in my scholarly efforts in the areas of edTPA preparation, STEM integration, and constructivist-based inquiry learning.

Peer-Reviewed Publications, Years 6-10 - artifacts for each bulleted item are provided in my e-portfolio at Scholarship → Publications → _____ (Year of Publication + first 3-4 words of the title of the article)
Peer Reviewed Publications, Years 6-10

- Evans, E. (2021). Adopt-a-prof: Utilizing a professional development school partnership as a multi-dimensional pipeline for university faculty and in-service teacher development. *Professional Development School Partners Magazine: Bridging Research to Practice*. Washington, D.C.: NAPDS. (Accepted for publication in Fall 2021).
- Evans, E. (2021). No matter the modality, science is a verb: Supporting elementary pre-service science teachers during remote learning. *Journal for Success in High-Need Schools*, 16(2). Online.
- Evans, E. (2018). “A baby, a doctorate, and a professorship...oh my!” In A. Kemp (ed.). *Dignity of the Calling: Educators share the beginnings of their journeys*. Information Age Publishing, Inc.: Charlotte, NC.

My publication endeavors are also informed by my teaching. As mentioned above, those outside of the profession must keep in mind that my discipline is teaching and learning, and the two cannot be separated; thus, my scholarly activities center around the teaching and learning process. Adopt-a-Prof is discussed in greater detail in the Professional Development section of this Scholarship reflection.

“Science is a Verb” relates back to my experiences in restructuring the teaching and learning process in my EDUC384/MEDU676 Elementary Science Methods Course during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which I wished to continue utilizing hands-on, inquiry-based learning in my course despite class sessions being held in socially-distanced and/or remote synchronous format over Zoom. I designed a “Lab Bag” of materials (discussed in detail in the Teaching section of this self-reflection) so that all candidates had equal access to materials to be able to participate in class sessions similarly to if we were in person, utilizing guided inquiry and cooperative learning via Zoom for implementation. The article utilizes course evaluation data to anecdotally draw assertions as to whether or not the methodologies utilized were effective for candidates’ learning as students as well as whether or not they planned to utilize similar strategies in the future, and the findings concluded positive results.

The book chapter for *Dignity of the Calling* was submitted after my former professor at Northern Illinois University, Dr. Andrew Kemp, who served as editor of the book, asked me to consider submitting a reflection of my experiences as a junior faculty member. The purpose of the book is to help others to better understand the profession, namely those considering pursuing the tenure track. The assertions I shared were positive and encouraging, and all related to the support I received from the university and my core network of supporters outside of USF. The cons that I shared pointed to the necessity of finding a work-life balance to be able to manage all that goes into pursuing the professoriate. Self-care is essential to one’s success.

Each of the above three articles can be found in my e-portfolio under Scholarship → Publications → _____ (year of publication + first 3-4 words of the article’s title).

Invited Publications, Years 6-10:

- Evans, E. (invited publication, accepted for publication in 2021). The footprint legacy. In M. C. Costello (ed.). *Portraits of USF: A Centennial Celebration*. Joliet, IL: University of St. Francis.
- Evans, E. (invited publication; accepted for publication in 2021). This I believe: The power of “yet.” In B. Roth (ed.). *Roots and Wings: A Centennial Celebration*. Joliet, IL: University of St. Francis.

Both of the above publications are works that will be included in two separate Centennial Celebration collections and were a great deal of fun to write, as I don’t often have opportunities to write creatively as opposed to academically. The first is a reflection to be featured in Chester Cosetello’s “Portraits of USF” book that he intends to publish later in 2021 or early 2022. He asked me to write about anything I wanted that would paint a picture of what I love most about USF, and that the intended audience included current and former students, community stakeholders, and anyone interested in learning more about our institution. “The Footprint Legacy” was written about my favorite physical spot on campus—in Donovan Hall in the staircase that joins the undergraduate and graduate office hallways of the COE, there is a landing with a small divot that thousands of footsteps have sunken in over our 100 years. Each person who has contributed has formed not just that physical change to our building, but they have also shaped the legacy of USF. In short, I am grateful to have been a small contributor to this legacy and look forward to all my years to come. The full article can be accessed in my e-portfolio at [Scholarship→Publications→Pending 2021 - Footprint Legacy](#).

The contribution for Provost Beth Roth’s collection “Roots and Wings” is titled “The Power of Yet” and reflects on how far I feel I have come since my career at USF began. Plagued by self-doubt, I often question if I’m enough: “Am I doing enough? Am I good enough?” comes to mind in many facets of my world. What I’ve learned though, is to embrace a growth mindset and instead of worrying about what I may not be doing perfectly, I should instead focus on the fact that I’m not there...yet (but I can get there and I will get there). That mindset has gotten me through a doctoral program, the early phases of motherhood, the tenure track, running a half marathon and countless other personal and professional endeavors I’ve undertaken. The full article can be accessed in my e-portfolio at [Scholarship→Publications→Pending 2021 - The Power of Yet](#).

Current Manuscript

- Evans, E., Smietanski, M., Siadak, L., & Welsh, J. (developing for publication in 2022). K-12 in-service teacher perceptions of pandemic teaching and learning modalities. *School-University Partnerships Journal*. Washington, D.C.: NAPDS.

Artifacts that show evidence of this research project can be found in my e-portfolio under [Scholarship→Works in Progress→2021 IRB Approval](#); see also 2021 Remote Learning Analysis Summary; see also 2021 Remote Learning Survey Instrument.

In Spring 2021, I had been thinking about a project that I wanted to implement with two graduate students who were taking MEDU661 Elementary Classroom Management; the expectation for all graduate students who are taking any course that is cross-listed with an undergraduate course in the COE is to take on a project that integrates research in some capacity. This usually includes having the

candidate do a literature review of sorts related to a topic of interest that relates to the outcomes of the course. However, a conversation with one of the *undergraduate* students in the course inspired the current project that allowed the graduates to conduct scholarship of discovery with me leading the charge while the undergraduate candidate fulfilled requirements for a Duns Scotus Honors project for EDUC392 Elementary Classroom Management.

The undergraduate candidate, Maddy, proposed that she do a literature review on best practices for remote teaching since she said her conversations with teachers in the field informed her anecdotally that how teachers define and utilize remote learning methodology varies widely from classroom to classroom and school to school. I knew from doing my own research that the information in the field that related specifically to elementary remote learning was scant since the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to be the catalyst for the greatest amount of change in recent years to how elementary teachers were approaching planning and instruction. Still, Maddy and I perused a few articles for her project, and at that time, I had subsequent conversations with Jorie and Lauren, the two graduate students in the course, about developing a qualitative survey that we could use to study K-12 in-service teacher perceptions of remote learning. We discussed ethical research and they provided input to refine our research questions and develop the survey instrument, which I had validated by multiple experts in the COE. At that time, I submitted a proposal through USF's IRB, and we launched our survey at the end of the Spring 2021 semester (May). When the survey closed, we had a sample size of 110 K-12 teachers, and the qualitative analysis that followed was conducted by all four of us, with meetings thereafter to discuss themes that emerged. We then outlined an article that integrated the findings from Maddy's literature review and our collective analysis of the data.

Even though the course is complete and all requirements have been met for graduate research and undergraduate Duns Scotus work, we continue to work on synthesizing our shared findings together to draft an article that we will submit by September 2021 to the School-University Partnerships Journal published by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) for review and potential publication in 2022.

Grants

Artifacts provided in my e-portfolio at Scholarship → Grants → NSF IUSE Grant

- 2019 National Science Foundation Improving Undergraduate Science Education (IUSE) (served as Principal Investigator for \$300,000 grant titled "Using the 5E Model to Deepen Elementary Pre-Service Teachers' Science Knowledge Through Inquiry" to improve programmatic scaffolds to prepare elementary education majors for STEM integration) – *grant proposal was not funded by NSF*

As noted when reflecting on my goal acquisition for years 6-10, after serving as the principal investigator on a team (Frank Pascoe, Gina Stevens, Susan Renner, myself) to build capacity for a STEM-in-a-Box initiative to create lab kits for use by teacher candidates and local K-12 partners as part of a collaboration for the Science for Educators courses and Elementary Science Methods, our grant application was unfunded. Due to Gina's retirement from USF and changing circumstances with teaching loads and university roles, we as a group decided to change course and pursue other opportunities not related to this initiative.

Curriculum Development

I have had significant opportunities to design new courses in the teacher education program over the years, most notably during our elementary education redesign in 2015-2017. The syllabus for each course listed serves as evidence of a course that I developed and taught in my years at USF, with the most recent iteration of each represented under Teaching→Course Syllabi. I continue to teach each of these courses regularly, either every semester or every other semester depending on course offerings and program sequence, and prior to each semester that the courses are taught, I thoroughly review all contents and revise based on feedback from evaluations and my own research on best practices in the field.

A list of courses that I personally designed, implemented, and still revise/teach regularly includes:

- EDUC100 Human Relations for Educators
- EDUC 379/MEDU678 Elem Methods of Teaching Social Science
- EDUC384/MEDU676 Elem Science Methods
- EDUC392/MEDU661 Elem Classroom Management
- EDUC 394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment
- EDUC 476/MEDU699 Professional Growth Seminar

Research/Professional Development

Project READY

As the start of the 2020-2021 school year was approaching, I had been “leaning in” to my personal research related to culturally responsive teaching, equity in education, and social justice in education. What I had learned thus far of these topics, I had begun integrating into my courses as appropriate, such as teaching students in their very first education course (EDUC100 Human Relations for Educators) about how implicit bias impacts the way humans view and interact with the world and developing and awareness of our biases can help us to become more inclusive and equitable teachers. These topics also appear frequently in EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment related to culturally responsive teaching, family engagement, trauma-informed teaching, and restorative practices in education as well as EDUC384/MEDU676 Elementary Science Methods in terms of ensuring access and equity across all groups of students (i.e. based on gender, socioeconomic status, race, cognitive ability, etc.). The personal research I had been conducting was for the purpose of professional development to inform my courses and make me a better teacher, and the more I learned, the more I realized how much I still have to learn! I remember reflecting and feeling that we, as a college and as a university, had much work to do, and around this time, Dr. Gambro announced that the COE had set a goal to learn more as a college about these topics for the 2020-2021 school year so that we could work together to better integrate these important themes throughout ALL of our courses and programs. How we were going to accomplish this, though, was still uncertain.

Due to my own research, I had come across a site called Project READY, a web-based resource geared toward librarians to provide professional development on all of the aforementioned topics within school libraries in a manner than was “bite-sized” and organized in a digestible way (<https://ready.web.unc.edu/>). I provided the web link to Dr. Gambro, and our college collectively liked the resource so much that we studied it for the duration of the 2020-2021 academic year, spending time during each monthly COE assembly meeting having important (but admittedly difficult) conversations to

help each other learn and grow as individuals. It was raw, vulnerable, and among the most insightful learning experiences I've had, and I'm very excited to see how we come together in 2021-2022 and beyond to begin weaving these topics throughout our program to help shape our teacher candidates to be ethical, equitable advocates for all students whom they serve, not to mention learn how to become more skilled at those things myself for the candidates whom I serve.

Adopt-a-Prof

An initiative that I pursued in 2017-2018 on my own accord was one that I called "Adopt-a-Prof." Essentially, the idea was born out of my own reflections at that time that I had spent the same amount of time in higher education that I had in my K-12 classroom; thus, my "street cred" felt waning. Granted, I was still doing consistent research for the purposes of professional development and my course evaluations remained excellent, but I had a nagging voice inside that would warn me to take a step back every time I felt compelled to tell candidates, "the research says this works, but I know it works, too, based on my own teaching experiences..." After all, "six years ago" isn't exactly considered as credible as "in the last two years," is it? Not only did I want to get some experience in a K-12 classroom to be able to implement some of the curricular initiatives that I hadn't been able to implement myself (i.e. the Next Generation Science Standards were published after I left the K-12 classroom), but to be perfectly frank—I was also starting to miss working with younger students in a direct capacity. Supervising student teachers and jumping in to help out with small group instruction from time to time is not the same as planning and teaching as the lead teacher in the room.

I approached three fifth grade teachers at Singleton Elementary in Joliet District 86 (one of our partner schools in the Joliet Professional Development School Partnership – JPDSP) whom I knew were excellent teachers and whom I knew would give me unfiltered feedback to help me grow. This felt vulnerable because as professors, we are looked upon as experts in our field. We should know everything there is to know about our profession. But as any good professor can attest, there is always room to learn and grow—especially after spending so many years not directly performing the tasks that we are teaching our students to emulate. In short, what I proposed was that they and their students could "adopt" me as their professor; I would be involved with curricular planning for the upcoming science units, co-teach lessons with the teachers, share resources from the university that could supplement the scant supplies they had on hand for inquiry-based science, and build relationships with their students. In return, I would share my expertise on implementation of the NGSS, which were fairly new to the teachers at that time, I would provide additional student support in already-overcrowded classrooms, and as a culminating activity, I would organize an event back at USF where the 5th graders could come to campus to learn about university life, career opportunities that college can provide, and tour our brand new science building courtesy of professors Dan Schwert and Scott Gruenbaum.

This endeavor that spanned the school year was a massive, but rewarding undertaking, with students, teachers, and myself all walking away from the experience with positive outcomes. It strengthened the partnership between the university and the community, it sharpened my teaching, and it also helped me to obtain both a professional peer-reviewed presentation and publication that I could share with the broader academic community. Additional information can be found in my e-portfolio at [Scholarship→Presentations→2018 Adopt a Prof](#), which I presented at the Association for Franciscan Colleges and Universities National conference hosted at USF in 2018 about meeting unmet needs in the community. The publication artifact can also be found at [Scholarship→Publications→2021 Adopt A](#)

Prof, which includes the manuscript from the peer-reviewed article being published in the *Professional Development School Partners Magazine* by the National Association for Professional Development School Partnerships later in 2021 and focuses on utilizing professional development schools as a multidirectional pipeline for development.

Professional Memberships

To supplement my own personal research and professional growth, I maintain membership to the following organizations that inform my scholarship as an academic researcher and practitioner:

- Association of Science Teacher Educators (ASTE)
- National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)
- Illinois Science Teachers Association (ISTA)
- Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI)
- Kappa Delta Pi – International Education Honor Society (KDP)
- National Education Association (NEA)

Looking Ahead: New Goals in Scholarship

After reflecting on my scholarship, my goals in the next five years at the university are as follows:

Table 6: Future Goals in Scholarship

Goals in Scholarship by next review in 2027	
1.	Continue efforts to publish manuscripts and/or present at professional conferences at the rate of once per academic year.
2.	Attend a professional conference to grow in an area in which I'd like to learn more without the pressure of only attending a conference in which I have grown enough expertise to formally present (for example, I'd love to attend a conference on promoting equity in K-12 and university settings or better developing culturally-sustaining pedagogy within the curriculum).

SERVICE

Within the policy manual for the university, service is emphasized as an integral component of academia. A core value of a Franciscan institution, service is especially important because it allows one to support the mission of the university through helping others and exercising stewardship of the many resources available within the institution. In this section, I highlight the efforts I have made to grow in serving the college of education, the university, and the community, particularly with regard to leadership opportunities; I have proven to excel and demonstrate *sustained excellence in service* based on the myriad of artifacts and data that I will present in the sections below.

Early Accomplishments in Service

As noted on my CV (found in the "CV and Credentials" folder on the main page of my e-portfolio), my first six years included advising students, engaging with the community, serving on committees, and gaining some traction in leadership by chairing the STEM Education Committee and the COE Curriculum Committee. Select artifacts that showcase excellence in service from my tenure

portfolio are included in my e-portfolio under “Service” and then “Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6.” These artifacts are all related to the “sustained excellence in service” that I discuss in the next sections.

Select Service Accomplishments, Years 1-6: (select artifacts are in my e-portfolio under Service → Select Artifacts Yrs 1-6)

- USF STEM Education Committee chair (2013-2017; committee chair 2015-2017).
- USF Sustainability Committee (2013-2015)
- USF Ed Standards Committee (2012-2015)
- USF University Curriculum Committee (2016-present; chair 2018-2020)
- Joliet Professional Development School Partnership (2011-present)
 - Design/implement authentic teaching experiences in local high-needs partner schools (iSTEM at Singleton Elementary 2014-present; Farragut Elementary Science lessons to 2nd graders 2011-2013; Singleton Elementary social studies lessons to 4th-5th grade, 2011-2013)
- COE Curriculum Committee (2014-present; chair 2016-present)
- COE Catholic School Partnership Committee (2013-2016)
- COE Professional Standards Board (2012-2014)
- COE Science and Environmental Education Academy Committee (2011-2013)
- COE Chrysalis Retreat Leadership Team & Retreat Facilitator (2011-2019)
- COE Initial Programs Committee (2011-present)
- USF and COE Academic Assemblies (2011-present)
- Recruitment Success Stories
 - After visiting high schools or meeting prospective candidates at USF visit days or open houses, I always invite them to “take USF for a test drive” by shadowing me for an afternoon, visiting my classroom, having lunch at the Bistro, and talking to current students. As evidenced in the artifact found at Service→Select Artifacts Years 1-6→Recruitment Successes, I have invited several students on campus, built relationships, and later found that they had chosen to enroll at USF. Many of these students have now graduated from our teacher education programs and I look forward to continuing these efforts post-pandemic. See also Service→Select Artifacts Years 1-6, USF Recruitment Presentation for additional information that I present to get prospective students interested in the COE. Additionally, I have updated this presentation for use in more recent years post-tenure since I continue to engage in such activities on campus. The new presentation can be found under Service →COE Service→USF/COE Recruitment→Visit Day Presentation.
- USF COE Facebook Group
 - As evidenced in the artifact (Service→Select Artifacts Years 1-6, COE Facebook Group), I created a private Facebook group in 2015 to better communicate with current students and alumni about events, announcements, and to share resources from the COE. To date (in August 2021), the group has nearly 400 members and posts from COE faculty frequently include job openings, relevant articles, open opportunities for students and alumni to ask questions and share resources, etc. I find that it’s yet another way to build and maintain relationships (fraternitas) well beyond the walls of USF.

Service Goals Set at Time of Tenure

Looking back at the narrative I submitted as part of my tenure portfolio, I set clear and meaningful goals for myself to work on throughout the next five years in the area of service. Below, I articulate each of these goals and discuss my accomplishments related to each:

Table 7: Service Goals from Tenure

Goal for 2016-2021	Progress	Notes
Continue to chair the USF STEM Education Committee	Accomplished	I continued to serve as chair until disassembly of the committee in 2017.
Continue to chair the COE Curriculum Committee and serve as liaison to the University Curriculum Committee with the goal of one day seeking leadership at the university level by chairing UCC.	Accomplished	I continue to serve as COE Curriculum Committee chair and served as UCC chair from 2018-2020 and Executive Committee from 2018-2021.

Sustained Excellence in Service

After accomplishing all that I did in years 1-6 leading up to tenure, I was eager to take on the goals and challenges that I set for myself for my next five years of service for years 6-10. The USF policy manual suggests that one must demonstrate “Sustained Excellence in Service” in order to meet the requirements of applying for promotion to full professor. Per the policy manual, this can include activities in committee work, university events, special projects, mentoring, advising, and community activities. The artifacts I’ve chosen to showcase and discuss, some of which are new and others which extend from my tenure accomplishments, fall within each of the aforementioned categories and also showcase leadership endeavors that illustrate sustained excellence.

Some of the committee work that I undertook in years 1-6 continued into years 6-10, including my involvement at USF Academic Assemblies, COE Academic Assemblies, COE Initial Programs Committee, COE Curriculum Committee (chair), University Curriculum Committee, and the Joliet Professional Development School Partnership (JPDSP). Highlights of those continued commitments, along with my new commitments, are articulated below.

Service to the COE

As educators, those of us in the College of Education are no strangers to service, as serving others is the core Franciscan value from which our profession was born. Within the COE, I have served in many capacities as outlined below:

Academic Advising

Serving students is the heart of what we do at USF, and I take my advising responsibilities very seriously. My attention to detail serves me well in this capacity as well as my passion for building relationships with students. For my first six years at USF leading up to tenure, I regularly advised between 12-20 students, on average, from the elementary and special education undergraduate programs. Since receiving tenure, I have broadened my advising expertise to also include secondary history majors who wish to pursue middle-level or high school teaching positions, and my advising loads have grown to 24-28 students at a time—a large number given the scale of our college.

I take great care as an advisor to encourage my advisees to take advantage of a wide variety of opportunities throughout the course of their programs. Such opportunities include diverse practicum experiences, licensure endorsement opportunities through elective coursework for marketability and finding their unique niche in the field, or extra-curricular activities to help them become involved and connected with campus life, whether they live on campus or they commute to and from school.

At the time of tenure, I had not yet had enough candidates complete their teacher education programs to have a large enough sample size to reflect upon based on advising surveys that all candidates complete prior to graduation. By the end of year ten, however, I had a sample size of 22 candidates who had completed advising exit surveys from which I am able to analyze and draw assertions from the data. The advising survey results in their entirety can be found in my e-portfolio at Service→COE Service→Academic Advising→Advising Eval Data. Upon review, one will see that the survey is designed as a series of indicators on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” In analyzing the collective data over my ten years of advising for the six indicators on the survey, my cumulative averages are as follows:

- Approachable (97.3%, 4.87 average)
- Advisee felt comfortable asking questions (97.3%, 4.87 average)
- Available/accessible for students (98.6%, 4.93 average)
- Answered questions timely and accurately (98.6%, 4.93 average)
- Discussed field of education/gave advice/clarified (98.6%, 4.93 average)
- Advisee overall satisfied with advising experience (98.6%, 4.93 average)

In addition, candidates were asked to provide any additional feedback via qualitative comments. Out of 42 qualitative comments submitted, 39 were positive, indicating things like “she knows her stuff,” “she is amazing and compassionate,” and “she has the answers that I need.” Additionally, in a letter received from former advisee Shea S from Fall 2020:

Coming from a junior college, I was a bit hesitant and unsure of what to expect at USF...as my advisor and professor, you were one of the first people that I remember feeling comfortable with and I knew I could go to, whether with something personal or with academic concerns...you have always been there by my side. (see artifact in my e-portfolio under Service→COE Service →Academic Advising →Shea S).

I find this role to be highly enjoyable in the sense that it allows me to get to know students on a deeper level and become a positive influence on their retention and overall success at USF. In fact, we meet regularly as a college to discuss student concerns, and collectively, we view our roles as advisors to deliver 1:1 supports to ensure students’ success—particularly our first generation students who may need

time and support to find their footing in college. I know all about these students' experiences, as I, myself, am a first generation college student from a rural town in central Illinois; I find that sharing this with first-generation students often puts them visibly at ease, as I believe I am someone with whom students can feel comfortable relating and talking to.

There were three qualitative comments within the advising survey data that pointed to some critique that I have reflected on to improve my practice:

She was always available, but having official check-in meetings beyond registration would be helpful. (FA20)

Sometimes her demeanor was 'let's get to the point'. (2018)

Give all candidates an explanation of endorsements freshman year and what courses would be needed for each.

In reflecting upon the above three statements, I made some changes to improve the advising process. First, the statement about wishing I had more "official" appointments with advisees came during the Fall 2020 semester in which I was teaching remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under "normal" circumstances, I am nearly always on campus, and my office door is always open, so candidates frequently stop by to say hello or ask questions. It is possible that this comment came from a candidate who was frustrated that appointments were necessary to meet with me in FA20, but even so, I will make every effort in the future to remind students that they do not need an official appointment to check in with me during the semester. Rather, they can stop by my office any time, whether during my regular office hours or any other time that I am on campus. I am always available to help.

Second, in relation to the statement about my demeanor sometimes being, "let's get to the point," I do agree that there comes a point in an advising session in which we must, well...get to the point, as there is much to accomplish and talk about programmatically during sessions. That said, I also know that advising sessions are a prime opportunity to just check in with candidates about how things are going in and out of USF. To that end, so that sessions do not feel rushed, I have extended my appointment times for advisees, especially for freshmen who are new to the program. In years past, all appointments were held in 30-minute time slots, but now I set aside 60 minutes for freshmen each semester, 45 minutes for sophomores, and 30 minutes for juniors and seniors. This also helps to address the last point of critique in which the candidate suggested I spend more time going over endorsement options for licensure with candidates from freshman year and beyond. While I do feel that I do this in advising, during my EDUC 100 Human Relations for Educators course, and the information is also recorded on all candidates' academic degree plans, this statement tells me that the information can get lost in the shuffle and that more reminders are helpful.

COE Curriculum Committee Chair (2016-present; member of COECC since 2013)

Upon receiving tenure in 2016, I began pursuing opportunities for leadership in service within the COE by becoming the chair of the COE Curriculum Committee. The charge of the committee is to ensure that all programs and courses are written and revised as necessary to ensure quality programming aligned to the requirements of the State of Illinois and our accrediting bodies. As evidenced by the letters

of recommendation for promotion to full professor by Dr. Cindy Sloan, COE Associate Dean, as well as Dr. Cathy Nelson—both of whom serve on COECC with me—I am an organized and efficient leader of our group. Cathy mentions in her letter that I run meetings efficiently, send out pertinent documents far in advance, and respect all members of the committee. Cindy asserts, “Erin is organized, dependable, dynamic, and open-minded; she is the kind of person you WANT to have on a committee.” (Both letters can be found in my e-portfolio under Letters of Support→COE Letters→C Sloan and C Nelson). A sample of the work that I have organized for our committee’s review can be found under Service→COECC Chair→COECC Sample Chair Minutes for Committee, which illustrates a task that I’ve taken on during the COVID-19 pandemic in which our committee has been meeting on Zoom. Because I know that these times are trying for all, as I lead committee meetings, I share my screen and take notes during each meeting, relieving the burden from committee members from having to complete this step. Doing so while sharing my screen during the meeting allows for us to make immediate changes and has provided more efficient means for taking minutes that most accurately represent the work that we accomplish during our meetings. I have also included a sample of the types of reports I give at COE academic assembly meetings related to the happenings in the curricular pipeline with UCC and Executive Committee with the artifact found under Service→COE Service→COECC Chair 2016-present →Sample COE Curriculum Report.

In serving on the COE Curriculum Committee as chair, I am also tasked with serving as the COE representative on the University Curriculum Committee, which I have also served on since 2016, also serving as chair from 2018-2020 (more on my leadership on UCC is discussed in the USF Service section of this self-reflection below). I have been very involved in leading the collaboration of the committee in deeply discussing agenda items, ensuring that all documentation is relayed to the college and Dean Gambro prior to our COE assembly meetings, and then presenting approved proposals at UCC as they move through the governance process.

JPDSP Partnership: iSTEM and Adopt-a-Prof

As I previously discussed in the teaching and scholarship sections of this document, I designed and implemented a large project, the “iSTEM” (integrated STEM unit), that continues to be a part of my Elementary Science Methods courses and serves the Joliet community in District 86 (see artifact under Teaching→Innovative Practices→iSTEM Handbook). This project allows our elementary teacher education candidates to serve elementary students within the high-needs partner schools within our Joliet Professional Development School Partnership (JPDSP) in which they are placed for Elementary Internship I. Candidates design and teach lessons surrounding a chosen science theme that aligns with their cooperating teacher’s curriculum, and they are able to utilize resources from the university to supplement the scant supplies available at their school sites. I have worked closely with the teachers and administrators for over seven years adapting this experience to best suit the curricular needs of the teachers and students while also providing a quality learning experience for candidates. Former candidate, Erin McDonough, who now teaches in Joliet District 86 and serves as a cooperating teacher for iSTEM reflects in her letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor that “iSTEM was something that many candidates could not otherwise do in the field had they not had the experience built into science methods,” so the opportunities that this experience provides benefit more than just the K-12 students (see Erin’s recommendation letter with further discussion about iSTEM in my e-portfolio under Letters of Support→Outside of USF→E McDonough). Additionally, many cooperating teachers ask

candidates for their lesson plans after the experience so they can replicate the units in subsequent years because they often include innovative best-practices that may be less familiar to veteran teachers in the field who have not recently completed a methods course surrounding the Next Generation Science Standards.

In addition to the iSTEM experience for candidates, an additional service opportunity that was born from this project was an initiative that I call “Adopt-a-Prof,” which I discussed in detail in the scholarship section of this reflection. As the name implies, I sought to essentially be “adopted” by a group of elementary teachers and their students to become a part of their classroom community (see the proposal provided to teachers at Service→COE Service→Service in Partner Schools →Adopt-a-Prof Proposal; see also Visual Summary of Adopt-a-Prof in the same folder). The experience was aimed at providing professional development for myself as a university faculty member, professional development and curriculum coaching for in-service teachers, and also adding richness to the inquiry-based science experiences of the elementary students with whom this entire collaboration would support. While unusual to think of a school-university partnership initiative that does not focus primarily on pre-service teacher development, the question I sought to answer was how we could utilize an existing, authentic professional development school (PDS) partnership for the purposes of providing ongoing development for those in charge of preparing pre-service teachers for the field, namely in-service teachers and university faculty.

The initiative launched in 2017-2018 at a time when I realized that I had spent the same amount of time teaching in higher education that I had in my middle school science classroom. Thus, I worried that my practices may have been getting a bit rusty and wished to sharpen my practice and reinvigorate my teacher heart by working directly with elementary learners—something I hadn’t done in quite some time, as serving as a supervisor to teacher candidates is not the same level of interaction as planning and teaching as the lead teacher. Most higher education faculty in teacher education programs have prior experience in the field as practitioners, but I realized that I was no longer able to tell candidates that the methodologies I were effective with the students in their student teaching classrooms because enough time had gone by that my K-12 teaching was not as “recent” as I felt it should be to remain credible, particularly given I had left the field before newer evaluation models, curriculum mandates, or standards had been developed. As a former middle school science teacher turned elementary science methods professor, I was now teaching candidates about the Next Generation Science Standards, a curricular document which I had not utilized in my own K-12 classroom. I also realized that the district from which I came before moving into higher education lacked the diversity that was ever-present and evolving before our very eyes in our partner schools. To that end, did my experiences really stack up to the demands that my PSTs were facing?

While there is certainly validity to the old adage that teaching “is like riding a bike,” I knew deep down that if I really wanted to be able to best-prepare my PSTs for the modern realities of the field, the best way for me to do that would be to get right down into the trenches with them, not in a supervisory role, but in a teaching capacity for my own continued development, learning from in-service teachers about the continued evolution of the field. This experience shaped me as a teacher and provided opportunities for scholarly activity, but just as importantly, it provided me the opportunity to serve in already-overcrowded classrooms, bringing expertise in science pedagogy to the lesson development process with the fifth grade team with whom I worked as well as providing additional support in the classroom for the fifth grade students through co-teaching.

Adopt-a-Prof culminated after numerous visits to the school over the 2017-2018 school year with the fifth grade team (three teachers approximately 65 students) coming to USF to tour “their professor’s”

school. The students were given the opportunity to go on campus tours with the Saints Ambassadors, visit the new science building and engage in inquiry-based lab demonstrations with colleagues Dan Schwert and Scott Gruenbaum, participate in a Q&A panel with current students about the career paths that college may allow, and hear from financial aid about the possibilities for making college affordable upon graduation from high school. The students even got to meet Bernie! As their bus pulled away from USF that day, from the stars in the students' eyes to the hugs of gratitude from the cooperating teachers, I knew that we had accomplished something great for these students who were on the cusp of making big decisions about their futures. The entire experience of Adopt-a-Prof—all facets from start to finish—were completed beyond my teaching load *simply because I wanted to do it* and felt passionate about the service it provided to the local community. To date, it is among the most rewarding projects I've pursued in my years at USF.

Alumni Co-teaching

Since Adopt-a-Prof was so hugely successful and reinvigorating for me as a teacher, I began to encourage my colleagues to participate in similar, albeit more bite-sized, experiences. After all, we have no shortage of alumni teaching nearby in the field, many of whom would jump at the chance to work with us beyond their initial licensure programs. To that end, Cathy Nelson, who teaches in the Elementary Internship I "Methods Block" with me as the math methods instructor, agreed to pursue an opportunity to co-teach STEM-related content with two of our alumni candidates in the Minooka school district. We reached out to alumni George Deaton (see his letter for my recommendation to full professor in Letters of Support→Outside of USF→G Deaton) and Kristin Dziuban, both of whom had graduated from USF in 2018 from the graduate and undergraduate elementary education program for initial licensure. We chose them because we both had ongoing relationships with them and we knew, too, based on their performance in our program that they would likely be implementing best practices in the field as licensed teachers. Our question to them in the 2018-2019 school year was simple, "What do you think about our idea to visit you in your classroom, do some observing of what STEM teaching looks like in the field, and maybe get the opportunity to do a little co-teaching of our own?" Their "yes" came quickly and excitedly, and over the next few months, Cathy and I visited their classrooms on two different occasions, even conducting an IRB-approved qualitative interview and using our findings to present with George at a regional conference in 2019 as part of our scholarly activities (see artifact in my e-portfolio under Service→COE Service→Service in Partner Schools→Visual Summary of Minooka Alumni Teaching; this file houses the presentation given for scholarship at the regional conference).

After we taught a similar lesson to both George and Kristin's classes (3rd and 5th grade), Cathy's big take-away from the experience was that she found that after being away from teaching in the field so directly for so many years, she somewhat forgot about the minute differences between the various age groups at the elementary level. For example, the way in which one might formulate a higher order question for a 3rd grader differs from the way the question might be structured for a 5th grader. Or, when giving directions for an activity, there are many "what ifs" that tend to happen with young learners that may not happen in the methods classroom when modeling the activity with adult learners. Engaging in this experience with my colleague was helpful to us both, and we look forward to opportunities to continue engaging in service opportunities with our alumni candidates in the field again once the circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic have subsided enough to allow outside visitors into our schools.

Service to USF

University Curriculum Committee Chair (2018-2020)

One of my service goals post-tenure was to pursue university-level leadership by chairing the University Curriculum Committee. This goal stemmed from both my continued service on the committee and feeling I really understood its processes and charge, but also because my background in studying curriculum leadership lent itself well to the role. Thus, I was elected chair of UCC in 2018 and was re-elected in 2019, serving the maximum of two years in the role at one time. Two highlights from my time as chair include revision of forms and alignment to current policy and providing mentorship for future chairs of the committee.

When I first became chair of the committee, I felt it appropriate to review the policy manual in greater detail than I had before when serving as a member, as I wanted to make sure I led efficiently and accurately according to policy. Upon doing so, I realized that the curricular forms that the committee used (which had been updated in previous years) were not in congruence with the policy manual. The forms had been approved for use; however, the policy manual had never been updated to reflect these changes. Thus, prior to the 2018 academic year beginning, I went through all sections of the policy manual in detail, noting edits that would ensure proper alignment to current practice. This process also included working closely with Jennifer Ethridge in the Registrar's Office to ensure that the forms were organized in such a way so as to provide all relevant details necessary for later updates in the governance process, such as updating the course catalog, Banner, etc. I presented these findings to the committee at our first meeting in 2018, and the forms/policy manual were updated appropriately (see the presentation given at UCC in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service→UCC Chair 2018-2020→UCC Policy Manual Revisions. Many colleagues commended my attention to detail and willingness to extend my time and energy to ensure efficient structure of forms for greater practicality and consistency.

Another major highlight of my service as UCC chair came as my two years of leadership were culminating. I had been reflecting back on the experience of stepping into the role as chair and how uncertain many aspects of the role had felt. I had little information to use to feel confident that I was correctly utilizing the processes, communications, and structure expected, whether from former chairs or the policy manual. Former chairs expressed similar sentiment over the years, and I believed that this uncertainty may be a reason why some faculty members are reluctant to volunteer for such roles. To that end, I decided to create a "New Chair Guidebook" that detailed my experience as chair from start to finish. The guide is not meant to articulate how one *must* lead, but instead seeks to provide an outline that a new chair can follow to feel confident that they are on the right path and are not somehow "missing something." The New Chair Guidebook for UCC can be found in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service→UCC Chair 2018-2020→UCC New Chair Guidebook.

The Guidebook was utilized by the new chair of UCC, Michael Stowe, when his leadership began in 2020. In Michael's letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, he states that he finds great value in the guidebook because it "outlines in great detail the role, responsibilities, timelines, and meeting structure for UCC." In addition, I presented the guide book to Executive Committee to share the idea with the chairs of other standing university committees, and it was so well-received that other chairs have started creating similar guides for other committees, using my guidebook as an outline and filling it in with information pertinent to their specific committee. This is a task that I took on over and above my

other duties as faculty and chair, demonstrating my commitment to excellence and supporting the leadership of future chairs.

Executive Committee (2018-2021)

Part of my duties when serving as chair of the University Curriculum Committee from 2018-2020 included serving as a member of the Executive Committee. We discussed important matters of the university, gave summary reports of the happenings of the standing committees, and developed the agendas for USF academic assembly meetings. Additionally, serving as a chair of a standing committee also means giving detailed reports at each USF Academic Assembly meeting and fielding questions and feedback from the faculty. When my time as UCC chair culminated in 2020, I realized that no other members from the College of Education were chairing any university committees the following year, thus a COE representative on Executive Committee was needed for 2020-2021. I readily volunteered for this position to continue my service on EC for another year, and found that this was particularly valuable as many discussions and procedures were being developed by the university in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all my years serving on Executive Committee, I was able to provide feedback and ideas to the committee, serving as a voice on behalf of my college due to me providing consistent updates to my colleagues at our monthly COE Academic Assembly meetings. Serving as liaison between the COE and EC was a valued experience in which I feel I was able to lead in a meaningful and efficient manner.

Faculty Mentor (portfolio and mentor/river guide)

Since receiving tenure in 2016, an area in which I have found to be a passion of mine is working with new faculty members to help them navigate the tenure process. In fact, as noted in her letter of recommendation for my promotion to full professor, Cathy Nelson, who served as chair of the Rank, Promotion, and Tenure committee at the time that I received tenure, stated, “Erin’s tenure portfolio documents her ability to [reflect on her teaching] well; her portfolio has been used as a model by many junior faculty members per suggestion of former members of [RPT]” (see Cathy’s letter in my e-portfolio under Letters of Support→COE Letters→C Nelson). True to Cathy’s statement, I have been approached over the years by numerous colleagues asking for help with outlining the structure of their portfolios, figuring out which kinds of artifacts they might use to showcase their endeavors in teaching, scholarship, and service, or (most often) understanding how to synthesize data from numerous sources, including letters of support, evaluations, and artifacts, to best provide justification for their performance. See the artifact in my e-portfolio that illustrates the various faculty members to have reach out to me for assistance over the years under Service→USF Service→Mentoring→Faculty Tenure Mentoring.

In addition, because of my success in navigating the tenure process, I was approached by Dr. Gambro in 2019 to serve as the COE mentor to new tenure-track faculty member, Karen Blaha. Dr. Blaha has been a long-time instructor for our REAL office in our graduate programs and has a long history of success in education, but the tenure track was completely new to her. As such, as she works toward her third year review in the coming school year, I have conducted a teaching evaluation with detailed formative feedback to guide pre- and post-reflection discussions (see artifact under Service→USF Service→Mentoring→K Blaha Teaching Observation) but I have also provided detailed feedback to her on her year one portfolio to help her improve its contents leading into the third year

review and ultimately her application for tenure and promotion (see artifact under Service→USF Service→Mentoring→Portfolio Feedback for K Blaha).

My leadership in mentoring has also been extended when I was asked by Dr. Elizabeth Davies, CAS Dean, to serve as “river guide” mentor to new science faculty member Chloe Lash (see email from Elizabeth and sample communication with Chloe in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service→Mentoring→River Guide Mentor for C Lash). During Chloe’s first year at USF, I attended all new faculty meetings and regularly reached out to her to reflect on the contents of the meetings or to help answer any questions that she may have, and I also provided input during the meetings for any other new faculty members related to the topics outlined in the paragraph above about which many new faculty members have questions, namely those related to creating an effective portfolio.

Because of my success in working with new faculty members in an informal manner at the university, I have set a new goal beyond receiving promotion to full professor to continue my service in this area by serving on the Rank, Promotion, and Tenure Committee in the coming years to help review the structure and processes of the committee as well as to mentor new faculty in understanding the expectations of the tenure track (and beyond). There is currently much “gray area” and I believe there is much room for improvement related to the requirements outlined in the policy manual and the assessment process of the committee.

COVID-19 Task Force: Classroom Committee

When preparing for the 2020-2021 school year, it took a village of many of us coming together in service to ensure that the school year would function as smoothly and efficiently as possible given the many complications that COVID protocols added to daily campus life. I was able to utilize my organizational skills and attention to detail by serving on the Classroom Committee as part of the COVID-19 Task Force. We met several times over the summer, and many, many hours were dedicated to going through every single class offered by the COE and reorganizing the meeting locations for in-person or hybrid classes based on the updated socially-distant room capacities and 30-minute cleaning schedule in between all class sessions. This undertaking was a bit like putting together a large jigsaw puzzle with the added complication of knowing which types of activities take place in which classes, colleague preferences, etc., adding many variables into deciding which of our classes can and should meet in which spaces on campus. After each iteration of revisions, our committee would meet and discuss complications to which we were having difficulty finding answers (i.e. if there was a large class session that had literally nowhere to meet in the Motherhouse, I may have to collaborate with the representatives from other colleges to see if their buildings might have a meeting space for that particular class). It was a painstaking endeavor, but one that helped the Fall 2020 semester to function as smoothly as possible, which was of key importance for our students. We aimed to make teaching and learning during a pandemic feel as “normal” as it possibly could, and chaos and disorganization would have destroyed those efforts. Thankfully, the members of the committee were able to iron out a schedule that was effective. An example of my efforts on this committee during summer 2020 are included in an artifact in my e-portfolio in which I sent an updated version of changes to the master schedule that were made on behalf of the COE to the chair, Steve Morissette. The artifact can be found under Service→USF Service→COVID Task Force Classroom Committee→FA20 Scheduling Updates.

University Events

As a faculty member, I recognize the importance of being highly visible and involved on campus. To that end, I participate in a myriad of events for the purpose of building relationships with students, cultivating fraternitas with colleagues, and recruiting potential USF students to build our future capacity as a university. Namely, I regularly participate in new student and transfer open houses and freshman visit days (my presentation at these events can be found in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service→USF/COE Recruitment→Visit Day Presentation). In addition, I also serve annually at the Freshman Scholarship Competition. I find this event wonderful in the sense that I get to really get to know potential students in a 1:1 setting, giving them input as to which programs or extra-curricular opportunities on campus might appeal to them based on the interests they share during our interviews (see artifact that illustrates sample follow-up communication with the student whom I meet in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service→USF/COE Recruitment→Freshman Scholarship Competition Sample Follow Ups). In addition, I have regularly visited high schools on career days or within future teacher clubs for the purposes of student recruitment as well, and find that many students either don't know we exist or they hadn't considered us because they weren't sure if a private university could be as affordable as a large, public institution.

At any of these events, any time I come across a candidate who is interesting in the teaching profession, I always ask them to provide me with their email address so that I can reach out to them after the event (even if they are still early in their high school careers—our communication can become longitudinal if they wish) to help answer any questions they may have. One of my recruitment strategies is that I always invite students to come visit USF for a personalized visit experience with me. During their visit, they come to campus to shadow a couple of classes, we walk around and I introduce them to any COE faculty and staff who are on campus that day, I arrange for them to engage in Q&A with a few current students—usually over lunch at the Bistro, they meet with Maureen Hunt, COE Licensure Officer, to discuss a detailed program plan, and then I help to arrange any additional experiences they wish to have beyond the COE. Not only does this attention to personalization and detail show how supportive and familial our university is, it has also proven to be successful in the sense that it has brought students into our doors who may have been on the fence about which university they wished to attend. I am confident that other universities are not providing this level of time and personalized service into recruiting potential students (see artifact in my e-portfolio under Service→Select Artifacts Years 1-6→Recruitment Successes).

Excellence in Service Award Nominee (2020)

I was honored to receive a nomination in 2020 for USF's Excellence in Service Award. While the announcement is made each year as to who is nominated, no other information is provided to nominees as to who submitted the nomination or why it was submitted. This is something that I seek to discuss in the coming school year, as I think it would be highly beneficial to those nominated to know these details for the purpose of professional self-reflection, such as that in tenure and promotion narratives. While I did not receive the award, the nomination alone provided evidence that I was going above and beyond in my service to the university and community. The nomination evidence can be found in my e-portfolio under Service→USF Service.

Service to the Community

Community Service (Boy Scouts of America, Rainbow Council, Wreaths Across America, Feed My Starving Children, Plainfield District 202)

In addition to my many service commitments at the university, I am also passionate about continuing to serve on a personal level within the local community. Many of these service endeavors are woven into the fabric of my own family, and I enjoy teaching my own sons the values of Franciscan service by embracing leadership opportunities with the Boy Scouts of America Rainbow Council, Wreaths Across America, Feed My Starving Children, and my sons' school district, Plainfield 202. Select photos from these various service endeavors can be found as evidence in my e-portfolio under Service→Community Service→Family Service Projects.

Two years ago, my son decided to join his local cub scout pack (82). I quickly discovered that there were not enough parents stepping into leadership roles within the pack and that my expertise in elementary education lent itself well to leading my son's den. Thus, my husband and I served as Lead Denner and Assistant Denner for the den from 2019-2021. This role includes planning and leading all den meetings, monitoring scouts' progress toward completing their required adventures and earning rank, planning and implementing various pack events for all dens, and engaging with the local community. For example, I helped to organize all den meetings at a local church, which required collaboration with the clergy to arrange a calendar, rooms, and set up and clean up of events. We also collaborated with local organizations such as the fire department when helping our scouts complete their requirements for first aid and safety by having them visit the firehouse and learn from the firefighters basic first aid and survival procedures as well as how to respond in emergency situations. A sample of the types of activities that I regularly planned for the scout den can be seen in my e-portfolio under Service→Community Service→Scouts Super Science Adventure, which illustrates a station-based inquiry science night I planned for the scouts to earn their science badges.

An activity in which my family and I have participated regularly has been visiting an organization in Aurora, Illinois called Feed My Starving Children in which we assist in bagging packets of food to be shipped to third world countries to families in need. We typically sign up to serve at least once per semester, and we have also involved our local scout den in service at FMSC as well. It is an excellent way to help our own children understand the importance of global interdependence as well as the Franciscan value of serving the underserved.

A large undertaking that my family and I have pursued in recent years has been our involvement with Wreaths Across America, namely at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. I took my son to see the national cemetery in Elwood, Illinois when he was nine years old, and it was an experience that lit a fire in his heart for service. From then on, we have always participated in the "Flags for the Fallen" event for Memorial Day in which all 65,000 gravesites receive a flag – all placed by volunteers. For his 10th birthday, my son decided he wanted to raise money for wreaths to be placed at Christmas on the graves of the veterans. What we found out is that while all gravesites receive flags for Memorial Day, the number of graves to receive wreaths at Christmas tied directly to the number of donations received. On average, the cemetery usually receives enough donations to cover roughly half of the graves. We made a valiant effort, asking for donations on social media and even being showcased on ABC7 Chicago's "Chicago Proud" newscast and receiving donations for almost 300 wreaths, but our first year, only about 33,000 wreaths would be sent to ALNCE. So, in the week prior to "wreath day," we decided to honor the

military tradition of leaving coins on headstones by collecting pennies, hoping to have at least some type of memento to leave on all graves. Our community rallied behind us, and by wreath day, we and a team of volunteers placed pennies on all 65,000 graves at the cemetery. We continue our service at ALNCE to this day, placing flags every Memorial Day and raising money for wreaths, collecting pennies within the community, and placing them every Christmas, with the only exception being that we did not collect pennies in 2020 due to the complications with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our various experiences at ALNCE and Wreaths Across America can be found in my e-portfolio under Service→Community Service→ABC7 Chicago Proud Feature.

Looking Ahead: New Goals in Service

After reflecting on my scholarship, my goals in the next five years at the university are as follows:

Table 8: Future Goals in Service

Goals in Service by next review in 2027	
1.	Continue efforts to develop a higher-quality mentoring program at USF for new tenure-track faculty
2.	Serve on the Rank, Promotion, and Tenure Committee at USF after receiving promotion to full Professor to further engage in mentorship of new faculty
3.	Continue my service on college-level and university committees as well as service endeavors in the broader community with a heart to serve the underserved.
4.	Continue to seek opportunities to involve my students in service learning opportunities within and/or outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

The past ten years that I have been able to serve at the University of St. Francis have been among the most transformative and treasured of my life. As my roots here push deeper, I am honored to continue serving in this place, with these people, and with the shared mission to continue building long into the future. In the next years of service, teaching will remain my highest priority as a faculty member as outlined within the university's policy manual, while cultivating relationships, connecting with the community through service, and embracing scholarly opportunities will deeply remain as part of my faculty mission. I request that the administration at the University of St. Francis and members of the Rank, Promotion, and Tenure Committee consider this portfolio as my formal documentation of all tangible components of my ten years of dedication to the university and its mission. I seek to further my commitment to USF by requesting promotion to the rank of Professor of Education. Above all, I wish to express my gratitude for all those who had faith in me from day one to become a part of this university, to lead, and to grow into the educator that I am today. I have been and continue to be irrevocably shaped by the influence of that which we all lovingly know is the heart of Franciscanism, and I look forward to all that is to come in the future.