

October 24, 2015

Dr. Martha S. Cheng  
Department of English  
Rollins College

Dear Dr. Martha S. Cheng and Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Director of College Writing and Assistant Professor of Writing in the Department of English at Rollins College. Currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Ohio University Zanesville, I earned a Ph.D. in English with a focus in Rhetoric and Composition from Ohio University in the spring of 2015. My qualifications—in pedagogical and theoretical research, effective and innovative teaching, and writing program administration—make me a great fit for this position. I have dedicated a majority of my career to discovering innovative and effective pedagogies for the teaching of writing and digital literacy, and I am passionate about such work. As an active scholar in digital rhetoric and humanities, I also bring a strong record of research that would contribute to the scholarly activity of your department and its undergraduate programming. I have formal experience in writing program administration, having served as Assistant Director of Composition at Ohio University for two years. Finally, I have experience teaching in online, hybrid, and face-to-face formats and am prepared to teach and develop courses at all levels in your undergraduate programming.

My research is primarily concerned with exploring the ways technologies mediate writing and culture. I work from the assumption that all writing is technological and that by understanding it as such, we can come to new realizations about how to best understand and teach towards 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies. My planned digital book project, *Interventions in Wikipedia: Teaching TechnoCritical Literacy in the Online Encyclopedia Anyone Can Edit*, exemplifies my commitment to digital literacy and technology. This research, which features descriptive case studies of my experiences teaching with Wikipedia, demonstrates that immersion in the encyclopedia's richly transparent writing culture can have a tremendous impact on how students learn and practice writing and new media. Participating in productive communities such as Wikipedia allows students to engage in a diverse ecology of media production while allowing them to practice particular skills related to digital editing, research, copyright, visual rhetoric, and collaboration. The project moves beyond pedagogical aims to also focus on the encyclopedia's cultural politics of access and representation. Wikipedia's emphasis on Western, print-centric epistemologies, while allowing the encyclopedia to push the boundaries of the encyclopedic genre, has resulted in the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and the perpetuation of social hierarchies of gender and race. The encyclopedia's well-documented gender gap is one example of this type of uneven representation across social hierarchies. But Wikipedia, despite its enlightenment goal to gather the "sum of all human knowledge," also fails to fully represent cultures and peoples who have historically relied on oral, rather than print, epistemologies.

In my experience designing Wikipedia writing projects, I have learned a lot about working with diverse partners across the academy, practiced innovative curriculum design, and developed strategies for maximizing student motivation and learning. In the winter of 2012, for instance, I collaborated with Ohio University Libraries to create a project where students updated Wikipedia articles on local topics by performing research in the Libraries' archives and special collections. In addition to providing students with the motivational opportunity to increase representation of their community, this project also engaged archive curators in new information literacy initiatives. This type of pedagogy is powerful. Getting students to write in interactive public spaces such as Wikipedia helps make writing concepts more accessible. Such projects also allow students have the opportunity to write on topics engaging multiple fields and disciplines, according to their own academic concentration.

While my research has focused specifically on strategies for teaching academic writing across the disciplines through innovative uses of technology, I also bring formal leadership experience in writing program administration. During my two year term as Assistant Director of Composition at Ohio

University, I had the opportunity to collaboratively develop and manage the first-year composition program, as well as to help train other Teaching Associates in this curriculum through an annual week-long orientation and additional pedagogy-focused seminars throughout the academic year. Additionally, I helped design, implement and secure funding for a portfolio-based assessment initiative of our writing program. I was also instrumental in the collaborative design, editing, and publication of our composition (anthology) textbook, *Readings on Writing*. Finally, as part of the English department's composition committee, I participated in initiatives to develop first and third-year learning outcomes, review and supervise curriculum designs for general-education, academic writing courses, and institute policies for supporting second language learners in the classroom. Because of this work, I have a solid understanding of the ongoing challenges of writing program administration, and have developed particular strategies to overcome such challenges.

In addition to my experience in writing program administration, and my scholarly engagement with digital literacy and academic writing pedagogy, I also bring a varied teaching repertoire to your program. Since my term as Assistant Director of Composition ended, I have continued to engage in curriculum design, and, working collaboratively with colleagues, have developed a number of courses, including: "Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric in the Professions" (a WID approach to professional writing); "Women Writing in Digital Spaces" (a hybrid gender studies and composition course); a course in "Digital Rhetorics and Literacies," as well as a number of developmental and first year composition courses. As a Visiting Assistant Professor at Ohio University Zanesville, I have developed a basic writing course, "Writing Conventions Across Communities" and a first-year writing course "Introducing Writing Knowledge" and have worked with a diverse student population that includes at-risk, first in the family, and other nontraditional students. I also have experience leading focused pedagogy seminars for other instructors. During my two-year term as Assistant Director of Composition at Ohio University, I assisted in ENG 5890: "Teaching College Writing," leading class discussions and responding to graduate student writing. I also co-designed and co-taught ENG 7910: "Professional Issues in Teaching College English," lecturing and organizing workshops and featured speakers on pedagogical issues.

Above and beyond these qualifications, I enjoy the challenge of curriculum development. I am constantly re-working my own courses and trying new things. I believe continuous revision and innovation make good pedagogy great. I would be thrilled to have the opportunity to direct college writing programs at Rollins. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my interest in this position. I believe my experience in teaching and curriculum development, my record of scholarship in digital writing and rhetoric, and my experience in writing program administration make me an excellent fit for this position and the current needs of your department. My digital portfolio is available at [mattvetter.net](http://mattvetter.net) if you have additional questions or concerns about my work. You may contact me at [vetter@ohio.edu](mailto:vetter@ohio.edu) or 606-584-5129. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you.

Sincerely,



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