

Instructions: Please submit a personal narrative addressing the following topics: relevant educational and experiential background, reasons for wanting to be in a helping profession, commitment to the field, reasons for seeking admission, personal philosophy, and strengths and weaknesses.

Relevant Educational and Experiential Background

I have been a teacher since about the age of eight. I had a makeshift classroom in my parents' basement, and my pupils were siblings and neighborhood kids who came to play at our house. From elementary through high school – long before the days of Teachers' Aides – I mentored fellow students and tutored younger ones.

My undergraduate degree is in Elementary Education (University of Tennessee, 1980), but I have worked in Adult Education since 1984. I have taught in both credit and non-credit college programs, community training, workforce initiatives (adult vocational), and senior citizens' programs (senior centers and Elderhostels). I have approximately fifteen years' experience as a workplace trainer (peers, subordinates, and management), both as an employee and a consultant. I have approximately ten years' experience as a training manager.

In addition to my own professional activities in the education field, I have supported my husband through his undergraduate and graduate studies in Industrial Training and have assisted my mother in her committee work on several Tennessee state-level initiatives, including the Tennessee Teachers' Career-Ladder Program and the Governor's Council on Vocational Education.

In 2005, I began work toward a Master's in Adult Education and completed 21 hours' work with credit for eighteen. I maintained a 4.0 average for the first eighteen hours, but extensive health problems in the last course caused me to fail the last three hours I took.

Reasons for Wanting To Be in a Helping Profession

I am the product of a multi-generational affinity for the helping professions, primarily nursing and teaching. Additionally, I was raised to put others first, and I find teaching to be a form of ministry. I consider myself a holistic educator. This philosophy means I recognize the importance not just of task-based or cognitive training, but of addressing the student's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs – using every encounter as a learning opportunity.

Parker Palmer describes the “...dance of teaching and learning.” This dynamic interplay can be a catalyst for spiritual clarification. The act of teaching provides a mirror to one's own soul. Ben Sweetland wrote, “We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own.” Good teachers recognize the “brightness” as an opportunity for self-reflection.

Henry Adams wrote, “A teacher affects eternity.” I want to have the widest, most-positive effect possible on my students' lives. Will Durant wrote of education, “...that we have learned to add courtesy to culture, wisdom to knowledge, and forgiveness to understanding.” These are values I want to convey to my students. Patricia Neal said, “A master can tell you what he expects of you. A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations.” I thrive on watching my students realize their potential. Richard Bach sums it up perfectly for me: “Learning is finding out what we already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers and teachers.”

Commitment to the Field

As I described above, I have always been a teacher. I have been an adult educator for more than twenty years. The few times in my professional life I have strayed from teaching have left me bereft. I do not believe I can stop teaching unless I cease cognitive functions. I am excited about the future of adult education, especially the recently formed consortium that is researching and developing the National Work Readiness Credential. I look forward to being a part of that future.

Reasons for Seeking Admission

After being disenchanted by my prior Master's program experience and its lock-step approach to curriculum delivery, I began looking for a program that provided modular courses. I have a very active life, so on-line delivery is very attractive. I like that the program has the stability of 45 years' history, but it also has the futuristic perspective of distance education.

After "interviewing" Dr. Michael Brady by e-mail and telephone, I found myself drawn to the general philosophy of the USM program. In the long-run, I believe it will be spiritually rewarding as well as mentally challenging to participate in USM's Adult Education Master's program.

Personal Philosophy

Among the multitude of inspirational quotes collected during my lifetime, three have always been significant to me: Richard Bach wrote, "You are never given a wish without being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it, however." John Lennon wrote, "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans." Jacquelyn Small wrote, "We are not human beings trying to be spiritual, we are spiritual beings trying to be human."

I believe our purpose in life is to work toward reunification with God, but not in the sense of pop-culture religion. So much of mankind is consumed with Self-actualization, but I believe this is narcissistic and a waste of time. If one is personally fulfilled, but others around him are struggling spiritually, how can he share the accomplishment? I believe we must empower and uplift others as we develop spiritually, because God, in addition to being Creator, is a community, or communion of souls. Therefore, every action or non-action we perform affects the community. I also believe quite firmly in Edgar Cayce's statement, "Thoughts are things." That means our thoughts, as well as our actions, have a quantifiable effect on the community.

Strengths and Weaknesses

It is always difficult to parse oneself, especially when tallying one's strengths and weaknesses. However, I love a challenge!

- I am bright, literate, articulate, curious, and spiritual, with myriad, eclectic interests. However, I sometimes get distracted, over-analyze, and have too many irons in the fire at any given time.
- I am strongly empathetic and find it hard to say "No" to others when I believe in them and/or their causes. At the same time, I have to fight the compulsion to find a way to fix everyone's problems.
- I usually balance everything in my life successfully. However, I am occasionally overwhelmed by all the pulls on me and find it difficult to prioritize successfully.
- I always do an outstanding job on any project, but I am generally just under-the-wire on delivery.
- I am a spectacular communicator and award-winning writer. I can talk to nearly anyone about nearly anything. However, gregariousness often eats into the time I have allotted for tasks or activities.
- I work very well as a member of self-directed teams, but I do not work well under close supervision or micro-management.
- I am an excellent leader and project manager, with an innate ability to recognize individual talents and abilities and match-up successful partners and teams. However, I am challenged as a personnel supervisor.
- I am a very good student, but I have debilitating test anxiety.
- I enjoy taking time to enjoy people, places, and things, but I abhor task-oriented time-wasting and inefficiency.
- I easily become indignant at social injustices and will gladly devote my energies to publicizing and rectifying inequities.
- I work very hard to be open and inclusive to all individuals, but I am intolerant of self-importance, self-righteousness, and intractable closed-mindedness.
- Personal integrity is my most-prized "possession." I detest dishonesty. However, I sometimes forget that blatant honesty is not appreciated globally.