



Computing & Information Studies

60 South Lincoln Street
Washington, PA 15301
tel. (724) 223-3402
fax. (724) 223-5271
e/ channon@washjeff.edu

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Dr. John Zimmerman
VPAA and Dean of the Faculty
Washington and Jefferson College
Washington, PA 15301

Dear Dean Zimmerman,

I am writing to report on my activities during my sabbatical fall 2015 and Intersession 2016. I would like to begin by stating that I very much appreciated this opportunity to reflect, explore, and carve out new directions for my future as a scholar and teacher. My primary accomplishments during this time were the following:

Essays

I wrote three essays, as follows:

- “Gender and Status in Voice User Interfaces”
This is a linguistic analysis of the speech patterns in artificial intelligence “agents” like Amazon’s Alexa, Apple’s Siri, etc. This essay has been accepted for publication in the ACM publication *interactions*.
- “This Interface Is a (Good) Joke!”
This describes a theory of how jokes are processed cognitively (incongruity theory), and then uses that as a metaphor for how interaction design in new technologies can introduce new idioms in pleasurable ways. This essay is under review at *Smashing Magazine*.
- “The Function of Function Words in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*.”
This is a computational linguistics approach to Faulkner’s novel, using software (LIWC: Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) developed by the psychologist James Pennebaker. This essay is under consideration at *The Faulkner Journal*.

Conference Papers

I also completed three conference papers:

- “Visualizing Referentiality in *As I Lay Dying*”
I delivered this paper at the 2015 meeting of PALA (Poetics and Linguistics Association) in Canterbury, England, July 2015.

- “Undergraduate IxD as Service to the Community”
I delivered this paper at the EDU Summit that precedes the Interaction ’16 conference in Helsinki, Finland, at the end of February 2016.
- “Gender and Status in Voice User Interfaces”
I delivered this paper at the Interaction ’16 conference in Helsinki, Finland, in early March 2016. Also in March, I will this talk as a Faculty Colloquium at W&J, and at a meeting of the Pittsburgh IXDA.

The common thread in most of this work is my interest in language, technology, usability, and culture, and these are areas I will continue to explore in the future in both my scholarship and my teaching.

Other work that I completed during this period:

- Learned new software: LIWC: Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count
- Developed further capability with Tableau software for my course, CIS 245: Information Visualization
- Helped Academic Affairs/Admissions with planning for PDPU student visit in April.
- I am a reader for *The Faulkner Journal* and I reviewed one article submission for them during this time.
- I attended the Midwest User Experience conference in October, in Pittsburgh.
- I taught my two-week Unit in the Digital Humanities course, ENG 255, which was created through funding from the Mellon grant.
- I was a guest lecturer in Dr. Jennifer Harding’s ENG 290 course, speaking about New Historicism and some of my scholarship in Faulkner Studies.
- Attended the Lifesize demonstration organized by Academic Affairs
- Attended two-day training as Title IX Deputy Coordinator
- Assisted the ISA (Indian Students Association) in their Diwali event
- Attended the Discussion meeting of the Gen Ed DTF in early November

Overall, this was a very productive sabbatical. I’m happy to discuss any of these items with you further if you wish.

Sincerely,

Charles Hannon

Cc: Dr. Samuel B. Fee, Chair, CIS
Dr. Kelly Weixel, Chair, FDC