

Revised Goal Statement

Academic Goals:

Reading back my first goal statement, I find it touching and quite naïve. However, I must say not much has changed. I just refined a few things. I remember feeling fairly knowledgeable about assistive technology (AT) prior to entering GMU. Well, that has most definitely changed. First of all, the AT field has grown tremendously over the last couple years. Enormous amounts of new options flood the market every day. Second of all, the greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds. There is no stopping point for learning. That is true in any area but especially in the area of technology. One day you know everything, and the next day you are lost in the ocean of new products. I have had some amazing learning opportunities in my courses and various projects but I am truly looking forward to even more. I really enjoy the thrill of learning something new and delving into every opportunity. For me, there are no challenges, just opportunities. My specialization and my passion is still assistive technology. Nonetheless, it has slightly evolved to incorporate instructional technology. Students with learning disabilities still have a special place in my heart and there is such a fine line between the instructional and assistive technology options for this population. That is why I am now more open and do not limit my interests to only special education technology. Moreover, my priorities shifted from accepting anything that is out there to carefully evaluating each product and learning about the design process.

Research:

There are no words to describe my growth in the area of research through my courses, work, and collaborations with my colleagues. My research assistantship position with Dr. Behrmann has been a blessing. It provides me an opportunity to learn theoretical basics of research as well as its practical applications. There is no better way to learn than to actually do it. I am fortunate to be a part of the National Assistive Technology Research Institute (NATRI) that has been a great school of research. Through this project I have learned and practiced to conduct literature reviews, data analysis, and reports for publications.

I loved every single research class I took so far. I feel very passionate about the mixed method designs. For that reason I am really falling in love with a single-subject design, which is located somewhere between the qualitative and empirical research incorporating, from my point of view, the best qualities of each. Most definitely I am just at the beginning of the research road and there are many more paths that I have to take to feel comfortable with it but I am really excited about this journey. At least it is not terrifying any more.

My research interests are still scattered between investigating the effects of technology integration into curriculum for students with learning disabilities, determining the reasons teachers do not use technology even when it is available and ways to change that situation as well as creating new pieces of technology that will be universally designed and seamlessly incorporated into all classroom activities. Being a part of multiple wonderful projects was very beneficial for me but I feel like it also prevented me from narrowing down my areas of interests. I am still trying to find that one niche that would provide a shelter for my dissertation.

Professional Goals:

I love teaching and miss being in the classroom very much. However, I have no doubt that my calling is teaching at the higher education level. Last semester I had an opportunity to teach graduate students for the first time in my life. I was very nervous before every class but as soon as it started I would get this burst of adrenalin and energy, the feeling that I now cannot live without. On the other hand, it was also quite challenging, and I know I have a lot of room for improvement. Through my own classes I have witnessed outstanding models of teaching, instructors who are able to make their students excited about even the most difficult and/or boring subject. I also love doing research and engage into collaborative projects with my colleagues. I am still interested in anything I can do change the situation with special education in Russia. However, now more than ever before, I can see how much work has to be done here to ensure successful technology implementation. Coming from North Carolina I thought the answer was establishing technology training programs. Except that being in Fairfax County, the school system with one of the best technology training and support services provided to teachers, I now realize that something else has to be done. It would be an honor for me to work on finding that “something”!

Last year I managed to submit three articles for publications and two book chapters that I wrote with my professors and peers. Regardless of whether they are ever published or not, it was an amazing learning experience. I had an opportunity to present at numerous national conferences and am very proud of that. I compare this experience with ballroom dancing. You can practice your whole life but the time when you actually grow is on the dancing floor during a real competition. That is how I feel about all these opportunities. I know that each time I participate in a real project, I grow tremendously. Moreover, if you are successful at least once, you cannot stop!