

September 26, 2013

Dear Search Committee,

It is with pleasure that I write to recommend Kevin Cassell for a position in your department. Mr. Cassell's dissertation promises to contribute significantly to theorizing rhetorical practices in the fields of technical and scientific communication and composition studies. His successes as a teacher and student administrator were recognized this year with awards for "Teaching Excellence" and "Exceptional Leadership in Student Government." Mr. Cassell thus embodies outstanding promise and achievement as a scholar, teacher, and program administrator.

Serving on both his comprehensive examination and dissertation committees, I have observed Mr. Cassell's sustained, scholarly engagement with complex theoretical concepts, such as the phenomenology of perception, situated cognition, *metis*, and mimesis, the intersections of which his dissertation now elucidates. Mr. Cassell's dissertation brings this work together and promises to contribute significantly to new understandings of productive, thus rhetorical and *metistic*, knowledge and how it might influence the ways we think about communicating technology and science, as well as teaching multi-modality in communication courses. Building on the work of philologists Marcel Detienne and Jean-Paul Vernant, who first recovered *metis* from the marginalized spaces to which Plato relegated it, Mr. Cassell examines the intersections of this experiential intelligence with contemporary theories of phenomenology and situated cognition. What emerges from Mr. Cassell's examination is a critique of mimesis as mindless imitation and a reinterpretation of it as a conceptual framework for understanding the accumulation of embodied knowledge. Such a reinterpretation advances contemporary scholarship that theorizes rhetorical epistemologies as dynamic and distributed, thus distinguishing them from static canonical categories. The practical applications for Mr. Cassell's reconceptualization are significant, as well. Attending to a "feeling for the organism" (McClintock as reported in Keller) becomes important for those who communicate science and technology, and for those who teach it. And, the arbitrary categories of multi-modal communication—writing, designing, and speaking—collapse, indicating the integration of embodied experience with the construction of new knowledge.

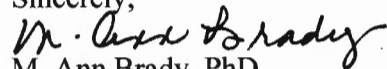
Acknowledged by the Humanities Education and Research Association, with its "Teaching Excellence Award" (2013), and by Michigan Tech, with its "Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award" (2011), Mr. Cassell is clearly an extraordinary instructor. I have served as his teaching supervisor in the technical and professional communication classroom and appreciate the skill with which he has developed innovative teaching materials and assignments. Working with students from primarily

engineering and the sciences, he designed an upper-division, cross-disciplinary course in technical and professional communication, several classes of which I observed in 2010. A thoughtful blend of lecture, discussion, and interactivity, the classes increased students' awareness of the rhetorical and ethical complexities they will face as working professionals. One of his assignments required students to respond in writing to complicated workplace dilemmas with an awareness that their correspondence would be circulated among numerous stakeholders with conflicting interests. On the days I observed, student interest in the preliminary discussion about their answers was high, and their involvement was evident. Mr. Cassell's ability to encourage students to share their experiences with the assignment fostered an environment in which students were compelled to connect the activity of the day to the larger goals of the class while also empowering them as active members of the learning community.

As a graduate student, Mr. Cassell has extended the considerable administrative and editorial experience he brought with him to Michigan Tech. Noteworthy is the sophisticated level at which he engages this recent work. As an experienced program director and administrator, I am impressed by his ability to design and carry out programmatic initiatives. As the Associate Coordinator of our Composition Program, and under the supervision of its director, he redesigned programmatic assessment methods and procedures, organized training and support for incoming graduate composition instructors, and conducted outreach to other programs and departments across campus. His elected position as President of Graduate Student Government required him to work closely with university deans, vice-presidents, and graduate program and resident life directors to communicate the views of nearly 1,300 graduate students. In his current position as Assistant Editor of the journal *Women & Language*, he reviews submissions, advises authors, and supports production – a job not unlike the one he held a few years ago with the *Community Literacy Journal*.

Given his scholarly promise and accomplishments, his exceptional commitment to teaching excellence, and his sustained contributions to a range of programs and projects, Kevin Cassell is the ideal candidate for a position in your department. I recommend him to you with my strongest support.

Sincerely,



M. Ann Brady, PhD

Associate Professor, Rhetoric and Technical Communication
Director, Scientific and Technical Communication Program