

Laura Noll Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

It's the study of how to use a wide range of technologies to better teach somebody something, whether it is in a traditional classroom, in business or in industry.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

Colleagues at my level now generally have Masters of Science in relevant fields that support careers in research compliance administration. So, yes, staying current and furthering myself professionally is a strong motivator. I also wanted to learn new skills that would help me in my career and in life in general. This Masters has taught me quite a bit about web-based instruction and how to create better instructional aids of many kinds. I also wanted to do it for myself. I had considered returning to school for a DVM or PhD at one time but determined that this was not practical or, realistically, feasible while still earning a living. But I could manage a Masters and still continue working. It's been hard at times, but so far, so good!

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

Unfortunately, because all of my classes are either online or in the evening, and I and most of my classmates are at work all day, I can't really speak to this. However, I work with graduate students nearly every day in my professional capacity here at RU, so I should think there is value in networking with other graduate students in other fields. We have a tremendous pool of graduate students here and I am sure they are all worth getting to know better!

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

Knitting, spinning wool into yarn, working with my flock of sheep (I can stand and watch them graze for a very long time when circumstances allow), working with my dogs, or working with photographs I've taken. I'm a firm believer that everyone needs art in their lives and knitting, spinning and photography are definitely forms of art for people who can't draw (and I can't draw very well at all.) Training a sheep dog is also an artistic outlet for me – their work is amazing. They are more the artists than I am in that case, though.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

I keep a book on my nightstand for regular reading, though I often read brief in very brief spurts for pleasure, such a for a few minutes before turning out the lights at night. I like to read mysteries but not gory ones. However, I recently read **Nobel Prize Women in Science: Their Lives, Struggles and Momentous Discoveries** by Sharon Bertsch McGrayne. It was a fascinating read and really showed how far science and women have come in the last 100+ years.

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

Working with my program advisor, Dr. Greg Sherman. He's been absolutely great to work with and has really helped to "de-mystify" grad school, the program, the courses, and the field of Educational Technology for me. He has also helped me to better understand teaching and learning, both as my instructor and as my advisor.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

I think that the biggest surprise was/is that I have been able to maintain a 4.0 in my first 8 classes of the program! We'll see what my 9th course and my capstone hold, grade-wise, though. Also, the courses have often been of a more broad scope than I expected, very often encompassing far more than "just" education or "just" technology.

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

I would rather work as support personnel for the mission. I worked at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory for 5 years supporting missions such as Galileo, Magellan, Mars Observers, and others, and I loved working in space flight!

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

It's a toss-up between chocolate, hot chocolate, and French fries, I guess. I try to limit them to 1-2 times per week.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

Hopefully, I would continue to be employed in my field and would working on earning professional certifications in my field.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

I anticipate graduating in December 2014.