

December 5, 2018

To whom it may concern,

My colleagues and friends have long said that I was born to lead, and while I admit to having a natural affinity for collaboration and team-building, I have also been cultivating this talent for almost 30 years by taking on leadership positions in my student and professional life. Highlights include having served for 4 years as Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the last 2 years as Interim Director of the English Department at UPRM, as well as serving as the current Vice President and incumbent President of the Electronic Literature Organization. These experiences, as well as others will be described in more detail below.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus (UPRM), I quickly rose to prominence in the Department of English, becoming Vice President of the English Department Student Association in my sophomore year and President during my junior and senior years. I was also elected as a student representative for those two last years of my studies and attended English Department and Faculty of Arts and Sciences meetings. When I graduated in 1992, I was not only awarded my Department's medal for its top graduate, the Mellowes Award, but I was granted a Presidential Scholarship to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. and then be offered employment in my Department.

After completing my Masters Degree at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in 1994, I returned to UPRM and was hired as an Instructor with a temporary contract for two years. On the strength of my performance, I competed and was awarded a tenure track position (UPRM still hired faculty with Master's degrees then), which allowed me to develop my early career, serving the Department by teaching, committee work, and coordinating the Writing Center, while competing for local grants and presenting papers at conferences. In 1999 I was awarded tenure, a promotion to Assistant Professor, and a study leave for 4 years for my doctoral studies at University of Maryland (UM).

Upon my return in 2003 from my studies at UM, I re-integrated to a large department with a faculty of 53 tenure and tenure track faculty members and participated in an initiative that helped organize it into 4 sectors: ESL, Linguistics, Writing and Communication, and Literature. I chaired the Literature Sector for its first 5 years, leading its 14 members through the development of new undergraduate and graduate courses, helping search committees hire new faculty, and organizing speaker series and other academic activities. Over the course of my career, I have served in every elected committee in the Department: Personnel, Graduate, Curriculum (which I chaired for a year), and Grievance. In 2007, I became the English Technology Center (ETC) Coordinator and have been the English Department's Webmaster ever since. As ETC Coordinator I collaborated with my ESL colleagues to redesign our Language Lab, a design that is still viable to this day, and caught the attention of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, who invited me to join his team in 2008.

When I became Associate Dean of Assessment and Educational Technologies in 2008, I didn't realize that I was entering one of the most challenging and rewarding phases of my career. My first year as Associate Dean, in addition to learning the job and directing the Arts and Sciences Assessment Committee, had a major accomplishment: identifying and solving a developing campus-wide situation with the use of audience response technologies (also known as clickers).

At the time, there were about 5 companies that had individually courted faculty in different departments and there was very little consistency and limited support for the use of these technologies. What was worse, students had to purchase and maintain multiple devices for different classes. I organized an event in which a variety of companies were able to demo the work to the university community, which provided feedback on the equipment. With that feedback, we were able to narrow down the selection to 3 finalists, with whom I negotiated competitive pricing and was able to lock in a renewable non-exclusive agreement with a company that offered the best product for the best price. This allowed me and my team to offer training and support on a single technology, which the students could purchase and use in multiple courses throughout their studies. Beyond the benefits of teaching large classes with this technology, I was able to transform the speed and effectiveness of nominations and voting in the UPRM Academic Senate.

But 2008 was the year of the great market crash, and it was the beginning of serious solvency problems for Puerto Rico and UPRM. My first year was the last year I managed a budget as Associate Dean, after which I needed to request funding for my needs from the Dean of Arts and Sciences. Unfortunately, 2008 also brought about a political change in Puerto Rico and its University, which led me to work under two new Deans between 2009 and 2012. This was a time of great turnover and strife in the UPR, including a student strike that shut down all 11 UPR campuses for 2 months in the Spring 2010 semester. I survived the transitions for two reasons: my work produced compelling results that spoke for themselves, and because my loyalties were not with political parties, but with the University itself. During this time of student protests and budget upheavals, I completed and successfully defended my dissertation in May 2010, which prompted an important reinvention for me in my role as Associate Dean.

Having a PhD meant that I was qualified to apply for different kinds of external funding opportunities, so I started doing research and applying to multiple opportunities. More importantly, it forced me to measure myself by a higher standard, and while I was extremely successful at my institution-- comfortably earning my promotion to Associate Professor in 2008-- I took active steps towards becoming the kind of scholar that could be competitive for these opportunities. I also shared this knowledge with the Arts and Humanities faculty I served, putting together resources, orientations, and workshops on writing grant proposals. During the two years I ran this initiative (2010 to 2012) our faculty submitted 27 grant proposals, tripling the 9 proposals submitted between 2001 and 2010. This has had a lasting impact in grant proposal writing culture with my colleagues. My success with this initiative also led to an opportunity that allowed me to boost my research career: winning a Fulbright Scholar award to join the Digital Culture program at University of Bergen (UiB) in Norway during the 2012-13 academic year.

That year in Norway allowed me to gracefully resign to my Associate Dean position (which I held for 4 years) and dedicate the next 5 years to my research and growth in my field. When I found out I had been nominated for the Fulbright, I launched a scholarly blogging project that has made me known around the world: I ♥ E-Poetry (<http://iloveepoetry.org>). My goal was ambitious: to read a work of electronic poetry every day and publish a brief analytical post about it-- and I did it for 500 consecutive days. By the end of that initial run, I had developed a global readership, won 1st runner up honors for a Digital Humanities Award in two consecutive years, and made myself known in my field, securing a nomination and election to the Board of Directors of the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO). Joining the ELO Board came with

two major responsibilities: I was elected to serve as Treasurer for the Organization, which placed me in the Executive board, and I was chosen to lead the Editorial Collective for the *Electronic Literature Collection, Volume 3* (<http://collection.eliterature.org/3>). This is the world's largest and most important organization in the field of electronic literature-- literature written to take advantage of the potential digital media offer-- and the collections it publishes every 5 years help choose the best works and establish the canon for the field. In other words, I have established myself as a key scholar and leader in my profession, both locally and internationally. I have served for the past 3 years as Vice-President of the ELO and will become President on July 15, 2019 for a 3-year term.

As a fully bilingual native Puerto Rican, I am uniquely situated both at the center of the field in the English and Spanish speaking worlds. I am part of the steering committee for the Red de Literatura Electrónica Latinoamericana (<http://litelat.net>), a growing network of over 450 members. My commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is evidenced by these networking efforts and by having edited the most inclusive and diverse volume of the *Electronic Literature Collection* to date (<http://collection.eliterature.org/3>). I am currently part of a 3 member editorial collective to produce the first Latin American Electronic Literature Anthology, scheduled to be published in the Spring 2019 semester. To continue expanding beyond the networks I participate in, I started a column last year in *80 Grados*, a Puerto Rican online magazine, in which I share my research on electronic literature, educating Spanish speaking audiences on the importance of this emergent genre. This is a public outreach component in a current grant with the Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades (Puerto Rico's branch of the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities). I aim to continue writing for public audiences, seeking columns in publications with even larger readerships, to help our society transition from a print-based book culture to one that is more in tune with writing in digital media.

Digital preservation is an urgent research area in which I'm positioned to make major contributions in the near future. When I completed my dissertation in 2010-- a single author study of Canadian poet Jim Andrews' work-- I became acutely aware that much of the work he had created in Macromedia Director (later purchased by Adobe) was in danger of obsolescence. I immediately dedicated myself to train and seek funding opportunities to preserve this and other works created in Flash so they could be studied decades or even centuries from now. I am currently developing funding proposals to create the Electronic Literature Repository to preserve thousands of works of electronic literature created in Director, Flash, and other endangered platforms so that they can survive obsolescence. I am an integral part of an Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) grant awarded by the Mellon Foundation to build a prototype of the Electronic Literature Archive (ELA), a repository for endangered websites and works of electronic literature. Our goal is to build the prototype and then scale up to include work and source files for literature and art created in Director and Flash from the electronic literature community. The ELA will give access to previously unpublished source files that will empower the scholarly community to perform critical code readings, platform studies, porting of the works to contemporary platforms, and to better preserve the works. This landmark pilot project will lead to a much larger follow up funding request from Mellon to scale up and implement the Electronic Literature Archive. I hope Appalachian State could become a partner in this next stage of the ELA grant, as we scale up to the implementation phase of the project.

My teaching is closely tied to my research. After having the experience of teaching courses strictly in my area of specialization during my Fulbright year, I realized how productive it is to keep one's mind always focused on one's research area. For the past 5 years I have successfully redesigned general education and specialization courses to better fit my research. This has allowed me to teach courses that have an even greater impact on my students, and preparing them to participate in my projects.

In the Fall 2013 semester, I launched a course titled Digital Humanities Internship (<http://leonardoflores.net/lab>) as a means to get students involved in my DH projects. And it has been a transformative practice, both for my research projects and for my students. I receive the help of an invaluable labor force to develop aspects of my projects that I cannot feasibly do by myself, and my students receive training, develop skills, and gain practical experience in real world DH scholarship, in addition to college credit and a grade.

This model is borrowed from the sciences, in which it is customary for students to enroll in guided research credits to work in labs on faculty research projects. The students sign up for a 3-credit course, which means that they receive 1-2 hours of weekly training on project related tasks and dedicate 7-8 hours per week working on them, for a total of 9 hours per week. This is digital pedagogy at its finest, because it promotes collaboration between scholars and students, building upon a DH culture that values creating and developing resources.

My DH Internship students help me develop I ♥ E-Poetry (<http://iloveepoetry.com>), as well as building and maintaining websites (such as the English Department website: <http://www.uprm.edu/english>). Through these projects, my students have learned about web design, interface optimization, blogging as journalism, content strategy, developing social network identity and presence, outreach activities, HTML, CSS, databases, Wordpress, Omeka, and other Web technologies, Web accessibility standards and best practices, metadata, developing and implementing taxonomies, electronic literature, developing outreach materials (such as posters, brochures), presenting electronic literature to different audiences, teamwork in collaborative projects, and more.

In addition to my research and teaching activities, I have been serving my Department as Interim Director for the past 2 years. During this time I have initiated and led a long-overdue rethinking of our undergraduate and graduate curriculum to align it more closely with our faculty strengths and MLA recommendations for contemporary programs. I have helped restructure the department internally, since it has been reduced through faculty attrition policies for the past 15 years from 53 to 29 faculty members, while serving more students than in 2003. The reason we have been able to do so is through minimal hiring of adjunct faculty (we have 6 part-time members), and growing our Master of Arts in English Education program and Graduate Teaching Assistant participation in 1st year General Education English courses. Our department currently serves about 5,000 students per semester, because all students are required to take 12 credits in English at our institution.

My managerial style is of radical transparency and participation from our whole department community. Every semester, I prepare and circulate a draft of the entire course offerings for the following semester, which allows faculty and GTAs to fine tune their schedules to better fit their needs. At the same time, my students and Orientation Committee members can spot potential scheduling conflicts that may prevent students from graduating in a timely manner. This

transparency is an extension of an ongoing conversation I have established with my community of over 350 students and faculty members through weekly emails that I use to make announcements and offer a weekly calendar of meetings and events. I have established a robust communications network that incorporates the English Department website and blog (<http://uprm.edu/english>), several mailing lists, and even text message and social media groups. This has been instrumental in successfully guiding my community through a 2-month student strike in the Spring 2017 semester, and the impact of Hurricanes Irma and María in the Fall 2017 semester. We have been through several crises together and are thriving as a Department, despite aggressive budget cuts, freezing hires, and the loss of senior faculty through retirement, illness and death. And despite all the difficulties, our faculty are winning major grants, our graduate students are presenting their research at national and international conferences, and our undergraduate students are participating in exchange programs, paid internships, and research opportunities in unprecedented numbers.

I would embrace the opportunity to test my leadership and budget management talents in the English Department at Appalachian State University. I have the skills, communication, and experience to guide a department through whatever situations it may face, and the vision to guide it in fruitful directions for research, publication, creativity, and growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leonardo Flores', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leonardo Flores, PhD
Professor of English
Interim Director
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University of Puerto Rico: Mayagüez Campus