

## Clarification of Materials Submitted for Promotion Review

Dear Dean Mattingly and future evaluators,

Thank you for your time and continued consideration of my application for promotion to the rank of Professor. I appreciate the opportunity to provide a brief clarification in response to several points raised in the Fine Arts and Humanities Sub-school Personnel Committee review, with the goal of ensuring that my materials are being understood as intended within the context of SUNY Cortland's promotion criteria.

First, with respect to teaching materials, I would like to clarify that **full access to my course content was provided through my instructional platform** which was included in my portfolio as a "sandbox" environment for evaluators to access via the provided link. **This site contains complete syllabi, lesson structures, assignments, and instructional materials across 14 total courses.** While these materials may not have been presented as static documents in a traditional dossier format, they were made fully accessible in a dynamic format designed to reflect the structure and delivery of my teaching practice. I hope this clarifies that comprehensive documentation of my teaching was, in fact, provided.

Second, regarding creative activity, I would like to clarify the nature of my work through the ProLab initiative. While my individually authored films (*The Catch, Nutz & Bolts*) represent one dimension of my creative practice, my work since 2019 has evolved toward a collaborative production model that reflects standard practice within the field of filmmaking. As a medium, film is inherently collaborative, and creative authorship is typically expressed through roles such as director, producer, and creative lead rather than through single-authored works.

Within this context, I serve as the primary creative lead on ProLab productions, guiding projects from concept through completion while working in collaboration with students. These films are developed under my creative direction and authorship, representing an extension of my scholarly and artistic practice. **Since 2018, this work has resulted in more than 25 short films (averaging approximately two productions per semester), twelve of which have received official selections at regional festivals,** including the Buffalo International Film Festival, Syracuse International Film Festival, and Phoenixville Film Festival, among others. As part of this cycle, I also coordinate field trips with students to represent our selected films at the various festivals where they have been selected to screen.

This model reflects a practice-based approach to scholarship in media production, where creative inquiry is expressed through sustained, collaborative production and public exhibition. Within the norms of the discipline, these works function as authored creative outputs and contribute to an ongoing program of scholarly and artistic activity. It is my sincere hope that evaluators of this portfolio do not think I *stopped* producing work in 2019 as that could not be further from the truth.

Finally, I would like to provide additional context for the [Blackbird Film Festival](#), which represents the **most significant and sustained component of my creative activity and leadership work.** Blackbird is not a one-time or isolated event, but a year-round, multi-faceted creative enterprise that I have directed continuously since founding it in 2015. Each annual festival requires extensive curatorial, organizational, and creative labor over the course of many months, including programming, artist outreach, partnership development, and the securing of approximately \$35,000+ in annual external funding through competitive grants and sponsorships. In this way, Blackbird functions similarly to an academic

conference or edited volume within the field of media arts: it is a site of peer review, dissemination, and scholarly exchange for independent filmmakers. Its sustained operation over more than a decade reflects an ongoing program of creative inquiry and institutional leadership rather than a singular past accomplishment.

In light of the Sub-school committee's concern regarding the presentation of Blackbird across multiple evaluative categories, I would like to clarify how this work aligns with the expectations of teaching, creative activity, and service as outlined in the SUNY Cortland Handbook. As a teaching endeavor, Blackbird is directly integrated into my curriculum through courses such as CIN 305 (Film Criticism) and CIN 429 (Festival Planning and Promotion), where students engage in film analysis, programming, and event production as part of their coursework. As creative activity, my role as Artistic Director involves the curation and development of the festival program, a process comparable to the editorial and scholarly decision-making involved in assembling an edited volume or conference program. As service, Blackbird operates as a public-facing cultural platform that serves SUNY Cortland students, the regional community, and the broader field of independent filmmaking by providing a space for exhibition, dialogue, and professional engagement.

**Taken together, these dimensions reflect the integrated nature of practice-based scholarship in media production, where teaching, creative work, and service are not discrete activities but interconnected components of a sustained professional practice.**

My intent in sharing this clarification is not to challenge the committee's review, but to ensure that the scope and structure of my work are clearly aligned with the expectations outlined in Chapter 220.07 of the SUNY Cortland Handbook, particularly as they relate to teaching effectiveness, sustained creative scholarship, and leadership. As noted in my application, my work is grounded in a practice-based model in which teaching, creative production, and service are intentionally interconnected. I understand that this model may differ from more traditional forms of scholarly output, and I appreciate the opportunity to further clarify how it fulfills the criteria for promotion.

Thank you again for your time, consideration, and guidance throughout this process. Please let me know if any additional information or documentation would be helpful.

Respectfully,

Sam Avery