INTRODUCTION

My process for writing this application letter has been one of many crumpled papers and scratched out sentences. If you were to ask me about my vision for technology in education at practically any other moment, I could dominate a conversation with passion and excitement on the subject. Yet, when I have settled down with my favorite pen and a blank legal pad, my mind has gone blank. I have been facing a symptom of writer's block that seemed impossible to overcome. Further, not until I pulled out my two-year untouched journal and wrote did I discover that what was holding me back was fear: fear of success, fear of the unknown, and the fear of not being seen as a worthy competitor for the others applying to this program. I come from a family that seems to have a disinterest in education for one reason or another. I will be the first traditional, undergraduate from both sides of my family. I am the first to pursue a graduate degree, and I will most likely be the only one to work towards my doctorate degree. Consequently, I have lacked knowledgeable support for my vision. Though my husband tries to appear interested in instructional design and technical writing, I know that he can only listen so long before he becomes bored. With that being said, I hope to evoke patience as my vision may appear underdeveloped and implausible. My hopes for technology may not be extensive but that is why I am applying to Pepperdine. I hope to discuss these ideas in a productive forum to develop and – hopefully – bring them to fruition and demonstrate that I am indeed a worthy competitor.

VISION

My vision for technology concerns "old" but effective technology that is gaining popularity in the workplace. As far as "old" technology, my hope is to see global classrooms established through web conferencing. I believe that students of all ages can benefit from taking classes virtually-joined with students from another country. For example, in the K-12 setting, I imagine an American and a Japanese first grade classroom receiving lessons first from one country and then the other. Each teacher would take turns with his/her lesson while the other teacher could follow along -- and maybe learn something new -- with the students. The subjects could range from mathematics to language integration. Each set of students would be exposed to a foreign culture, gain experience and comfort in using web conferencing technology, and this could all be done with another popular technology: tablets. Exposing children to a culture vastly different from their own should have major, positive social implications. Especially considering how most elementary schools -- at least in my experience with my hometown -- segregate depending on geographical placement, which is often dependent on socioeconomic standing. If the US children are exposed to Chinese children while they are young, my hopes would be understanding adults who do not shame others based on race, culture, or socioeconomic standing. I can dream, right? This is the vision statement after all.

I believe this idea could be implemented, possibly more easily, in the college classroom. Eastern Washington University (EWU) has a large exchange-student population; however, I am curious how many more students would be able to 'attend' class if they were to attend virtually. I know that this set-up is possible because when I attended Walla Walla Community College (WWCC), my physics class was using this arrangement. The majority of the students were on the WWCC campus. There were around 6 or 8 students web conferencing in from WWCC's campus in Clarkston, Washington. Our teacher would travel to Clarkston to help with experiments but only because Clarkston lacked a physics instructor;

hence the virtual campus. I do not see why the virtual campus could not be implemented for international students. I understand that traveling would be much more difficult, but I would be interested in seeing conference forums with ideas on implementing the idea nonetheless. Considering that the MA in Learning Technologies program is online, I am curious as to the actual structure and delivery of coursework. I feel as though the information on the website barely captures the entirety of the program's sophisticated workings. I hope to be able to experience and understand the classroom setting myself.

Another vision for technology is one that, again, is not new but could definitely be adapted: educational games. When I think of educational games, I am reminded of such games that I played in elementary school. With my aversion to math, ants holding leafs was a great way for me to learn simple mathematics. As I'm sure we can agree, those types of games are not fit for every student. Especially in a world of Xbox One, the PlayStation 4, and the anticipated Steam Box -- students are not as easily intrigued by cute, little ants with number-leafs. In order to move my ideas for educational games into a more attractive direction, I researched with a double-major in Philosophy and Computer Science who is also a video game enthusiast. I narrowed my game types into three primary genres: tower defense (TD), role play game (RPG), and simulators.

TOWER DEFENSE

In tower defense, most of the time, 'building powers' are earned by special tools that provide you energy points of some sort. In the popular PopCap game *Plants vs. Zombies*, the player earns sun-energy to plant seeds. The player plants specific seeds to defend their home against various zombies. The game is fun. The player must strategically place various plants according to resources for more plants and the number of zombies. My idea for an educational tower defense games would integrate mathematical or science equations into the process of earning energy points. Continuing with the *Plants vs. Zombies* example, the player earns sun-energy over a designated amount of time. The player has the ability to plant sunflowers which increase the population of sun-energy while decreasing the duration between each occurrence. If I were to change the game to integrate math or science, I would change the sun-energy earning process. Instead of relying on sunflowers, the player would answer a math or science question. If correct, the player would be rewarded with two sun-energy drops. If answered incorrectly, the player would receive one sun-energy drop but also a sort of 'curse' that would spawn a special zombie. The zombie might be stronger, faster, or more difficult to kill. This type of educational game could be successful in improving response times, problem-solving, critical thinking, and following logical processes. Although a game of this manner does not currently exist, mathematical and science related problems could be applied in this manner.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES (RPG)

Though science based questions would work in the tower defense genre, I suspect that the RPG genre is a better fit. In the game *Arcania - Gothic 4*, the player must hunt for deer, collect various quest items, and search for scrolls to advance in the game. Science can be applied in crafting tools, using scrolls, or fighting. A few games that require the player to write programming code already exist. Among them are *Code Hero*, *CodeSpells*, and *Kuato* -- to name a few. *CodeSpells* was developed by UC San Diego Computer Scientists. My suggestion for integrating other scientific fields such as chemistry, physics, and biology would follow the same lines. As mentioned above, the player would craft tools, use scrolls, or

fight by solving and applying scientific equations. My understanding of the specifics is not as well developed as my tower defense idea; however, I feel there is potential for games of this nature.

SIMULATION GAMES

One of my favorite game genres is the simulator genre; otherwise known as 'sims'. In *Sims 4*, a very popular game universe, the player is able to simulate real-life experiences anywhere from building a home to finding friends and a mate. Many of the expansion packs add in fantasy aspects such as vampires, werewolves, faeries, etc. However, the main objective is for the player to build a life for themselves. As a technical writer, I envision the incorporation of English or communication skills into the educational game discussion and the simulation genre seems to be a near perfect fit. Communication is already a large part of *Sims 4*. The player must use body-language actions to advance in the game. The player is allowed to decide if they want to 'suck up to the boss' to get a raise, or 'hangout with their co-workers' to network when they go to work. In my opinion, the simulation genre has potential to incorporate actual job elements, such as: structuring templates for research proposals, presenting research, or simply working in a group. In the *Sims* universe, players send their character to work, but they are not able to control their character's actions while the character is at work. My vision for this genre is similar to the RPG genre in that I am unsure how this would be successfully implemented; however, it is a topic of discussion I would want to explore further with more information and research.

BACKGROUND

My history with educational technologies is primarily in online course, layout development. While I am proud of all the technological competencies I have acquired, I am most proud of my knowledge of Python, MAGpie, and Microsoft Office. When I began learning Python, I thought I was lacking a clear understanding of the subject. Learning the new language felt difficult and my first test revealed that I had earned only a 63-percent. I was not surprised and I felt the score was just. However, as my instructor went over the test in class, I added the point from the pages up. I found that I had actually earned an 83-percent. I was ecstatic that I had not only received the wrong score but exceeded my own expectations. My grade on that specific test encouraged my confidence throughout the remainder of the quarter. I became much more studious and dedicated in learning Python. I was also encouraged to take the first of two Java courses. I am proud that -- though I received an average grade in both -- I did not fail either class. Python and Java were two of the most intellectually challenging courses of my education and I surpassed my own expectations in learning the subjects.

I was exposed to MAGpie, a closed-captioning software, as an Instructional Designer's Assistant. My department received a project with only a few days to complete it. Without guidance and few resources, I was able to teach myself and apply my new knowledge to the project. The result was a successful project completed on time. I was later requested to write the instructional and troubleshooting documents for use in future training.

As to my experience with Microsoft Office, it has been a continuous learning experience. Since I was a junior in high school, I have been teaching myself the intricacies of Microsoft Office; specifically, Microsoft Excel, Word, Publisher, and PowerPoint. I have used YouTube, Microsoft.com, and other online forums to research various tools. I also believe that my constant use of Excel and Word have

allowed me to keep up to date on the tools and features. I have also discovered some of these tools through happy accidents while exploring the software out of curiosity.

PERSONAL GOALS

My personal goals are to be the first person in my family to receive a Master's degree as well as a doctorate degree. After graduating with my Master's degree, I plan to work in industry as an instructional designer and/or freelance technical writer. After 3 to 6 years of experience, I plan to pursue a Doctorate in Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington. With my doctorate in hand, I plan to become an instructor and advisor.

My mission, throughout my endeavors, is to empower students by providing both intellectual and emotional support in their educational pursuits. Throughout, I want to encourage and assist others as they pursue their goals. I feel that the best way to accomplish this goal is to graduate from Pepperdine's MA in Learning Technologies for a multiplicity of reasons. The most important reason to me is the timeline. As a young, married woman attempting to start her career, completing my MA degree in less than 14 months is valuable to me both financially as well as personally; especially since the program is online. One reason I hope to attend Pepperdine is that the research strategies seem to align well with the way I currently receive information.

When reading the ELT 650 course description, I was drawn to the statement that, "[...] students will examine their values and the alignment of their values to their workplace." Furthermore, "Students define a 'field of action' and examine the forces that are aligned for and against changes." Before I knew about the Pepperdine program, I applied these principles when when, due to unforeseen circumstances, my program's only two faculty advisors were unavailable for assistance. I researched ways to compensate for the absence of the faculty advisors. With my research, I decided to start the Technical Communication Club to establish a student community. The goals of the club are to build relationships with faculty, to support student needs, and to participate in professional development opportunities. The forces of change were definitely in my favor in relation to the club. The club aligned my values to my workplace by providing me the opportunity to share my knowledge of the demands of the technical writing industry, learn new information from my peers, and provide mentorship to new technical communication students. I was able to define a 'field of action' and determine the goals and objectives to ensure that students were not without a community if ever their advisors were unreachable. Many people reminded me that this club would not be helpful for me because I would graduate before I would see any significant change. I founded the club in spite of this fact. My personal goal was to ensure that students are never without a place of community: no matter the circumstance. Furthermore, this club will help me. As an alumni, I will have access to the technical communication club network. The network will provide with access to updates on the progress of the technical communication club, allow me to help students entering the industry, and the network will funnel clients looking for post-graduation resume and cover letter services.

As I write this letter, I am able to see the end of my undergraduate studies. I have only one business week until I complete a 5-year chapter of my life. My hope is that as I close one chapter, I am invited to open another with Pepperdine. Though my fears still linger, I am confident that - if provided the opportunity - my leadership, research, and a determined work ethic will empower discussion, change, and learning for myself and those around me. If given the opportunity to succeed at Pepperdine University, I believe I will discover, succeed, and grow more than I could have ever envisioned. Being selected to participate in your program would be an honor that would allow me to succeed in my future.