Work Integrated Learning: Two students' experience working in the Teaching & Learning Centre

Published 5/6/2022 by Ashley Ribbel

[View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!](#)

Filiz Ozek-Gunyel and Jennifer Brown are students in the Technical Communication graduate certificate program at Seneca. They recently completed a work term in the Teaching & Learning Centre (T&LC) under the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program as Instructional Design Assistants. In this Spark Plug, they reflect on their experience in the WIL program and the opportunities provided to them by the Teaching and Learning Centre.

What were your goals coming into the WIL program, and did you meet them?

Filiz: In one of our first meetings, I remember saying "I would like to learn how I can apply what I've learned at school in the workplace." When I said school, I actually meant 'schools.' I've been a student for many years — taking many courses and completing many assignments. I've taken courses on editing, technical writing, instructional design, learning theories, and digital publishing.

Throughout my educational experience, I've discovered my academic and professional interests. However, there were times when I was confused about the career path I should follow. I've always enjoyed editing, so should I be looking for editorial opportunities? I've always loved creating course materials, so should I be looking for instructional design opportunities? I've always had this dream of writing a book, but would it be difficult to get it published? I couldn't imagine that my experience at the Teaching & Learning Centre would provide me with the opportunity to utilize my skills and explore most of my interests all in one department.

Jennifer: Although I'm new to the fields of technical writing and instructional design, I have two decades of career experience in writing and research. My goal in the WIL program was to gain practical, career-building skills while learning how my previous work experience

might inform my new career path.

My experience in the Teaching & Learning Centre has exceeded my expectations on that account! This is a very busy team, managing many complex projects concurrently. Filiz and I were embraced immediately as valuable team members and have been given the opportunity to support the T&LC in meaningful ways, taking on more responsibility as the WIL term has progressed.

Can you describe your experience integrating into the team at the Teaching & Learning Centre?

Filiz: In the Technical Communication graduate certificate program, we learned that in order to complete an assignment well, clear communication within the team is important. During my first week, I was very happy to see that everybody was ready to help and answer any of our questions. It was a relief to hear that 'There is no silly question. Just ask any question, and someone will answer it.' Despite the distance, thanks to the amazing communication in the team, I got used to working on various projects easily.

Jennifer: I've found that the WIL program prepared us well for the 'new reality of job-searching and working virtually, and everyone at the T&LC has prepared us well for the new ways of working and job searching. I've learned a lot about project management and team communication through this experience. Since my last full-time employment was pre-COVID, this is my first real 'virtual' team experience in the working world.

How did you apply what you learned in your program to your WIL position?

Filiz: In our technical writing courses, we learned the importance of plain language, simplicity, and coherence. In our editing course, we learned how to edit technical documents and completed usability checklists. We learned how to use an eLearning authoring tool in our instructional design course. We discussed the importance of empathizing with the end-user in our user experience design course. We've definitely been applying all these skills in the projects we worked on.

Jennifer: As Filiz said, the skills we learned in Technical Communication graduate certificate program are used every day in an instructional design role. I'm really pleased with how our supervisor and colleagues have taken into account what we wanted to work on and what skills we wanted to build.

What have you learned from the projects you've worked on?

Filiz: Let me start with accessibility! We learned about creating accessible documents in the

Technical Communication graduate certificate program. For assignments, I would only spend a minimum amount of time writing alt text or checking color contrast for accessibility because completing the assignment on time was the priority.

In my first week at the T&LC, I understood that accessibility was at the heart of each project. Although we learned how to use Adobe Captivate in our courses, I could barely tell the difference between Articulate Storyline 360 and Rise 360 on my first day. Now, I can create eLearning modules using both of them.

Jennifer: I'll echo what Filiz said about accessibility. T&LC puts accessibility and Universal Design for Learning principles at the core of instructional design, and it's something I'll take with me into future work.

Aside from the 'hard' skills involved in instructional design, I'd have to say a key learning outcome for me has been seeing how the T&LC Team manages the many projects they work on. There are a lot of moving parts and stakeholders, and seeing how the project managers, instructional designers, and eLearning developers keep everything moving forward has given me many tools to take with me into my career!

How did working at Seneca affect your career path?

Filiz: I have always enjoyed creating course materials since I first started to teach. I knew that the needs and interests of students in each class would be different from each other. I would observe what they like and what their learning styles are. Then, I would spend hours creating PowerPoint (PPT) decks or designing board games. This is how I decided to pursue an academic path in instructional design. However, this has been the first time for me to work as an instructional designer assistant on projects. During the four months, I spent with this great team, I would like to pursue a career as an instructional designer.

Jennifer: I really can't say enough about the WIL program at Seneca and the T&LC Team. From preparing us for job searching, readying us for the post-COVID workplace, providing mentorship and meaningful learning opportunities, all of the skills I have learned from these experiences have gone into my toolbox. I'm fortunate enough to have secured a full-time position as an instructional designer at a consulting firm, and they were very impressed with the range of skills and experience I've gained in such a short time.

With thanks to Amy Lin, Anh Lam, and all of the wonderful Instructional Designers and eLearning developers in the Teaching & Learning Centre, to Charmaine Johnson in WIL, and Amy Briggs in the Technical Communication graduate certificate program for all of their support.

Photo by Johan Extra on Unsplash

View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!

tags : spark-plug, student-experience, teaching-and-learning, teaching-and-learning-centre, wil, work-integrated-learning