

# C&T CONNECTION

The IUP Composition and Applied Linguistics PhD Program and  
TESOL MA Newsletter



## HIGHLIGHTS

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**2005 alumna, Dr.  
Michele Petrucci**

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**Outstanding  
Dissertation Award:  
Justin Nicholes, PhD**

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**Megan Heise: Helping  
Lead the Fight  
Against Retrenchment**

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## THE FUTURE IS CAL

Indiana University of Pennsylvania has been a place for scholars to receive their PhD in Composition and Applied Linguistics since 1975. Though the program has gone through several name changes, it is still one of the oldest and largest in the United States. Here at IUP, students from all over the globe come to receive their education at one of the only programs worldwide that gives the option to explore first and second language literacies in English.

As of Fall 2021, students in the CAL program represent countries such as Saudi Arabia, Mali, Serbia, China, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Russia, South Korea, Japan and more.

**From bell hooks' (2010) *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom***  
"Critical pedagogy encompasses all the areas of study that aim to redress biases that have informed ways of teaching and knowing in our society ever since the first public school opened. The two great movements for social justice in our nation that both changed all aspects of our culture and created small but powerful revolutions in education are the civil rights and feminist movements" (p. 23)



## MICHELE PETRUCCI, PHD

**Associate Vice President of International Education and Global Engagement  
Executive Director of the American Language Institute**

**Dr. Michele Petrucci** is a 2005 graduate of the Composition & TESOL doctoral program (now CAL) which has gone through four name changes since her time at IUP. While it may not have been known as CAL at the time, Petrucci expresses full gratitude for the path the program has given her while allowing her to be true to herself on her scholarly journey. "The C&T community challenged me, supported me and pushed me to think harder than I had previously and yet it allowed me to pursue my blended dissertation research which brought together my love of writing, narrative research and art." She also thanks the program for preparing her for her current role on campus. "Partaking in a doctoral program with a large international student population was a bonus for my career. I experienced a more in-depth understanding of international students in a peer-to-peer environment...The program prepared me even more to work with people from across the globe and to listen closely before jumping to conclusions."

**"BUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MEMORIES ARE, OF COURSE, THE PEOPLE: CLASSMATES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD AND PROFESSORS PUSHING TO BRING THE BEST OUT OF EACH OF US." - Michele Petrucci, PhD**

## Outstanding Dissertation Award

IUP CAL alum Justin Nicholes, PhD, was recently awarded the 2021 "outstanding dissertation award" from WAC Clearinghouse for his dissertation, *Exploring How Chemistry and English Majors Understand and Construct Disciplinary Identities in Relation to Life, Departmental, and Writing Experiences: Implications for WAC and Retention.*

His dissertation can be found on the ProQuest Database.  
Dissertation # 10231732

*Nicholes is currently an Assistant Professor in the College of Arts, Communication, Humanities and Social Sciences at University of Wisconsin - Stout*



## About Megan

Megan Heise is a writer and teacher based in Western Pennsylvania. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing and Poetics from Naropa University, and is currently working towards a PhD in English Composition and Applied Linguistics at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is an Assistant Editor for *Writing Spaces* and an inaugural Herstory – Coalition for Community Writing: Writing for Peace and Justice Fellow.

## MEGAN HEISE, PHD CANDIDATE

### Helping lead the fight against retrenchment for the CAL/MATESOL program

- **What brought you to IUP?**

I was born and raised in Indiana, PA, though for as long as I can remember, I wanted to leave and see other places. I lived in New York, Colorado, and Greece for a combined ten years before returning to Indiana. I “came back,” in part, because I was struggling to find a stable job after my MFA in CO. I had never pictured myself as an academic – that is, had never considered doing a PhD program –

until my failure to secure a FT teaching job with only an MFA in hand. At the same time, I was really struggling to combine my creative writing background with the work I wanted to do with multilingual refugees; I didn’t know how to intersect all of my interests, and to do so in a way that would also lend itself to some modicum of stability. When I stumbled across the CAL program, it felt like kismet or fate – it was perfect for bringing together everything I wanted to do, and it was in my hometown where I was already living. It was the only program I applied for, and receiving that acceptance email and my GA with Writing Spaces was so exciting! We definitely celebrated with some limoncello at my house that day!

- **What type of pedagogue would you consider yourself to be?**

I consider myself to be a critical, transnational feminist pedagogue.

- **What can students like yourself do to support their professors and other faculty members?**

I’ve realized through membership in social media groups for graduate students that the level of support and mentorship I’ve received in this program is NOT the norm, and is not to be taken for granted. Our professors aren’t perfect, and I’ve certainly been the squeaky wheel on matters that I feel strongly about, but especially through this hellish year of the pandemic and retrenchments, I’ve really come to see my professors as human beings in a way that helps me be a more full and earnest human being, and I see this as a radical act on all of our parts – to dare to be fully human in the dehumanizing machinery of academia. So, to answer the question on what we students can do to support our professors, I think especially during the pandemic, one thing I’ve really learned and leaned into is giving grace for myself, my fellow students, and my professors. The pandemic and retrenchments have been hard on everyone, and some things that 2019-Megan might have complained about, 2021-Megan lets slide. That’s not to say that I don’t continue to give feedback and speak out when I see things that I assess to be wrong, but I have a broader perspective and try not to sweat the small stuff, pick my battles, that sort of thing.



"When I stumbled across the CAL program, it felt like kismet or fate – it was perfect for bringing together everything I wanted to do..."

I think another thing, specifically from the time of the retrenchments, before our faculty's retrenchments were rescinded, is that speaking out about how much our faculty mean to us and how much we need them to support our growth and professional (and personal) development was a really important act of advocacy. I heard through the grapevine that upper administration at IUP noted how passionate the CAL/TESOL students were about their program and faculty – they were annoyed by our persistent communication, but receiving the word that our faculty's retrenchments were rescinded seems to indicate that this advocacy worked – and can continue to work. I'd also say that in the case of the retrenchments, I noted (and wrote about, hopefully I'll work more on this piece and seek publication) a strange inversion of power where we students held purchasing power in the neoliberal higher education system and could more freely speak out than our professors, who feared retaliation or other negative impacts if they spoke back too much. I think it was an occasion in which our professors needed allies, and we students showed up. Having worked closely in different capacities with all three retrenched faculty, it felt very personal to me – they had supported me academically, professionally, and personally, so it felt quite natural to advocate for them, to give them grace, and to otherwise support them during that time.

- **In your article for the Hawkeye you write about some new projects—a job at the University of Texas, your Coalition for Community Writing & Herstory Fellowship, and a memoir-writing workshops with refugee and immigrant teens in Pittsburgh. Would you care to share a little more on any or all of these incredible projects you are undertaking, for our readers?**

Yes, I started a position as a Writing Assessment Specialist at the University of Texas last fall through their OnRamps program, which is a dual enrollment opportunity for high school students. Our role isn't only to grade, but to give encouraging feedback and help students develop a growth mindset as they strive towards college standards. Especially this semester, I've taken a lot of my own advice – that is, I've tried to apply the advice I give to high school students to have a growth mindset to my own studies. For example, I get down on myself a lot for not being further along in my Arabic studies, to the point where it seems like every other week I want to just give up. However, when I remind myself of the growth mindset, it helps me to keep going and to celebrate my progress, however small.

I'm also grateful for the opportunity to plug the work I do with Youth UnMuted through the CCW-Herstory Fellowship. My original plans to work with Pittsburgh-based youth didn't work out, and I shifted to a new opportunity to work with the four incredible young women who make up Youth UnMuted's Youth Advisory Board, who are between the ages of 16 and 22, and have refugee experiences and are now resettled in Germany. I facilitate a weekly writing workshop in which they have space to share their writing-in-progress about things that matter to them and to receive feedback from myself and each other. While these works are private to our workshop, all four young women also share their thoughts and work in the Now You Hear Us podcast for the public. Their YouTube channel [Now You Hear Us] is here [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCctK6JRXqfzJ\\_MWfFBgIR\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCctK6JRXqfzJ_MWfFBgIR_Q) and their website is [www.youthunmuted.org](http://www.youthunmuted.org), if you would like to listen or learn more.

- **How did you first feel when you heard about the impact of the NextGen Proposal and the subsequent retrenchment?**

Wow, yeah that's a hard memory to go back and sit in. I remember seeing a post in the Composition & Applied Linguistics Facebook group from a faculty member engaging in transparent communication about the implications of the restructuring (which we didn't know much about at the time) – it had seemed so benign and non-impactful of our program, that when I saw this Facebook post I really woke up and sprang into action. Others saw the post as well and the CAL/MATESOL student group chat sort of exploded –



"But the silver lining is that I really saw the CAL/MATESOL community step up and become more vocal and outspoken after the retrenchments were announced, and I am so proud to be a member of this community because of that."

- it was a Friday, and over that weekend we kind of divided and conquered on the work that needed to be done - one person connected with the Arts students on Twitter, one coordinated with APSCUF on a call and email script, one started a petition, and I threw together a website (*shameoniup.com*) to aggregate all of this information and these efforts. We really hoped then that the admin would change their minds and no one would be retrenched. Of course, it just got worse and worse as we found out \*who\* was going to be retrenched in our department and that it was all \*our\* professors in the CAL/MATESOL programs. There had been a lot of talk about intra-departmental and inter-program unity on social media before this was announced, and I have to say it hurt a lot to see the silence and overall lack of that unity once the names were announced - it felt like once programs/departments/majors/etc. realized they weren't personally impacted, that they could sit down and rest rather than sticking with the coalition that formed across the university when nearly \*all\* programs were afraid of the impacts. But the silver lining is that I really saw the CAL/MATESOL community step up and become more vocal and outspoken after the retrenchments were announced, and I am so proud to be a member of this community because of that. I vividly remember doing my costume makeup for our CTA Halloween party, and then getting WhatsApps from classmates and texts from teachers confirming receipt of the retrenchment letters just as we were starting up the Zoom. There was no way it could stay a party, and those of us there that day turned it into an organizing meeting. After that, we saw more letters to the administration, organized sit-ins outside President Driscoll's office, and the delivery of our petition with nearly 2,000 signatures, printed out, and mailed to President Driscoll's residence and office. We also held a small in-person, outdoor event shortly thereafter to support our retrenched professors and shower them with love and gratitude, which was an immensely needed opportunity for processing and being together in solidarity. As I mentioned before, I've heard from some voices on high that all of our efforts to fight back against the retrenchments really got under the skin of the administration, to the point that we were all actually asked to desist. We did not, of course, and I like to think that in some part these advocacy efforts, in addition to the work of our professors and their own self-advocacy through union grievance avenues, led to the ultimate rescinding of all three retrenchments in our program. That was some great news to take us out of fall finals week and into winter break, though the fight's not over.

- **As retrenchment continues to shape the faculty and class experience at IUP, what steps do you think would provide more transparency from the University regarding its hiring and professional development of faculty?**

Well, I am so glad you asked! In Dr. Cristina Sánchez-Martín's Raciolinguistics course this semester, I and my fellow group members Aqib and Kevin, drafted a call for higher education institutions to develop more explicitly anti-racist practices around faculty hiring and retention. This project was directly in response to what happened at IUP, where the retrenchments were based on fewest years of service - this meant that those with the least seniority (including professors who were/are far from junior, with tenure, promotions, and many years of service) were most vulnerable to retrenchment. The (raced and gendered) problem here is that there's a well-documented "leaky pipeline" in academia, where we're seeing fewer and fewer BIPOC academics the higher up you go - so one can see how BIPOC faculty, women faculty, working-class faculty, etc. are most vulnerable under "fewest years of service" retrenchment criteria. There's also a very real problem in what "counts" as service under this "fewest years of service" policy, and there are innumerable labors that are often performed by women and BIPOC faculty that are grossly un(der)valued by the academy in hiring, promotion, tenure, and ultimately, retrenchment decisions. So what my group called for in our project, as a call for all of U.S. higher education, but in the context of our experiences at IUP, is that there needs to be explicit antiracist actions taken, rather than just rhetorics forwarded, around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## Do You Want to See More of Megan's Work?

Check out her website!

[www.meganheise.com](http://www.meganheise.com)

Some of these include valuing invisible labor like student advising, DEI and other committee work, and even teaching on par with research, upper administration work, and grant reception. And I want to be clear that this is directed to IUP, but it's also directed to PASSHE, to the PA Legislature that continually underfunds state education, and to ALL institutions and ALL individuals at institutions of higher education. It's not just about the President and Provost here, though I think many of us have very real and already-articulated issues with their unilateral decisions; this is really a sign of a greater sickness in all of higher ed in this country. So yes, I call upon President Driscoll, Provost Moerland, and Chancellor Greenstein to put their money where their mouths are on DEI and to pay faculty, predominantly BIPOC-faculty, for their service work on these and other essential student-facing labors. But I also call upon other faculty, especially those with relative intersections of privilege, to speak out when they see racism and sexism embedded within programmatic, departmental, institutional initiatives. And while students really are in a precarious position, I think that in times like the retrenchments of this past year, we did have a unique opportunity to speak out against these policies as well, and so I even call upon students to find ways to speak out and push back, while also being mindful of the very real power imbalances we face in academia and not putting oneself in danger of harm in any way.

- **What would you consider some measures of accountability that would create a more equitable student experience in the wake of IUP's process of retrenchment?**

I think IUP administration and ASPCUF, the PASSHE faculty union, need to seriously reconsider the "fewest years of service" clause from an explicitly anti-racist lens. I think that, especially at IUP, these decisions need to be made in concert with the folks they impact - in this case, with faculty. The retrenchment and restructuring plan was basically made unilaterally by administration, without meaningful input from faculty, the union, or students. This cannot continue to happen. Such a radical restructuring and such devastating cuts cannot just be forced upon an entire faculty and student body with no accountability afterwards or throughout. What this accountability looks like is, I think, up to the IUP community and the standards we hold our leaders to - it could be a vote of no confidence; it could be a formal apology from the decision-makers and change of course and policy; it could be a statement made by administrators - and not their unpaid predominantly-BIPOC faculty who serve on DEI committees - recognizing the harms of these decisions and committing to concrete, explicitly anti-racist actions they plan to undertake to address these wrongs. I think the frustrating thing is that students, faculty, and staff have been calling for accountability from our institutional leadership, but there hasn't been any meaningful and earnest response.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to discuss some of these things here with you. Believe it or not, this is me tempering my language and tone a bit - I can get really worked up about the retrenchments, as I think befits the whole situation, honestly. But the biggest thing I got from this is what a strong community CAL/MATESOL is, and what incredible people we have in each other - students, alumni, faculty, and staff. And I take heart that with all of our protests, calls, letters, op-eds, and petitions all of our faculty's retrenchments were rescinded. I guess I want to end on a message of hope, not to sweep the difficulties behind and ahead under the rug, but to rightly recognize a moment in our very recent history when we all came together and made a change. For me that has been the crux of learning about critical hope - that change is made collaboratively and we don't have to bear these burdens alone.





\*\* ZOOM safe events like Cooking for Self Care with Dr. Park kept the club going!

## CTA NEWS

### The Composition and TESOL Association

The mission of the Composition and TESOL Association is (1) to provide academic and communal sustainability to graduate students enrolled in the Graduate Studies in Composition and Applied Linguistics and M.A. TESOL Programs, as well as related academic programs and (2) to provide student-representation in relevant departmental and programmatic decisions. While its main purpose is to support students enrolled in the previously mentioned programs, membership in this association is open to all IUP students.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

Oct 23 11:00 a.m. EST "Strategies for Crisis Intervention" with Sharon Layton, Zoom

*Look forward to more details from the list-serv*

Oct 29 6:00 p.m. EST Haunted IUP: Ghost Tour with Dr. Laurel Black

**Various workshops and socials are held throughout the semester with Dr. Vetter and Dr. Park! Watch out for emails with monthly updates on each.**

## QUESTIONS REGARDING CTA?

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## Questions Regarding The Writing Center?

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# THE KATHLEEN JONES WHITE WRITING CENTER NEWS

## graduate workshops

Graduate students can make 2 appointments a day and each appointment is 45 minutes per appointment. We offer in-person, online through Zoom or Wc Online, and asynchronous.

Writing Center's October 16th Dissertation and Thesis Writing Boot camp, 11-4pm via Zoom. Our boot camp has new features this year including:

- A new workshop from the library on reading, finding, and organizing sources (critical!) and synthesizing sources (critical!)
- Tutorials available with the IUP Libraries, Writing Center, Applied Research lab AND Thesis and Dissertation office—so you can literally have all of your questions answered about research, finding sources, writing, formatting/depositing
- New workshops on a variety of writing-related areas

**Here is the URL for our signups—We hope to see you there!**

[https://iup.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6XrNhZ47FKYux0](https://iup.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6XrNhZ47FKYux0)



# MEET OUR FACULTY AND STAFF

get connected

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## For More Information Contact Our Program Director

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## Connect With Us On Social Media!



Facebook Groups: CAL Placement & Professionalization,  
Composition and TESOL, and @IUPCALTESOL