

**Professional Development Plan**

**Robert J. (Bob) Leahy, Jr.**

**CTE 708 – Issues in Career and Technical Education, Spring 2014**

**Instructor: Dr. Carol Mooney**

**University of Wisconsin - Stout**

### Professional Development Plan

I am a lifelong learner. Additionally, I have been a teacher, instructor or trainer of one sort or another, formally and informally, for almost forty years. My complementary blend of experience and training in corporate, government and military environments is unique. However in all this time, including that of my secondary and post-secondary education, I did not see myself as actively pursuing the field of Career and Technical Education (CTE). But upon current reflection, that is what I have done. After personal and historical events over the past twelve years, I have made some decisions of what I want to do with the second half of my life personally and professionally. This includes formally entering into the CTE field.

### **Program Planning Sheet**

Dr. Carol Mooney and I developed the original planning sheet after my formal acceptance into the Education Specialist (Ed.S.) CTE degree program in July 2013. Dr. Mooney is my advisor and also the Ed.S. CTE program director. *Figure 1* is an updated version of my personal program planning sheet. The updates include removing pre-printed suggested coursework found on the original portable document format (PDF) form that did not become part of my plan, and other pre-printed items that were struck-out and replaced with authorized substitutions. This provided space for entering the electives that did become part of my program. The actual and anticipated completion dates of the various courses are included along with the grades received for completed coursework.

**EdS in Career and Technical Education**  
**Program Planning Sheet – Professional Education**

Name: Robert J. Leahy, Jr. Stout ID #: 0628456

**Required Coursework**

Course No.	Course Name	Credits	Grade	Completion Date	Transfer Course?
<b>A. Professional Education (8-11 credits)</b>					
CTE 502	Principles of CTE	2	A	F2013	
CTE 708	Issues in Career and Technical Ed	2		SP2014	
CTE 746	Seminar	2		SU2014	
EDPSY 850	Psychology of Development	3		SP2014	
EDUC 765	Issues Instru Design	2	A	SU2011	
<b>B. Applied Research (12-15 credits)</b>					
CTE 895	Field Study in CTE	6		F2014	
EDUC 816	Instrumentation for Research	3		SU2014	
EDUC 766	Instru Strat & Assmt Methods	3	A	SU2011	
EDUC 767	Design CBT	3	A	F2011	
<b>C. Industry and Technology (6-10 credits)</b>					
CTE 638	Course Construction	2		SP2014	
CTE 725	Quality of Improvement in Education	3		F2014	
EDUC 646	Using Games for Learning & Assmt	1	A	F2013	
EDUC 760	E-learning for Educators	3	A	F2012	
EDUC 764	eLearn Practicum	3	A	SU2013	
EDUC 768	Project Mgmt Instru Design	3	A	F2011	
TRHRD 560	Training Systems for Bus & Ind	3	A	F2013	
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>		<b>44</b>			

**Requirement checklist**

- ... Minimum of 36 credits
- ... Required coursework completed
- ... 18 credits at 700-level or above
- ... Maximum of 12 transfer credits
- ... Seven-year limit checked
- ... Residency requirement completed

**This program plan has been approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Revised 5/01/2011

Figure 1. Ed.S. in Career and Technical Education Program Planning Sheet

### **Ed.S. Degree Goal**

There are several different fields or areas of which I have an interest in or am qualified to pursue in the area of CTE. However, my chosen electives for the Ed.S. CTE program concentrate on instructional design, e-learning, and online teaching. I am using these electives, along with the knowledge I am gaining in CTE specific and required courses, to see how they can relate to, support, and improve CTE programs of different types. My immediate goal is to complete the requirements and electives of the Ed.S. CTE program at UW-Stout. I have an anticipated completion date of December 2014.

The subject matter area I have been primarily teaching for the past four years is in emergency management and emergency preparedness. These areas come under the CTE Emergency and Fire Management Services Pathway of the Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security Career Cluster. The subject matter focus for the products I will create during the coursework of this program, to include my field study, will be in or related to the emergency management career field.

### **Philosophy of Career and Technical Education**

My first course after formal acceptance into the Ed.S. CTE program was *CTE 502 Principles of Career & Technical Education*. One of the textbooks for this course was *Overview of Career and Technical Education*. According to its authors Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski (2008):

It is essential that all educators understand their primary philosophical view-points that are usually developed from a number of philosophies and exercise an eclectic approach to solving educational problems and thus provide themselves with an increase understanding go the views of others and a wider range of things to choose from in coming up with the best solution to an educational problem (p. 416).

I am eclectic in many ways. This is from the music I enjoy, to my various careers, to my unconventional life-long learning pursuit. It is no surprise that my educational philosophy is also eclectic. Having reviewed the definitions of the major philosophies, I find parts of my personal beliefs regarding people and education are found in just about every one of them. The two major philosophies that I most identify with are pragmatism and progressivism.

I am one who believes that knowledge is gained through problem solving and working through things. I was fortunate to have teachers and mentors early on in my life that taught and mentored me by following the Chinese proverb of “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” These individual were at least partially practicing pragmatism, and I adopted many of those beliefs. Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski (2008) tell us that “Pragmatism views knowledge as a process in which reality is constantly changing. Learning is viewed as a transaction between the learner and the environment, and both entities are in a constant state of change” (p. 396).

From my own prior learning and experiences, I find that students come with their own unique set of prior knowledge, learning styles, skills, attitudes, and experiences. One size does not fit all. The same is true for subject matter or programs. What may work effectively for one field, subject, or topic may not for work for another.

The progressivism philosophy of education, another philosophy I relate to, stresses experiential learning, the scientific method, and intrinsic motivation. Progressivists emphasize that individual instruction, progress, and change are fundamental to a person’s education. They use informality in the classroom, and include group discussions and laboratories as instructional techniques. They believe that people learn best from what they consider most relevant to their lives, and center their programs on the needs, experiences, interests, and abilities of the students.

I am not limited to one field or discipline in CTE. My background, education and experiences are in technical fields (hardware and software), multimedia communications, military science, law enforcement, and emergency management/emergency preparedness. Though most recently my teaching has been in emergency management/emergency preparedness, it is not necessarily where I may focus in the near future. A common thread among these fields is the advancement and use of distance learning. Not only as online tutorials or self-paced multi-media lessons and courses, but also in facilitated e-learning through public and private institutions. I am preparing myself not only as a teacher, but also as the developer of the courses or curricula.

### **Description of Setting**

My recent teaching experience since 2010 is with a volunteer organization in my local community, and in the field of emergency management and emergency preparedness. As the Training Coordinator for the Palatine Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), I am in an unpaid volunteer position that supports the Emergency Management (EM) program by providing expertise in the research, planning, facilitation, implementation, and coordination of training for PEMA volunteers. In addition, I am one of the primary instructors for many different EM subjects, an Illinois state-certified Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) instructor, and an Illinois state-certified CERT Train-the-Trainer instructor.

PEMA consists of one full-time EMA Coordinator, who is a staff member of the Village of Palatine government, and approximately 200 volunteers. These volunteers come from all walks of life with varied education, skills, backgrounds and experiences. The common thread among all the volunteers is emergency preparedness and the desire to support and assist family, friends, neighbors and the community in times of disasters.

Due to recent internal and local government events, this organization is going through major changes. These changes are affecting not only the training, but the very makeup of the volunteer organization and its function in the near future. The EMA Coordinator has resigned and no replacement has been identified. Currently there is an “acting” coordinator, but not one who is fully trained or experienced in the emergency management field, and who does not know the volunteer leaders or personnel in the organization.

For the immediate future, the training of volunteers has been temporarily suspended. This summer we must evacuate our operations center, storage facility and classrooms for a major reconstruction project. New or temporary facilities have yet to be identified. Any logistical support for future training requires the village government to locate and secure new classrooms, training areas, storage facilities, etc. This is currently proving to be a challenge.

I have been an instructor, trainer, or mentor as part of the positions I have held for almost forty years, and as early as my high school days. This included my after-school employment as a Lead Clerk and Lead Cashier for a department store chain and as a Lab Assistant to the high school electronics instructor during my senior year. This followed with instructor duties (either primary or additional duty assignments) in the US Army, civilian employers, and volunteer organizations.

For the past twenty years, my primary full-time career has been that of a technical writer. I have always viewed technical writing as a form of education as it is my job to create products (written and multi-media) to instruct end-users (consumers, customers, salespersons, technicians, etc.) about the company products, services, procedures, etc. that I represented. During my time as a technical writer, I had entertained the idea of teaching at a public or private post-secondary school, even though my teaching and instructional design experience had been with the military,

government, volunteer organizations, and corporate America. A chance encounter with Ellie Pinkham, an instructor I had while taking multi-media courses at a local community college, re-energized that thought.

Ellie was the college's only full-time multi-media communications instructor (faculty) at that time along with several part-time (adjunct) instructors. A couple of years after completing her *Creating Web Pages* course, and a few other multi-media communications courses I had completed with adjuncts, she invited me to teach the same course I had with her as a student. That was my first time teaching formally at an educational institution, and I greatly enjoyed it. Following that semester, I was invited to apply for a full-time teaching position in multi-media communications at the same college. I went through the interview process, but did not get the position. I found out afterwards that I was one of the top two candidates, and that my lack of a master's degree was a deciding factor with awarding the position to the other candidate who had an appropriate advanced degree. This was one of the things that prompted me to go back to school and get my Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.) in Adult and Higher Education of which I completed in 2005.

A year after receiving my M.S.Ed., I was recalled to active duty in the US Army from the retired reserves. The original position I was to fill was that of a Training Developer/Writer for the United States Army Air Defense Artillery School at Fort Bliss, Texas. Upon reporting for duty I was reassigned to another more critical position with the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Capability Manager – Lower Tier office. This position was still related to training; however it was support for a recently fielded (new) Air and Missile Defense (AMD) system that had a higher priority due to military operations going on overseas.



I became part of a team that established the Counter-Rocket Artillery and Mortar (C-RAM) training base at Fort Bliss and assisted in the training of US Army and Navy personnel, and military forces of the United Kingdom on the system. Later I was assigned to the Surfaced Launched Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (SLAMRAAM) program which included coordinating with defense contractors, reviewing and editing technical and tactical manuals, and developing a SLAMRAAM Staff and Planners course for USAADASCH. After three years, in 2009, my tour of duty was complete. I returned to civilian life and I was once again a technical writer.

I returned from military duty to the employer I had been with five years prior to my recall. Things had changed at this company due to the economic downturns of the previous three years to include a reduction in personnel. Because of federal protection, my re-employment was mandated and I was secure for one year. Halfway through that year my employer was acquired by a major corporation and I became one of their employees. Just after the one year anniversary of my return from military duty, my position was eliminated and I was laid-off. I felt I needed to do more to differentiate myself from the many other candidates who suffered similar fates, so I re-entered school.

To enhance my technical writing skills and opportunities, and combine my love of teaching, I started and completed the online *Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design* program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout) in 2011. I followed this up in 2012 by entering the online *Graduate Certificate in E-Learning and Online Teaching* program at UW-Stout, and completing it in the summer of 2013. During this time I was unable to find employment with educational institutions, but did secure a technical writing position with the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

An unexpected result of my last three-year active duty tour in the Army from 2006 to 2009 was that I became eligible for part of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. I discovered this after I had already started the certificate programs at UW-Stout, and decided I should use it towards an advanced degree. I learned I had enough veteran's benefits for a second master's degree or an Ed.S. degree. After searching various schools I decided on UW-Stout and the Ed.S. in Career and Technical Education program as appropriate. An added bonus was that some of the coursework I completed in the two certificate programs could be applied to the program.

I am currently working on my personal five-year plan. In this plan I would like to secure part-time employment as an instructor/adjunct at a post-secondary institution and continue my full-time employment with the federal government. At the end of five years, I am eligible to retire from federal service. I would then enter into semi-retirement and continue to teach as an online instructor. This could offer additional freedom and flexibility and not limit me geographically. I could also work as a contract instructional designer on a project basis.

### **Professional Development Goals/Objectives**

My primary career for the past twenty years has been one of a technical writer. Most recently it is software-related in federal government service. Throughout my time as technical writer, the fields of which I wrote and the places of my employment were conscious efforts and part of the plan of my professional development. This was until 2010 when in my last corporate position I was subject to downsizing (layoffs) for the fourth time in my life and at the age of 53.

After a term of unemployment, and a short-term contracting position, I came across my current position. Though I had not thought of government service in the context of technical writing, I had the background, education and experience required of this position. I then found out that this particular position came with pay and benefits superior to those I had in the

corporate world. When formally offered the position, I jumped at it and have been in it for over two years. The drawbacks are that I am at the highest pay-grade for a technical writer and that further promotions would require me to change career fields into something such as project management or some sort of a technical leadership/management position.

I am not a perfect technical writer, and can still use professional development. So my current goals are two-fold; keep current and improve my technical writing skills, and to find, use and improve complimentary skills in other areas such as teaching and instructional design. Instructional design and technical writing share many of the same processes and skillsets. They both entail effective communication, and the skills and challenges are complementary. However not all instructional designers can be effective technical writers, and vice-versa. I am working at being effective at both.

My current goals include:

- Completing coursework in my degree program that not only apply to CTE and education, but can be applied to my current career and volunteer services
- Completing the Ed.S. CTE program in December 2014
- Completing coursework outside my degree program, such as through the Department of Veterans Affairs Talent Management System or the Federal Emergency Management Agency Emergency Management Institute, that can be applied to my current position and volunteer services
- Developing an effective e-portfolio which is a personalized collection of materials that are a reflection of me as a professional and a record of my professional development, proof of performance on the job and in educational environment, and what I have accomplished (e.g., tangible artifacts, products and evidence)

- Securing part-time employment as an instructor at the post-secondary level or as an instructional designer

These goals or objectives are to continue success in my current career and situation, as well as preparing me for what will most likely be my last career transition to one of semi-retirement and in the educational field. It will have an effect on my current audience for my technical writing as well as student learning in my current teaching of volunteers, and other teaching in the near future. This will affect the products I currently develop as a technical writer and possibly new programs and/or curriculum development I hope to be called upon to create.

### **Rationale for Goals/Objectives**

Ever since I entered my M.S.Ed. in Adult and Higher Education program, I have been formally preparing myself to be a better more effective teacher of adult learners. This is true even while I was in the field of technical writing. The documentation (products) I produce provides information, or teaches adult users, of the various products, programs, processes or services I represent. Ultimately I have to consider my audience no matter what area I am working within. This could be end-users (consumers, sales persons, technicians, engineers, etc.) for things I represent as a technical writer, or students of classes I teach or develop for others.

My formal entry and interest into CTE has only happened recently. However after reflection I find that this may be what I have been doing since high school so many years ago. There was no formal CTE program in my high school, back in the 1970s, from what I recall. However there were CTE type classes or opportunities offered that I took advantage of (electronics, “shop classes,” automatic data processing, audio-visual assistant). I entered the field of electronic after high school and with post-secondary CTE type training in the US Army.

My first civilian career immediately following my first three year in the Army was in electronics repair (technology).

Successes in the electronics career, as well as my continuation in part-time (reserve) military service, lead me to positions as a mentor, instructor, and leader. This eventually evolved to being a technical writer calling upon my experience as a practitioner of technology. Along for the ride were volunteer opportunities in law enforcement and emergency management, both of which are in the pathways of CTE. In both those organizations I was called upon for my writing abilities, as an instructor, and to lead/coordinate the various training programs.

As I wrote earlier, I am consciously preparing myself for what will most likely be my last career transition. My current five-year plan has me entering semi-retirement in the 2019- 2020 timeframe. At this time I would delight in the possibility of not having to work full-time and year-round “to make a living.” Instead I would like to be in the educational field teaching or developing part-time, affording me the opportunity to enjoy some benefits of retirement (e.g., travel, hobbies, etc.) and to keep active and engaged with the fields I have come to respect and appreciate (military, law enforcement, emergency management, technology). Financially my previous careers and investments, along with part-time employment can make this possible without much change in my current lifestyle.

### **Professional Development Plan Activities**

My main focus and activities are related to my goal of completing the Ed.S. CTE program. The following are the courses I have remaining to complete in the program:

- Spring 2014: *CTE 638 Course Construction in Career and Technical Education*, *CTE 708 Issues in Career and Technical Education*, and *EDPSY 850 Psychology of*

*Development* – All three course are in progress, with the term end date in a few weeks, and all with anticipated grade of A (4.0)

- Summer 2014: *CTE 746 Issues in CTE Seminar, EDUC 816 Instrumentation for Research, and CTE 895 Field Study in CTE* (2 of 6 graduate credits)
- Fall 2014: *CTE 725 Quality of Improvement in Education, CTE 895 Field Study in CTE* (4 of 6 graduate credits), and *Intent to Graduate*

The research I conduct, and the products or activities I am engaged in within the various courses, will remain in the CTE field of emergency management as long as they are applicable and allowed. This includes using much of what I have amassed or developed over the course of the program to use in my field study. In addition to meeting the requirements of the program, it is my hope that I can use what is developed in my field study as a course/program to be used in the emergency management field at the community college level.

### **Professional Development Plan Timeline**

When I originally entered into post-graduate coursework in 2011, the intent was the pursuit of a graduate certificate. The same was true of the coursework started in 2012. However upon formal acceptance into the Ed.S. CTE program, coursework from both of those certificates were applicable to the program. In essence, my program unofficially started much earlier. Figure 2 (on page 15) is a graphical representation of a timeline for my original M.S.Ed. in Adult & Higher Education degree and the 44 graduate credit hours earned afterwards that has become or will become part of my Ed.S. CTE.

Of note may be the gap between degree programs of May 2005 and May 2011. During that period I had completed several hundred credit hours of distance learning through the US Army Institute for Professional Development and the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Emergency Management Institute. I had also completed the *Professional Development Series*, a commitment to *Standards of Excellence in Emergency Management*, through the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA, 2010).

**Professional Development Plan Collaboration**

Those involved in my professional development are varied and come from several fields inside and outside academia. As my background, training and education is quite eclectic, I will start back to the time when I made the decision to try and formally pursue teaching at the post-secondary level.

In 2003, I was the victim of corporate downsizing and unable to find full-time employment in my field of technical writing. One day in early May, I took my daughter to

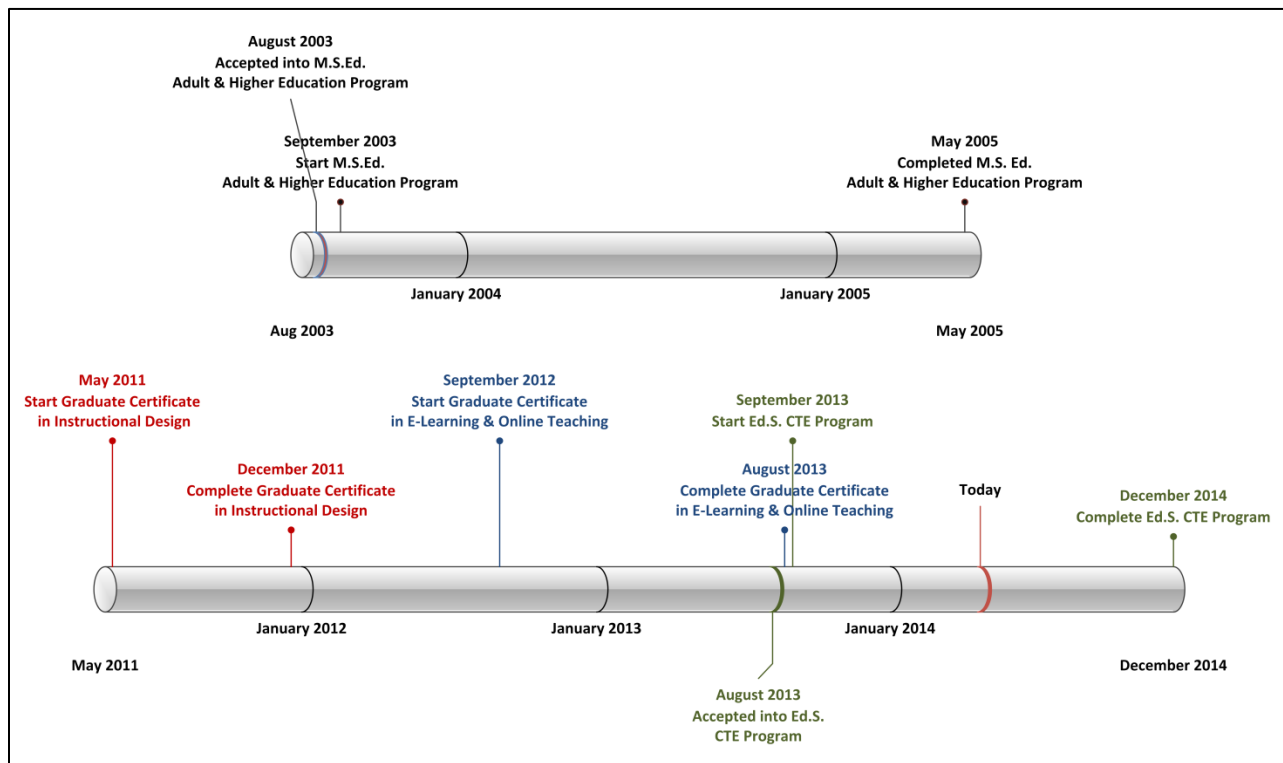


Figure 2. Professional Development Plan Timeline

Northern Illinois University and waited for her to finish her classes. While I was waiting, I did some research at the university library. Then I decided to check with the Veterans Affairs office of the college to find out if I had any school benefits left, of which I did. My next stop was the graduate school on campus. By the end of the day, I was armed with the information and forms to apply to the M.S.Ed in Adult and Higher Education program.

I was formally accepted into the program in August 2003 and began an 18 month pursuit of that degree. My mentors included my program advisor Dr. Laurel Jeris and several professors to include Drs. Gene Roth, Jorge Jeria, and Amy D. Rose. They were all adult education professionals who went the extra mile and made my re-entry into college education, after a ten year break, relatively painless. They were instrumental in helping me identify, and in some cases change, my philosophy of education and adult learning principles. Three of these mentors have since retired over the past few years.

Mentors and guides in the field of Emergency Management include the former Emergency Management Coordinator of the Village of Palatine, Tom Smith. After bringing me on as a volunteer for the Palatine Emergency Management Agency, it was Tom who encouraged and recruited me to become the organization's first Training Coordinator. Another mentor is John Crilly, a retired lieutenant of the Lake County Sheriff's Police, and now the Chief of Police for Wonder Lake, Illinois. John was one of the full-time unit commanders of the Lake County Sheriff's Reserve Deputy Unit (command of this unit rotated approximately every four years). During that time I was a volunteer Reserve Deputy Sheriff Lieutenant and his Training Officer. He later promoted me to Chief of Reserves (highest volunteer position) of the unit. In addition to law enforcement duties, John was also the Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator for Lake County, Illinois. John has been a reference for me during my employment searches as well



as entering the Ed.S. CTE program. Just recently John contacted me for some assistance in the area of documentation and training as he enters his new position as Chief of Police.

Other guidance, suggestions and input I received in the area of Emergency Management came from my peers. These peers, like me, are volunteers of the various organizations we have been associated with. They all come with varied education levels, professions, and life experiences. Their professions include lawyers, nurses, airline pilots, engineers, store managers, and salespersons to name a few. Some of these peers were also instructors within the organizations. Not only did I experience different learning styles of the volunteers, but I saw different teaching styles and have come to adopt many of the best practices.

My initial post-graduate studies at UW-Stout have been suggested and encouraged by program advisors such as Nicholle Stone (*Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design*) and Dennis O'Connor (*Graduate Certificate in E-Learning and Online Teaching*), and the faculty of the various courses in those programs. One instructor in particular, Dr. Susan Manning, has been a great influence on me. Susan has been the instructor for several courses in two certificate programs I completed, and I was also an intern in one of her online instructional design classes during my e-learning practicum. Susan is also the only online instructor I have met in-person so far. It just so happens she lives about 30 miles away from me in Illinois and she was in my town for a marathon event where I met her afterwards. Susan has agreed to be on the committee for my field research study.

This brings me to date. Since entering the Ed.S. CTE program, two individual have stood out to assist me in my program as well as adapting or relating what I have done in the past to CTE. Dr. Carol Mooney is my advisor, the Ed.S. CTE program director, and also one of my instructors. Matthew Simoneau is the Program Director for the B.S. in Career, Technical

Education and Training at UW-Stout and is one of my CTE instructors. In some ways I am more of a challenge for both of them in that I am out-of-state (not a resident of Wisconsin) and my unconventional and eclectic background in teaching. Their guidance, experience, and examples of CTE instructors and their instructing will prove invaluable.

Additional collaboration will depend on future employment or CTE focus, volunteer opportunities, and education beyond the Ed.S. CTE. This collaboration may come from peers, higher education representatives, professional organizations, mentors, and industry partners to name a few.

### **Professional Development Plan Evidence**

A requirement of the *Graduate Certificate in E-Learning and Online Teaching* program was for the student to develop an e-portfolio. One of the learning outcomes for *EDUC 764 E-Learning Practicum* was “Publish a technically proficient electronic portfolio of learning artifacts created during the practicum and other classes of the E-Learning and Online Teaching Certificate Program” (University of Wisconsin-Stout, 2013).

I took this e-portfolio several steps further by adding the coursework I completed in the *Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design*, and my background, training and experience in technical writing, law enforcement, emergency management and the US Army. Currently I am adding the coursework that has become part of my Ed.S. CTE program. It is a work-in-progress and can be viewed at <https://sites.google.com/site/bobleahyportfolio/>. Located within this e-portfolio is evidence of activities, assignments and examples, which are a result of study, discussion and practice, completed during the various courses and programs to achieve the learning outcomes and objectives.

Examples of my professional development can be found in the following figures. Figure 3 is the *Illinois Emergency Management Agency Professional Development Series Certificate I* earned in 2010. This is awarded for specific coursework completed in the field of Emergency Management and taught by the state of Illinois. Figure 4 is the *Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design I* earned in 2011 at UW-Stout. Figure 5 is the *Graduate Certificate in E-Learning and Online Teaching I* earned in 2013 at UW-Stout. Evidence of my successes in those certificate programs as well as all coursework I have completed to date at UW-Stout can be found in Figure 6, a recent copy of my Academic Advisement Report.



Figure 3: Illinois Emergency Management Agency Professional Development Series Certificate

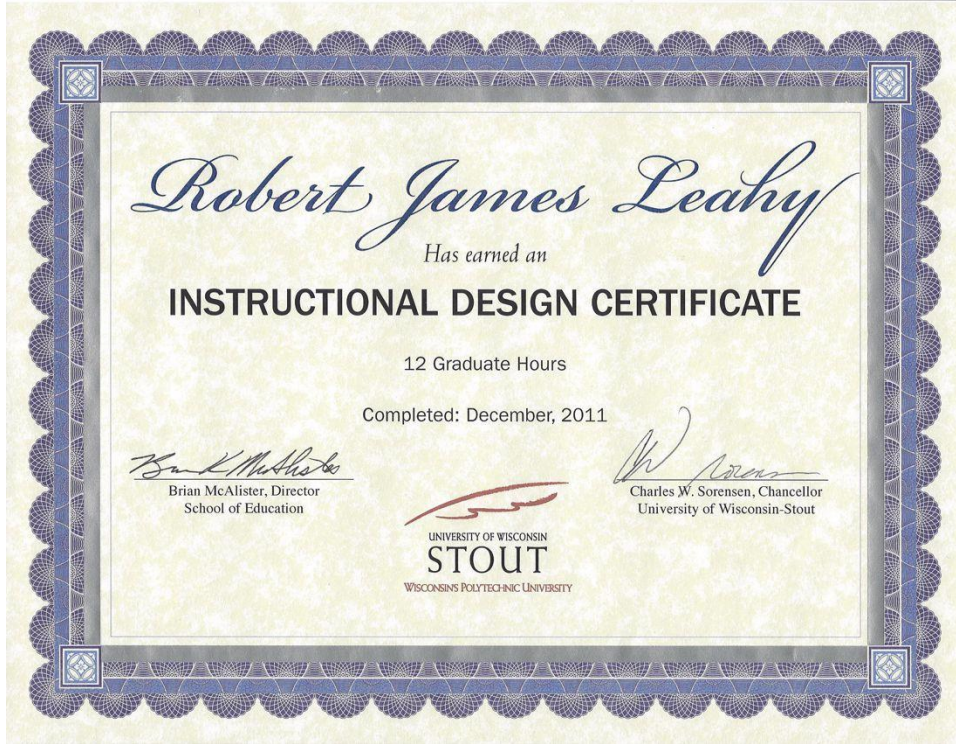


Figure 4. Robert Leahy Instructional Design Certificate



Figure 5. Robert Leahy E-Learning and Online Teaching Certificate



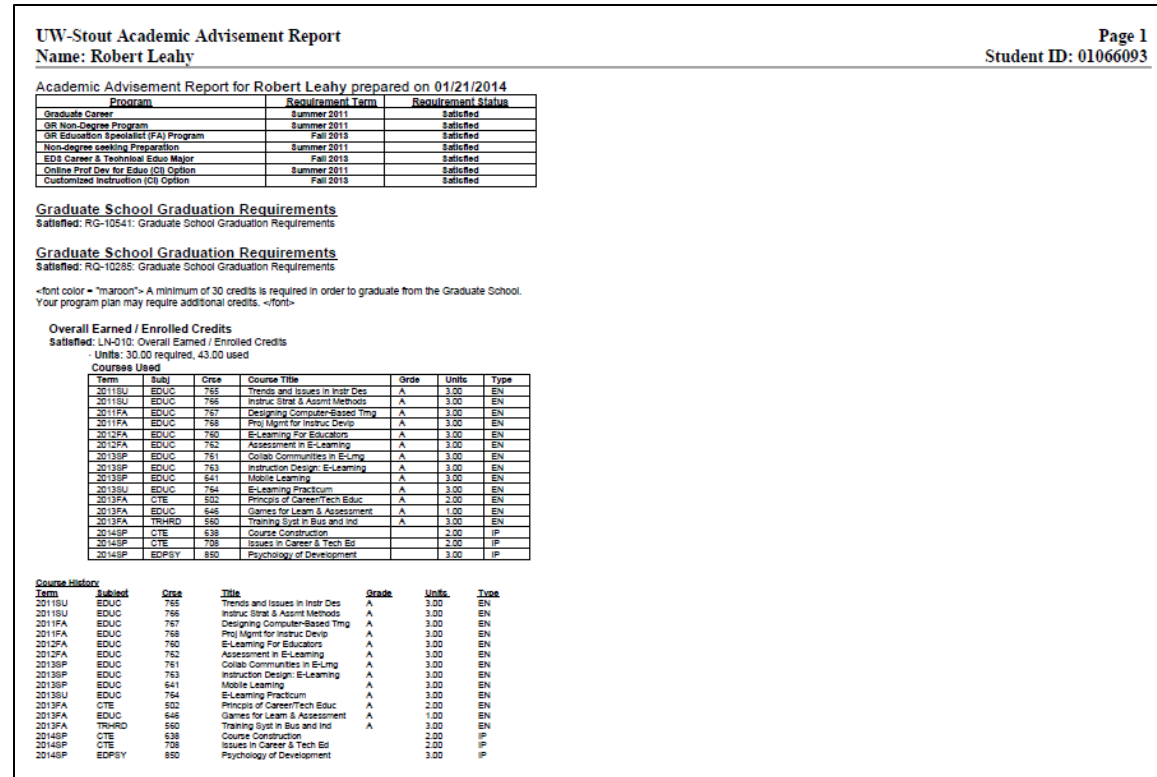


Figure 6. Robert Leahy UW-Stout Academic Advisement Report

### References

IEMA. (2010). Illinois professional development series (PDS). Retrieved from

[http://www.state.il.us/iema/training/pds/prof\\_dev.htm](http://www.state.il.us/iema/training/pds/prof_dev.htm).

Scott, J. L. & Sarkees-Wircenski, M. (2008). *Overview of career and technical education* (4th Ed). American Technical Publishers.

University of Wisconsin-Stout. (2013). *E-Learning Practicum*. Retrieved from

<http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/elearnpracticum.cfm>.