



Middle Georgia
State University

Sabrina Wengier, Ph.D.

Middle Georgia State University
Department of Media, Culture, and the Arts

2024 Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award Portfolio

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21 November 2023

Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award Selection Committee
Board of Regents, University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Middle Georgia State University (MGA), I am pleased to nominate Dr. Sabrina Wengier, Associate Professor of French, for the 2024 Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. Her nomination is strongly supported by the Provost's Office and by the Dean's Office of the School of Arts and Letters, along with many colleagues at MGA. These faculty and administrators recognize the lasting impact that Dr. Wengier's teaching, scholarship, and service have had on her students' success in her courses and so many others.

In almost 25 years of college teaching, over a decade of which at MGA, Dr. Wengier has earned and maintained a reputation for teaching excellence. She has given generously of her time and expertise to share evidence-based practices with colleagues. Across the four years that MGA had no Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), Dr. Wengier was especially active in collaborating with faculty. For example, as a Chancellor's Learning Scholar, she directed a Faculty Learning Community on Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT) at MGA to improve outcomes for historically underserved students. Later, after participating in the Governor's Teaching Fellows Program, she shared eagerly what she'd learned through multiple venues, including MGA's Professional Development Days and other school-level and institutional events. Her current work with the re-established CETL as a Provost's Fellow further underscores her enduring commitment to promote what works in teaching.

Other examples of sharing her intense curiosity about excellent teaching extend beyond MGA. Two recent articles add to a string of SoTL presentations and workshops for faculty and students on a range of effective practices. In her 2022 article "The Start Here Module: Creating a First Day Impression in an Online Language Class" in the journal, *Dimensions*, she marries her wise insights with the literature to offer beneficial guidance on boosting student belonging in online courses. In the 2023 article "Promoting Student Success with TiLT in Asynchronous Online Classes," in *Perspectives in Learning*, she and an MGA colleague investigated the equity-aligned

assignment design approach to understand its efficacy for online students. Dr. Wengier is at home and adept in the face-to-face classroom as she is in her online courses.

Regardless of course modality, Dr. Wengier’s deeply considered methods foster successful outcomes for her students. All three of the letters from former students echo with respect and appreciation for her powerful and effective techniques. For example, one former language student—and self-confessed “tough critic” as a non-traditional student—cites Dr. Wengier’s creativity for assisting with content “retention, for the neuro divergent population and for the many students in our school from underserved communities.” Another language student recalls, years after the class, how Dr. Wengier “excels at creating memorable contexts and classes in which certain constructions, words, or cultural aspects of language are used. In doing so, one is capable to remember what’s taught far better than if it was simply from a textbook.” The third former student from one of Dr. Wengier’s Interdisciplinary Studies courses reflects fondly on how “Dr. Wengier set high standards, encouraging me to excel and she held me accountable through objective constructive criticism, which led to personal and academic growth.” In fact, all three of her former students, without consulting with each other, emphasize Dr. Wengier’s careful focus on encouragement, acceptance, self-improvement, and effective learning.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Wengier’s colleagues at MGA remark on the same facets in her professional and personal interactions. She earned an MGA award for service to the institution and has been recognized by the School of Arts and Letters for her teaching excellence. This consistently high regard is a clear and genuine result of her strong commitment to her students and to effective teaching. In the innovative teaching strategies section of the portfolio, her eight “Power of” strategies read like a master class in teaching excellence. Dr. Wengier’s Dean and Chair agree, as well. Chair Sheree’ Keith notes Dr. Wengier’s collaborative spirit and provides examples of her persistence and dedication. Dean Mary Wearn adds to that perspective by lauding Dr. Wengier’s hyperfocus on meeting students where they are and guiding them to success.

In service of MGA’s open-access mission, Dr. Wengier embodies teaching excellence, promoting it through her many forms of collaboration with colleagues and students. Her steady commitment to students has benefited their studies, making MGA stronger for her passionate teaching. Therefore, I am delighted to offer my strongest recommendation for Dr. Wengier in consideration as a recipient of the 2024 Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Jenks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Jenks".

David Jenks

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Sabrina Wengier, Ph.D.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Middle Georgia State University, Macon, Ga.	2012-present
University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fl.	2003-2012
Miami Dade College, Miami, Fl.	2007-2011
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Fl.	1999-2002

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Romance Studies, French track, University of Miami.	May 2010
M.A. Comparative Literature, French and English, Florida Atlantic University.	May 2002
Maîtrise de Langues, Littératures et Civilisations Étrangères (M.A.), Anglais, Université Lumière Lyon 2, France.	July 1999
Licence de Langues, Littératures et Civilisations Étrangères (B.A.), Anglais, Université Lumière, Lyon 2, France.	June 1998

COURSES TAUGHT

French: Core Classes: Elementary I and II, Intermediate I and II; Upper-Level Independent Studies and/or Study Abroad: Language and Culture, Conversation, Grammar and Composition.

Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies: Area B: HUMN 1001 Perspectives on Narrative; Upper-Level: HUMN 3999 Happiness, Literature, and Culture; IDS 3800 Methods in Interdisciplinary Studies; IDS 4500 The Discourse of Love; IDS 4060 Madness, Literature, and Culture.

English as a Second Language (at Miami Dade College): grammar, speech/listening, writing.

GRANTS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

Provost Fellow, Faculty Career Advancement, MGA CETL, 2022-present.

Governor's Teaching Fellow, Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia, 2021-2022.

MGA Award for Excellence in Service. 2021.

Chancellor's Learning Scholar and Faculty Learning Community Leader. 2019-2021.

MGA Award for Excellence in Teaching. Nominee. 2016.

Curriculum Redesign Grant awarded by MGA's Knowledge@Work, Fall 2016.

Curriculum Redesign Grant awarded by TalkAbroad, Spring 2016.

Graduate Award for Excellence, University of Miami, 2009.

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, University of Miami, 2007-2008 and 2004-2005.

PUBLICATIONS – FOCUS ON PEDAGOGY

JOURNAL ARTICLES

“Promoting Student Success with TiLT in Asynchronous Online Classes.” With Lorraine Dubuisson. *Perspectives in Learning.* Spring 2023.

“The Start Here Module: Creating a First Day Impression in an Online Language Class.” *Dimension.* Spring 2022.

INTERVIEW

“Student Engagement in Online Settings.” Interviewed by Sara Boutin for the National Foreign Language Resource Center, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Spring 2021.

STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

FACULTY PRESENTATIONS AT MGA

“TiLT Workshop” with Dr. Rod McRae. November 2023.

“Introduction to TiLT” with Dr. Rod McRae. October 2023.

“Engaging Students in Face-to-Face Communication” with Dr. Andre Nicholson. School of Arts and Letters Convocation. August 2023.

“Learner-Centered Teaching” with Dr. Scott Spangler. New Faculty Orientation. August 2023.

“Connecting with Students Online” MGA Professional Development Day. March 2023.

“Faculty Panel on Chat GPT” organized by CETL. January 2023.

“Learner-Centered Teaching” with Dr. Rod McRae. New Faculty Orientation. August 2022.

“Helping our Students Learn” MGA Professional Development Day. October 2021.

“Transparency in Teaching and Learning” MGA Professional Development Day. November 2020.

“Dynamic Discussion Boards” MGA Professional Development Day. November 2019.

“Global/Intercultural Fluency” with Laura Thomason. Knights LEAD program, Center for Career and Leadership Development. Sessions in 2019 & 2020.

STUDENT SUCCESS AT MGA

Workshop Presenter: “How to Study for your Language Class?” (September 2023); “Nervous about Learning a Language?” (April & October 2023); “Understanding your IDS Degree” (September 2022).

Presentation Facilitator: “What to do with your IDS Degree” (2022); “What to do with your Language Degree” (2018).

Mentor: Mentor for 2 student papers published in MGA’s *Knighted*; Moderator for panels at MGA’s Undergraduate Conference; Director of several honors projects; Mentor faculty for Knight’s Lead, an initiative of the Center for Career Leadership and Development.

Student Life: Advisor for the Around the World Club (2022-present) & Women’s Studies Association (2014-2022).

Organizer/Co-Organizer: Francophone and Hispanic Movie Series, Language Festivals, French Conversation Table, and other extracurricular activities.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS – FOCUS ON PEDAGOGY

“Helping Students with Transparent Teaching Practices” SAMLA. Atlanta, November 2023.

“Career Readiness in Humanities Classes.” Georgia Philological Association. Macon, May 2023.

“Engaging Students in Asynchronous Online Classes.” USG Teaching and Learning Conference. Athens, March 2023.

“Critical Thinking in the Elementary I Language Class.” Southern Conference on Language Teaching. Mobile, March 2023.

“Revitalizing Discussions in In-Person and Asynchronous Online Classes.” Georgia Philological Association. Macon, May 2022.

“Rethinking the Elementary Language Classroom.” SAMLA. Virtual, March 2022.

- “Teaching about Protest in France: Les gilets jaunes in the Intermediate French Classroom.”** American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Virtual, November 2021.
- “The Power of TILT”** with Lorraine Dubuisson, Paige Crump, and Alison Nooks. International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning Conference. Virtual, October 2021.
- “The Power of TILT”** with Lorraine Dubuisson, Paige Crump, and Alison Nooks. D2L Fusion Conference. Virtual, July 2021. (100 attendees)
- “What Do We Mean by Critical Thinking?”** Georgia Philological Association. Virtual, May 2021.
- “Connecting Students with Native Speakers: TalkAbroad at the Intermediate Level.”** Southern Conference on Language Teaching 2021. Virtual, March 2021.
- “Teaching about Protest in France: Les gilets jaunes in the Intermediate French Classroom.”** SAMLA. Virtual, November 2020.
- “Teaching Culture in an Online Setting”** with Paige Crump. FLAG 2019. Augusta, March 2019.
- “Making the Language Classroom Textbook Free.”** USG Teaching & Learning Conference. “Best Practices for Promoting Engaged Student Learning.” University of Georgia, Athens. April 2015.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COURSES

- Oral Communicative Tasks, Michigan State University.** Competitive enrollment through application. October-November 2023.
- OneHE Courses,** including Small Teaching: Retrieving, Small Teaching: Learning through Connecting, Improving Feedback in Asynchronous Online Classes. 2021-present.
- Quality Matters Course,** “Evaluating your Course Design.” August 2022.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Monday Morning Mentor Series,** offered by CETL. 2023-present.
- Podcasts:** Teaching in HigherEd, Faculty Focus, Lecture Breakers, World Language Classroom, Unpacking Language Pedagogy, among others.
- Webinars:** regularly attend webinars by the International Association for Language Learning Technology, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy, National Foreign Language Resource Center, among others. Most recent include:
- “Maximizing Interpretive Communication” by Florencia Henshaw. September 2023.
- “Making Generative AI Work for Language Teachers” by IALLT. June 2023.
- “Fluency Development” by ACTFL. May 2023.

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION – FOCUS ON PEDAGOGY

- Reviewer,** USG Teaching and Learning Conference proposals. 2023 and 2024.
- Reviewer,** *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (3rd edition).
- Beta-tester,** MomentumU@USG, online short course on TiLT. 2021.
- Participant,** USG/James Lang Study on the Impact of Small Teaching Practices. 2021.
- Participant,** Cengage Course Development for Languages. 2020-present.
- Participant,** American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Distance Learning Special Interest Group. 2020-present.

Reflective Statement

If I can sum up my teaching philosophy in one word, it's **connection**. I strongly believe that connection fosters learning, and I strive to create a learning environment based on connections.

Connecting with students. I started my career as a French instructor (now I also teach humanities and interdisciplinary studies (IDS)). In a language class, fostering a safe and friendly learning environment is of the utmost importance because students often feel anxious. Creating a safe space starts with sharing my own journey learning English, the importance of embracing mistakes as a learning tool, and demystifying language learning by explaining how it works. In my humanities and IDS classes, I also share a lot about myself because the material is often personal (autobiographies, healthy living, mental illness, happiness) and dialogue is at the heart of my classes. When I started teaching online (asynchronously, long before covid!), what worried me the most was losing my connection with students. In *Equity-Minded Teaching*, the authors write that students in online classes often believe their professor is not real. When I taught my first few online classes, I also felt like my students were not real; they were just words on a screen. After much research, I developed several video and feedback strategies that allow me to be visible and present. Students often comment on how approachable I am online, which, I believe, is due to those strategies.

Connecting students with students. Creating a safe and friendly learning environment also means that students are comfortable talking and sharing their life experiences with one another. I am privileged to teach at an access institution where students come from all walks of life. We also have a healthy population of nontraditional students and 62+ seniors taking advantage of the free tuition. The diversity of voices I am able to pull from in my classes enriches our class discussions and brings to life the idea that listening to others and considering the world from a different perspective are essential in becoming the global citizen our interconnected, multicultural world requires. In the final class reflection in my Methods in IDS class, a student posted the following comment that reflects what I endeavor to do in class: "Since starting this course I've been challenged to consider and discuss topics that are slightly uncomfortable for me. I've learned to be a better listener which has helped me to become a better leader and team player."

Connecting students with the course material. Throughout my career, I have always strived to keep my course material fresh and relevant. Every semester, I change at least one reading and tweak an assignment in each class. I am always on the lookout for new material to use in my classes (music, films, articles, books). I have fully redesigned all levels of French by ditching my textbook completely and creating a curriculum focused on content, culture, and critical thinking, rather than on grammar as most language textbooks are. In each class, a unit is built around a film that provides cultural context for the themes, vocabulary, and grammar we study. Thanks to the TiLT framework, I have become more intentional in my selection of course materials and in the design of my assessments in all my classes. All my assessments are linked to a real-world outcome and transferrable skills, and I believe students appreciate the value of what they learn in my class.

Connecting with colleagues. In 2018, MGA disbanded our CETL effective 2019. I was scheduled to turn my humanities class online that spring and my Methods in IDS class the following fall. The task seemed daunting without the help of a CETL. Thankfully, I had had good training for online teaching and even more thankfully, I was introduced to TiLT through a USG workshop. To say that

TiLT revolutionized my teaching and helped me build quality online classes is not an overstatement. I appreciate the value of TiLT for in-person classes, but I value TiLT even more in asynchronous online classes where I have adopted it as a philosophy: a transparent syllabus, transparent unit objectives, a transparent course structure, and transparent communication. The combination of teaching more classes online, discovering the power of TiLT and having no CETL led me to apply to become a USG Chancellor's Learning Scholar in 2019. I started my own FLC focused on TiLT and best practices for online teaching. Focusing on online teaching proved quite timely as the pandemic hit during our FLC's second semester. My group was able to present our findings and experiences at our institution and at national and international conferences during the pandemic. I also worked with a cluster of MGA colleagues who saw a need to bridge the void left by CETL: I presented at our Faculty Development Days and proposed online programming during the pandemic. I was really energized by my two-year CLS experience, continued as a member of another FLC, and was then nominated for the Governor's Teaching Fellow program where I met a group of faculty who was as passionate about teaching as I was. After that program, I became a Provost's Fellow with our newly re-established CETL, and in this capacity, I have enjoyed helping organize and present at the Faculty Development Days, presenting at the new faculty orientation, participating in panel discussions on AI and TiLT, and leading a reading group on *Bandwidth Recovery*.

Connecting outside of the classroom. What happens outside the classroom is often as important as what happens inside. Since I was hired at MGA, I have strived to be a good citizen of the campus because I strongly believe that all aspects of the university contribute to our students' success. For instance, I chaired the Diversity Council and served on a variety of committees, including Academic Affairs, Academic Quality; I was also the editor for the undergraduate catalog for four years. My contributions to the institution were recognized by MGA's Service Award in 2021. I was the advisor for the Women's Studies Association for eight years, I am the advisor for the Around the World Language Club, co-organized the Francophone and Hispanic Film Series as well as Language Festivals, and I offer French conversation tables online and in person. Since the inception of the program, I have been a mentor for Knight's Lead students, a leadership initiative from our Career Center. I have mentored students to present their projects at our undergraduate research conference and to publish in our interdisciplinary journal. As the coordinator of Modern Languages and IDS, I work on curricular development for both programs. I helped with the addition of Korean classes to our existing French and Spanish offerings and added technology-oriented classes to the IDS curriculum to prepare students for the needs of 21st careers. As coordinator, I advise many students every semester and make sure they receive a personalized advising experience. In the past few years, I have organized presentations to help our students be successful in their language classes (how to study and overcome language-learning anxiety) and facilitated professionalization events for our IDS majors (How to market your IDs degree?).

My parents taught me that education, having a job, and being a well-rounded individual able to think for themselves are the foundation for a meaningful life. As a teacher, I prepare students for their career, open their minds to different perspectives and cultures, and help them understand the value of life-long learning. I take this task seriously and enjoy it tremendously.

Summary of Innovative Teaching Strategies

I already mentioned TiLT as a powerful and effective strategy, so I will not expand on it here other than to note that TiLT and UDL principles underpin every aspect of my teaching. I would also like to add that the strategies I outline below are the fruit of my 24 years of experience teaching and the fruit of my research. Some books that have influenced me are Lang's *Small Teaching*, Darby's *Small Teaching Online*, Brown et al.'s *Make It Stick*, Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, Nilson and Goodson's *Online Teaching at its Best*, Russell and Murphy-Judy's *Teaching Languages Online*, and Henshaw and Hawkins's *Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom*.

- **The Power of “Why Not?”:** In my French classes, students often ask, “Why do you say it like that?” or “Why do you do it like that?” I do answer their questions when I can (I often cannot!), but I also invite them to ask, “Why not?” and open themselves to the possibilities of seeing the world in a different way.
- **The Power of Questions:** About five years ago, I attended a workshop focused on questions as the basis of critical thinking, inquiry, and curiosity. After this workshop, I realized that I was often the one asking all the questions in class. Since then, for every discussion, I ask students to come prepared with discussion questions and we spend class time on what makes a good question (i.e., questions that are not “which part of the reading did you like the best?”). In online classes, students answer their classmates’ questions in the discussion boards. Asking students to ask the questions may seem like a simple skill, but knowing the questions to ask is, for me, step one to good leadership and problem solving.
- **The Power of Perspective-Taking:** At the beginning of my Methods in IDS class, I set a session aside to hold a debate on a somewhat controversial issue (universal healthcare or free college tuition are my go-tos). I ask students to take a side according to their personal opinion and to form a group with their like-minded peers (it is usually pretty balanced). I then inform them that they have 30 minutes to research arguments in favor of the opposite opinion and to strategize with their group. Let’s say they stated they are in favor of UHC, they will need to argue against it. I love this exercise because students are often angry when they learn they won’t be able to argue their side; then they start researching and they gradually get involved in crafting good arguments and in refuting the arguments of the other group. The debrief of this exercise is a reflection on the importance of understanding that societal issues are complex, require an IDS approach and a willingness to genuinely hear the other side. I explain to my students that it’s not about changing their mind (I don’t actually tell them what my own opinion is because it doesn’t matter) but it’s about enriching their understanding of the world they live in.
- **The Power of Presence:** I discussed connection and presence in my reflective statement, but I reiterate it here because I believe that is a powerful strategy in my online teaching where one must put even more effort into creating a sense of community and belonging for students. I post two weekly announcements, one of them video so that students are reminded that I am indeed real. In those announcements, I recap the material of the week, clarify some concepts, and note the ideas of students who advanced our understanding of the material through their questions or comments. I assign video assignments as well so that students know that the other students are

real as well. I use Perusall as an alternative to D2L discussion boards as it allows more organic conversations. In addition, I also give detailed feedback on assignments and vary the modality: audio, video, or written. I reach out to students who are falling behind and email them when they're doing well. I tell students that the class is online but not on autopilot. I let them know how long it will take me to grade or if something is preventing me from meeting a deadline. Asynchronous classes mean we are not together at the same time in the same space. But when my students log in, I want them to “see” me and to be engaged in that moment.

- **The Power of “Making It Real”:** As a believer in TiLT, it is important to me to be explicit about the skills students are gaining and to ensure a connection between assignments and the real world. In my IDS classes, students do a midterm paper (to ensure they continue to develop their written communication skills) and a final project. All final projects must show use of some technology and must be geared toward raising awareness of the issue the class has addressed for the audience of their choice. In my “Madness, Literature, and Culture” class, a student created a social media campaign (a series of posts including resources, hashtags, and a catchy tagline) aimed at destigmatizing seeking help for mental health needs in the young African American community. In my Methods class, a student created a work-life balance video for her colleagues. I want students to see that what they learn can help them make a difference in the world. In my French classes, starting at the Intermediate I level, my students do three 30-minute conversations with a native French speaker through the TalkAbroad platform (the native speakers are specially trained). We prepare for the conversations in class by crafting questions together on the topic of the conversation and brainstorming the vocabulary they will need. Students are usually nervous, but they realize they can say more than they thought and speaking to a real French speaker other than me makes language-learning more applicable and real.
- **The Power of Mock Interviews:** As coordinator of the IDS program and as one of the instructors for Methods in IDS, the gateway class for the program, I realized that IDS seniors often were still unable to explain what IDS is. Seeing this gap, I designed a lesson on concept mapping the IDS degree so that students would visualize the skills they are learning and put them in relation to their career aspirations. In addition, I asked our Career Center to record a session on “How to Market your IDS degree” that I assign to watch. Finally, students complete a mini-mock interview where they explain to a future employer what IDS is in jargon-free language. Students have let me know they appreciate this professionalization aspect of the class. A student commented “I got to use the elevator pitch of why I was an IDS major in a couple of interviews and I would say that it worked as I got those job offers.” In elementary French I, a standard unit covers classes taken in school, majors, and future career aspirations; in my redesign of this course, I turned this unit into a professionalization unit. We look at infographics of skills U.S. and francophone employers seek in their employees, and students identify their own skills and the skills they would like to develop. We also look at various francophone resumes and discuss similarities and differences. I bring in the Career Center to do a presentation on interview skills and cover letters. Their final assignments are a cover letter in French and a mini-mock interview for their ideal entry-level job. To ensure that the interview remains at the French I level, students only answer the question “Tell me about yourself.” I ask students to say what

their major is, to talk about their strengths and skills they are developing, and give an example of work, volunteer experience, and/or involvement at the university. In other words, I have taken what is usually a unit on simply saying what classes you take and the job you want and turned it into a useful exercise to prepare them for the job market.

- **The Power of Redesign:** Every semester, I change an aspect of each class. Early November 2023, I finished a class with Michigan State University to improve oral communicative tasks in my language classes and will be implementing changes this spring. This fall, I redesigned the midterm paper for my Methods in IDS class giving the students the opportunity to either write a traditional academic paper or to write a magazine article (in the style of *The Atlantic* or *The New York Times*). I recognize that not all students plan on attending graduate school and I wanted to offer an alternative assignment still based on research but whose audience would be broader than academia. One of the students who chose the article format left this note with her submission: “This was my first time creating an article, it challenged me a lot and I highly enjoyed the work into it so much more than I thought I would! I thought you would like to know that I am now registered to take a class on Digital Writing next semester because I enjoyed this so much! Thank you for continuing to push us, I hope you enjoy the article! :)” I am continuously trying to find new ways for my students to expand their skills.
- **The Power of Grace:** When I started my teaching career, I was a young international graduate student. I was trying to find my bearings in the classroom and taught pretty much the way I had been taught: inflexible deadlines, a ‘threatening’ syllabus made of consequences for non-compliance instead of an inviting and encouraging tone. With time, confidence, and experience teaching at two access institutions (Miami Dade College and my current institution), I became more understanding of students’ life circumstances. I will again credit TiLT and wanting to do better in my online classes for the strategies I gleaned to strike a balance between maintaining high standards and extending grace to students who often need it. Following Darby’s example in *Small Teaching Online*, I now offer ‘oops tokens’ (the number depends on the length of the class) in all my classes where students can hand in assignments late no questions asked. I really didn’t think much of this but every semester, I have a student who comments on how much better they feel knowing they have those oops tokens. In the same way, when students fall behind or simply stop coming to class, I reach out asking how they are rather than letting them know they are failing the class and they need to submit assignments if they want to pass. I have reached out to our campus CARE team when students are in distress and walked students to our Counseling Center when needed. I care about my students, not just their performance in my class, but them as human beings. I no longer believe that high standards mean inflexibility.

Letter of Support from Student XX (French)

Dear Committee Members,

Before explaining why Dr. Wengier deserves this award, you should know that I am a returning student with a BBA in Finance from UGA (1981). So there’s no suspense, I’m 64, which gives me a far different perspective from the typical college student. After a long business career and countless life experiences with education, in all its forms, I recognize and appreciate that Dr. Wengier is an exceptional teacher.

She has taught me three semesters of French, and during that time, I have watched her handle a lot of classroom situations, always with grace and dignity toward the student. She has impeccable manners and is not only well respected but well liked.

Dr. Wengier's teaching style is unusually creative. She assigns interesting projects designed to activate different parts of the brain, foster critical thinking and expand understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. For example, those assignments have included conducting an introduction on a French friendship match site, writing magazine opinion articles, filming a cooking video/tasting, creating a cartoon about an adolescent life experience, watching thoughtful French films, applying for a job and more. This style is very helpful for retention, for the neuro divergent population and for the many students in our school from underserved communities. It gets students engaged with each other too.

Dr. Wengier also leads or conducts many extracurricular activities that promote international language and culture awareness. There's the French Conversation Table, the Around the World Club, and the International Club among others. Plus, she hosts events for French holidays. All are carefully executed to the highest standards, and I'm a tough critic.

In summary, Dr. Wengier is an exemplary teacher. She is encouraging, accepting, imaginative, broad minded, and fully deserving of this award. The modern language program is a fundamental building block of a well-rounded education, and I understand it is suffering from declining enrollment statewide. I hope that Dr. Wengier will ride the dark horse to victory on this award, not only to acknowledge her rare abilities but also to raise awareness for the immense value that modern language programs contribute to education.

Letter of Support from Student XX (French)

Dr. Wengier was the instructor of the very first class that I ever took at the university level. I can still remember what I learned from that very first class that I took with her three years ago. I learned a certain construction in French where you take the typical French negation (*ne...pas*) and replace the word *pas* with the word *que*. By doing so, one is able to express that one *only* does something. I am telling this story because it's crucial to highlight the fact that from the very first day, Dr. Wengier was a huge part of my academic journey and development. I can recall so much from her classes and being one of her students always came with the feeling of progression.

From the very beginning, I constantly learned from her and improved my studies and proficiency with her guidance and patience. I also truly gained my confidence with speaking in French from being in such a welcoming and comfortable environment. Part of being a good instructor is creating a space in which to allow students the ability to interact freely. Dr. Wengier always excelled at curating a space that felt open. Speaking in a foreign language is always daunting and slightly frightening, especially towards the beginning of the language learning journey. However, Dr. Wengier was the perfect professor to have in these early stages. I had such a privilege to do an independent study with Dr. Wengier. For the entire semester, she devoted so much time and attention to my desire to improve in French. She curated an entire course that was very individualized to my needs. I read cultural stories, and we had discussions every class. Her classes, lessons, and all interactions were always so engaging. For instance, I remember one lesson from a prior class that she centered around the movie "You've Got Mail". This was a creative and captivating way to teach reciprocal pronouns, since the movie had many actions that were reciprocal.

Part of why I am able to recall so much material and concepts from her classes is because I could always remember the context in which it was taught. She excels at creating memorable contexts and classes in which certain constructions, words, or cultural aspects of language are used. In doing so, one is capable to remember what's taught far better than if it was simply from a

textbook. Language is alive in the world, and she made sure to make it alive in the classroom too. It makes perfect sense to me that Dr. Wengier has been nominated for a teaching award. She is such a kind, hard-working, helpful instructor who cares greatly for her students. She encourages critical thought, self-improvement, and effort. Having her as an instructor at the beginning of my college career laid the groundwork for how to approach material and new ideas in a respectful and curious manner. Dr. Wengier is a terrific teacher who always puts her students first. I am forever grateful for her.

Letter of Support from Student XX (Online IDS Student)

My life was initially shaped by the expectations of others, following a conventional path of education and a career influenced by family pressures. This journey included enrolling at the University of South Florida (USF), joining St. John Vianney Minor Seminary under familial influence, and returning to USF after realizing the seminary was not the right fit. My academic career halted one semester before graduation due to my father's death, leading to a focus on family responsibilities. By 2013, I recognized I had hit a glass ceiling at my job followed by a series of career challenges, culminating in the termination of a strategic role in February 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Facing continuous rejections in the tech industry because of the lack of a pedigree, I decided to return to school and selected Middle Georgia State University (MGA) as my partner in my academic journey.

Dr. Sabrina Wengier played a significant role in this new academic phase. When transferring courses after a 30-year gap, Dr. Wengier's assistance was crucial, I felt supported for the first time in my life--I no longer needed to do everything by myself. In her online course, IDS 3800—Methods in Interdisciplinary Research, Dr. Wengier's engaging teaching methods, clear syllabus, and expectation for active student participation deeply impressed me. She used innovative methods like Perusall for collaborative discussions on academic articles and she connected course content to the local community of Middle Georgia, enhancing the learning experience.

Dr. Wengier set high standards, encouraging me to excel and she held me accountable through objective constructive criticism, which led to personal and academic growth. She carefully selected reading material from academic articles which provided a different facet of a difficult case study. With each article, I better understood a different piece of the problem. The final project in her course, aimed at benefiting the community, was a significant challenge and aligned with MGA's core values. I gained more confidence from the experience.

In Spring 2023, Dr. Wengier's support extended well beyond the classroom. She encouraged me to publish a term paper from another class, even assisting as a proofreader, which led to its publication in *Knighted* in Spring 2023. Her guidance transformed a middle-aged man with low self-esteem into a confident graduate student, now aiming to publish another term paper in a peer-reviewed journal. Dr. Wengier should be recognized for her educational prowess and for the personal impact she has on her students; she is a model educator. Her classroom is a transformative space where only the finest qualities thrive under her mentorship.

Evidence of Teaching Excellence

Example of a TiLTed assignment FREN 1001 – Guidelines for a Cover Letter

Purpose and Task Sections with Real-World Application

Purpose of the assignment: Many American students have already applied for a job by the time they get to college but being able to write a good cover letter (*une lettre de motivation*) for a job is a great skill to hone. I have served on many committees for staff and faculty positions at MGA and the cover letter can be a make or break for a candidate. You may be wondering, how is writing a letter in French going to help me in my

future job searches? First off, you never know where you'll end up. And second of all, because you don't know how to say everything you want to say in French, you'll have to think really hard about the essential skills you have, and being able to be brief and to the point is a great skill in and of itself.

Task: You are writing a cover letter to apply for a job in your field, explaining:

- your major,
- why you are qualified for the job (strengths and skills you are developing),
- your professional and/or experience (if you have any) or the opportunities you have seized at school to develop your skills (group projects, student clubs, etc.)

Syllabus Highlights Page (Methods in IDS class)

This is typical of my invitational syllabus style.

Make sure you read the entire syllabus (you will be quizzed over all of it at the end of this module), but here are some highlights:

- **Talk to me!** This class may be online, but it is not on autopilot... If you have questions, comments, please ask! I will answer all emails within 24 hours, either at sabrina.wengier@mga.edu (the quickest way to reach me) or through the D2L email. Note, however, that I will not answer emails on Saturday.
- **Course Materials:** You need to buy Repko *Introduction to Interdisciplinary*. The course uses the First Day Access program which means you get access to the textbook today. More on this in upcoming pages in this orientation module. All other readings will be provided in PDF format. There will also be videos that will either be on YouTube, Netflix (with an alternate if you don't have access to Netflix), or MGA Library's Streaming.
- **What is the class like?** We're going to read and write a lot. My lectures are in the content folders. Make sure you read those pages; they are the heart of the class and will help you do a good job on the assignments. I also rely heavily on your discussion board posts to advance our discussions, so make sure you are ready to contribute.
- **When is work due?** Work will be due every Sunday and Wednesday by 11:59 p.m.
- **What about late work?** We have a lot to do so let's start on the right foot and with the mindset that you will hand in everything on time. However, life happens... so you have 4 'oops tokens' for late assignments in the course of the semester. The oops/late tokens mean you can hand in your work late 4 times in the course of the semester, no questions asked. You just need to email me once you have completed the work letting me know that you would like to use an oops token and that you have completed your assignment.
- **Tech Requirements:** This is a fully online course and therefore, you need reliable access to the internet, and a way to make recordings and videos – we will do some video discussion boards and your oral presentation will be a video presentation. We'll be using the platform Perusall as well (<https://app.perusall.com/home>). Our course code is WENGIER-RKVZC.
- **Assignment Feedback:** For discussion boards, it might be just a 'good job' but many times, I will point things you are doing well and other things you could be improving, and I will respond to your ideas, so please make sure you read my comments on your work. I tend to write lots of comments on papers and this can be scary for students... My comments are not meant to scare you but rather to help you become stronger communicators.

I do not want this class to be an assignment machine (i.e., you log in, do the reading, complete the assignment, log out). I try to make the class as interactive as possible, but this requires that you do your part as well. Engage with the material and with your classmates, really read their posts and respond to their ideas, i.e., ask them questions and further their ideas with your own.

Summary of Student Evaluation Ratings fall 2019–2023

fall 2019	Elementary French I	4.58
	Intermediate French I	4.86
	Methods in IDS	4.73

spring 2020	Elementary French I Elementary French II Perspectives on Narrative HUMN 1001	4.93 4.81 4.64
summer 2020	Perspectives on Narrative HUMN 1001	4.96
fall 2020	Elementary French I Elementary French II Methods in IDS	4.5 5.0 4.83
spring 2021	Elementary French I Elementary French II	4.89 5.0
summer 2021	Perspectives on Narrative HUMN 1001 IDS Madness, Literature, and Culture	5.0 5.0
fall 2021	Elementary French I Elementary French II Methods in IDS	4.08 4.2 4.75
spring 2022	Elementary French I Elementary French II Methods in IDS	4.78 5.0 3.67
summer 2022	Perspectives on Narrative HUMN 1001 HUMN Happiness, Literature, and Culture	5.0 4.99
fall 2022	Elementary French I Elementary French II Methods in IDS	4.96 5.0 4.47
spring 2023	Elementary French I Elementary French I Elementary French II	4.82 4.94 4.95
	Average	4.76

This student comment in the anonymous course evaluation sums up what I strive to accomplish in my classes: “This course I thought would have been a breeze– well, I was not ready to be honest. However, when I attempted my first assignment it was quite interesting and after that I was hooked. The course also opened my possibilities to a myriad of areas that it can be applied – both in general/professionally and personally. Her feedbacks were quite wonderful, honest and informative at best and in especially areas that I can work on. She always maintained a good pace through the material and communicated on a very strict and timely manner–and never misses a beat. The online material itself was presented quite clearly and outlined as I would have expected, and as for fairness my grades–per my assignments were fair. I was however disappointed at one specific grade and as she outlined her reasons and areas that I needed to work on I felt quite better after the talk/critique. That kind of respect and honesty really helped, and so I was able to meet my objectives of this course. Would I take another class if she taught? Yes!!! She is one of the best there is and I look forward to taking her again in any other setting.”

Weekly Checklist in Online Classes

This is an illustration of what I mean by TiLT as a guiding philosophy online. Each weekly folder in my online classes starts with a checklist where I greet students, let them know what will be covered that week, link the material to read/watch, link the assignments that are due, let them know what we'll do in future sessions and what will be due soon, and include a fun cultural bit that engages them with the material for the day. This mimics what I do in the first five minutes of my in-person classes.



Checklist for June 8

Hello everyone! Today, we'll be discussing a really interesting concept, that of the experience machine. And I met a personal goal of mine today, to use the film *The Matrix* for a class 😊. You don't have to watch the film, but if you haven't, I highly recommend it.

To read for today:

- [Robert Nozick](#)
- [The Experience Machine I](#)
- [The Experience Machine II](#)
- [The Experience Machine & VR/AR](#)
- [The Experience Machine and The Matrix](#)
- [The Experience Machine and The Matrix II](#)

To do for today:

- [Reading Quiz](#)
- [DB1U2: The Experience Machine](#)

Heads up: We'll be watching and discussing the film *The Truman Show* (1998; PG; 1h 43m) on June 12th which you can watch for free on MGA Library's streaming site, Swank. By the way, there's quite a few movies on there that you can enjoy for free!

You'll also be writing a paper for June 15th on *The Truman Show* through the lens of one of the theories/concepts of happiness we discussed so far. Guidelines for the paper: [Guidelines: Midterm Paper](#)

Song of the Day: We're going to talk about an experience machine today, which could lead one to experience only happy events. It made me think of the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy." What concept of happiness does this song allude to?



Letter of Support from Dr. Lorraine Dubuisson – Colleague

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Dr. Sabrina Wengier for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. I have been in the enviable position in my fifteen years at MGA of benefitting from the guidance of many excellent mentors and role models, but none of them have had as profound an effect on my teaching as Sabrina.

I had the good fortune of participating in the Faculty Learning Community (FLC) that Sabrina began in 2019, and my pedagogy has been revolutionized as a consequence. Sabrina was introduced to Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT) at a USG teaching workshop, and she based that FLC on sharing the principles of TiLT with her MGA colleagues. To say that adopting TiLT has completely transformed the way I teach is an understatement. My classes are more successful, more student-centered, and more aligned with student learning outcomes; I am a better teacher because I participated in Sabrina's FLC. After the conclusion of the FLC, Sabrina and I conducted an IRB-approved study on the effects of TiLT in our online classes and published the results in a TiLT-focused special edition of *Perspectives in Learning* with an introduction by Mary-Ann Winkelmes, the creator of the theory behind TiLT. Along with other participants in the FLC, we also presented at several conferences (including an international conference) on implementing TiLT in our classes. Because Sabrina cares passionately about teaching and because she cares passionately about sharing what she knows with her colleagues, she has continued to offer workshops on a variety of pedagogical themes and is currently leading a reading group on how we can best serve marginalized students.

Although teaching is ostensibly the primary focus of what we do at MGA, so many professors are not intellectually curious about teaching. They do not approach teaching as an iterative process that requires experimentation and reflection. They do not regard teaching as the subject of life-long learning, and they are not passionate about and engaged with the subject matter and challenges that comprise the majority of their duties. Sabrina breaks that mold, and she inspires the rest of us (me)

to do so as well. I am grateful to work with Sabrina. She provides an example I strive to follow, and I can think of no one who deserves this award more.
Lorraine Dubuisson, Professor of English

Letter of Support from Dr. Sheree' Keith – Chair of Media, Culture, and the Arts

I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Sabrina Wengier's nomination for the Regents' Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. Dr. Wengier has been a valuable member of our community since 2012 and I am more than thrilled to write this letter of support. What impresses me most about Dr. Wengier, and what I think makes her particularly well-qualified for this award, is that her commitment to teaching is evident in her teaching, scholarship, and service.

Dr. Wengier's dedication to teaching is something that is widely known across our institution. She was a USG Chancellor's Learning Scholar and a leader of a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) as part of that program from 2019 through 2021. Most notably, she was then invited to be a Governor's Teaching Fellow at the University of Georgia Institute of Higher Learning in 2022. This is an extremely prestigious achievement that means Dr. Wengier is being recognized state-wide for her success in teaching.

Dr. Wengier focuses on the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT) framework, online teaching, and second language acquisition. Her work with TiLT is shared across campus and has an extremely positive impact on her teaching evaluations across the board. Her colleagues look at Dr. Wengier as a mentor for teaching and several have mentioned the positive influence she has had on their classroom teaching. She has routinely led workshops and teaching circles as part of her learning communities and as part of her service to our department and school.

A good portion of Dr. Wengier's scholarship also revolves around teaching and learning. Her two most recent publications include "Promoting Student Success with TiLT in Asynchronous Online Classes." in spring of 2023 in the journal *Perspectives in Learning* and "The Start Here Module: Creating a First Day Impression in an Online Language Class" which was published in *Dimension* in the spring of 2022. She also has numerous conference presentations at conferences such as the USG Teaching and Learning Conference, the Southern Conference on Language, and the International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning Conference.

Her commitment to teaching is evident at all levels of her career. In my department, Dr. Wengier serves as the coordinator for the BA in Interdisciplinary Studies. She advises the majority of students in this major. She works tirelessly to make sure students are on track towards graduation as well as on track with selecting classes that meet their educational and career goals. She consistently advocates for the students and is their champion in encouraging them to make wise scheduling choices and to be successful in their courses. Her dedication to the students does not end at the classroom door, but rather it influences the majority of her endeavors at this institution.

In conclusion, I am happy to see Dr. Wengier nominated for this honor as she is a valuable asset to our institution. Based on her commitment to educating our students in her teaching, service, and scholarship, there is no doubt that Dr. Wengier is deserving of this award and I am excited to write this letter for her.

Sheree Keith

Sheree' Keith, PhD Sheree.keith@mga.edu

Professor of Communication Studies and Chair of the Department of Media, Culture, and the Arts

Letter of Support from Dr. Mary Wearn – Dean of the School of Arts and Letters

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I write in support of Sabrina Wengier for the Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. Having had the privilege of working closely with Sabrina since 2003 when she joined Middle Georgia State University (MGA) as

Assistant Professor of French, I have witnessed her exceptional dedication, innovative teaching methodologies, and unwavering commitment to student success.

As a teacher who approaches her own vocation from a growth-oriented perspective, Sabrina is a model of learning and an inspiration to her students. She is constantly evolving as a teacher through intentional professional development -- including attending University System of Georgia (USG) and MGA Teaching and Learning webinars and workshops; completing Quality Matters online learning training; serving as a Chancellor's Learning Scholar; and most notably completing the prestigious Governor's Teaching Fellowship.

What distinguishes Sabrina as an exemplary teacher is her innate ability to adapt and experiment with diverse teaching techniques and technologies. Whether incorporating the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework or leveraging online platforms like Perusall, Sabrina consistently seeks ways to enrich her students' learning experiences. Her commitment to innovative approaches is also quite evident in her robust course redesigns, which were supported by competitive MGA grants.

Moreover, Sabrina's dedication to meeting students at their individual levels and her exceptional rapport-building skills enable her to connect with MGA's highly diverse student body effectively. Her commitment to serving students of varied backgrounds and college readiness aligns seamlessly with Middle Georgia State University's hybrid access mission and commitment to academic excellence.

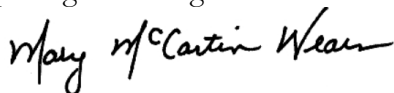
As an educator in French, Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS), and the Humanities, Sabrina also exemplifies the School of Arts and Letters' commitment to providing a career-ready liberal arts education. By incorporating professionalizing elements such as mock job interviews in her classes, Sabrina demonstrates her dedication to preparing students for real-world challenges and achievement.

Beyond her instructional efforts, Sabrina's impact on student success extends to mentoring and advising students, facilitating the MGA Student French Conversation Table, guiding University-wide student support events such as "How to Study for your Language Class," and serving as the faculty advisor to the student "Around the World" club. She clearly understands that student learning necessarily extends beyond the confines of the classroom.

Sabrina's commitment to student success has also profoundly impacted the greater teaching and learning culture at Middle Georgia State. An incredibly generous and highly respected faculty member, Sabrina continuously shares her pedagogical wisdom with peers across the University. She has offered professional development training within the School of Arts & Letters on many occasions and was of invaluable service to her peers when COVID-19 demanded a precipitous shift to online learning. She now serves as a Provost's Fellow to MGA's Center for Teaching and Learning and spreads best practices for student success across the University.

In summary, Sabrina Wengier's passion for teaching, her unwavering commitment to student success, and her profound impact on pedagogical advancement at MGA make her a truly exceptional educator. Her dedication not only transforms students' lives but also elevates teaching standards and supports student success across our institution.

It is without hesitation that I offer my highest recommendation for Sabrina in her candidacy for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. Her contributions and impact on teaching at Middle Georgia State University are immeasurable, and she is undoubtedly deserving of this prestigious recognition.



Mary McCartin Wearn, Dean of the School of Arts & Letters