

From: [TLC](#)
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Subject: Ten Questions for Faculty Series
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The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions For Faculty* series. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Dr. Dani L. Peterson, Professor of French.



Dr. Dani L. Peterson
Professor of French

Where are you from?

I grew up in the tiny town of Corsica, South Dakota. Most of my family still lives in South Dakota, but I think the siren call of Florida weather during the winter months may lure some of my other family members here!

Which college or university did you attend?

I graduated with a BA from Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, MI. From there, I traveled a bit before ending up at The University of Alabama where I completed my MA and started my Ph.D. coursework in Romance Languages: Concentrations in Spanish and French.

When did you begin teaching at FSW?

I started teaching at FSW in the Fall of 2016. I am coming up on the five-year mark!

What is your favorite food?

I will never turn down pizza. But I also like to discover new foods. So, it may be possible that I haven't found my favorite food yet. ...But, yeah, pizza.

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?

This is the question that I was most intimidated by because my answer changes so often. (...Also, the answers provided by my previous colleagues have all been so profound and timely!) This week, I would say... Edgar Allan Poe. When I was in high school, I performed *The Tell-Tale Heart* as part of my school's Oral Interpretation team. Later in the college for a performance class, I presented *The Raven*, since then, I've always been curious about Poe's creative process. The fun for me of those performances was seeing the shock in the audience (somehow, no one ever expected those performances out of me)! I have wondered since then if that was the joy for Edgar Allan Poe, also. What was his process? His inspiration? Was he in it for the shock value? I'd love to have a (creepy) dinner with him to find out!

What is your favorite local restaurant?

I really like Ninja Thai & Sushi Bar, which is not too far from FSW's Lee Campus. The food is great, of course, but, many great lunches and dinners there with friends and colleagues from FSW may also be influencing this answer. I would also recommend The Shrimp Shack. It is near where I live, and, like the name implies, it can always be counted on for tasty, inexpensive shrimp!

What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?

I have always been relatively comfortable with technology, but I would say working remotely is a constant lesson in learning to be more efficient with it and exploring new ways of integrating it in my teaching. However, one lesson that I seem to repeat over and over is calibration! My colleagues here at FSW and at other institutions have given me so many great ideas for using technology for online instruction. When I hear of something working well in someone else's classroom, I immediately want to try it in mine! (Like... Let's do it right now! Plan? Well, do I need a plan when I've got a vision?! I'm sure everything is going to work well and there will be no problems!) I have learned (and continue to learn) that adding things a little bit at time, with a solid plan, makes for a lot less stress for both myself and my students. (At least I get a lot fewer student emails that way!)

How do you think COVID-19 has changed the way we do things or has changed your outlook on life?

I can be a bit of a perfectionist... So, the abrupt transition forcefully reminded me that perfection does not exist. A task can get done effectively without it being perfect. It is reminder that learning, changing, and adapting happens whether we are comfortable with it or not! And, letting go of a perfect outcome allows for us to question what's necessary what needs be let go. But, most importantly, it is okay to let some things go!

Secondly, I was reminded that one of the many benefits of being at work was getting to chat with everyone there! Some colleagues on campus lovingly (I'm sure it's lovingly! ...Right?!) refer to me as the Walmart greeter of our hallway. I enjoyed the daily opportunity of checking-in with colleagues and students on campus. And, I really look forward to taking up my greeting duties once we return! In the meantime, I've had to learn how to check-in with people from a distance. Luckily for me there are phone calls, texts, emails, and even Zoom meetings.

What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?

After Spring break and while transiting to working from home, I walked... a LOT! (My family lovingly referred to my habit as "walking away the crazy"!) One of my favorite things to do is get outside and listen to music, a podcast, or an audio book. On that note, I have been reading and listening to as many (fictional) books as I can get my hands on! (I have definitely been indulging in literary escapism.) Now that the weather is turning a little warmer and more humid, I don't find

myself walking as much... But the reading has continued! I missed out on the bread baking craze that swept through my friends and family on social media. But I keep myself busy reading, crocheting, and Netflixing.

What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?

I don't know that I consider myself any kind of expert in navigating social isolation, but some things that have been very helpful for me have been making the conscious effort to connect with friends and family everyday through phone calls, texts, videos, and/or video-conferencing apps like FaceTime or Google Duo. Some college friends and I have even been trying to figure out how to have game nights through Zoom! (Tbh... The actual card games are not actually working... But we're having fun with this project even though our efforts have been mostly failure!) Checking in daily with friends and family has become necessary for me! So, I would say, reach out! Check in with friends, family, and yourself. Just... Check in!

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator for the Teaching and Learning Center: kwestfield@fsw.edu

