



# Georgia Institute of Technology

Writing and Communication Program

April 9, 2011

Dear Selection Committee,

When I needed pedagogical advice recently, I tracked down Jesse and asked if he could help me. I'd heard him talk about teaching on numerous occasions. He's passionate about the subject, but more than that, Jesse also just gives really good advice. He understands how classrooms work in a way that sometimes seems intuitive, but is in fact grounded in a thorough understanding of pedagogical practice. I asked for Jesse's input about a lesson I was planning and he offered constructive criticism that was at once affirming, but also enabled me to see where I could do better. My lesson was considerably enhanced as a result of that discussion. Moreover, through our conversation, I also began to appreciate Jesse's ability to inspire confidence while motivating improvement, a skill that he brings not only to his interactions with colleagues, but also to his work with students.

Last week, I observed Jesse teaching one of his English 1102 multimodal composition classes. Jesse's classroom presence is friendly and professional; he puts students at ease while keeping them fully focused on the academic matters at hand. On that day, he led a discussion that addressed the rhetorical construction of arguments via media. The class had a two-part design, beginning with analysis of a clip from a T.V. series and transitioning into a discussion of the arguments students are making in their own movie projects. The discussion covered considerable ground, including the rhetorical use of sound and image, figuration as rhetorical technique, technology as mediator of reality, and the ethical questions that arise when science intervenes into nature. Many students participated in the conversation, which was lively and fun while also addressing key issues in multimodality and the relationships between science and culture.

A day or two after I'd observed his class, Jesse stopped by my office with two of his students who were scouting locations for their movie project. It was one of many stops across the offices of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Skiles – and beyond. Their visit demonstrated something of which I had not previously taken note, and that is how Jesse is challenging his students to make use of Georgia Tech as a resource. His students are looking at the university and its Atlanta surroundings as more than a space in which they live and work, but as a collection of sites that themselves communicate in different ways.

Upon hearing of the 2011 Teaching Award for Brittain Fellows, I offered to write a letter of support for Jesse; he did not ask me to do so. I volunteered to write this letter and I strongly believe Jesse should win the teaching award because he is an exceptional teacher who makes those around him better teachers as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle G. Gibbons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michelle G. Gibbons, PhD  
Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow