

Bob Jennings Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

My area of study is a Master's of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. My primary areas of interest are in learning styles, motivations, as well as the impact that digital technology has had on learning and engagement.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

My primary motivation is to become more knowledgeable about education from a broader perspective and to better understand the growing options available for students in both K12 as well as higher education. I also have a strong belief in the role of parental support in order for students to have more opportunities to excel in their learning and development.

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

I believe that social networking, when used properly, can have significant benefits to engaging students and allow for more collaboration among students. With that said, I believe that there is a downside to social networking and I am concerned about students becoming less effective with face-to-face communications at all levels.

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

I would have to say that exercising is my best form of stress-reduction, whether it is biking, walking, swimming, and even mowing the grass while listening to an audiobook.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

Oddly enough, Portraits of an Educator, by Thomas Guskey was my most recent book that I read for pleasure. It is a great perspective on Benjamin Bloom, who is best known for Blooms Taxonomy, and the stories by his students and colleagues are very enlightening I believe. I am also a big fan of Grapes of Wrath, which I tend to read about every other year.

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

Without question, my most meaningful academic relationship has been the one that has been developed with Dr. Kristan Morrison at Radford University. I had the opportunity to take EDET 607 with Dr. Morrison as my first course in this program in the spring of 2012 and it immediately opened my mind to a world of education that I was not aware of and I became incredibly curious to learn more. We have shared many articles on education as well as books over the past couple of years and I now have the opportunity to have her for EDET 610 this summer. The impact that she has made on me as a student and as a person will be with me for the rest of my life and I will be forever grateful for all that she has done for me.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

Since I finished my bachelor's degree in 1984, I was not mentally prepared for the level of reading, writing and research that would be involved in this pursuit. It has made me a better person and though I was very disciplined prior to beginning this program, this has elevated that to another level and I have enjoyed almost every minute of it.

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

Unless my wife, 3 sons, and extended family can join me on that trip then I truly have no interest in going. If I did decide to change my mind and to make this trip, I would most certainly ask to take as many books along as I possibly could-preferably in hardback copies.

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

I am a big fan of Italian food, whether it be spaghetti, eggplant parmesan, or pizza. I do not have these as often as I would like and unless I decide to begin competing in triathlons once again, I will continue to make them a less frequent option.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

I had made a decision to either pursue graduate school aggressively or to begin training for triathlons again since my middle son, Taylor (Radford alum and current Ed student there) is one of the top triathletes in the region at the Half Ironman distance. He also competed in the World Championships for the Half Ironman in Las Vegas last summer, so I would like to attempt to be an athlete once again, if not for this educational pursuit.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

Fall of 2014