A Work In Progress

In reflecting on my past learning goals, I described how my growing awareness of the importance of context in learning design helped to create focus in my goal setting. Not surprisingly, I have built my plans for future learning around context as well. Although I still have broad interests, I aim to concentrate my efforts to grow and maintain skills and knowledge relevant to the contexts where I will be working the most. Throughout my work history, those contexts have changed fairly often as I have explored different professional opportunities.

In the very near future, my professional context will be changing again. I will be starting a new position (and hopefully beginning a new phase of my career) supporting the distance learning program at a local university. In this role, I will be maintaining and troubleshooting courses, researching new technologies, providing technical training and assistance to team members, and contributing to process improvements. As such, I plan to focus on growing my skills in Web development and accessible course design. I also plan to continue to follow news related to emerging technologies and practices in distance learning--things like gameful course design--as well as research literature related to higher education, psychology, and educational technology.

Because I will be supporting the development and maintenance of eLearning courses, it will be essential for me to sharpen my Web development and production skills. I need to refresh my knowledge of Dreamweaver for authoring and editing web pages. I also need to expand my knowledge of HTML and CSS coding syntax. Not only will this help me to create new pages, it will help me to understand how current pages are built and function, which will enable me to blend new pages into existing designs and identify areas where the current systems could be improved. To start to learn these tools and technologies, I plan to consult a variety of resources including tutorial videos from Lynda.com and self-paced courses from Udemy and CodeAcademy.

Accessible design was an important concern for all of the eLearning projects I contributed to in my past eLearning-related position with MountainTop Technologies. As government contracted developers, our products were required to comply with the accessibility standards set in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which were created to ensure that persons with disabilities could access all government-furnished information. This ideal aligns with the missions of schools and universities, like the one I will be working for, to make great educational experiences available to all students. As the popularity of distance learning programs grows and learner population rises, differing needs of students become more pronounced. In order to support the university's mission, I will need to maintain awareness of standards and best practices relating to accessibility and universal design, like those defined by organizations such as the World Wide Web Consortium, Quality Matters, and the International Society for Technology in Education. I can increase my knowledge of standards

and best practices by subscribing to organization newsletters, reading published reports, attending conferences, and joining learning networks. The knowledge that I gain will directly affect the work that I do maintaining courses, researching and evaluating technologies, and suggesting improvements to processes and procedures.

Although researching new technologies and trends in educational practice will not be a large part of my job responsibilities, it will be one of the most important functions of my role and a key part of my long-term career development. Technology continually changes and evolves just as practices, frameworks and systems are continually tested and refined. As an educational technology professional, I will need to keep up with these changes in order to stay relevant. Any employer or client I work for will be relying on me to maintain an informed perspective of and provide expert guidance on the use of technologies to enhance learning. I already follow developments related to technology and education through online publications including *Wired*, *The Verge* and *Mind Shift*. I plan to expand my resources to include sites like *Inside Higher Ed* and peer-reviewed journals like *Games and Culture*. I also plan to work through a growing list of books to improve my leadership and design skills including *Crucial Conversations, The Design of Everyday Things,* and *Thinking in Systems*.

Even though I will soon be earning a master's degree, I have come to realize through my studies that mastery of a subject like educational technology is much more of a continuous process than a static state of being. My expertise (much like my career) continues to be a work in progress, and my success depends on continual learning, exploration and discovery.