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Dear Colleagues,

I'm very pleased to write, as part of Dr Chris Friend's promotion package, to provide details of his exemplary influence at and contributions to the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI), which I direct -- influence and contributions that are, quite frankly, positively game-changing.

By way of disclosure, at the outset of this letter I'm duty bound to note that I hold a Distinguished Professorship in a Faculty of Humanities' Department of English, a cross-appointment in a Department of Computer Science, a position as visiting research professor at Kings College London, where I taught some time ago, and have held visiting positions in the Institute for English Studies at U London (Researcher: 2005, 2008), at Kyoto's Ritsumeikan U (Research Professor: 2010) and Sheffield Hallam U (Research Professor: -2010), NYU (Distinguished Visiting Professor: 2013), U Tokyo (Visiting Professor: 2014), U Passau (Visiting Professor: 2014-15), Western Sydney U (Visiting Professor: 2014-15, 2017-18), as Leverhulme Visiting Professor at U Loughborough (2019), and as Global Innovation Chair in Digital Humanities at U Newcastle (2019-22); I've recently completed the second term of a Canada Research Chair position in humanities computing at my own institution, recently also serving as a member of the Council (=board) for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (our chief funding agency in the area), as a Vice President / Director (for research dissemination) for the Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences (a group representing a constituency of over 90,000) and as Chair of the international Alliance of Digital Humanities Organisations, as well as two terms as President of our national digital humanities organization, the Canadian Society for Digital Humanities / Société canadienne des humanités numériques (CSDH/SCHN). I mention this so forthrightly because I understand that these positions give me a rare, panoramic perspective of the area in which I work – and, over the past several years, have put me in a position of evaluating and reviewing a considerable number of dossiers and packages of the sort presented for competitions and assessment in the area.

DHSI is the largest dedicated digital humanities curriculum in the world, a pedagogical partnership of over 30 institutions and academic organizations plus an expanding international training network, led by the Electronic Textual Cultures Lab at U Victoria. In 2019, DHSI welcomed over 850 faculty, staff, and students from the Arts, Humanities, Library, and Archives communities — as well as independent scholars and participants from industry and government sectors — for over 70 courses (including workshops), led by an instructional team of just under 100. DHSI's alumni group is just under 5000 large, and it mobilizes well in excess of $1 million in training funding annually.

For the past several years, Friend has led DHSI courses on critical digital pedagogy, with co-instructors of his choice that have included Chris Gillard, Robin DeRosa, and Jesse Stommel building on many years as a leading member of our pedagogical community at DHSI. His experience with the *Hybrid Pedagogy* group has him working with leading scholars in the field, in areas of critical pedagogy, open education, digital surveillance, and other important topics; his ability to bring them into the classroom (in person, or via virtual means) to speak in their areas of expertise is inspiring – often extending considerations of such topics beyond the walls of the classroom, and into the lives of those participating in his courses … many of whom at DHSI are already pedagogical practitioners, many trainers or teachers and professors themselves, who will apply what they learn in their course with Friend immediately.

His most recent offering, "Critical Pedagogy and Digital Praxis in the Humanities," cuts to the core of debates and discussions happening internationally today around issues in digital pedagogy. Its description is as below:

> This course will focus on building community in collaborative digital learning environments and will interrogate notions of outcomes, best practices, and instructional design. Our work together will be productive, grounded in praxis, and driven by learner experiences.
>   Digital Humanities, with its deep reliance on technological tools, is replete with courses about those tools. This course offers an alternative: It is an exploration of pedagogy, challenging teachers to re-think how they approach their classes and interact with their students. We will discuss critical pedagogy and the importance of letting students define, control, and take responsibility for, their learning environment. This course will also serve as a playground, letting participants experiment with critical digital pedagogy in a class-created open-access online course that we co-design, build, deploy, promote, and assess, all within the one-week seminar. Participants will leave with a better understanding of their approaches to teaching and how critical digital pedagogy applies to DH courses.

The foundation of this course, and others before, has been immense – and, in experience surveys following the course, those in the course have praised Friend's critical acuity, pedagogical prowess, broad ability to engage important ideas with those who are first encountering them – on their own terms, and the traditions and foundations those ideas are situated – as well as genial temperament conducive to serious learning, reflecting the deep knowledge of someone genuinely attuned to the field and its contexts and traditions. This is commendable.

So, too, is his conscious student-focused emphasis on process, outcome, and experience-of-engagement. I have witnessed this first hand, spending time in class (as my DHSI directorial role encourages, as an observer of / visitor to the class) and admiring the way in which necessary, complex and at times potentially-challenging ideas were presented from various perspectives to ensure that all the backgrounds and aptitudes of those in the class were reflected … this providing a firm foundation for building, cumulatively. I've noted how those in his classes at DHSI find him approachable and welcoming, understanding, and a model of the mixed-mode and digital pedagogy he practices himself very much worth aspiring to. Further, given that Friend's course has pragmatic outcome – a group-

generated website reflecting the materials of the course as they approach and consider them, usually with additional reflection – participants can readily bring that model of engagement into their own classrooms and other pedagogical spheres.

To this, I might add that Friend's more broad contributions to DHSI and the life of our community have been both considerable and significant, from a presence in other courses taken as participant and talks he has given in his areas of expertise at other events in DHSI, to participation in unconference activities where he brings the same strong critical acuity as to his classroom, to our instructional planning meetings where his ability to capture the essence of a complex situation and then gently restate/rearticulate it in such a way as consensus can be built around it, and beyond.

Reflecting the above, it was a delight when colleagues suggested we invite Friend to contribute a chapter to a forthcoming praxis-oriented Digital Humanities essay collection. His piece in that collection, entitled "Starting With Students: Open Course Design" and co-authored with DeRosa and Stommel, was a reviewers' favourite (in referee reports we received via the press), and we hope very much it will come out in the next few months of 2019. Further, when asked last year by those in a leading international literary studies organisation, about whose digital pedagogical approach I found most inspiring, it was a great pleasure to write a paragraph about Friend's most recent course at DHSI, drawing in particular on the way in which it brought together a strong experience with teaching, an expertise with the traditions of pedagogy, and a very positive awareness of contemporary concerns and opportunities.

I'll wrap up. Friend is a pleasure to work with in this way and many others, and his contributions as I've encountered them at DHSI (documented in the above) have been nothing short of remarkable. I understand it is the same in other contexts as well.

I'm very pleased to write in very strong support of his tenure in this way, and encourage you to be in touch if I can provide any further details. It would be a pleasure to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Ray Siemens