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Dear future Hornets,

My name is Erin Merritt.

When I returned to the Binghamton area to attend Broome and Davis College, I had already completed a graphic design certificate. I had already learned practical print design and computer software skills in Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator. So, it was so strange to me to “back-track” into art theory as a visual communications arts student. As you can tell from the next brief reminisces, my pragmatic graphic design brain struggled to understand the fine arts.

One of my strong memories was of Professor Patricia Evans’ class. We often made collages and paper sculptures to meet project criteria. With most assignments, we had to give a short presentation about the piece. I remember watching a fellow art major give a lengthy talk on the deep, profound, political, so-subtle-that-it -needed-to-be-carefully-explained meaning of her project. At the time, I thought, “Oh, thank goodness I am just going to be a designer and I don’t have to be a cryptic fine art genius.”

In Professor David Zeggert’s class, I remember being nervous about the next drawing subject – a young lady. Luckily, my classmates agreed on a bikini instead of nakedness for her, and I didn’t have to speak up! I also remember having my hands covered in pencil dust as I tried and tried to keep the expression in my self-portrait from looking peeved. I blame that more on my decision to take the course in the evening after a day’s work rather than Professor Zeggert’s class!

I started working in the SUNY Broome Marketing and Communications department in 2011. As a student worker, and later an employee, I did minor website updates, posted stories to the college web publication, The Buzz, and created various posters, billboards, brochures, and digital graphics. I was probably more engaged in this work than in my coursework! In 2018, I accepted a full-time position as the SUNY Broome Foundation’s communications specialist. This meant I moved to the opposite end of the upstairs hallway in the Darwin R. Wales Center.

In 2023, I realized I’d been typing at a desk in Wales for about 12 years. I have made some wonderful friendships in my two departments.

Recently, the Foundation started an employee recognition program, Very Inspiring Person. I especially love it when we award a staff member who works quietly and faithfully behind the scenes and doesn’t tend to be recognized.

Another cool thing is that I get to interact with alumni. I’ve heard stories about when odors of a nearby pig farm disrupted non-air-conditioned classrooms or when the library used to be in Wales. Sometimes, former Hornets talk to me as if I attended in the 80s alongside them instead of the 2010s. Sometimes, they are so sad and surprised that their favorite professor or mentor passed away long ago. I didn’t have much college pride as a student – I was too focused on work and grades. But learning the history of this campus and knowing the sheer amount of people we’ve helped in their careers has made me a genuine believer in SUNY Broome.

In the futuristic year that you read this letter, I hope the college is still bringing accessible and affordable education to the area and our graduates still look back to SUNY Broome with fondness.

Erin Merritt

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