



## **School of Dramatic Art**

401 Sunset Avenue  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada N9B 3P4  
519-253-3000 Ext. 2814

20 October, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to sing the praises of Lorie Stolarchuk who has come to my aid over the years in so many different ways: as the resident expert on Blackboard, its tools and features; as an instructor; as a calming voice when I lost my way with technical matters; and as a guiding light in times when I was so overwhelmed that I was on the brink of losing it. She has always been there for me when I needed her, during office hours, after office hours and even throughout the weekend. I find her to be extremely knowledgeable about her work and remarkably dedicated to helping others. She is one of the most dependable support persons with whom I have ever had the pleasure to work. Her kindness and thoughtfulness are exemplary.

In what follows I will give you a brief idea of some of the mindboggling challenges I faced over the last year and how Lorie got me through them. Around noon on December 20, 2019, I discovered that I had been locked out of two of my three class Blackboard sites due to an omission (my name as professor) on the paperwork. The university was about to close for the Christmas holiday. In fact, the messages I received from the two individuals who might have been able to rectify the situation in the Registrar's Office indicated that they were already away from their desks. Knowing that I could not prepare my class sites over the holidays if I couldn't access them, I started to panic. I had a lot of material that needed posting. Waiting for January would have turned the launch of the semester into a mad, mad rush. Just before noon I emailed Lorie, hoping she'd still be in her office, explaining my situation. By two o'clock, Lorie had contacted Tim, requesting that he do an override so I could work on my Blackboard sites during the break. Problem solved.

When the university shut down this March due to the COVID-19 outbreak, I was faced with an unexpected issue which centred specifically on the video uploads of my students' work. Normally, I tape all student acting presentations, exam included, and then I personally upload them from my video camera to UVUEW, linking them to the appropriate Blackboard sites. Since we were no longer in a classroom situation, the students used their phones to tape both their end-of-term presentations and, one week later, their exam presentations. These came to me as email attachments. This was incredibly problematic not only because a number of the videos needed conversion, but also because some of the converted videos skewed the data ratio which caused a terrible, almost unviewable, visual distortion. The first person I contacted was Lorie,

who immediately submitted a Team Dynamix Service ticket to IT for me, copying and pasting the information I sent her into the ticket. Because of Lorie, I was connected to two IT technicians who put their heads together to tackle the problem. It took them some time to resolve the ratio issue, but they figured it out. Lorie followed up with a personal email telling me she'd be there if I needed additional help, even though video conversion and ratio reconfiguring weren't her areas of expertise.

On Friday September 11, my department head emailed me to see if I would be able to take over the online teaching of a Drama course. This came as a huge surprise to me for two reasons: first, because a friend and colleague had had a heart attack; and, second, because that spring I had been informed that no sessional courses were being assigned to me in the 2020-2021 scholastic year. As a consequence, I did not enroll in any of the online courses which taught professors how to use various platforms to teach online. Although I was comfortable with using Blackboard and UVIEW, I had minimal experience with Teams, and zero experience with Zoom and Stream.

I saw the department head's email the next morning and immediately emailed Lorie asking her for help. It was a Saturday. She responded less than ten minutes later. Drama was using Zoom but, she said, the university didn't support it. She did, however, send me a number of Zoom URLs, which helped curb my growing panic. She also informed me that Stream had replaced UVIEW, so I would have to learn how to use that platform in order to upload student videos onto Blackboard. Since Bodek Frak was the Stream expert, she cc.ed my original email to him so he would know about my predicament. She suggested I ask the Dean of FAHSS for a Request to Access form and then told me to contact Nick Baker at OOL. During our exchanges, Lorie took the time to explain—in ways I could understand—the differences between Zoom and Stream (what they could and couldn't do) and sent me visual aids on the Office 365 portal and how to access the Bb Café. In addition, I received numerous URLs for additional help on Stream and Blackboard.

By Sunday, Lorie had essentially connected me to all the people who could bring me up to speed about the various platforms I need to access and the tools I needed to use in order to teach a drama course online. On Monday I had two separate Team meetings: one with Nick Baker, Mark Lubric and Dave Cormier; a second with Graham Fawcett (my UVIEW contact). Lorie was the common thread that connected me to everyone else that weekend. I felt like I was a part of a very supportive team and that I had a chance of succeeding against almost insurmountable odds. In fact, I was so impressed with this team effort that I wrote an unsolicited letter of thanks to the Dean of FAHSS, praising this group of incredible people.

As my last point I would like to say that Lorie is a very organised, prepared and effective teacher. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, I participated in the CTL workshop *on Blackboard and Microsoft 365 (inc. Teams): Features and Limits*. Six individuals ran the workshop like a well-oiled machine. Even though I was new most of what was being discussed, I was able to process and retain a

great deal of technical information (which actually surprised me). As always, Lorie provided a page of URLs for me to click on my own time.

I may be a little biased, but I have to say that Lorie has been there for me time and again: she's a gem. She's an email away, day, night or on weekends. She's helpful, caring, personable and pulls teams together in the blink of an eye to get people through the hard times with the support they need. Two thumbs up!

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Cottreau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deborah" and last name "Cottreau" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. Deborah Cottreau