

To: The APA Board of Officers
From: David W. Concepción, American Association of Philosophy Professors (AAPT)
RE: Report on the July 2018 AAPT Teaching and Learning Seminar, Greensboro, NC
Date: 8/13/18

(1) Executive Summary

The 2018 AAPT T&L Seminar was a success. Here is some selected feedback from our graduate student participants:

“an intensive, potentially life-changing experience where you become a more learner-centered teacher.”

“transformative”, “profound”, “special”, and “human.”

“eye-opening ... there's this whole world of things to learn about teaching.”

“It is what the Teaching Skills seminar for Ph.D. students preparing to be instructors of records should be.”

“I am sad that it is over and I wish I had a time machine so I could do it again.”

For an overview of the workshop please see Appendix 1. For a list of facilitators and participants, please see Appendix 2. For a more detailed summary of participant responses, please see Appendix 3.

(1) Summary of Participant Evaluations

Sixteen of 20 participants returned evaluations. All respondents found the seminar helped them grow as learning-centered teachers who can well identify valuable learning objectives, construct pedagogies to help students achieve these objectives, and assess how well students are doing (and identify how to adjust). No “disagree” or “strongly disagree” ratings were received.

QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES

(4=Strongly Agree; 3=Agree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree)

The seminar increased my understanding of learning-centered teaching	AVE. 3.94
The seminar illustrated how to identify how I want students to grow (learning objectives)	AVE. 3.81
The seminar illustrated how to identify innovative instructional strategies (pedagogy)	AVE. 3.88
The seminar illustrated how to discover how my students are doing (assessment)	AVE. 3.63

(2) Summary of Facilitators' Reflections on Workshop in Light of Evaluations

Strengths

- Facilitators, including the variety in their teaching styles
- Engaged/interactive learning activities
- Emphasis on learner-centeredness
- Content: Focus on how to make teaching decisions and punctuate with examples
- Respondents are able to articulate innovations they plan to implement

- 100% of respondents would recommend the workshop to others

Weaknesses

- Have a facilitator share a syllabus they actually use
- Have participants work on their own syllabi

(3) Lead Facilitator's Recommendations Going Forward

Keep the same basic structure:

- Build the seminar around learner-centeredness and (intentional and transparent) alignment of learning objectives, pedagogy, and formative assessment.
- Retain the Fink reading as the centerpiece to the entire experience.
- Keep the number of facilitators at three, with varying presentation styles and practices modeled.

Reflection

There hasn't been a more successful workshop/seminar. The evaluations suggest that participants learned a great deal. The Dotson reading strikes me as especially powerful and should likely be a part of all of the workshops/seminars for the next few years.

APPENDIX 1

American Association of Philosophy Teachers
Teaching and Learning Seminar
Greensboro, NC, July 2018

An Overview

The AAPT Seminar on Teaching and Learning shows participants how to improve their skills as learning-centered teachers. Participants study how to identify and select challenging and transformative learning objectives. By understanding the principles of integrated course design, participants appreciate how to best guide students to the successful achievement of these goals. Further, participants develop educative assessment strategies that allow them to measure success, continue to innovate, and create even deeper learning.

Readings

Prior to arriving for the workshop please read the following, all of which are attached:

Core Reading

- (1) L. Dee Fink, "A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning"
<https://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf>
- (2) L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), App. A. [Pedagogy]

Additional Required Reading

- Susan A. Ambrose, et. al., "How Do Students Develop Mastery?," in *How Learning Works: 7 research-based principles for Smart Teaching* (Jossey-Bass, 2010): 91-119. [Pedagogy]
- Kristie Dotson, "Concrete Flowers: Contemplating the Profession of Philosophy," *Hypatia*, 26/2 (SPRING 2011): 403-409. [Learning Objectives]
- Paul Green, "How to Motivate Students: A Primer for Learner-Centered Teachers," *AAPT Studies in Pedagogy* 1 (2015): 47-60. DOI 10.5840/aaptstudies20159184. [Learning Objectives]
- John Immerwahr, "The Case for Motivational Grading," *Teaching Philosophy* 34:4 (Dec. 2011): 335-346. [Assessment]
- David J. Nicol and Debra Macfarlane-Dick, "Formative Assessment and Self-regulated Learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice," *Studies in Higher Education* 31:2 (April 2006): 199-218. DOI: 10.1080/03075070600572090 [Assessment]

Schedule

Time Topic

Day 1

.5 Overview, key concepts (Dave)
2.5 hours Learning Objectives (Christina)

Day 2

3 hours Pedagogy (Dave)

Day 3

- 2.5 Assessment (Rebecca)
- .5 Starting a T&L group in your department as a graduate student (Adam)

Day 4

- 1 Answer participant questions (All)
- 1 A teaching career with a growth mindset about teaching (Stephen)
- .5 There is no way we won't be at least .5 behind so just don't schedule anything
- .5 Tie it all together (Dave)

Shared Meanings

By "Learning Objectives" we mean whatever is the answer to this question: How do you want students to be different after their time with you?

By "Pedagogy" we mean whatever is the answer to this question: What will you design for students to do, and in which order, so that they end up different in the way you hope?

By "Assessment" we mean whatever is the answer to these two questions: How do you know if your students have changed in the way you hoped they would (at time X in the semester)? Given the answer to the previous question, how should you adjust?

APPENDIX 2

Facilitators and Participants

AAPT T&L Seminar July 2018 Greensboro, NC

Seminar Facilitators

David Concepción, Ball State University, dwconcepcion@bsu.edu
 Christina Hendrick, Univ. of British Columbia, christina.hendricks@ubc.ca
 Rebecca Scott, Harper College, rebecca.g.scott@gmail.com
 Stephen Bloch-Schulman, Elon University, sschulman@elon.edu
 Shadower
 Adam Thompson, University of Nebraska, art@unl.edu

Participants

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APPENDIX 3

Post-Workshop Evaluation Responses
AAPT T&L Seminar
July 2018 Greensboro, NC

QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES

(4=Strongly Agree; 3=Agree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree)

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Do you plan on implementing one or more innovation in a course as a result of your participation in the workshop? If yes, please describe at least one change and the motivation behind it.

Yes, particularly it helped me understand new ways of thinking about my learning goals. I plan on developing those on a more granular level. It seemed in the seminar that making these goals explicit, though not necessarily public, was an important step to figuring out how to enact learner-centered pedagogy and create a meaningful class.

Yes! I am actively revising my classes for the Fall based on some of the updated learning goals and strategies I developed at the seminar!

Yes, I plan to implement the syllabus training right away and the assessment possibilities we discussed.

Yes. I plan to utilize how-to instructions, so all of my students have a fair and equal chance at success.

I had already decided to focus this upcoming school year on ways to increase my students' compliance with reading assignments, but I learned in this course ways I can do this that help increase students' internal motivation as well as external motivation.

Yes. I found the discussion of scaffolding to help students build up component skills of a broader learning goal to be very helpful.

I had started to do something similar, but was not happy with the results. I think in part this was because I was not proceeding slowly enough and was afraid of having students focus explicitly on building up core skills at the expense of covering content, which I've learned is often necessary from a learner-centered perspective. Dave's detailed discussion of how his intro course starts was a great model and I am going to remove content to more explicitly focus on teaching students how to read philosophy.

First: I have been using David Concepcion's appendix "How to Read Philosophy" with my students for several years. I basically told them to read that essay and apply it, and their daily assignment was a "Reading Note". They would try and do terribly at first. They would practice and get better (and the grading scheme was such that they could drop those early ones if they needed to), but the experience was very frustrating for them. I re-designed the assignment to incorporate a much more managed/limited controlled failure, and then an opportunity to re-write their first "Reading Note" and I've adopted several out-of-class and in-class activities that aim to progressively improve skills of thesis-identification, summarization and evaluation. Second: The final paper was a case-study analysis where students had to compare and contrast two different moral theories in relation to the case. I now believe I didn't give students sufficient practice doing this kind of thinking before asking them to produce a final product. This semester I will try assigning them to groups, letting each group pick a case to work on for the entire semester, and then after each moral theory, we'll return to the case study groups and think through the application of that case study before moving on. I also plan to use a jigsaw so that all students get exposure to all of the cases in the class. At the end of the course, students will have an option to write their comparison/contrast paper on one of the cases (either their own or another group's).

Incorporating more thoughtful and holistic learning objectives, rather than the tired old "speaking, reading, writing" ones.

Yes. I plan to add more skill-based work (e.g. working on how to read a philosophy paper) and remove some of the "content" (e.g. Kant and Bentham) from my course. This is because I've come to realize from the seminar that intentional, explicit instruction on this kind of matter is pivotal, as it helps prepare the students to perform the tasks that they may otherwise be unable to perform (but need to do for the course).

I'm going to drastically reduce the amount of content I try and cover so that I can spend more time focusing on the dispositional growth and skill development that I really want students to have.

I want to change one thing: learning objective. Specifically, I want to take one major learning objective for the whole class, and build the class around it. The motivation is to first, clean up the different thoughts I have about teaching and second, be realistic about what I can do.

Yes. I plan to further emphasize skills, such as "how to read philosophy" in my Intro course.

Yes, as a result of the pedagogy session (as well as Stephen's keynote), I plan to have a scaffolded assignment in which I first give my students study questions to guide them through the readings and then ultimately get them to help write those

questions. I hope this change will help my students think metacognitively about reading philosophy as well as get them thinking about what makes certain questions philosophical.

I'm really re-thinking the kinds of assignments (especially writing) that I use. So far, I've been doing what I've seen most professors do in classes I've taken or TAed for: assign a big essay that counts for 30+% of the grade, with relatively few smaller assignments to prepare students. Now I know that much more needs to be done to get students ready to write a "big" paper, but also: there are so many more possibilities for things I can ask students to do to help them learn/help me assess their learning than just the kinds of papers that traditionally get assigned in philosophy classes.

Yes--I'm cutting coverage of texts (and potentially even a traditional term paper) in my standard ethics course to be able to focus on developing philosophical thinking and ethical development.

Yes, I will make sure that each learning experience involves a non-generic gerund. I'm motivated to do this so that I can track the variety of activities I use and so my activities are more thought out than just "writing" or "reading".

Has participation in the workshop changed the way you think about teaching and learning? If yes, please describe one way in which your thinking has changed.

It's too early for me to answer this question one way or another.

Absolutely! It did a lot to help me realize the extent to which student learning, rather than some obligation to canonical "content" can (and likely should) drive my course design.

Absolutely. Like many of the seminarians, I come from a major research institution that has a complicated relationship with teaching. It was reassuring to be with other people invested in best teaching practices for the students.

Yes, in the sense that it clarified and amplified my pre-existing intuitions and thoughts about teaching and learning, and provided me with tools to help achieve the kinds of goals I have for my teaching.

I received a picture of teaching and learning in this seminar that takes more into account the whole person of the student rather than just viewing the student only qua student.

Absolutely. I found the discussion of transfer in the learning process to be very helpful and this is something that will explicitly guide my (re) design of future lesson plans.

The learning comes in the doing. I have for a long time believed that it is impossible to teach by opening their heads and pouring in what I want them to know, but it is very difficult to change the habitual pedagogical practices that tacitly assume such a model of learning.

Yes. I think being creative about embodied activities to achieve learning objectives (as Dave suggested).

Yes! It has made me realize that I do not give the students enough credit, and that it is okay to give up some of my control over my students. I do not have to be the one calling all the shots-- nor should I. Instead, from this seminar I've learned that it's okay to let the students take a more active role in designing the course (or in influencing things like assessment, reading lists, etc.).

It's empowered me to think of teaching as a philosophical activity, rather than as something separate from philosophy.

Many things that I heard and learnt in the seminar changed my way of thinking about teaching and learning. However, one way to characterize it is that it made me realize teaching is a profession. I am trained to be a philosopher, and it is easy for me to come up with a list of important skills for instance. Before the seminar, I was not able to do the same thing regarding teaching because I did not know what it means to be a teacher as a profession. To put it in a different way, I was implicitly trained to think that being a good philosopher naturally makes one a good teacher. I was explicitly told that that idea was not true, but had no idea why. After the seminar, I see clearly why.

Yes. Previously I thought of teaching problems as problems. Now I think of them as the sort of problem that occasions a research program--i.e. an opportunity for philosophizing.

Yes, it has encouraged me to think more about how supplying clear how-to instructions is necessary to combat preexisting inequalities.

When I've planned courses in the past, the part of the process that I spent the most time on was choosing the reading material for the course. I can't imagine that that will ever be the case in the future - the particular philosophical content covered isn't the most important part of the course, and this seminar helped clarify that for me. I want to spend more time thinking about how I can design valuable learning experiences, rather than trying to locate the perfect passage from Hume.

The seminar didn't directly change how I thought about teaching, but it was a really valuable reminder to implement the values that are important to me and gave me the space, time, and feedback to really think carefully what implementation would look like.

Yes, I've moved beyond activities like class discussions or short written reflections. Instead, I've begun thinking of unique activities like hand-jiving, art-making, and roleplaying.

Considering content, format, presenters' style, or other variables, what would you say are the strengths of the workshop?

The design is effective and the presenters have a nice breadth of styles and experiences. I thought it was helpful to see them disagree with each other, as the seminar might otherwise have felt like indoctrination.

The presenters are all excellent. They are truly committed to teaching well and to valuing students as learners and as philosophers. They all communicate excellently, and each with their own unique style and set of values.

Every presentation is interactive and wrestled with topics that were quite relevant.

Referencing and explaining ideas/examples from their own experiences, using active learning and group discussion rather than just lecture, inclusive and inviting presentation styles, being flexible

I really appreciated hearing more experienced instructors talk about how they grew as teachers, what factors contributed to their growth as teachers, and what things they have changed throughout their time as teachers. This gave me the ability to be patient with myself as I grow into a teaching role, but it also, more practically, gave me ideas on how I can change what I do to improve my instruction.

I thought the seminar had a great combination of very different facilitator styles, which I found helpful as models. The format of having different facilitators take the lead on each day was a helpful way to showcase this. I also thought the organization of content was useful, as each session built on the last one (with the pedagogy and assessment sessions esp. building on each other nicely).

I would say the seminar gives a very coherent and systematic immersion in learner-centered teaching.

It was good to see the diversity of teachers. It was also good to see seminar leaders participate in the large group when it wasn't "their day."

We observed a lot of different ways to be an effective, engaging, student-centered instructor-- this was helpful since people have different teaching styles, and the seminar presenters showed that we do not all need to fit into one mold of a "good" teacher. The seminar is also strong in that it is engaging and has clear goals for its participants-- there were tangible things we were supposed to leave the seminar having accomplished (e.g. planning learning goals for a course, thinking about which assessments would be most effective for those goals, etc.). It was a much more concrete, reality-grounded seminar than any other workshop on teaching I've participated in in the past!

Fosters a lot of learning; meet great people; the community built is great

Definitely the "top-down" approach to teaching. By this, I mean the refreshing emphasis on the "learner-centered" approach to teaching. It was impressive not only because it is quite a different approach, but that it was quite consistently demonstrated throughout the entire seminar.

Having time to adopt a somewhat silly style while presenting on dead serious topics helps a lot. Having more time in the seminar (vs. the one-day workshops) allows for the building of community, which is tremendously important for learning at least from my perspective.

All the sessions were clearly focused on learner-centered teaching as well as inclusion. I also liked the way that various presenters integrated the material and activities that we'd done previously.

The way Dave explained things when he said that the presenters would teach us to fish rather than give us fish (even though they did have a few fish to give) captured it. I think the seminar was great for building the foundation for learner-centered teaching skills that we can continue to hone as our specific circumstances require going forward.

The interactive exercises and conversation with other members of the seminar really helped to bounce ideas off of and think about changes to courses in a piece-by-piece way to make real changes.

Content: all. Format: activities that made us produce something. Presenters' styles: good variety and dynamic.

Considering content, format, presenters' style, or other variables, if you could change something about the workshop, what would it be?

I didn't love that it started at 9AM. Also, occasionally when I was in groups with presenters, they would dominate the groups (only occasionally).

There isn't much to say here. I had a phenomenal experience, and can't say enough good things about it.

The seminars could have had a little more time dedicated directly to syllabi building and lesson planning.

I would love to have seen some examples of full syllabi from learner-centered classes (perhaps at the end of the workshop) in order to have something that shows how all the different components and learning goals of a course come together.

Although very helpful, I found the seminar to be also very tiring. It was three hours over four days of intense lecture, discussion, and activities, which allowed for very little processing time. Given the constraints of time and situation I am not sure there's a way to mitigate the intensity, and, of course, not everyone suffers from that situation. I hope that I will be able to remember all I learned as I take the time to process over the next month or so.

I also found the moments when different facilitators disagreed to be helpful to get a sense of what is controversial in SoTL and as a means of highlighting key choice points. I wonder if more discussion of current controversies/points of disagreement could be explicitly built in to the content or the readings.

The seminar's content, format and presentation by speakers was very strong. I don't think I'd change much, if anything.

The assessment day was weak, I thought. I'm not sure how to improve it, but I didn't get as much out of that day.

Maybe make it clearer that the 9pm meeting on the Wednesday is an official part of the seminar. I'd have been sad to have missed it.

I wish the assessment part could be longer or done more systematically. I recall the cheerful energy of the facilitator, but not quite the content. Going back to my notes, I remember the activities and discussions about assessment. However, I seem to have piecemeal knowledge about the subject, but not a consistent idea demonstrated and interacted in different ways.

The "reverse engineer the presenters' pedagogies" activity was too close to the end of the seminar for me. It turned into an opportunity for us to love on the presenters, which is fine because gosh we like y'all, but I worry about shifting the focus onto the presenters at precisely the moment when the cohort should be coming into itself as a cohort.

Since the learning objective exercise and the pedagogy session were closely tied to the learning objectives and learning activities for a particular course, it would have been useful for me to have been assigned a task similar to the ones we did in session beforehand. (I.e., come up with learning objectives and a castle-top series of learning activities.)

Maybe providing handouts to accompany the presentations? (My note-taking skills aren't the best)

I would not change the content or presenters' styles. As for the format, I would reduce discussion and add more activities that make us produce something. As for other variables, I would have liked a classroom that made it easier to interact with more of the seminarians.

Would you recommend the workshop to others? If yes, how would you describe the workshop experience to others?

Yes, I'd enthusiastically recommend this seminar to others. I would say that the seminar is a chance to think collaboratively, and in a concrete way, about how to create courses that work.

Absolutely. I would describe it as providing crucial perspective on teaching against the backdrop of a discipline that often values its own norms more than its students (to its detriment).

Yes, and I already have. It is what the Teaching Skills seminar for PhD students preparing to be instructors of records should be.

Absolutely. I thought it was a fantastic and inspiring experience, and anyone in philosophy who cares about their students should participate in the AAPT, and grad students especially should attend the seminar.

Yes, I do wish all the graduate student instructors at my school could take it. I would describe the seminar to my fellow grad students as an excellent foundation for developing oneself as a teacher, both in regard to curriculum as well as in regard to oneself as a person who teaches.

I would definitely recommend the seminar to others. I would describe as a helpful space away from the more typical academic philosophy circles, where teaching is seen as a burden, where one can deeply evaluate one's current teaching practices, and learn from the perspectives of those who have devoted themselves fully to the craft of teaching philosophy.

Yes, I'd recommend it to others. I'd describe it as an opportunity to re-think the way you teach and to learn how to focus your attention on the needs of your students.

Yes. I think it's better for those earlier on in their teaching, but beneficial for everyone.

Yes! I would describe the seminar as an interactive opportunity for reflection on your teaching style and goals as an instructor, one which fosters a community of compassionate teachers who seek to prioritize students in the classroom.

Yes. It's an intensive, potentially life-changing experience where you become a more learner-centered teacher.

I have already recommended it to multiple people. I keep speaking to them about the seminar with the many new things and mind-changing things I have learnt. I would probably describe the experience differently to different people, hoping that they get something about the seminar that interests them the most.

A thousand times yes. The seminar not only provides participants with the opportunity to cultivate student-centered skills and dispositions--it also invites participants into both a caring cohort of teacher-scholars and the broader AAPT community.

Of course! I would describe it as a seminar focused on introducing one to learner-centered teaching that gives attendees tools and strategies to implement learning-centered teaching practices in their classrooms.

Yes! Most philosophers aren't encouraged to spend a lot of time thinking about teaching, and we miss so much because of it - I think I'd mostly emphasize to others how eye-opening the seminar is, that there's this whole world of things to learn about teaching.

Yes, definitely! I would describe it as an opportunity to think carefully about your approach to teaching and your goals in a community of like-minded teachers.

Yes, I would recommend the seminar to others (sorry, my grade school teachers made me write in complete sentences because apparently seeing the sentence structure in the question reflected in the answer brings them unspeakable satisfaction and aesthetic ecstasy). I would describe the seminar experience as unspeakably satisfying and aesthetically ecstatic. No, but really, it's the best seminar I've ever had the pleasure of participating in. I would urge them with the fervor of a zealot. I would entice them with adjectives like "transformative", "profound", "special", and "human".

Please report any other thoughts you have about the workshop, or things you would like to say to the facilitators, here.

I'm so glad I attended.

Thank you all so much. This was a great experience that I highly value and will recommend every chance I get. You all are truly phenomenal, and I'm so glad to have been a part of this event.

I do think there were some critical discussions regarding class demographics and sizes that we could have explored deeper, but that is it.

Thank you. It was obvious how deeply you cared about teaching and thinking about teaching, and how excited you were to be with us, and how much effort you put into everything. It's really inspiring to know there are professional philosophers who think the same way about teaching that I do.

I thought only two of the four facilitators were very well prepared for their presentations and activities. I do appreciate that everyone has a different style, and perhaps some styles of teaching do not require as much up-front preparation. But the difference between the two who were well-prepared and the two who did not appear to be as well-prepared was noticeable.

Even though all of the facilitators were excellent and all made important contributions, I wanted to note that I found it helpful to include some facilitators who are earlier on in their career (in this case Rebecca and Adam). Obviously, they are still experts

on SoTL, but I found that it made serious improvements in teaching seem more attainable, and I suspect that it is useful to have perspectives from different career stages represented in the seminar.

Thanks for a great seminar!

I continue to worry about efforts at inclusion which alienate those of us with more conservative views about social issues.

Facilitators seemed to think that everyone is in agreement about progressive social positions. Not everyone is, and reasonable people of goodwill can and do disagree. I'd like a softer touch on these issues at all APA and AAPT events. The more these agendas are pushed, the more the APA/AAPT will alienate a sizable minority of higher ed. institutions and educators.

I was so thankful to be able to participate in this seminar! I was an elementary education major during undergrad, and care a lot about teaching in light of that. When I made the switch to philosophy, I noticed that so many people were more focused on research and the philosophy, but put little thought or effort into the teaching of that content. I began to feel really alienated, like my passion for teaching was something to be ashamed of. I've spent the past seven years in philosophy wishing I had a community of people who cared about the same things I did, and taking this seminar felt like coming home-- finally, I was surrounded by a group of people who "got" me, and I felt valued and respected and understood. Thank you for restoring some of my faith in the discipline, and for making me feel "found". Thank you, thank you, thank you!

This was an amazing experience. It made me realize how much I love teaching. It was liberating to be in a setting with other people who love it as much as I do. I cannot recommend this seminar enough to anyone who cares about teaching. As well as changing how I think about teaching, it's changed how I think about my work and my self—all for the better.

Overall a great experience without a doubt. Throughout the seminar, I have always thought about how I can incorporate what I learnt into self-education because I was influenced to believe that we are our first students. Thus, the seminar has not only changed my views on teaching my students, but also helped me reflect upon myself and how I could educate myself. Among the many things I can and want to say about the seminar and to the facilitators, I want to stress one point: the whole seminar presents an impressive demonstration of how teaching can be done. It was filled with great content for sure. But it was also done and taught in the way that was consistent with pedagogical content. Furthermore, all facilitators show great passion and caring attitude to teaching, to us, and to the general student population. I quite look forward to the next AAPT meeting, and hope that I could present a paper there!

Thanks, everyone! If you or the AAPT need folks to take on some of the work, just ask us--I expect especially those of us who are employed would be glad to do our part.

Thank you so much!

Thank you so much for this seminar - this was such a valuable experience!

Thank you so much! I came away inspired and excited to start the fall semester!

I am sad that it is over and I wish I had a time machine so I could do it again. Thank you.