

Governors State University

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### Graduate Profile: Inspired to Continue Inspiring

Office of Marketing and Communications

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# Graduate Profile: Inspired to Continue Inspiring

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After teaching photography for 15 years, Candi Helsel decided it was time for her to be the student again in the [Independent Film and Digital Imaging](#) program (IFDI) at [Governors State University](#) (GSU). Impassioned by her newly earned degree, the 2020 graduate reflects on the inspiration she has

gained in her time at GSU and the importance of the support system she had in friend and fellow Homewood-Flossmoor teacher, IFDI student, and 2020 graduate Kristy Weidenhoefer.

"It was great to have Kristy there alongside me. We are close friends in life and work closely together in our jobs, so we have a great line of communication open. Just having someone there as a sounding board who is going through the same challenges helped so much."

[Read Kristy Weidenhoefer's profile here.](#)

### **GSU Newsroom: What brought you to GSU?**

**Helsel:** Governors State was an easy decision. This is my second master's degree, but after 15 years of teaching photography, it was time to get a Master of Fine Art. Most schools do not offer a flexible MFA option. Attending another university's program would most likely require me to quit teaching at Homewood-Flossmoor High School—the job that I love so much—and would cost far more. It is my experience that most people seeking advanced degrees are already working and need the flexibility of evening classes in order to meet the needs of their schedules. Governors State did this for me. The Independent Film and Digital Imaging program was a perfect fit for my needs. One of the courses I teach at the high school level involves teaching film, art, music and theatre students in the same classroom. This program has definitely supported and enriched my knowledge in areas of film and to my delight, theatre as well. I have incorporated a fair amount of this knowledge into this course.

### **GSU Newsroom: What are some of the highlights from your time at GSU?**

**Helsel:** The highlights of my time at GSU revolve around building relationships with a few professors, as well as diving into the world of film. As a teacher, I spend so much of my energy focused on the success of my own students. GSU gave me the opportunity to submerge myself into learning for myself. It was renewing to be challenged from a learning perspective.

### **GSU Newsroom: Who are some of the professors who have helped to shape your experience/your future?**

**Helsel:** There are two professors who have had a major role in shaping my experience at GSU. [Professor Daniel Nearing](#) is a teacher at heart. He truly cares about students as individuals. His teaching style is one that covers the content, but goes about it in a reflective and compassionate way. He uses great examples during class to illuminate current issues within society. I took several courses under his guidance, and he made the learning not only technical, but also relevant and meaningful through a wide range of materials and techniques. I had the amazing opportunity to work on a film with him, and not only was I inspired, but I learned so much from the experience.

Dr. Angela Latham was a great source of inspiration to me. She is challenging in the most inspirational way. Her knowledge of film, costume and theatre really changed the way I view performance. She truly pushes for each student to take charge of their own learning, to digest it in a way that makes sense to each individual. My most challenging

classes were under the instruction of Dr. Latham, and I truly appreciate her for that. One of the best things about Dr. Latham, as an instructor, is that she truly is a lifelong learner. In as much as she expects from her students, she expects the same from herself.

**GSU Newsroom: Tell me about how attending with Kristy impacted your experience at GSU.**



**Helsel:** I knew going in this would be a challenging journey. With a full-time teaching schedule, a family, work as a freelance photographer and frequent full-time enrollment at GSU, there were definitely times when I wasn't sure if I would make it. It was great to have Kristy there alongside me. We are close friends in life and work closely together in our jobs, so we have a great line of communication open. Just having someone there as a sounding board who is going through the same challenges helped so much. We enrolled in the same classes until the last few semesters so it was nice to have someone to discuss class related topics with, as well as lift each other up through challenges. There were opportunities to work as a team on projects, especially our film, and as with most things in life, it's always better to have more than one mind working to come up with solutions and ideas. We work well as a team and she was a major source of inspiration and sanity throughout the process.

**GSU Newsroom: What's next for you after graduation?**

**Helsel:** I will continue to develop work using my voice as a conceptual photographer and I will continue to teach at H-F. Eventually, I would love to teach a few courses at the college level in the evenings or over the summer. I couldn't imagine doing anything other than teaching art. It is what gives me energy. Inspiring students to do their best, giving them knowledge that I have been gifted with and watching them grow and develop passion for art, creativity, viewpoints, understanding and innovation and life is really the best job I could ever ask for.

[Apply for the Independent Film and Digital Imaging program today!](#) Or join us on June 3, 2020 for virtual [Coffee with a Counselor](#) to discuss admissions, programs, and more.