

Elizabeth **“Neko”** Pilarcik-Tellez

Application for

***Full-Time Faculty, Animation***



Dear Search Committee,

Hello, and thank you for considering my application. My name is Elizabeth Pilarcik-Tellez, but most people call me by my pen name, Neko. For the past six years, I've had the pleasure of teaching animation at St. Louis Community College - Florissant Valley. During that time, I've had the opportunity to wear many hats such as Faculty Advisor for the Graphic Arts Association and Chair of the Women's History Month Committee. I've written the curriculum for the new Animation / Illustration degree path and helped see the college through its NASAD accreditation visit. I was even awarded Adjunct Faculty of the Year in 2016. As of spring 2016, I was hired as full-time faculty and Program Coordinator for Graphic Communications, a hat I continue to wear proudly.

Why do I want to leave a place that has given me so many wonderful experiences? The truth is, I don't. Unfortunately, a series of State funding cuts will necessitate layoffs for 70 full-time faculty. I've decided that this too, is an opportunity to seek a new adventure. I've had the chance to hear your recruitment presentations each year at Portfolio Day, and I'm always taken by the sincere enthusiasm your Reps express for your College.

I've taught a wide variety of courses, both advanced and foundational/developmental. I say "developmental" because, for many of our students, college is their first encounter with a desktop computer and professional art software. Things we take for granted like using a mouse or organizing files may be foreign to them. I spend a lot of time tutoring students in these basic functions in order to get them to the college level. This is not to say they aren't smart or capable, it just takes a bit more time to get them to realize the potential that was there all along.

In addition to teaching, I've maintained my practice as an animator and illustrator. I recently had the pleasure of doing animation and illustrations for the 5th and 6th installments of the extremely popular "Five Nights at Freddy's" video game franchise. Being that the series is most popular among high school-aged people I've had the opportunity to leverage that popularity in my recruitment efforts for the College's. I've also used it to better engage my students. Ahead of the release of the 6th game, I demonstrated the techniques I used to create the in-game artwork. You can imagine how excited my students were the day the game was released and they saw pieces from the demo in the intro to the game. I love finding opportunities like that to connect what they're learning in the classroom to real-world productions.

As my duties to the college have grown I've had to face the reality of balancing my commercial career with my teaching career. Again, I took this as an opportunity, instead of turning away animation and illustration contracts, I utilized my connections to provide opportunities for my students. I selected a diverse group of very talented recent graduates who, due to financial or family obligations, are not able to attend a Bachelors' program at this time. These artists work as my apprentices, helping me with the art and animation on my commercial contracts. This gives them a chance build their portfolios while getting paid to do so. It also allows them to further hone their skills working for clients while still receiving guidance and support.

I would like to bring these skills to MICA, to work with you to build even more exciting opportunities for your students. I would like to make Baltimore my new home and MICA my new adventure. I truly hope you'll give me the opportunity. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth "Neko" Pilarcik-Tellez

## Education

### **Bachelor of Arts | Film & Video (Animation) | 2008**

Columbia College Chicago

Graduated with Honors - GPA 3.8

- Dean's List: 2005, 2006 & 2008
- Capstone Project screened at 2008 Cannes International Film Festival

### **Associate of Applied Science | Graphic Communications (Illustration) | 2004**

St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley

- Certificate of Alumni Accomplishment: 2008
- Women-in-Progress Exhibition: March 2010

## Academic Positions

### **Program Coordinator: Graphic Communications | St. Louis Community College**

Jan. 2016 to Present | Ferguson, MO

- Manage daily operations of an academic program delivering Associates' of Fine Art and Associates' of Applied Science degree to 100 students.
- Teach advanced and foundational / developmental courses in Animation, Storyboarding, Motion Graphics, and Character Design.
- Collaborate with counterparts at the three other campuses on college-wide initiatives.
- Manage schedules, budgets, and payroll for six faculty, and four student workers.
- Developed an animation curriculum consistent with those of major art universities. Graduates transfer into Bachelors program with foundational animation courses complete.
- Mentored students in creation of portfolios to secure scholarships at major art universities.
- Meeting with students regularly for academic advising and mentoring.
- Participate in regular recruiting visits to area high schools.

### **Adjunct Professor | St. Louis Community College | Jan. 2012 to Jan. 2016**

Ferguson, MO

- Awarded "Outstanding Adjunct Faculty: Liberal Arts Division 2016"
- Designed and lead collaborative projects between the Graphic Communications program and other programs / departments including: Mass Communications, Career and Employment

Services, TRIO and the District Title IX Task Force.

- Developed and lead Service Learning projects which place students in real-world production environments delivering art and animation for real clients.
- Increased recruitment of Home Schooled students by organizing department tours and special animation lessons.

**Faculty Advisor: Graphic Arts Assoc.** | St. Louis Community College | 2013 to Present  
St. Louis, MO

- Developed successful fundraising strategies that have increased student participation by 50% and taken the organization from an operational deficit to an \$800 surplus within the first year.
- Collaborated with the Greater North County Chamber of Commerce to create new fundraising opportunities for students that allow them to utilize their artistic skills in a way the benefits the community at large.
- Organized club trip to Four Star Studios in Chicago, IL where students received portfolio reviews and advice from professional artists working at Dark Horse, Image, and DC Comics.

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### **Courses Taught**

Storyboarding & Animatics - AT 233  
Fundamentals of Animation - AT 234  
Animation Tech.: Digital 2D - AT 235  
Special Topics in Animation - AT 238  
Motion Media Design - AT 106  
Computer Art Studio - ART 131

Illustration I - ART 239  
Illustration II - ART 240  
Digital Illustration - AT 107  
Web Design I - AT 135  
Drawing for Graphics - ART 138  
Advanced Computer Art - AT 246

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### **Skills & Software Proficiencies**

Animation: Traditional & Digital  
Illustration: Traditional & Digital  
Storyboarding  
Motion Graphics  
Graphic Design  
Video Editing  
Audio Editing  
After Effects

Photoshop  
Illustrator  
InDesign  
Premiere  
ToonBoom Harmony  
ToonBoom Storyboard Pro  
Audition  
Audacity

## College Service

### **Women's History Month Planning Committee** | Chair | Fall 2017 - Present

- Lead 20-person committee in developing programming for Women's History Month.
- Secured Keynote Speaker and plan related events.
- Write funding proposals to cover costs of receptions, awards, and guest speakers.
- Work with District Marketing and Communications to produce marketing materials such as posters, flyers, and programs.

### **"The Art of Matias Tapia" Gallery Exhibition** | Curator | Fall 2016

- Curated a first-of-its-kind exhibition of video game concept art and illustration.
- Secured special permission from Hasbro and Gear Box to show concept art and illustrations from popular titles such as: "*Borderlands 2*", "*Kajudo*", "*HellFire: The Summoning*", "*Dungeons & Dragons*", and "*Pathfinder*".
- Oversaw printing and mounting of work, interviewed the artist for display in the gallery and helped promote the event at local conventions.
- Organized the printing and sale of a series of limited edition signed prints of Tapia's original works. All proceeds from the sale went to benefit the Florissant Valley art clubs.

### **Title IX Awareness PSAs** | Animation Supervisor | Fall 2015 - Spring 2016

- Developed special project for Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.
- Directed students in two-semester collaborative project with Mass Communications department for the district Title IX Awareness Taskforce.
- The PSAs have been shown district-wide as part of the larger Title IX awareness effort.

### **Drawing FergUSon Together** | Committee Member | 2015

- Collaborated with diverse committee to organize two-day art and social justice event.
- Designed promotional materials such as the logo, t-shirts, and website.
- Managed student volunteers at the event which was attended by over 300 people from the community.

### **The Clothesline Project** | Organizer | Spring 2016

- Organized campus event for national Sexual Assault Awareness Month which gave a voice to survivors and highlighted campus resources for victims of violence.

**Women's History Month Committee** | Member | 2013 to Spring 2016

Developed unique arts programming including:

- A live recording of the radio drama "The Screwfly Solution" which was later rebroadcast on KCFV throughout the month.
- Screening and discussion of women animators and their works from Lotte Reiniger to the early anime directors of Studio Gainax and Studio Ghibli.
- Staged readings of works by Joanna Bailey.

**Animation Showcase** | Creator/ Organizer | 2013 - Present

- Created annual student film festival, showcasing the best work in animation, storyboarding and motion graphics. Now entering its 3rd year.
- Key responsibilities: Jury work; create graphics and edit show reel; technical direction.

**Collaborative Projects with Mass Communications Dept.** | 2014 to present

- Developed program partnering Broadcasting majors interesting in voice-over and/ or sound design with animation students in the creation of short animated films.
- Animation students receive lessons in voice direction, audio editing, and sound design. Broadcasting students gain real-world experience and work for their demo reels.

**Collaborative Project w/ Counseling and Career Center** | 2013

- Lead Illustration II in students creating artwork for permanent display in the Counseling and Career center.
- Collaborated with the heads of the Counseling and Career Centers to act as clients for the students, giving them realistic work experience.

*Other Service Projects and Committees*

**Women's Caucus for Art: St. Louis** |  
Board Member | 2015 to 2016

**Title IX Awareness Task Force  
(District)** | 2015 to 2017

**Title IX Steering Committee  
(Campus)** | 2015 to Present

**Gallery Exhibitions Committee** | 2016 to  
Present

**Honors Project Mentor** | 2013 - Present

**Graphics Advisory Board** | 2015 to  
Present

**Chalk4Peace** | 2013 & 2014

**Portfolio Day** | Mentor & Tech. Support |  
2012 - 2015

**Visiting Artist: Design I** | 2012 & 2013

## Professional Experience

**Freelance Animator & Illustrator** | Various Projects | 2008 to Present  
Chicago, IL & St. Louis, MO

- Developed special program offering recent STLCC graduates mentorship and real world experience working for clients in gaming and animation industries.
- Effectively communicate with local and international clients in order to tailor effective solutions to their specific needs.
- Produce high-quality art for a variety of media including: film, books and video games.
- Prioritize tasks across concurrent projects maintaining a high level of quality and efficiency.
- Hire and managed additional crew members to adapt to changing scope of projects.

### Note-worthy Productions

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#### **“Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria Simulator” (Video Game)**

Client - Scottgames

Job Role - Illustrator for Intro and Endings

\* 2<sup>nd</sup> most downloaded game on Steam on day of launch.

#### **“Five Nights at Freddy’s: Sister Location” (Video Game)**

Client - Scottgames

Job Role - Animator

\* Over 500,000 copies sold since October 2016.

#### **“A Tooth Tale” (Animated Film)**

Client - Ron Fleischer

Job Role - Special Effects Background Artist

Awards - Best Animated Short: 2013 Garden Stare Film Festival, Best Short Film: 2013 Columbia College Chicago Alumni Film Competition, Honorable Mention: 2013 Santa Monica Film Festival, Honorable Mention: 2012 Columbus International Film & Video Festival

#### **“Osgood Rex” (Musical)**

Client - Project WonderMeant

Job Role - Character Designer & Mask Fabricator

Award - Audience Choice Award: 2012 St. Lou Fringe Fest

#### **“Zombie Ninja Pirates” (Game Series)**

Client - Gozer Games

Job Role - Lead Illustrator

Awards - 2011 Gaming Genius Award, 2010 Toy Man Award of Excellence

## Professional Experience (continued)

**Marketing & Outreach** | National Women's Caucus for Art | Sept. 2015 to July 2016  
New York, NY (Remote Work)

- Assisting with various marketing and fundraising initiatives including: The Lifetime Achievement Awards and Annual Conference.

**Lead Animator** | "Win the Jamm Hollywood" (TV Pilot) | May 2011 - September 2012  
Los Angeles, CA

- Collaborate with the Executive Producer to establish a "look" for the show that is both engaging and efficient to animate.
- Manage animation team: give direction, prepare and distribute animation assets, interview and hire animators, give assistance and support team members to ensure quality and timely completion of goals.
- Create and maintain all production schedules and budgets for animation department.
- Meet regularly with Executive Producer to discuss production goals, work-flow and progress.

**Production Assistant** | "Transformers: Dark of the Moon" (Feature Film) | July - Sept. 2010  
Chicago, IL

- Secured filming locations and performed general escort duties on to and off set for Main and Aerial Units.
- Kept lockdowns packed with on lookers safe and in place during shots involving car chases, stunts, explosions and aerial photography.

**Lead Illustrator** | Gozer Games, LLC | 2009 - 2012  
Bensenville, IL

- Created over 100 unique illustrations for the award-winning card games "Zombie Ninja Pirates" and "Vampire Werewolf Fairies" on a limited three-month production schedule.
- Clearly and humorously depicted abstract concepts such as "Witch Trial" and "Internal Conflict" in a single image.
- Hired on as lead illustrator after only one project due to my reliability, professionalism and creativity.

**Animation Reviewer** | Film Monthly | 2008 - 2010  
Chicago, IL

- Interview animation industry leaders and innovators including: Harvey Selick and Ari Folman, about the process of creating animated films.

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

“You know you’re not expected to do all this” is something I often hear from my colleagues. They’re referring to all the extra projects, club activities, and late hours I spend working for my students. I know that just showing up to teach my classes would be enough, so why do I put in all the extra time?

I put in the time because college is about more than just classroom learning, although that is vitally important. I know the lessons and experiences that will truly stay with students often happen outside of projects and exams. Many of our students have never left St. Louis. By chaperoning club bus trips, I get the chance to show them a brand new place, and perhaps new possibilities. Most have never met a professional animator or illustrator. By organizing field trips to comic and animation studios, or by having my colleagues in the industry speak in my classes, my students get feedback from professionals and potential employers. In helping my students get their work published and chaperoning them at conventions, they have a chance to network and show their work as professional artists in their own right.

Working with the Greater North County Chamber of Commerce has enabled me to create new avenues for fundraising for the Graphic Arts Association. More importantly, it's given my students a chance to engage with the community. I remember the first time my club did caricatures at the Valley of Flowers Craft Show. At first, everyone in the surrounding booths looked at us like we didn't belong. After seeing the excellent artwork my students were creating and how positively and professionally they conducted themselves, people were coming up and complimenting them. It was just one day, but I think some people’s misconceptions changed a little. Community members got to see the youth of Ferguson in a new context, and my students got to see that they can participate as professionals in their community. Since then, the Chamber has invited us back for the past three years in a row.

I put in the effort in the classroom because many of my students start off incredibly shy, uncertain of their place, or not confident in their skills. Through the team projects they do in class, my students get a chance to take on leadership roles and to bond as teammates. It makes me so happy to see a shy student, afraid to speak up because of his stutter, now confidently raising his hand in class and joking around with friends outside of class. That student can feel confident in my classroom that no one will pick on them just because they're different, because we're all different, and college is a place where that's a good thing.

I believe cross-departmental collaboration is a powerful tool for student success, and I’ve actively worked to create opportunities for such collaborations to take place. One example would be my work with Paul Huddleston, Station Manager of campus radio station. Together we’ve created a series of collaborative projects in which Mass Communications and Graphic Communications students work together to create short animated films. Now my animators get a chance to direct real actors, and Paul’s Radio Production students get experience voice acting for animation. Building upon that success, I’ve continued to collaborate with more departments, creating similar projects with the TRIO program, Career and Employment Services, and the District Title IX Awareness Task Force.

Although I’m not expected to do all these things, having the opportunity to do them is part of what makes this career so rewarding. As much fun as it is to make a video game or a short film, as a teacher I've found a way to use my talents as an animator in a way that benefits others. That is something very special, and that is why I do this.

## Artist Statement

I love to make pictures move, it's as simple as that. There's a special magic to taking something lifeless, like lines on a page or pixels in a computer and crafting them to create lifelike, engaging performances. I'll never forget how I felt the first day I animated something. It was the first project in my Animation I class and we were tasked with shooting a 15-second stop-motion animation on the pencil-test stand. I made myself a little clay puppet, I took a picture, made a little change, and took another picture, then I hit play and I laughed out loud in disbelief. It moved! I don't know what I was expecting, that was the whole idea, right? Still, I just couldn't believe it, here was this adorable, but inanimate thing and I made it come to life. I was hooked, I had found my medium.

That experience impacted me so profoundly that to this day, my Fundamentals of Animation students do this as their first project. My hope is that they too will experience that joy and wonder and that the experience will help carry them through some of the tedium and frustration which may lie ahead, as it did for me.

As an art form animation demands a particular type of patience and persistence. It takes 24 to 30 individual images to create one second of footage, everyone knows that. What everyone may not know is how rare it is to get those 24 to 30 pictures right the very first time. There are always revisions and experimentation required to create a truly convincing performance and, at times, that can be frustrating. When you get it right, when you hit play and it looks just like you pictured in your head, there's nothing like it.

Teaching animation has definitely made me a better animator. Not only does their passion, ideas, and unique perspectives inspire and push me as an artist but also, they're really good at breaking things. I mean it, never in a million years could I get After Effects to do some of the crazy things my students will get it to do in a minute. In class, I am constantly having to research and troubleshoot new issues and do it all with a ticking clock. I know that as long as the problem persists the student cannot work and another student is in the process of breaking something else that will need fixing. This may sound like a bad thing, but I love it. That's where patience and persistence comes in to play. By troubleshooting my student's projects, I can deepen my understanding of the software in a way that I otherwise couldn't. That experience makes me a stronger animator and a stronger teacher.

What else is there to say? I love to make pictures move, and I love to share that passion, skill, and knowledge with the next generation of picture movers.

## **My Portfolio**

<http://www.nekomatic.com/mica-application.html>

## **My Students' Work**

<http://www.nekomatic.com/students-work.html>

## **References**

### **Julia Jenner – Arts & Humanities Department Chair**

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### **Michael Quintero – General Fine Arts Program Coordinator**

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### **Matthew Duhan – President, Gozer Games LLC**

\* Client of many years.

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