Sam Williams: Welcome to the UP Tech Talk Podcast coming to you from the new Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland campus. Produced by Academic Technology Services with your hosts Maria Erb and Sam Williams.

Welcome to the UP Tech Talk Podcast. Today, we have with us Pat Thompson who is a doctoral candidate in organizational leadership through the School of Education, and she is here at the University of Portland and also an instructor with the University of Portland School of Education. We would like to welcome you to the podcast.

Pat Thompson: Thank you. It's great to be here.

Maria Erb: Pat, we're so happy to have you here, and we're going to be excited to talk about your Academic Technology Round Table Project using VoiceThread, but since we've been talking earlier about your incredibly varied and wide background, can you give our listeners a sense of what's bringing you to this ATR project?

Pat Thompson: Sure. I was in the field of both public and private education for 37 years first as a teacher, an athletic coach, and then moving into the world of administration in the late 1980s that found me in places large and small from [Waldport 00:01:19] on the Oregon coast to back at my alma mater at St. Mary's Academy and then into the world of Portland Public schools where I served as vice principal and principal in a variety of different roles in those schools. My last three years in public education was actually serving at the central office where I oversaw a variety of programs that stem from career technical education to gifted and talented education. I've had a tremendous blessing of having a very rich experience in both public and private education, and I really am thankful for my experiences so far.

Sam Williams: Besides being an instructor, I didn't get a chance to name them all off because I wanted you to kind of say, because I'd probably get it wrong, so besides instructor, what are some other roles that you have here at the University of Portland?

Pat Thompson: Sure. I am also responsible for coordinating the Initial Administrative License program through the School of Education, and now most recently, our launch last summer, in the summer of 2015, of our Catholic Initial Administrative License program which is not a separate program, but it's an enhanced program that draws people from a variety of spiritual experiences in private and/or Catholic schools who are very committed to leadership and continued leadership in those Catholic schools moving forward. We're very excited about that program, and I'm both coordinating and instructing in that program as well.

Sam Williams: I know in our conversations around some of your activities there is kind of what led us into the Academic Technology Round Table project.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: You're a fellow for the '15-'16 academic year, and we definitely are very happy to have you as a part of the Academic Technology Round Table.

Pat Thompson: Thank you.

Maria Erb: Right. Since you've been a principal and you've had the role of technical coordinator in the school system and all these differential pieces, coming to your ATR project focusing on using voice feedback and using this tool of VoiceThread, what's the connection for you with that?

Pat Thompson: I think since my time at the University of Portland starting in the fall of 2012, I've experienced a great need for greater authenticity and collaborative conversation with the candidates that I'm serving as the role of instructor and in some cases as coordinator. In some cases, distance is a real factor. For example, in teaching our graduate cohort members in both Guam and Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where we do have educational masters programs currently, I find that text alone, in terms of feedback back to our candidates, has not been the best and most efficient way of communicating with them. Skype can be difficult at times because of the time difference and because of the busy nature.

When I learned about VoiceThread through Sam this last summer, I thought, ah ha, what a great opportunity to expand our horizons with authentic feedback through video, through audio, and through text that will provide a much better and a much richer two-way experience for communication with our candidates. The same thing, of course, is true with our Initial Administrative candidate whether they are in a public school or a private school, whether they're near or far away, the ability to communicate in a much more authentic way with our candidates that are in the midst of the work and their practicum experience. I can see VoiceThread just being a wonderful opportunity for university supervisors in addition to myself to say connected.

Sam Williams: Just so that way our listeners know, and we'll put this as part of the blog post as well, but it's VoiceThread.com is what we're looking at.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: Your project is to do some investigative kind of research for us and actually some implementation and utilize this within your curriculum for this coming year. I'm excited about this opportunity. I would love to see this expanded. What we love about VoiceThread is the ability to be able to upload an artifact. A student can upload an artifact to an assignment if it's connected up to Moodle or just on its own. You can have independent logins. Upload an artifact and then your peers or your teacher can leave feedback in context. If I upload a pdf and I'm on page 5, somebody can get in there and leave feedback that's either, it's video feedback, audio feedback, text feedback. They can write and so it has that animated part of it as well. It really brings life to the feedback.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: I know that we've looked at it a little bit here at the University with some other professors we had Dr. Susan Stillwell in the School of Nursing who had talked about, she's flipping her feedback so she's providing video feedback on papers because she found that students, when they'd read her comments sometimes might get offended or read too much into it and think that she's upset with them.

Maria Erb: Right. When she's not and she found by putting the voice inflection in there that you can get what the audio file...

Pat Thompson: Right.

Maria Erb: ... that the communication was much clearer.

Pat Thompson: Right. Speaking of artifacts, all of our Initial Administrative License candidates will totally relate to this because in lieu of the former requirement by the State of Oregon for a [practice 00:07:01] exam, all of our candidates now must produce authentic artifacts that link to each one of the current Oregon Effective Educator Leadership Standards. That's true in our standard program for people working in public schools as well as those working in Catholic schools.

What an amazing opportunity as a tool now for our candidates to actually bring those artifacts to life, share them with each other, have the opportunity for pure feedback throughout the entire portfolio process. I can just see all kind of opportunities that await us to naturally extend and I think strengthen our program in the sense of providing authentic feedback through authentic assessments.

Sam Williams: You also brought in the connectedness as well I think at one point...

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: ... in this idea, I think it brings more life to a course to be able to have these versus just here's some text, read some things.

Pat Thompson: Yeah.

Sam Williams: You know send it to one person and get feedback where if you have these group feedback or this peer feedback that a little bit more than text.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: You feel like you can connect to people a little bit more.

Pat Thompson: That's right which is why as we examine the implementation in the Catholic IAL, we're looking at a course that we're currently offering online. The instructor is doing everything possible to create that connectedness within the confines of the current Moodle system, but this will provide a whole new opportunity for our instructor and for our students who are really begging for a greater amount of connectivity with one another who miss the opportunity for one-to-one, face-to-face. In the absence of that, this will be an amazing tool that we can provide that provides that connectedness opportunity. So thank you for that.

Maria Erb: Yeah.

Sam Williams: Yeah. No problem.

Maria Erb: Such an important piece.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Maria Erb: Especially as we move forward exploring other ideas around extending our learning to different spaces.

Pat Thompson: That's right.

Sam Williams: What are some other ways that you feel like VoiceThread can help you or others within the School of Education?

Pat Thompson: That's a very important question. I am one of a large group of very qualified and amazing professors in the School of Education. While I can't speak for them, I can only imagine that they will be fully prepared to start seeing what the benefits could be. The fact that I am able to pilot this from a practitioner's point of view I think will be extremely helpful for future individuals like myself that bring that perspective, but for others who have had years within the research. I can only encourage them to think creatively and out of the box about how the VoiceThread phenomenon can be a great opportunity for them to provide even greater authenticity and connectivity within the courses that they're teaching.

I would say, I would stretch this to even beyond the School of Education to other departments and schools within the University of Portland as a whole. I can only encourage us to think about that. From everything I've learned so far, it will be a fairly simple process with full integration with Moodle. It will not take a technology expert necessarily as much as someone who's just willing to take the risk and really start seeing how this can be a day-to-day method even with students who are present on campus and our undergraduate programs to provide some additional assistance in outreach and communication.

Maria Erb: Yeah.

Pat Thompson: To everyone within our programs.

Sam Williams: When we think that we use technology to create efficiency not only do we want people to learn technology and to be able to use it, but we definitely, I tell people if you can't create an efficiency with technology, people are not going to adopt it. I think that with feedback, the feedback part of this is teachers and faculty use technology to get that feedback back to their students whether it's the assignment module in Moodle, whether it's an email directly to the student, but up to this point, it's been very static.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: The feedback where VoiceThread allows us that next level of feedback.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: I will say that the first stage of your project, just so the listeners understand, we're actually not doing the Moodle integration immediately, but that you're getting individual licenses and that we're starting out there, but that the overall system does have some really deep integration, I don't know about deep, but has integrations with Moodle.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: So students will be able to have an assignment in Moodle, they'll be able to submit their content to the assignment, and they'll be able to go down that path with VoiceThread at that point.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: We're excited about phase 2.

Pat Thompson: Yes.

Sam Williams: Of this project about moving it forward, and hopefully that will be next fall...

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: ... is what I'm guessing or early summer.

Pat Thompson: Which would be awesome. Right. For me, it's all about, I'll pull this phrase from my past, rigor, relevance, and relationships. Starting in the reverse, the ability to provide a communication system that really strengthens your relationship with students individually and collectively, I think it will be an amazing value add. Just as you mentioned Dr. Susan's experiences earlier, I think that's a great example of really clarifying the place from where our feedback is coming and the emotion and the articulation of what we hope the message will be.

Then in terms of rigor and relevance, you can truly speak to that within as I believe what the VoiceThread system will provide. The excitement around a student presenting to you using VoiceThread, their excitement about the rigor, the depth of the project and the relevance factor to the course itself, are really, you can't put a price on that I think. My hunch is that the VoiceThread system will be able to allow us to really hone in on those three specific areas in any course.

Sam Williams: I think you debunk any myth of people at any points in their career just jumping in with technology. It's like I just thank you so much for your enthusiasm for jumping in on this project.

Maria Erb: Yeah.

Sam Williams: And implementing something brand new that we haven't even tried.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: I mean we might have faculty that are trying it that we don't' know about.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: But I think that helping us find a tool, a collaborative tool, that will really hit all the areas of campus I think is very important, and this is one of the tools that definitely has risen to the top. I just thank you so much for your willingness to jump in and try something brand new.

Maria Erb: Thank you. I'm very excited about it. It takes people like you to do these types of things. We're just glad for your fearlessness and your desire to improve communication between people and find this really wonderful use for a technology tool.

Pat Thompson: Right.

Sam Williams: Definitely, we're going to wrap up the podcast here, but I want to wish you well on your doctoral work.

Pat Thompson: Thank you.

Sam Williams: We'll definitely have you back in the spring I'm guessing. We'll see where you are with that but then also kind of get some more feedback on the use of VoiceThread.

Maria Erb: Yeah. It's going to be fascinating to hear the types of feedback that you get on your tool which is about feedback.

Pat Thompson: Which is about feedback. There we go. Thank you both so much.

Sam Williams: Thank you.

Pat Thompson: Thank you, Pat.

Sam Williams: Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP Tech Talk Podcast. Just a reminder that we post a new podcast every Friday morning, and you can find us at techtalk.up.edu.