

SABBATICAL LEAVE AWARDS 2004 - 2005

Professor Lori Crane - Spring 2005

Palm Beach Community College is known for its efforts to promote cultural diversity. Increasingly, students from a wide variety of backgrounds are selecting PBCC for a quality education. As a member of the faculty, I believe it is important for us to provide students with elements of their culture within the subjects that we teach. Students who can make a personal connection to the material are not only more vested in the subject, but also begin to apply the newly discovered ideas to their everyday lives.

As a Professor of Speech Communication, I encounter students who not only need the skills to communicate with people from other cultures, but will continue to interact with members from their community. In my attempt to prepare students for these experiences, I have not only encouraged students to share elements of their culture, but also sought out materials from textbooks and current journals which would provide a theoretical grounding of these concepts. Unfortunately, many of the materials I have encountered focus on intercultural communication from a Eurocentric and highly Westernized perspective.

If granted a sabbatical, I plan to pursue various ways to integrate a wide variety of cross-cultural components into the courses that I teach. I would work to accomplish this through not only traditional methods such as a thorough examination journals, textbooks, the internet, and various data bases, but I would also gain personal experiences that could be referenced. There are many courses in the area that provide opportunities to learn about other cultures and I would enjoy enrolling to gain more formalized information and learn not only from the instructor, but from the other students. In a less formal setting, I would like to become involved in community organizations that are working to address the needs of specific cultural groups within our community. Finally, I would like to travel during the sabbatical. Visiting neighborhoods in this region and gaining first-hand experiences would provide a point of reference when interacting with members of the community. Furthermore, I would like to spend time outside the country allowing me to immerse myself within the culture.

Through these varied experiences, I will return to the institution with new perspectives and the means to integrate them into the courses that I teach.

Professor Carol Farmer - Fall 2004, Spring 2005

Chemistry with its associated laboratory requirement presents special challenges to a handicapped student. During this sabbatical, I propose to identify the actual types of handicaps that have been and could be encountered at PBCC, assess the special needs of these students, and investigate what resources and techniques are available to meet these special needs, or what alternatives are available which satisfy both the needs of the student and the requirements of the course.

The various types of disabilities to be studied will be determined by the information received during the course of the project. Possible topics of this study include hearing, visual, and mobility impairment.

In order to assess the special needs of these students, I propose to work with the disability support staff here at PBCC and interview present and former students having various disabilities. I propose to contact some of the local high schools to discuss their programs and to discuss possible ways that the transition from high school to college can be eased. I propose to contact the support groups or organizations that specialize in the various types of impairments in order to obtain and compare information from educational and non-educational institutions.

In order to investigate what resources and/or techniques are available, I plan to contact the American Chemical Society and other colleges and universities for information and, if allowed, observations. Other aspects of this project will include investigating legal requirements that affect assisting students with disabilities attending academic institutions, including PBCC. Efforts will be made to compile information on the financial programs available to students with disabilities.

Professor Jeffrey A. Fisher - Fall 2004

The basic activity that I propose is an extended living experience at selected sites in Europe. I tentatively plan a 3-4 month stay - probably August - November. Wherever I travel, my interest will be centered on (1) language and cultural study, (2) visiting selected nature areas and ecosystems, and (3) making observations, where appropriate and possible, of the post-secondary education system and the day-to-day societal practices relating to natural science, technology, and environment.

The focus of my travel will be in Spain. I will take a 2-3 week intensive Spanish language course and live with a Spanish family. In addition, I will travel through Spain to observe eco-sites, including the built-environment, and universities and museums as they relate to natural science and environmental programs. In France, I will view selected ecosystems, parks, or nature areas. I hope also to make some cultural/social observations concerning French lifestyle practices pertaining to the use of technology and science. If opportunity and time permit, I will seek similar experiences in Portugal and Italy.

In this era of linking broad concepts such as globalization, environmentalism, technology, and education, I will seek these relationships out in selected European settings and subsequently compare them to the trends and practices that exist in the USA. In my cultural/societal observations, I will give special attention to lifestyle comparisons with the USA in relation to aspects of environmental/ecological awareness and consciousness. Simple observations concerning things such as types of cars, methods of garbage disposal, water use practices, packaging of consumer goods, and environmental technologies will elicit a profile of environmental awareness by the public and governments.

I will use these experiences in a variety of ways upon my return. First, I will have developed language skills that will help tremendously in relating to the education needs of international and cross-cultural students. Second, classroom lectures in all of the courses that I teach (earth science, oceanography, environmental science, and biology) will be adorned with a new perspective for a global comparison of practices and awareness levels. Third, observing new animals and plants, ecosystems, and earth topography will enhance my knowledge of science. Fourth, my understanding as a professor and a person for the "linked concepts" of globalization, technology, environment, and education will be significantly changed. A broader personal worldview should result!

I am an experienced traveler and have foreign living experience. I have taken "free form walkabouts" previously in my life. I believe that this proposal, while more agenda-driven owing to it being a PBCC sabbatical leave, will be no less influencing of my professional and personal life. If this leave experience doesn't make me a better professor, I will be the first to question why!

Professor Alessandra Gieffers - Fall 2004

Having a Macintosh Computer lab on Eissey Campus is a dream come true. In accordance with my own "teaching policy" of encouraging digital solution to creative problems, I need a sabbatical to enhance and update my own Macintosh Computer skills.

Since the mid and late 1990's there have been a dramatic series of advances in hardware and software that suddenly make possible digital renderings of astonishing artistry and verisimilitude. The advances in computer visualization - borrowed from engineering applications, atmospheric studies and special effects have given rise to a dazzling array of sophisticated modeling and rendering tools.

In our Eisey Campus computer lab, the Macintosh G4 computers have several software packages, including Adobe Photoshop 7.0 that allows students to generate remarkable convincing textures, colors and surfaces on their scanned drawings and designs. With this design software, they also can create art work with such subtle variegations as to simulate marble walls or the complexities of multiple reflections on a pane of glass.

I need the intense study time of a six-month sabbatical that would afford me to take master classes at Florida Atlantic University so that I, too, will be on top of the game.

Professor Frederick C. Lane - Fall 2004

Edward F. Redish, <http://www2.physics.umd.edu/~redish/>, Professor of Physics, University of Maryland, has been researching "How Students Learn Physics." I intend to review the material and results that his group has collected over the recent few years by

1. Observing their current research and methods.
2. Interview Dr. Redish, his doctoral students and participate in their seminars.
3. Searching for any indicators indications of the cognitive process that the students use in learning physics to see if some of their work can be translated to mathematics.
4. Interviewing the principals that are conducting the current research activities, observe the physics labs and the methods that are used in their observations.

How we learn mathematics may be surprising to many of us. The way we learn mathematics may be a function of our language tools.

In chapter 1, page 3 of "The Math Gene," Keith Devlin states:

The main activity that prepared the human brain for being able to do mathematics, I will suggest, was nothing to do with the physical world, as you might have expected; rather it was keeping track of interpersonal relationships in an increasingly complex society. Although you may find this suggestion surprising, it is not in conflict with other authorities on the issue, for the simple reason that no one else has yet attempted to explain how our capacity for mathematical thought evolved! (Numerical ability, yes; but not mathematical ability.) If my explanation is correct, we can begin to understand why so many people find mathematics so hard, and how we might modify mathematics instruction so that a greater proportion of people may learn it.

Devlin goes on to show that processing language is the activity that prepares and develops mathematical capabilities in the brain.

Dr. Michael T. Miles - Fall 2004

Teach courses in Psychology, Education, Special Education and Human Services that pertain to children and families with learning and behavioral disorders. Conduct applied research with children and adolescents with learning and behavioral disorders. Help with the start up of a new master's program in special education.

The contacts that I have made with Vilnius University have put me in touch with a new Masters in Special Education that is going to be implemented this coming fall. My background is in special education, children and adolescents with behavioral disorders and learning disabilities. My applied work has been as a teacher of emotionally disturbed children and as the behavioral psychologist for a large Florida school district. My years of work as a psychotherapist and as a teacher will help the university with the implementation of their new curriculum as well as their Social Work program.

In the field of Special Education, I have taught the following course on both the undergraduate and graduate level:

- Behavior Management in the Classroom;
- Teaching Students with Emotional Disturbances;
- Inclusion;
- Special Education Law;
- Attention Deficit Disorders.

Every class will have a lecture and discussion component. Small group work and presentations by the student will be essential components of my classes. Each student must do a research paper with a topic appropriate for the class. These papers will be written in American Psychological Association (APA) format. I believe it is essential for each student to do a field work project that will expose them to the different disabilities that they will encounter during their tenure as a special education teacher. This component has always been a part of my classes. Student testing includes both multiple choice and essay questions. Videos, overheads and PowerPoint presentations are used when appropriate. Guest speakers are also a part of the course presentation (e.g. teachers, psychologists, etc.).

I am an American of Lithuanian ancestry. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, I have followed the events in Lithuania very closely. Over the past few months, Lithuania has been a focus of national and international news due to their new membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and their coming membership in the European Union (EU).

For a long time, I have longed to explore the country of my ancestry. This opportunity would not only fulfill this desire, but would allow me the privilege to contribute to the development and success the Lithuanians are starting to enjoy.

Professor Edwin Peck - Spring 2005

During my sabbatical leave, I intend to perform a program of interrelated activities to enhance my academic understanding in my field, my professional effectiveness as an instructor, and my contribution to the college learning community.

To develop further my foundation of academic understanding, I intend to pursue a comprehensive reading list of primary sources related to the literature courses I teach as a member of the English faculty (English Literature, The Bible as Literature, American Literature, and World Literature). The responsibilities of our heavy teaching schedules and the enormous number of students we deal with in English courses requiring Gordon Rule assignments of 6,000 and 7,000 words per student simply do not allow the kind of in depth and time-intensive reading of the literature that we need, especially of selections offered in our students' textbook anthologies. Sabbatical leave offers the necessary and wonderful opportunity to develop a personal acquaintance with all the works presented, allowing instructors to go beyond teaching merely those pieces that they may be familiar with from their own course work. I try to structure my literature courses so that students are not confined to those selections assigned for class but can pursue

those authors and selections in the textbook that interest them and address them personally. Helping students with this requires a wide acquaintance with the pieces they choose individually to work on. Sabbatical leave to do the necessary reading will help me to continue to allow students to have their own individual input in the semester curriculum. It will also help me to update my grasp of the newest literature. This is especially important now as the canon of works studies in college becomes so much more diverse, inclusive, and international. In addition to reading primary sources, I intend to do research into critical secondary sources related to this literature in order to deepen my understanding and to gain broader acquaintance with the sources students encounter.

I intend to pursue a similar program of academic development related to the composition courses I teach (College Compositions I and II). I am in need of time to update my knowledge of the latest development in composition theory and practice and in methods of teaching composition to accommodate the variety of learning styles of our student at the college. To do this, I plan to research readings in composition theory and in pedagogical methods of composition instruction and to explore programs in use at other colleges.

In both my literature and composition research, I intend also to work through the primary and ancillary computer components available with our textbooks and from other sources. These are incredible resources that sabbatical leave would allow me to explore and to incorporate into the curriculum of my courses in a way that I cannot now.

I plan to supplement my program of research with resources (in print and on-line) and workshops offered by the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the conference on College Compositions and Communication, the Two-year College English Association, the Florida College English Association, and the Great Books Foundation.