

Collin County Community College District APPLICATION FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

Instructions

Please complete this application by responding to all items. Attach requested documentation (in the order requested) and secure the appropriate signatures prior to submitting the application to the chair of the Sabbatical Leave Committee.

Name: Chris Grooms

CWID: 110497297

Title: Professor of English

Division: Communications and Humanities

Have you ever been granted a sabbatical? Yes If yes: Date: Fall, 2008

Please provide a brief description of your *previous* sabbatical project:

I studied the production of college-level textbooks from inception to delivery. Examining production and editorial practices, I evaluated the effectiveness of web-based versus print textbooks in the classroom environment as well as the growth and contribution of ancillary textbook materials as both primary and secondary sources for students.

Sabbatical Leave Period Being Requested

Dates: Beginning Date: August, 2014 Ending Date: December 2014

Length: ☒ One semester ☐ Two semesters ☐ Other _____



Applicant's Agreement

ABSTRACT

Please give a summary description of the project and its significance in a language that can be readily understood by persons in areas of expertise other than your own. PLEASE DO NOT EXCEED SPACE PROVIDED BELOW.

This sabbatical proposal will explore tutoring practices as part of current teaching methodologies and classroom research, focusing on improving student retention and academic commitment. I intend to document, evaluate, and review tutorial practices that affect writing across the disciplines. Through a series of interviews with a wide range of educators, both in America and Great Britain, I will collect a common set of responses to queries as to how each educator nurtures habits of mind that promote academic success and completion within the tutorial setting. These include the following eight concepts: creativity, openness, engagement, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition, habits around which instructors tutor students as they master student learning outcomes (SLOs) in preparation for their specializations and careers.

Although I will focus on composition, writing activities extend across the curriculum in both arts and sciences, and include these shared outcomes: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, knowledge of conventions, and the ability to compose in multiple environments, from traditional pen and paper to electronic technologies. As these common outcomes are at the heart of tutorial practices as a mutual academic contract between instructor and students in both the arts and sciences, the interviews I conduct will focus on how 'the tutorial' strengthens and guides that relationship, based on the eight habits of mind mentioned above..

I will share any discoveries and insights with my colleagues in the form of workshops, print documents (available in Word and PDF) that focus on best practices, and a dedicated web-based resource. Based on what best practices I find applicable to my own composition and literature classes, I will test, reshape, and then blend appropriate tutorial activities into my course syllabi and semester calendars.

'THE TUTORIAL' - BEST PRACTICES - COMPARING AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN MODELS

A SABBATICAL PROPOSAL - DR. CHRIS GROOMS

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THE 'OXFORD TUTORIAL' - A TRIPARTITE INTEGRATION

One of the byproducts of these interviews will be the chance to explore the history of academic tutoring and its transformation and genesis from the ancient classical schools and medieval universities to current traditions such as the 'Oxford tutorial'.³ At one practical level, the interviews will also query the historical and philosophical foundations of how educators currently blend tutoring practices with syllabus policies, semester calendar, and course writing activities. I also hope to better understand how tutoring practices act as an advising tool that might drive more effectively the academic goal of becoming 'core-complete' in preparation for a college major as well as completing the associate's degree.

The basic system from which many educators derive their classroom and conference methods has as its kernel the 'Oxford tutorial.' Even in the Oxbridge system, it has continually evolved, based on the complex needs of specific disciplines in the arts and sciences. At the heart of its continuous genesis is the opportunity to assist, tutor, and mentor individual students in (1) a face-to-face setting, either during office hours to review and facilitate their revision activities, or (2) in close workshop activities with small groups of students in a traditional classroom setting, or (3) in open classroom discussion as a way to norming course expectations. All of these activities are predicated on the place and purpose of the primary and secondary texts and other traditional or ancillary materials as well as new digital technologies.

By circulating, balancing, and equalizing instructor-student contact across these three environments, instructors and students across a variety of disciplines create a more productive academic laboratory that strengthens their habits of research, either by imitation or by guided work. The interview process will focus on details of tutorial practices from these three environments and enquire as to what techniques influence and strengthen the eight successful student habits of mind (listed above). Focusing on these eight areas or habits as the interview rubric will allow flexibility of detail and exploration without diverging from a consistent response.

1 *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. Developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTA) and the National Writing Project (NWP). January, 2011. Web 26 Oct. 2013.
<<http://wpacouncil.org/files/framework-for-success-postsecondary-writing.pdf>>.

2 Ibid. page 1.

3 For a survey of history and trends, see *The Oxford Tutorial: 'Thanks, you taught me how to think'*. Ed. David Palfreyman. Oxford: Oxford Center for Higher Education Studies, 2001.

Although I cannot predict my discoveries, I want to know more about how the American tutoring practices diverge from the European practices and to what extent we have retained or jettisoned older models. Is this divergence due to a common educational culture, or has the influence of complex bureaucratic, class, and popular cultures separated us entirely with reference to attitudes towards students? As I encounter the complexity and diversity of tutorial practices in diverse American and European settings, I anticipate that the common interview tool (focused on the eight student 'habits of mind') will help me discern what is valuable and worth sharing with others. As stated above, I wish to extend my knowledge of tutorial practices by cross-referencing a network of interviews of former colleagues and students from both American and British institutions. With a common set of questions and queries, I will create an academic snapshot of current developments in 'the tutorial.' As a conduit for collegiality, I will then seek professional opportunities as they appear to share in various ways what I discover with my colleagues at Collin College with the goal of improving communication and sharing pedagogical practices and concerns between various disciplines in the arts and sciences.

As a former visiting professor and lecturer at Harvard (Fall 1998) and Cambridge (Fall 2001), and research associate at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth, Wales (Fall 2008) and the Centre for Breton and Celtic Research, Brest, Brittany (1994), I was invited to conduct tutorial courses both in lecture and seminar settings. My colleagues overseas and at Harvard respected and trusted me to conduct such activities in my own way without any supervision, yet as a solitary and visiting 'replacement' lecturer, I had only fleeting peripheral opportunities to sit down with any of them and find out what made their academic environments work with respect to successful tutorial activities. I want to use this sabbatical time to redress that deficit in my educational experience. In that sense, this proposal also addresses the goal of professional enrichment by filling in that knowledge gap.

SABBATICAL ACTIVITIES AND CALENDAR

In response to these ideas and processes, I will follow this calendar of activities and work:

Fall 2014 - September-October:

Based on the interview rubric (eight habits of mind), I will interview and collect experiences from a range of my former colleagues and students at local universities as well as Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, and the University of Wales system (Bangor, Aberystwyth, and Swansea) who practice tutorials in a variety of subjects in the arts and sciences. These interviews will include Patrick K Ford, retired Chair of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University; Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, Professor of Irish, Harvard University; Simon Keynes, Professor of Anglo-Saxon, University of Cambridge; Oliver Padel, retired professor, University of Cambridge; Jerry Hunter, lecturer, University College of Wales, Bangor; Helen Fulton, Professor of Medieval Literature, University of York; A. Cynfael Lake, Professor of Welsh, University College of Wales, Swansea, and other lecturers that work in the tutorial environment.

November-January:

Based on the eight concept model (habits of mind) as a response outline, I will tabulate and cross-reference the transcripts of these interviews (print and web-based). I will also create a descriptive survey of historical and recent practices and research in the field of 'the tutorial,' including an annotated bibliography, and a list of best practices to share with my colleagues.

Spring and Fall, 2015+:

I will share any discoveries and insights with my colleagues in the form of workshops, print documents (available in Word and PDF) that focus on best practices, and a dedicated web-based resource. Based on what best practices I find applicable to my own composition and literature classes, I will test, reshape, and then blend appropriate tutorial activities into my course syllabi and semester calendars.

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY - THE TUTORIAL

SUCCESSFUL HABITS OF MINDS

Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. 2011. Developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTA) and the National Writing Project (NWP). Web. <<http://wpacouncil.org/files/framework-for-success-postsecondary-writing.pdf>>.

THE TUTORIAL - HISTORY AND PRACTICE

- Ashwin, P. 2005. Variation in Students' Experiences of the 'Oxford Tutorial', *Higher Education*. 50, 631-644.
- . 2006. "Variation in academics' accounts of tutorials," *Studies in Higher Education* 31:6, 651-665.
- Brock, M.G., and Curthosy, M.C., eds. 1984. *History of the University of Oxford*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Two extracts pertain to the tutorial system, Vol. 6 (1997): 32-6; 148-153; 188-191; Vol. 7 (2000): 133-7.
- Chi, M.T.H. 1996. "Constructing Self-Explanations and Scaffolded Explanations in Tutoring." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 10: S33-S49.
- Moore, Will G. 1968. *The Tutorial System and Its Future*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Palfreyman, David, ed. 2001. *The Oxford Tutorial: 'Thanks, you taught me how to think'*. Oxford: OxChaps.
- Rouverol, W.S. 1955. "The tutorial system." *Journal of Higher Education* 26:1.
- Tapper, T., and Palfreyman, D. 2000. "The Tutorial System: The Jewel in the Crown" in *Oxford and the Decline of the Collegiate Tradition*, London: Woburn Press, 96-124.
- Trigwell, K., and Ashwin, P. 2006. "An exploratory study of situated conceptions of learning and learning environments." *Higher Education* 51, 243-258.

THE TUTORIAL - ADDITIONAL WEB-BASED RESOURCES

- Beck, R. "Towards a Pedagogy of the Oxford Tutorial." Lawrence University, unpublished paper. n.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2013. <http://www.lawrence.edu/fast/beckr/pdfs/OxfordTutorial_7_05_06.pdf>.
- Matson, Cole. "Oxford vs US: An Undergrad Degree Comparison Chart (& Glossary)." n.d. Web. 12 Sept. 2013. <<http://colematson.com/2012/01/05/oxford-vs-us-an-undergrad-degree-comparison-chart-glossary/>>.
- Morgan, John H. "What is an E-Tutorial: An Innovation for the 21st Century." n.d. Web. 15 Sept. 2013. <<http://www9.bangwsd.net/gtfeducation/images/dynamic/file/faculty/What-is-an-E-Tutorial-JER1.pdf?1354304959307>>.
- Tutor: The Oxford Guide*. n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2013. <<http://oxford.openguides.org/wiki/?Tutors>>.
- "The Oxford Tutorial System." *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*. Vol. IX. "From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift." Chapter XV. "Education," Section 24. 1907-21. Web. 22 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.bartleby.com/219/1524.html>>.