



# Memorandum

March 14, 2014

To: Cary A. Israel, District President  
From: Colleen Smith  
Re: 2014-2015 Sabbatical Recommendations

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Five outstanding Collin College Professors applied for Sabbatical Leave to commence during the 2014-2015 academic year. There were no sabbaticals recommended in 2012-2013 for the current academic year 2013-2014. Two Sabbatical Leaves were taken by faculty each of the four previous academic years. Although the major criteria to be used in evaluating proposals is pedagogy, classroom and learning outcomes research, using technology in the classroom, professional enrichment including completion of an advanced degree, and improving college systems, also included in the decision-making process is sabbatical history and the balance of sabbatical leaves among faculty in a department. Please see my recommendations below for approval of Sabbatical Leave for four of the five candidates that were recommended by the committee. I am also including recommendations to strengthen the sabbatical process and each of the proposals for the candidates.

## Recommendations for strengthening the sabbatical process:

1. The instructions for Sabbatical Leave Eligibility should be revised to provide a clear understanding of eligibility in regards to both the years of service before a new faculty member first becomes eligible to apply for sabbatical and the years of service between sabbaticals required for eligibility.
2. Before the recommendation of approval is made by reviewers in each step of the Sabbatical Leave process, all elements of the Sabbatical Leave Application should be checked for completion and the application should be checked to determine that it clearly demonstrates that “Sabbatical leaves are authorized for the primary purpose of increasing the value of the recipient’s sustained contribution to the college by providing the individual a significant opportunity for professional growth” as stated in *The Sabbatical Leave Policy and Guidelines*.
3. Clear documentation concerning the merit of the Sabbatical Leave Application in compliance with the *Priorities for Sabbatical Proposals* should be clearly established by reviewers at each level of the process before recommendation of approval or disapproval is made.

## Recommendations for Sabbatical Leave for the Academic Year 2014-2015

1. James (Chris) Gray – Professor of Art, Ceramics (has never taken Sabbatical Leave)  
I recommend that this application be approved with the understanding that the professor must be on campus fulfilling his duties of full-time professor beginning with the first contract day of January 2015. (His application states that he will return to work on January 20.) Professor Gray’s application was the only one to receive unanimous votes for approval from the Dean, the sabbatical committee of his peers and the VP/Provosts. Comments from the committee are listed below.
  - I recommend this proposal for sabbatical. It contributes to the college mission of excellence and its outcome will be beneficial to pedagogy.
  - This application is strong in the areas of Teaching/Methodologies and Professional Enrichment. The request has merit, and the Artist in Residence would be beneficial.
  - I support this sabbatical. I think it can aid Collin College’s Ceramics department for the students and the department as a whole. I think that almost all of the priorities (teaching/methodologies, Classroom research, Discipline research, professional enrichment and improving college systems) are covered. I’m not exactly sure why the end date is January 20 when in the time line the applicant has the remainder of December for compiling data –

what will be done January 1 – 20? (Faculty report back January 7 and January 20 is the first day of classes for the Spring semester).

- Meets the priorities: Teaching/Methodologies, Discipline Research, and Professional Enrichment.
- I think this project will expand the curriculum at Collin in this department as well as provide a more engaging type of learning for students in that field.

2. Lupita Tinnen – Professor of Photography (has never taken Sabbatical Leave)

I recommend that this application be approved with the understanding that the professor must work with her Academic Dean to provide specific details of the timeline and what will be accomplished by specific deadlines within the sabbatical. According to the *Collin College Priorities for Sabbatical Proposals*, a suggested area of focus is “Pursue advanced education/certification related to current Collin position.” Although Collin College has demonstrated that completion of an advanced degree by faculty is a high priority that will be supported by systems of the college (example- UTD scholarships), there seems to be a lack of clarity concerning this issue as can be seen in one of the committee member’s comments below.

- The application is well-presented, and the dissertation would be worthwhile. Approval of this request would set a precedent for granting sabbaticals for dissertation work. Typically, sabbaticals for this purpose have not been approved.
- This does extensively support professional enrichment allowing the applicant to pursue advanced education related to current Collin position, and it addresses discipline research and can potentially aid in developing student research projects in photography and documentary (while involving other disciplines as well). Meets the priorities: Discipline Research, Professional Enrichment
- The project is of value to both her and the institution. Ph.D. residency should be a priority for sabbatical grants.
- Completion of the doctoral research benefits the faculty member and the college.

3. Sharon Hirschy – Professor of Child Development and Education (has never taken Sabbatical Leave)

I recommend that this application be approved with the understanding that Professor Hirschy will work with college departments such as the eLearning Center in the training for Collin College faculty using technology in the classroom and work with the Academic Dean to determine the viability of maintaining a training website over time and the fund raising mentioned in the proposal.

Comments from the committee in support of Professor Hirschy’s proposal include:

- I think that this proposal will enhance Collin’s child development program, as well as help in developing successful strategies/best practices for use of technology in the classroom across the district.
- Request is strong in the areas of Teaching/Methodologies, Classroom Research, and Using Technology. While this is the case, the proposed plan seems a bit aggressive in its scope. In addition, it seems somewhat contradictory in its focus; will the researcher concentrate on children’s or faculty’s use of technology?
- The topic of technology and learning is much needed to enhance the skills of our adult learners as well as child learners. The exposure of such research will support the college’s goals for innovation in teaching and demonstrate our desire to continue to be on the cutting edge of learning.
- I’d like more detail on the scope of “Train the Trainer” materials. With evidence that developing these materials requires a large investment in time, I vote yes. The project would position the college to train teachers who are well-adapted to technology that is in common use in local schools.

4. Chris Grooms – Professor of English (sabbatical taken Fall 2008) I recommend that this application be

approved with the understanding that Professor Grooms work with the Provost, Academic Deans and Student Development Deans to help develop a systematic tutoring program across the district. (The VP/Ps are currently analyzing their budgets in order to develop tutoring processes across the district. The timing of this sabbatical research would work well for the benefit of the College as a whole if

Professor Grooms shares his research and helps develop a systematic approach to tutoring.) Comments from the committee in support of Professor Groom's proposal:

- I highly recommend this applicant for sabbatical leave as this proposal strongly advances the core objectives of the college and will enhance classroom pedagogy.
- I support this sabbatical. I do think this proposal hits the majority of the priorities for the college. This will potentially benefit students in completion in several areas of the college and will aid in developing best practices for several areas of instruction as we do still practice writing across the curriculum.
- Meets the priorities: Teaching/Methodologies, Discipline Research, Professional Enrichment, and Improving College Systems.
- Improving the writing skills of students at Collin will benefit all disciplines here and for transferable students to other institutions of higher education. The workshops and documents created through this project appears to promote scholarly learning.
- I would like a more detailed time line, including the mode of review, and support letters from the faculty he mentions. Without that, I vote no. The project has definite merit for the faculty member and the program, but its structure needs to be more apparent.

5. Byrd Williams – Professor of Photography (sabbatical taken academic year 2008-2009) Professor Byrd's application was approved by the committee; however, this application received the highest number of reticent and conflicted comments concerning the benefit of the proposal to Collin College. A definite theme that made this application the lowest priority for the college was expressed as seen in the comments listed below. This application is not brought forward for approval at this time.

- Although this project is of great interest, it is unclear how it contributes to the college's strategic goals and enhances classroom pedagogy. Therefore I cannot recommend it.
- This application is a Once in a Lifetime request. It has merit and could bring some recognition to our college and its faculty. It appears to be primarily for the benefit of the recipient, but it could enhance his/her methodologies.
- Support this sabbatical, with reservations, as a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.
- I do believe that this is a wonderful opportunity for the applicant, but I'm not exactly sure how the college will benefit overall, since much of this project will be housed at the University of North Texas.
- While I completely agree with and promote family preservation, I'm not sure how this project will benefit the college and students.