

## Sabbatical Leave Report

### A. Applicant

Name: Sheryl Cavales Doolan

Department: English

Type of Leave: Formal Coursework

Leave Dates: Fall 2017 and Fall 2018

### B. Purpose of Leave

The intent of my sabbatical is to complete formal coursework in San Francisco State University's Doctoral program in Educational Leadership. With a specific focus on social justice and equity, this program is designed to help educators become transformational leaders in their worksites. Informed by the education in my coursework, specifically current research and scholarship on effective teaching for underserved students, I will develop a series of professional learning workshops for English faculty. These workshops will use critical theories as frameworks for creating more inclusive and equitable classes, particularly for students who are people of color, first generation college students, basic skills students, and LGBTQ students. Though specific content of the workshops will be shaped by the coursework, they will address issues such as cultural competency, unconscious bias, linguistic diversity and gender diversity.

### C. Objectives

1. Completed coursework in SFSU's Doctoral program in Educational Leadership
2. Compiled a bibliography of current research and relevant scholarship that address: issues of social justice and equity; effective teaching and learning practices; and critical theories of race, class, and gender in education.
3. Developed a series of professional learning workshops for English faculty designed to help them create more equitable and inclusive classes.

## D. Narrative

San Francisco State University's Educational Doctorate in Leadership (EDDL) program is a three-year, intensive program intended to help educators become transformational leaders. I began the program in Fall 2016 and am now completing my final semester in Spring 2019. Coursework in this program addresses three broad themes: leadership, equity, and inquiry. A sample of courses relevant to this sabbatical project include Qualitative Analysis of Race, Class, and Gender in Society and Education; Literacy and English Language Learners; Quantitative Analysis of Structural Inequality in Education; Transformational Strategies to Address Inequality in Education and Society; and Communication Techniques and Strategies for Educational Leadership. My dissertation research is also relevant to this sabbatical project. All coursework was successfully completed. The EDDL program provided me the opportunity to grow as an instructor, educator, and scholar. Through the coursework, I have come to have a stronger understanding of the structural roots of educational inequity that plagues the California Community College system. To effect real substantive change requires both structural change at the state level *and* the commitment of faculty to both implementation and innovative instruction. In the EDDL program, I have successfully learned various methodologies of educational research, and I am currently completing data collection for my own study. My dissertation research, titled, "Achieving Velocity: Equity-Oriented English Instruction in the Community College Classroom," is a qualitative study examining the composition (writing) teaching practices and experiences of developmental English instructors who identify equity as a significant value in their teaching. The purpose of the research is to ascertain the qualities and impact of equity-oriented composition instruction from the instructors' perspective. This research can help faculty leaders better support English instructors in the post-AB 705 composition classes that will see a wider variety of student backgrounds, prior knowledge, and reading/writing/critical thinking skills. San Francisco State's EDDL program has increased my instructional and leadership capacities and has helped me grow both personally and professionally in unexpected ways.

Throughout the coursework and for my dissertation, I have read extensively about critical theories of race and identity as well as pedagogical theories; current research in education and equity, particularly research addressing equity in developmental English; and scholarly articles on leadership models that are most relevant to English faculty and departments who are interested in faculty-driven transformational change. From my research, I have compiled a bibliography of the most relevant and useful pieces instructors can use to expand their own understanding of these topics.

Based on my education through reading and research, I have developed a series of professional learning workshops for English faculty designed to help them critically reflect on current teaching practices and collaborate with colleagues in creating more inclusive classes that can support equitable outcomes for all students. In the

workshops, I will share current research and scholarship; offer specific strategies and tools for improving equity and inclusion in the classroom; and create structures that will allow time and space for critical reflection, discussion, and collaboration with colleagues in rethinking our own curriculum and teaching practices. These workshops primarily utilize Laura Rendon's Validation theory and Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theory (an offshoot of Critical Race theory) as frameworks for creating more inclusive and equitable classes for the diverse backgrounds and abilities of our students. Utilizing the content from my formal coursework and research, and based upon the needs of the department, I have developed workshops on unconscious bias and stereotype threat; racial identity development; and equity-oriented practices for teaching composition. An important note is that the English department is currently offering five communities of practice, each asking extensive commitment of time and work from faculty and staff to prepare the department for the implementation of AB 705. I will coordinate with the department chair to determine the optimal time to offer these workshops throughout the upcoming transitional year.

#### **E. Evaluation Summary**

1. How did this sabbatical leave enhance my work performance at the college?

This sabbatical leave has afforded me the opportunity to grow as an educator, instructor, and scholar. Having a deep understanding of the roots of structural educational inequity gives me the perspective to critically analyze our college practices, to advocate for change, and to support my colleagues through challenging educational reform. As we face the full implementation of AB 705, the college and the English department must reflect not only on how to logistically implement change, but also on how we as educators can grow our roles as student advocates and critically question how we can serve all students more effectively.

2. How did this sabbatical leave benefit students in my discipline?

Within my own classes, the students I teach will benefit from my growth as an instructor. From adopting co-construction as a tool for student engagement to utilizing writing conferences for clearer, more efficient communication of feedback to students, my teaching tools have expanded dramatically. More fundamentally, the theoretical foundation of my teaching philosophy has evolved, based largely on Laura Rendon's Validation Theory and Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theory (an offshoot of Critical Race theory). As I share my knowledge through workshops with English colleagues, students throughout English classes can benefit from instructors' professional learning. All students directly benefit from instructors' increased expertise, but students with basic reading and writing skills, students of low socio-economic status, students of color, and culturally and

linguistically diverse students reap the most benefit from improved classroom environment and lessons.

3. How did this sabbatical leave benefit my department?

As a gateway department, the English department serves almost every student who attends SRJC. The increasingly diverse student populations enrich our classrooms and campus, and as we implement AB 705, English 1A, the required freshman composition course, we will see a dramatic increase in varying student ability in English 1A. We are also seeing a substantial reduction in developmental (basic skills) courses. The expertise I have gained in educational equity and equity-oriented instruction will allow me to support my colleagues in adopting and adapting teaching practices to better support our diverse students. Looking into the future, my training in educational research will also benefit the department as we consider data we may want to collect to help us better serve our students.

4. How did this sabbatical leave address the SRJC Strategic Plan and/or your department's educational plan?

The bibliography I have compiled of current research and theory in educational equity and diversity will be available to the department. Sources address critical theories of race, identity, and pedagogy; current research in education and equity, particularly research addressing equity in developmental English; and scholarly articles on leadership models that are most relevant to English faculty and departments who are interested in faculty-driven transformational change. The department goal of improving the ways we serve our diverse students reflects the college's values of Learning, Academic Excellence, Diversity, Compassion, and Innovation.

## **F. Abstract for Board Report Summary**

Sheryl Cavales Doolan completed coursework in San Francisco State University's Educational Doctorate in Leadership (EDDL) program. She is now in the final stages of data collection for her dissertation research. With a specific focus on social justice and equity, the EDDL program is designed to help educators become transformational leaders in their worksites. Informed by the education in her coursework and dissertation research, Sheryl has compiled a bibliography of critical theories, educational research on developmental English, and leadership models that emphasize faculty-driven educational change. Based on this work, she has developed a series of professional learning workshops for English faculty designed to help them critically reflect on current teaching practices and collaborate with colleagues in creating more inclusive classes that can support equitable outcomes for all students.

## **G. Appendices**

- A. Transcript from San Francisco State University
- B. Bibliography
- C. Outline of workshop agendas