

Sabbatical Leave Proposal

A. Applicant

Name: Jennifer Royal

Department: English

Type of Leave: Project

Leave Dates: Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

B. Purpose of Leave

The purpose of my sabbatical leave is to write an interactive college composition e-book which emphasizes active, student-centered learning via engaging game-based learning and assessment objects. I will submit the e-book for publication and use it as a primary text in my English 1A online classes; in addition, I will make all of the learning "games" created for this e-book available to my colleagues in the English Department.

C. Leave Objectives

1. Select a platform and/or software for e-book design and construction.
2. Write curriculum for a college composition e-book with an emphasis on active, student-centered learning, such as Just in Time, Habits of Mind, and Reading Apprenticeship.
3. Incorporate multimedia (images, video, animation) into course content to enhance student learning and provide multiple methods for student engagement.
4. Create engaging game-like learning and assessment objects (drag and drop, branching scenarios, Q&A with success meter, scripted characters, explorable environments, etc.)
5. Find a publisher for the completed interactive e-book and provide LMS integration.

D. Narrative

In a college composition class, students have a lot to accomplish. They must learn to write a focused, coherent, and well-developed expository essay; they must be able to recognize and correct errors in grammar and punctuation; they are required to analyze and synthesize ideas in college-level texts, noting style, tone, and point of view; and they must write a substantial, documented research paper.

To supplement class instruction and help students reach these goals, most instructors assign readings and exercises from a writing and rhetoric textbook. Each year, new textbooks come out, and each year, instructors sort through the options to select a text that explains concepts clearly and provides meaningful exercises, a textbook that will help students become immersed in learning.

I have yet to find an academic writing textbook that is deeply immersive for the majority of students. I think the problem has to do with the structure of assignments: students read, answer questions or complete exercises, then submit homework in class or online. Feedback is often delayed so students don't feel success in the moment, and even if there is an answer key, the reasoning behind the correct answers is seldom provided, so if students fail, they don't understand why. Additionally, multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions, which are commonly used to measure learning in academic writing texts, require a direct response from students, but rarely stimulate creative critical thinking.

Research findings since the 1980's show that students' immersion in learning, as well as their learning outcomes, can be improved with digital learning games. And in the last five years or so, the tools for creating digital games have improved dramatically and are now readily available to educational game designers. My goal for this sabbatical leave is to take advantage of these advances to design an interactive academic writing e-book that uses game-based exercises and learning activities in the hopes that this interactivity and "hard fun" will improve student's engagement in learning and their ability to reach learning outcomes.

My plan to produce this college composition e-book is detailed below.

Objective 1. I will spend 8-10 weeks continuing my education for this project. Specifically, I will develop a database of ideas for e-learning design by conducting a study of interactive, educational e-books (e.g., interactive e-storybooks created for children, professional training e-books, and college-level course e-books). I will also examine e-book design platforms such as Adobe InDesign and iBooks Author. I will read and review articles on student-centered learning practices, particularly articles that focus on learning in digital formats, to ensure that all activities in the e-book meet a high standard for student-centered learning. In addition, I will continue my studies of educational game design and "play" educational digital games to improve my design skills. By the end of my studies, I will decide on an e-book platform and game software, and be knowledgeable enough about how to use these tools to move forward with this project.

Objective 2. In mid-October, 2017, I will create an organizational plan for the e-book content, including special features, objectives and activities for each chapter, and regular multimedia and digital game features. Once I have the organizational plan laid out, I will set up the site framework using page templates and image/media placeholders.

From January, 2018, to the end of my sabbatical, I will write the curriculum for the e-book. During this time period, I will also collect images, create animations and videos, and design the learning games, as these components are interconnected.

Objective 3. I will find images for the e-book from public domain and creative commons sites, but I will also create my own images, animations, and videos to enhance the course content.

Objective 4. Based on my studies of educational game design before my sabbatical and during the first 8-10 weeks of my sabbatical, I will design and implement digital learning games that will help students reach learning goals. Games will challenge students with knowledge recall, but also lateral-thinking, pattern recognition, and creative problem solving. Games will involve activities such as drag & drop, solving puzzles, exploring branching scenarios, answering questions and monitoring progress with success meter, engaging with scripted characters and explorable environments, etc.

Objective 5. At the end of my sabbatical, I will complete the e-book, and see if there is interest in publishing this e-book at a reasonable cost to students (publication through W.W. Norton may be a possibility, as I am currently a faculty consultant for their online grammar learning game InQuizitive). I will also upload the grammar games to the English Department's Online Writing Center so that SRJC students and faculty have free access to the games. I will use the e-book in my own composition classes starting in Fall 2018.

E. Evaluation Summary

1. How will the objectives of this sabbatical leave enhance my work performance at the college?

My knowledge of and ability to use current educational technology and student-centered pedagogical strategies will improve over this sabbatical. My ability to create effective lesson plans and assignments will improve. I will also be able to improve the content of the SRJC Online Writing Lab.

2. How will the objectives of this sabbatical leave benefit students in my discipline?

Expertise acquired over my sabbatical in creating interactive game-based learning and assessment activities will improve student learning, both in my English 1A online and face-to-face classes. My hope is that these learning activities embedded in the curriculum will improve students' engagement and commitment to learning, and improve retention.

3. How will the objectives of this sabbatical leave benefit my department?

After my sabbatical period has ended, I will share my expertise by offering a workshop for English Department faculty (and/or PDA session) on creating learning "games" and/or writing an e-book. In addition, English Department faculty will have access to all of the learning games I create during the sabbatical to use as they see fit with their own curriculum.

4. How does your proposed project address the SRJC Strategic Plan and/or your department's educational plan?

My project will contribute to the English Department's and the District's goal of incorporating best practices and innovations to build an exemplary online program, and fostering learning by "implementing instructional practices that increase the learning and success of our diverse students."

F. Abstract for Board Proposal Summary

During her sabbatical leave, English Instructor Jennifer Royal will review and evaluate e-learning and game-design software where the focus is on increasing student motivation through engaging, student-centered, experience-based learning. Then, Jennifer will design and build an interactive college composition e-book with embedded game-based learning and assessment features. This e-book will be submitted for publication, and it will be a primary text in Jennifer's English 1A online classes; in addition, all of the learning "games" created for this e-book will be made available to Jennifer's colleagues in the English Department. This project will contribute to the English Department's and the District's goal of incorporating best practices and innovations to build an exemplary online program, and fostering learning by "implementing instructional practices that increase the learning and success of our diverse students."

G. Approval

Applicant Name
Department/Program
Review and Signature

Department Review

Signature of Department Chair

Date

Sabbatical Leave Committee Review

Signature of Committee Chair

Date

Board of Trustees Review

Action Taken

Date