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Sabbatical Report

August 11, 2015

I had three goals for my sabbatical and I have exceeded each of those goals and experienced unintended learning as well. I will explain each of these in this written report.

This current sabbatical will encourage me to grow in many areas.

1. Goal from application: Researching best practices of technology in Learning Commons, and Tutoring Programs will stretch both my research skills and my technology skills.

*Results:* I enjoyed searching the web for those colleges and universities with Learning Commons’ environments. I made notes of centers that looked compelling from their web presence for possible contact. I took the extra time to drill down in the web pages, informing me on the environments, structures and service delivery. I addressed the Learning Center leader with questions to learn more specifically who I wanted to visit and learned from the phone or email contacts other valuable information. When I visited colleges in person I evaluated the platforms used at their Learning Commons and Tutor Centers (if not the same) to advertise, track student usage and progress, and allow off campus access. In addition to my original focus, I learned about ways and formats that other colleges offer online tutoring, tutor training, and web design. The upshot was learning that there is a wide discrepancy of how much technology is used at colleges around the nation. Some schools are still very paper pencil based.

1. Goal from application: I will continue to grow my leadership skills by furthering the collaboration with members of the Learning Commons team. My learning of technology along with regular communication with team members will encourage me to take a leadership role in the co-creation of an effective system for service delivery enhancing student learning.

*Result*: Since returning from my sabbatical with my expanded skill set in technology fields, I am able to keep up with those from Institutional Technology and ATC as we work together. I met with Michael Levick and Vicki Doughty during my sabbatical to get up to speed on the platforms being used at LCC to compare what I was seeing at other colleges. In the end, we have decided to use our own local platform for ease, support and consistency for students. Since returning, I invited the participants of the future Learning Commons to meet regularly and discuss how we will work together. He have been meeting regularly all spring and summer term and will implement several suggestions in our new Learning Commons. One of these is a “passport” for a self-guided tour, complete with excellent prizes during the beginning of fall term, the informational and interactive kiosks that will help students navigate the space, and the hope for a map of available computers in the library. I learned about this at another college I visited and was able to help our team produce it.

We will also implement the touch screen kiosk system in the Learning Commons that will unite several of the service points for students ease of signing up to use various support systems within the Commons.

1. Goal from application: I will develop professionally by interacting with other professionals around the western US, predominately those involved in LSCHE (Learning Support Centers in Higher Education.) It will be valuable for me to make personal connections, share tutor program strengths, and challenges and be able to observe and evaluate other tutor systems firsthand.

*Results:* Thanks to my research from #1, I reviewed the archives and posted a question to the LSCHE listserv about Learning Commons’ experiences. I was surprised that very little was discussed by learning center professionals and my questions were left unanswered. I attended a conference at Green River for Learning Center professionals, and visited several tutor centers/Learning Commons facilities in Oregon and Washington. I made personal contacts with those in my role at approximately 18 colleges and universities around the US. I learned and shared valuable information about successful Tutor Program management. I was pleased to learn that many of the systems we have implemented at LCC are more desirable than those used at other schools. I found myself teaching as much as I was learning. This goal was exceeded thanks to the many contacts I made.

1. Goal from application: I expect to spend at least 30 hours experiencing, practicing and using technology unfamiliar to me. This exposure will grow my confidence to continue to use and explore new ways to communicate using technology. It will encourage me to move toward technology instead of away from it in future situations.

*Result:* This goal was overwhelmingly met. For the first time, I created a blog, and a 29-minute iMovie. I purchased and used a smart phone and iPad for regular communication and web access, bringing me up to the present.

5. Additional learning: Because my sabbatical was scheduled for winter term, I was able to participate in a Gandhi Legacy Tour tour to India over winter break and into January. This offering came to me after I had planned and my sabbatical was accepted, so all learning from this was a bonus. The professional growth from this trip was not related specifically to Learning Commons or Tutor Centers. We traveled with Arun Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson) and his son to places that Gandhi frequented and programs that have been created following his philosophies of peace and non-violence. I was reminded that one person can make a huge difference in creating peace and co-creating a caring, compassionate environment. I was reminded that we can gain more by serving others than by expecting others to take care of us. I learned appreciation for third world culture, and the benefits of respecting others, especially when they may disagree with us. This non-violent training that Gandhi lived and continues through his family inspired me to keep my own life (both personal and professional) free of conflict. This learning will remain a part of me in every area in which I get to work and live. Thank you for the opportunity.