

II Proposal

1. **Title of Project:** Teaching and Learning in the Dominican Republic
2. **Purpose of the Project:** The primary purpose of this project is to learn more about the people and language of the Dominican Republic so I can play a greater role in the college's global education initiative.

This past January, seven members of the college community participated in an Intercultural Communication's service learning course. I was one of the seven and I enrolled in the course as student. The group traveled to the Dominican Republic and spent nine days working with the children of Haitian immigrants who are attending a makeshift school, Escuela de Comunitiad, in Batey Central in Barahona. I would like to be able to play a greater role in this course and program since I found the experience to be both personally and professionally rewarding. As a biology instructor, I enjoyed teaching the children about basic hygiene, such as tooth brushing. As an educator, it was inspiring to see both the students and teachers at the school so exciting about learning new things and about being able to attend school. As a teacher prep advisor, I was very interested in the teaching techniques and conditions of this very impoverished school.

One of my project goals is to become fluent in Spanish. Prior to participating in this course, I took one semester of basic Spanish; needless to say, this was not enough to effectively communicate with the teachers or students. We had two people on the trip who spoke fluent Spanish, one was the Spanish Professor from our college and the other was one of our students who is Dominican. This is necessary for me to be able to effectively communicate with the students and teacher at the Dominican school and to become a leader in the college's program.

Another project goal is to learn more about the needs and resources in Barahona and the Batey Central Community. The school, Escuela de Comunitiad, was started by a Connecticut woman, Kim Crandall, two years ago. She founded a project called The Dominican Literacy Project (DLP), which funds the school. She is working to expand the school to include provide comprehensive services including health and nutrition resources. Our current work with the school involves our Spanish students and our teacher prep students. Since a number of my science students are pre-nursing and CNA's, I would like to explore a possible role for these students in the DLP.

3. Project Design

The project is designed to provide me a basic understanding of Spanish and an immersion into the Spanish language and culture so that I can become a leader in our college's global education initiative.

Beginning in May, I will enroll in a series of three six week Speed Spanish Courses offered by our college's continuing education Program. In December, I will enroll in the Escuela Larimar Spanish immersion program in Barahona, Dominican Republic. This is an intensive language program that is coupled with a home stay so I will be totally immersed in the language and culture for three weeks. The language schools runs for four hours a day and offers cultural excursions. I will also be able to meet with the teachers from the DLP school when I am not in language classes. This will provide an opportunity for me to better understand and identify the needs of the community and school so that I can prepare for our college students' visit. In January, I will travel from Barahona to Santo Domingo to meet our college students when they arrive and will spend the next nine days with them as we work in the DLP school, Escuela de Comunitiad. While at the school we will create

3. Project Design-continued

health records for the students and provide the teachers and students with curriculum material and activities that we developed before our trip.

When we return in January, I will enroll in our college's Spanish II credit course so I can continue improving my language skills. A series of presentations on the project will take place between February and April. I plan to present locally in our college service area as well as the Human Rights Convocation, The College Board Two-year showcase and the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs' Annual Conference.

4. Personal Statement Personal Statement .

When I decided to participate in the Dominican Literacy Project and enrolled in the International Communications Course, the organizer, Jessica Treat, was thrilled that I wanted to participate. Since she is our Spanish teacher, she understood that one semester of Spanish would not provide me with the language skills I need to effectively communicate in the Dominican Republic. She was willing to serve as guide and translator because she knew that my other skills and attributes would be an asset to the program. I am a skillful organizer and through my work with the Teaching Scholars program, I am experienced working with school-aged children. Even though I enrolled in the course as a student, my role was to organize the daily interactions with the school children and provide structure to our activities with them. The other college students would tell me what project or activity they wanted to do and I would work out the logistics of doing it in a makeshift school with out water or electricity.

I was deeply touched by this entire experience. The people in Batey Centrale where we worked, live in extreme poverty. Access to clean water and basics like clothing and shelter are luxuries that these people do not have. While I found the poverty and living conditions heart wrenching, I also found enthusiasm for learning and hopeful attitude of the people, especially the students, heartwarming. You can read more about my experiences at www.picturetrails.com/sgusky

The experience was truly rewarding but I left there feeling like I could have had a greater personal impact if I spoke Spanish. I am committed to continuing to help the people of Batey Centrale. I want to take a greater lead in running the course that the college offers and Jessica has asked me to co-teach the course next year. Although Jessica is comfortable translating for me, I desire to learn Spanish for my own personal and professional growth so I can make a greater impact. I truly believe that the project I have outlined will provide me with stronger communication skills by the time we run the course again in January 2008.

I have experience as a presenter and have, in the past, been invited to present at a number of meeting and conventions. I plan to present this project at the College Board's Two-Year Showcase and the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs Annual Convention. I will also do presentations for faculty, staff and students at our college and in the CT community college system.

5. Timeline

May-August 2007 Enroll in the Speed Spanish courses offered by the Continuing Education Department of the College

September –December 2007 Enroll in the Spanish credit course; Collect material and supplies for the DLP school; Work with the college students who plan on enrolling in the International Communications Course-we will be making lesson plans and preparing curriculum kits to bring on the trip.

December 30 –January 19,2008 3 weeks at Escuela Larimar with a home stay. This time will consist of 17.5 hrs of in class language instruction. The rest of the time during the week will be spent

5. Timeline-continued

volunteering at the DLP school during the day and socializing with my home stay family in the evening. This will give me a true immersion experience.

January –May 2008 Enroll in the Spanish Credit course and attend the weekly Spanish conversations. Submit presentation proposals and prepare for presentations.

February -March 2008 Attend and present at the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs' Annual Conference and Human Rights Convocation. Make local presentations.

October 2008 Attend and present at The College Board Two-Year Showcase

6. Budget

Airfare to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic \$600

Escuela Larimar Language Program 3 week course \$575

3 week Home stay \$575

Transportation in DR \$300

Other expenses while in the DR \$280 (laundry, miscellaneous costs for school supplies, food etc)

3 levels of Speed Spanish offered by NCCC continuing education program \$270 (\$90 each)

Registration for the College Board Conference \$150

Registration for the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs (NACCTEP) Annual Convention and presentation fees \$600

Travel to Denver for the NACCTEP Annual Convention \$600

Hotel four nights \$800

Books in Spanish and Spanish textbooks \$250

Total \$5000

Sharon Gusky : Teaching in Learning in the Dominican Republic

V: Application Questions

1. Provide your title at your institution and list your primary professional responsibilities

(50 words or less).

As an Assistant Professor of Biology, I teach General Biology and Microbiology. I am the Teaching and Learning Consultant for the college. In this capacity, I organize professional development events on campus and participate in state-wide initiatives. I advise students who are following the teacher preparation pathway.

Sharon Gusky : Teaching in Learning in the Dominican Republic

2. Describe a recent professional activity that has enhanced your ability to fulfill your

professional responsibilities as cited above. In 2004 I was selected by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association for participation in a two-year National Science Foundation (NSF) program teaching educators about emerging technologies in the workplace. According to the CBIA press release: “The teachers were selected for their commitment to learning about technological advances that will give students a more realistic understanding of how classroom learning can be applied on the job.” This two-year program consisted of participation in two 80-hour externships, which were held during two consecutive summers, as well as seminars, workshops and conferences held throughout that two-year period.

The first externship was at the University of Connecticut Health Center’s Department of Clinical Laboratory Medicine and Pathology. I learned how to perform a variety of diagnostic tests including the tests for Lyme Disease, blood disorders and the series of tests used to screen newborns for Cystic Fibrosis (CF). I used this experience to develop a laboratory exercise for my General Biology students which casts them in the role of laboratory technicians screening newborns for CF. They are able to run the full series of tests using simulated samples. This exercise helps students build direct connections between the coursework and issues of current relevance. The enhanced enthusiasm and engagement they show underscores the importance of this addition to our science program.

During my second externship, held in 2005, I worked at Genomas, Inc in Hartford. This company uses the latest technology to screen patients for treatment with DNA-guided medicine. At their facilities I learned how genotyping is performed and I was privileged to explore first-hand the use of robotics in the laboratory. I was also granted access to scientific databases and journals, in order to research articles for use by the company and in my courses. The cutting-edge work being performed by this small company was truly inspiring. Participating in the day-to-day operations of Genomas during this externship has provided me with a wealth of experience concerning the career opportunities that are open to our students.

Sharon Gusky : Teaching in Learning in the Dominican Republic

3. Explain the significance of a specific contribution to scholarship you made through publication, presentation, workshop, or other scholarly activity (include any available documentation).

I was awarded a Teaching Scholars Partnership Grant from the AACC and NSF for the period of July 2001-June 2003. With this grant I developed a program called Partnering in Learning Science. This program provides college students with the opportunity to develop and teach science enrichment lessons to elementary and high school students. This program gave students, who were interested in science, teaching or both, an opportunity to experience classroom teaching while they were in their freshman or sophomore level. This early classroom experience was not only beneficial to the college students but it also provided a resource to the elementary and high school teachers who hosted the students. The college students brought a new perspectives to the classroom, and provide a level of scientific experience and expertise that many of the elementary school teachers lacked.

The program won two awards: the College Board's Best Practices Award and the Bellewether Finalist Award. The program was presented at a number of meetings including: the Rural Advisory Consul meeting, the College Boards Showcase of Two-year Colleges, the Futures Assembly and the Community-Technical College's Board of Trustees meeting. In addition, an article on the program appeared in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice.

As a result of my role in this project, I was asked to participate in the Teaching by Choice national conference, convened in Washington, DC, September 9, 10 & 11, 2004. The product of this conference was the publication *Teaching by Choice: Community College Science and Mathematics Preparation of K-12 Teachers*. A 35-page report of recommendations for community college K-12 teacher preparation programs which was published by the American Association of Community Colleges.

Sharon Gusky : Teaching in Learning in the Dominican Republic

V: Application Questions

- 4. Explain the significance of no more than five awards or recognitions you have received for excellence in your field.**

NISOD Excellence Award 2007:I recently was informed that I will be receiving this award for my inspirational teaching. My Dean nominated me for this award and in my recent evaluation my direct supervisor stated that I teach as if I am having personal conversation with my students. It means a lot to me to be recognized as an excellent teacher by my supervisors.

The College Board's Best Practices Award 2005 and 2003: One of these awards was for a presentation I gave on The Teaching Scholars Project and the other was on the High School Partnership Program. Both of these projects have to do with providing high school students to with exposure to college while in high school. The College Board, the same institution that oversees the SAT and AP exams, presented me with these awards. Having these awards strengthens my credentials when approaching and working with High School faculty and staff who are all too familiar with the agency.

Bellwether Finalist Award: I received this award for a presentation I gave on the Teaching Scholars Program at the Future Assembly of Two Year Colleges. The presentation focused on the work I was doing with the college students who wanted to be teachers and the impact that the program had on them.

NCCC Merit Award 2006 and 2004: This award is extremely meaningful because the nominations for this award come from fellow faculty and staff members. Only two awards are given out each year and since I had already received the award previously, I was deeply moved and honored to receive this award for a second time.

Sharon Gusky : Teaching in Learning in the Dominican Republic

5. How has your experience in scholarship, service, and/or leadership contributed to the growth and achievements of your students?

According to the writer and scholar Parker Palmer, “we teach who we are”. I believe this is true and as I continue to grow and develop as a teacher, scientist and individual, my teaching grows and my students are impacted by this growth. I bring all my life experiences with me to the classroom and who I am shapes my teaching perspective.

My work with the CBIA/NSF project provided me with additional resources and business connections that I share with my students. Being able to work in science related industries for two summers allowed me to integrate real world applications into my laboratory course. This helped my students to make connections between abstract scientific concepts and terms and the real world. It also impressed upon my students that learning is a life long process and doesn't stop once you are in your job or become a professor.

My work in the Teaching Scholars program had a significant impact on the students that participated in the program. These were students who had some interested in science, teaching or both. All of the participants in the program graduated from our college and most have transferred to 4-yr universities to pursue a degree in science. Two of my students are graduating with degrees in Biology this spring. Both of these students are single mothers and did not know what they wanted to do before they participated in the program. Both already have full time jobs in the state Community College system as laboratory technicians and will continue on to get their Master's Degree.

My community service work, much of which I do through my position as a Phi Theta Kappa Advisor, serves to inspire my students. Many of the students I see, especially those in my first year science courses, view community service as a court ordered project. I try to lead by my actions and in doing so I see my students reaching out to help others and to get involved in our college and local community. Through Phi Theta Kappa's many service projects, I can not only inspire students but also provide them with a venue to get involved.