

## **Sabbatical Leave Report (2005-2006)**

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### **Summary of Sabbatical Activities:**

During my sabbatical leave, I accomplished both of my projected goals: first, in the fall of 2005, I traveled to Ohlone's new "sister college," Taizhou Radio and Television University/Taizhou Community College (TCC) in southeastern China. While there, I filmed the raw footage for a short promotional film designed to be used at Ohlone to promote upcoming academic exchanges between our colleges. With that footage I produced the final DVD (see attached). Next, in the spring of 2006, I completed a semester of full-time study, continuing my course in the French Master's program at SFSU.

### **Part I: Taizhou/Promotional DVD**

Visiting Taizhou Radio and Television University and making a promotional DVD was the first part of my sabbatical project, and seldom in my career have I had a more enriching experience. I was able to visit the campus, meet students and staff, give a lecture about American college life—I was even invited to stay with two English teachers during my visit (two weeks). They showed me around campus, the city, and the surrounding area. They even loaned me their bicycle so that I could move around more easily and film Taizhou city life. The reception was incredibly warm and the exchanges with students/faculty very lively, and I certainly hope that this feeling of good will comes across in the video.

After my visit to Taizhou, I learned that our administration had become interested in building relationships with other colleges in eastern China, expanding beyond Taizhou (to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hong Kong, etc). This presented a challenge to me while editing my video, since much of the original footage included specific references to Taizhou and to the campus there. I began to realize that, if I made a Taizhou-specific video, it would not help generate interest in programs elsewhere. I had to make a decision: do I continue with the video I had intended, or do I make a more non-specific film about student life in China in general? Fortunately, I also had a lot of material I had filmed elsewhere in China (including two college campuses), so I opted for the latter.

My goal has always been to inspire interest in China among Ohlone students, and whether that means Taizhou or Shanghai, I hope the video I produced will be helpful toward that end. I will offer a copy of it to Eddie West, the new Director of International Programs and Services, in the hope that he will be able to use it to recruit our students to explore opportunities opened by our budding relationships in China. Personally, I would love to share my experiences with Ohlone students in any way that I can, and hope to speak with potential exchange students about what a semester abroad in China might entail.

To me, one of our campus' most important long-term goals is to promote a "formal and active program of Student Exchange," as articulated in our agreement with Taizhou

Radio and Television University. Without elaborating on the hundred ways that such exchanges enrich both student and faculty life, I will simply say that this commitment is one that our entire campus should be dedicated to fulfilling.

## **Part II: Full-time Study at SFSU**

The second part of my sabbatical was spent as a full-time student in the French Masters Program at SFSU. I took a full course of study (see attached transcripts), and was able to advance to within one class of earning my degree, which I plan to receive in December of 2006.

It was strange but thrilling to be a full-time student again after so many years. I have become accustomed to standing behind the podium and leading class discussions, but there I was, sitting in the front row, myself one of the hyper-conscientious, “mature” students I often have in my own classes. Unlike many 19 year-olds, we returning students love having the chance to be back in school. We appreciate how precious our learning is. We raise our hands a lot. We do all the reading, and more.

I understood, then, my older students’ tendencies toward overachievement. I also learned that the student life, as fun as it is, taxes one’s time and schedule in ways that a 9-5 job does not. Here is a benefit that I anticipated but did not fully appreciate: I became much more empathetic toward my ESL students. So many of my students are perplexed by a language not their own. They work very hard, as I do in French, but becoming fluent in a second language is a slow, laborious process, and frustration abounds. Taking a full load of classes in French helped me to confront the same difficulties that many of my students face. I learned to develop strategies that would capitalize on my strengths (pronunciation) and compensate for my weaknesses (spelling), and because these are language acquisition skills that I developed through personal experience, I feel confident in passing them on to my ESL students.

With my French Masters, I hope to some day teach French language here at Ohlone. Although interest in French language courses among our students is relatively low, I would love to change that. My appreciation for the language and Francophone literature has grown in leaps and bounds over the last several years, and last semester just confirmed my passion to increase its profile on our campus. Learning a second language has been one of the most rewarding endeavors of my adult life, and I want to share that with students. It has given me a desire to learn more languages; increased my understanding of world affairs; sharpened my ear for languages in general; given me insight into the countless French influences on English; amplified my love of certain authors whom I had only read in translation; broadened my prospects for future travel; and added to the range of courses I am able to teach here at Ohlone.

2005-2006 was a year of living richly for me, and I am already implementing much of what I learned into my classes. I realize that a sabbatical is a privilege and not an entitlement, and I am very grateful to the Sabbatical Committee and to the Ohlone Board of Trustees for having granted my request for sabbatical leave.