

Name: Renato B. Rodríguez
Title: Associate Professor of Spanish
Department: Humanities
Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Date: November 10, 2006

Proposal Summary

Through my academic preparation, I have developed a very solid background in Spanish Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Teacher Education, ESL/TEFL, and Spanish Language and Literature. In my 13 years at Parkland College I have applied all of my areas of expertise to develop our Spanish Program as well as to address our students' needs. I have worked tirelessly and I feel that the time for me to re-evaluate, recharge my energy, and to relax in a productive manner has come.

Besides my interest and desire to recharge my impetus to continue teaching the best I can, I want to prepare for our future needs. As our Spanish speaking population increases at the present time and as their children grow to be at an age when their time for higher education comes, it is only reasonable that Parkland College prepares for this demand. This preparation will lead to better and more inclusive teacher training as well as the eventual design and offering of sections that specifically address their needs. If awarded a sabbatical for the spring 2008 semester, I propose to take Spanish 436: Teaching Spanish to Speakers of Spanish (Español 436: *La enseñanza del español a hispanohablantes*) at the University of Illinois in Chicago via the internet.

A second area that I would like to address is the language attrition that I have experienced in the past 16 years due to my living in an entirely English speaking environment. I need to bring my Spanish up to date and I can only do that by spending a reasonable amount of time in Spanish speaking countries, as opposed to the occasional Christmas or spring holidays. The gains that such an experience will bring along will not only be regarding my language skills, but also regarding culture, politics, literature, art, how the Spanish speaking world and the international press see the US, etc. Such experience will help train myself and gather all the necessary materials to teach other courses at Parkland College, courses like HUM 106, Latin American Culture, etc. This will expand my horizons and my productivity in our college as well as help me regain my desire to teach and work with our students.

Thank you for your consideration,

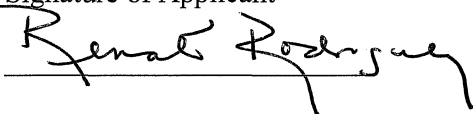
Signature of Department Chair



Date

11.10.06

Signature of Applicant



Date

11.10.06

Responsibilities at Parkland

I teach Spanish 101, 104 and 220 this semester. I have taught SPA 102, 103, and 100 in the past. I have also tailored sections of Spanish 100 to meet the specific needs that clients that the BDC had in the past as well as specific requests that our students may have (e.g., SPA for travelers, SPA for office work, etc.)

During my time as the coordinator of the Spanish Program (August 1999 to December 2004) I was in charge of a vast array of responsibilities from hiring and teacher training to the bigger or smaller issues that our students may have. In the academic arena I developed SPA 240 (Readings in Hispanic Literature and Culture –third year-), revamped SPA 220 (Advanced Spanish Conversation and Culture) and made it a repeatable course without a repeat fee in response to our student population at the advanced levels. The biggest endeavor that I took upon myself was to revise, redesign, and standardize all the other SPA courses offered at Parkland College (100, 120, 101, 102, 103, and 104) in order to address the many needs that our diverse student population has in our district and to set the same standards for all SPA faculty and students. I also advised students regarding their academic interests in SPA. I served as a liaison for study abroad in Spanish speaking countries. I put in place our Spanish Placement Exam so that students may find out what course they should take in an organized and unbiased manner through our Assessment Center.

Ever since my hiring as a full time professor I have worked closely with our library putting together a very well selected list of Spanish books for learners of Spanish as well as movies. I have served in search committees, offered sessions at the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning on several occasions. Currently I am preparing to teach “Humanities 106: Latin American Culture” as of the spring semester 2007 in connection with SPA 104 as part of a “Learning Community”. I am the person in charge for our “Latino Issues” bulletin board. I am also a sponsor and the person in charge of the “Nancy Nash Scholarship for Learners of Spanish”, a scholarship that will benefit our students who want to pursue studies in SPA as well as study abroad in the near future.

Eligibility for Sabbatical

I have been a full time faculty member since August 1999. I have never received sabbatical leave.

Impetus or Rationale for Proposal

I am a community college educator because I love it. I am dedicated to my students, our college, our community, and my career. I started teaching at a very young age and have not stopped ever since. I feel that my time has come to recharge my energy, my impetus for teaching, and to be able to dedicate a little bit of time to myself as a professional and individual. I want to be able to read the books that I have neglected in the past years, to be able to visit some of the places that I teach about, take a course that enriches me as an individual and whose content I can apply in the future, etc. I want to diversify and improve my abilities as an individual and as an educator. I want to be even more sensitive to other cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as to be more educated. As you can see it is difficult for me to separate my personal renewal from my academic preparation, however, I do know that the only way that I can achieve such renewal is by having some time when I can break from the cyclical routine of the academic semesters.

Specific Activities Planned for the Sabbatical

My planned activities are basically two: Traveling and taking a course on the internet. I plan to spend most of my time in Spanish speaking countries in Latin America. I believe that activities of this sort will make me relax and recharge my interest. I am an avid traveler but I never get to travel for prolonged periods of time and to a significant amount of places all at once. This would be an extremely enriching and relaxing experience for me. I would like to concentrate on Central America and Mexico in view of my interests, the interests of our student population, and some of the content in our Latin American Culture course as well as the fact that I, as a native Peruvian, will benefit and enrich more by spending time in places other than South America where I have traveled extensively. My idea is to travel from Panama to México in an extended period of time. I know that I will be able to stay with some acquaintances in some of these places and that I will need to stay in local lodgings in some others. I will immerse myself in the common citizen's environment in each place I go. I want to talk to the locals, see their most relevant cultural sites and sources of pride, read their papers, eat their food, breath their air, dance with them (at least try!), learn their local expressions, purchase realia, read their most current literature figures, understand better and from first hand information how they see us, the American population.

Here is a brief list of some of the places that I would be visiting:

Panama: The Panama Canal, Panama Canal rainforest, Panama City, etc.
Costa Rica: The most pristine natural life in America, San José, Tortuguero National Park, etc.
Nicaragua: Nicaraguan Biosphere Reserves, Managua, Nicaragua Lake, etc.
Honduras: The Garifuna Community, Tegucigalpa, etc.
El Salvador: San Salvador, catholic churches, Tazumal ruins, etc.
Guatemala: Tikal ruins, Guatemala City, Quetzaltenango, etc.
Mexico: Oaxaca, Monte Alván, Yucatan peninsula, Chichén Itzá, Veracruz, Puebla, Taxco, Guanajuato, Monterrey, Mexico City, the pyramids, etc.

Books and literature to read:

Contemporary Short Stories from Central America (anthology).
Escandon, Maria Amparo, Transportes Gonzalez e Hija.
Carlos Fuentes, El espejo enterrado.
Gabriel García Márquez, Crónica de una muerte anunciada.
Rogiberta Menchú, Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú y Así Me Nació la Conciencia.
Articles on Óscar Árias, Rogoberta Menchú, Rafael Trujillo, etc.

I also plan on taking the course "Spanish 436: Teaching Spanish to Speakers of Spanish" at the University of Illinois in Chicago via the internet which will demand that I read the available literature in this field. The current leaders in this field are: Dr. Potoswsky from the University of Illinois in Chicago, Dr. Gonzáles-Pino from the University of Texas at San Antonio, Dr. Sánchez-Muñoz from the University of Southern California, among others.

Justification for Sabbatical

I have worked at Parkland College for 12 years now (5 part time and 7 full time). I have redesigned and improved the Spanish Program. The quality of our program is well known in the community. Since 1999 our program can now offer more than twice the amount of sections and

more courses to benefit from. This improvement and growth have created 2 more full time instructor positions as well as more part time positions in Spanish. All of this is the result of tireless, disciplined, and efficient work. Work with awareness of the present and vision to the future. But, my work here at Parkland College is far from being done. However, I now have the need for growth, enrichment, reevaluation, and the need to recharge my energy and commitment to my call in life: to be the best educator I can be for the community I respect and love. I believe that I can continue contributing to the college and the community in an efficient and tireless manner, as well as with a vision to the future and awareness of the present, in a much better way if I can have the time to address my needs.

Sharing the Results of the Sabbatical

Upon my return to the college I would like to present my experiences and new knowledge to my colleagues via brown bags or sessions at the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. I believe that sharing the outcomes of my travels, reading, and learning with my colleagues in the Spanish Program as well as from other areas is not only mandatory but extremely beneficial for the college, the community, and me. I also believe that my activities during this time will lay the groundwork for other future endeavors.

Sabbatical Report to Parkland College

Spring 2008

Faculty:

Renato B Rodríguez

Responsibilities at Parkland College:

Professor of Spanish

I am pleased to inform that the goals I had identified for this sabbatical have been achieved or fulfilled. In my proposal I outlined the following goals:

1. To spend eight weeks in Peru, my country of origin. This allowed me to update the experience of living 24/7 in a Spanish speaking environment in many aspects. My concerns were centered on updating my Spanish; that is, catching up with the current expressions, social and linguistic references and conventions, new semantics at the word and more complex levels, vocabulary, etc. After living in a mainly English speaking environment for almost 20 years, I realized that I was showing signs of “native language attrition”. It was my objective to overcome this phenomenon by spending these eight weeks in Peru and by spending the rest of my sabbatical - eight more weeks – in Central America.
2. To spend eight weeks in Central America. I spent three weeks in Costa Rica, three weeks in Guatemala, and two weeks in Mexico. The idea was to immerse myself in the cultures that live there, to investigate their past and based on my findings understand their present. Not only did this make me a more educated individual, it also allowed me to experience firsthand the places, smells, foods, idiosyncrasies, etc. that up until then I could only talk about in my Spanish and Latin American Culture classes based on readings rather than experience. The latter is what I would be able to gain and report firsthand after these eight weeks.
3. To rejuvenate, to relax, to break the routine, to regain perspective of my career, to regain the energy and enthusiasm that are necessary to teach in this modern world.

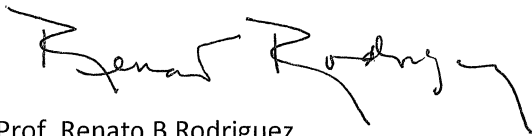
The spring 2008 turned out being a very productive. Besides achieving the goals presented above, there were other benefits to the experience:

- a. Gained abundant knowledge on Central America, its countries, their history, their dialects, etc.
- b. Visited San Jose. Took a bus to “Parque Reserva Nacional Manuel Antonio” on the Costa Rican west coast where my backpack was stolen, but the driver realized what was going on and recuperated my stuff. This park and the whole area are places blessed with magnificent nature and climate. I fell in love and joined the Costa Rican green spirit of taking care of mother Earth, etc. It is a life-style in Costa Rica. I also visited some volcanoes; spend time in Tabbacon in the spring waters, did some zip-lining, mountain walking, etc.
- c. Visited Guatemala City. I spent time in Antigua, Lake Atitlán, and the surrounding areas where the Mayas flourished. I was able to spend time in Tikal. These fantastic Mayan ruins and

pyramids are fascinating places to visit and experience. I spent morning and afternoons visiting museums, universities, colleges, exhibitions, book fairs, markets, etc.

- d. Spent time in Mexico City and Cuernavaca. I was able to spend time with a Mexican family and experience how a regular citizen goes by his day as opposed to the hotel experience. I also visited and assisted on a one day field research trip with a group of students of the "Tecnológico de Monterrey". It was through this experience that I was able to gain some insight about the life of a student in Mexico City.
- e. I was able to collect and pick up all kinds of realia or original materials and stuff to use in my teaching at Parkland College. Got tons of stuff!!
- f. Ate wonderful food everywhere. Never got sick at all.
- g. Read a good number of books. Some titles are: *Nos habíamos choleado tanto* by Jorge Bruce, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* by Elizabeth Burgos, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* by Richard Rodriguez, *El muro de la vergüenza* by Miguel Escobar Valdez, *Historia de Costa Rica* by Iván Molina y Steven Palmer, etc.

I returned to Parkland College in August of 2008. I felt rejuvenated, full of energy and enthusiasm. I looked forward to teaching my classes. I had lots of new information to share, stories to tell, experiences to narrate. I felt blessed. Thank you Parkland College for making this happen!!



Prof. Renato B Rodriguez

Humanities

Parkland College