

APPLICATION FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

Academic Year 2012-2013

Revised Proposal—Submitted 11/19/2012

Name:	Amy F. Penne, Ph.D.
Department:	Humanities
Proposed sabbatical semester:	Spring 2014
Time at Parkland College:	15 (total) years: 1997 (part time for 4 years) and began full time in August 2001 (11 years full-time)
Previous sabbatical applications:	None
Sabbatical request:	Full semester, no load

Abstract:

I plan to use my sabbatical to 1) renew myself professionally through a series of teacher's retreats with Parker Palmer at his Center for Courage and Renewal, as well as a conference trip to Indianapolis for the Conference on College Composition and Communication; and 2) study with Palmer and through his Center to eventually become a "Circles of Trust" facilitator (defined later in this proposal). My sabbatical is designed to reconnect who I am with what I do; I need this sabbatical to reclaim my original passion for the teaching of writing and the teaching of *writers*. My retreat with Parker Palmer will, I believe, serve as a turning point for me as it will give me time to meet with master teachers and learners who are committed to the exact same goals: renewal and recommitment. I need the time away from Parkland and the space created by experts *in the field of renewal of vocation*. I look forward to the colleagues I'll meet and the ongoing professional relationships I'll have if granted this sabbatical for spring of 2014.

Objectives:

a. Reclaim and refresh my passion for teaching during two retreats with Parker Palmer (and his trained facilitators) through his Center for Courage and Renewal. Every year, Palmer offers several "Courage to Teach: Courage and Renewal" retreats aimed at helping teachers to "reconnect who they are with what they do." Palmer travels regularly conducting retreats throughout the country. The spring 2014 calendar will be out next summer and deadlines for spring retreats are in early January. I plan to travel to the closest location for one of the retreats. A sample of retreat opportunities can be found at www.couragerenewal.org.

b. Engage in deeper study and reflection on Palmer's work so that I can begin the process to become a Circles of Trust facilitator (this process will take about three years to complete but the first two retreats will be scheduled for spring 2014, if I am granted this sabbatical).

"If we are willing to embrace the challenge of becoming whole, we cannot embrace it alone—at least, not for long: we need trustworthy relationships to sustain us, tenacious communities of support, to sustain the journey toward an undivided life. Taking an inner journey toward rejoining soul and role requires a rare but real form of community that I call a "circle of trust."

—Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness* (adapted)

Palmer's Circles of Trust are similar to the teaching circles we already have in place through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. But Circles of Trust are more than groups that discuss practice; they are ongoing professional development groups that help practitioners stay connected to "soul and role." That is, they are groups which open up a space for teachers and other practitioners to explore the inner teacher and to engage in deeper levels of personal and professional development. During my retreat, and in one other weekend training event/retreat, I will work with the facilitators from the Center for Courage and Renewal to eventually become a more skillful leader here at Parkland in the field of professional renewal and development. It takes concentrated time to study the methods and to think about

ways I can help integrate innovative small group professional development at Parkland College. During the spring of 2014, I will attend at least one Courage to Teach Seasonal Retreat for College and University Educators (at a cost of around \$200 for one retreat; I will also submit an application to attend a Gateway Retreat for Prospective Courage and Renewal Facilitators. These retreats are required before applying to become a Circles of Trust facilitator. These retreats are mostly offered in the fall. I would prepare my materials in spring of 2014 to attend this retreat in fall of 2014. The cost of this retreat is \$925. I would apply for professional development monies through CETL for this retreat). One Center for Courage and Renewal retreat alone would train me much more deeply to be a better leader for small group professional development. I could decide at that time if the full Circles of Trust program is worth the expense of the full-scale training. I believe that the training I will get at a basic Courage to Teach retreat will be enough for me to grow professionally to help facilitate innovative teaching circles here at Parkland College.

c. Lay the groundwork to create a richer teaching circle through the Center for Excellence at Parkland upon my return to full-time teaching the following semester. Further, I believe that teachings circles can serve as a useful model to utilize in my own teaching. As a writing teacher, it's crucial that students learn to listen to each other in non-judgmental ways when presenting their writing and ideas in peer writing groups. Writing groups often flounder because teachers are not skilled in creating the kind of atmosphere and culture needed to help students *learn* how to listen and learn from each other as writers. Though teaching circles are aimed primarily at teaching professionals, the basic skill of enhanced group dynamic will enrich my teaching after a semester away studying and writing about small group interaction.

d. Journal about all of these experiences of renewal and reclaiming my commitment to teaching and learning through writing. Journaling will help me to write again in a manner and style that I ask of my students; I ask students to reflect on their learning experiences every semester. Journaling about all of my experiences during sabbatical will reconnect me with my central professional and personal life as a **writing teacher who writes**. I plan to use my journals, or portions, as examples of the writing process for the students in my writing classes.

In what specific ways will this sabbatical contribute to my personal and professional renewal and growth?

Over the past five years, I served as the co-chair of the 2012 self-study report and site visit for Parkland's 2012 reaccreditation. This has been exhausting and professionally draining work. Though I continued to teach classes throughout the entire five-year period, most of my energy went into researching for the report, leading over 83 colleagues who served on hard-working committees, and coordinating and editing every aspect of the final report leading up the site visit, completed on October 3, 2012. Before that, I served as the chair of the college-wide Academic Assessment Committee, as well as an active member of the PCA executive team and on College Planning. This sabbatical will grant me time to catch up on recent developments *in my field of study*, as well as give me the concentrated time to more deeply explore some of the ideas of Parker Palmer and others working in the field of professional development through small group dynamic and dialogue.

In what specific ways will this sabbatical contribute to the mission of Parkland College and ultimately be of benefit to students and to learning?

Though **renewing my vocation** is the primary focus of my sabbatical proposal, I am enthusiastic about building a deeper professional commitment to servant leadership and teaching from the heart. Small groups, like teaching circles, provide participants with a paradigm shift which can help transform our workplace culture. Palmer writes: "In a Circle of Trust, we are invited to slow down, listen and reflect in a quiet and focused space. At the same time, we engage in dialogue with others in the circle—a dialogue about things that matter. As this "sorting and sifting" goes on, and we are able to clarify and affirm our truth in the presence of others, that truth is more likely to overflow into our work and lives." Working with so many hard-working teachers, administrators, and staff so intensely over the last five years has shown me how valuable this time to slow down professionally could be; teaching circles done consistently and with planning and follow-through, could create a space where the process of transformation is more deeply engaged.

Timeline of Objectives for Sabbatical

<u>Month 1 – Objectives:</u>	<u>Month 2 – Objectives:</u>	<u>Month 3 – Objectives</u>	<u>Month 4 – Objectives</u>
<p>Renew and relax. Schedule travel and retreat(s) with Palmer do background reading on Parker’s Center for Courage and Renewal and innovative uses of small groups.</p>	<p>Travel to retreat and workshop with Palmer and fully engage reflection on vocation and renewing my commitment to teaching.</p>	<p>Travel to the <i>Conference on College Composition and Communication</i> in Indianapolis, IN, March 19-22, 2014.</p>	<p>Develop a detailed plan for the creation of innovative small groups for our teachers and students.</p>
<p>Reading List:</p> <p><i>The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal.</i> (re-read) by Parker Palmer, Arthur Zajonc, and Megan Scribner.</p> <p><i>The Innovative University</i>, by Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring.</p> <p>(plus recent articles on the teaching of writing)</p>	<p>Reading List:</p> <p><i>From Outrageous to Inspired: How to Build a Community of Leaders in Our Schools</i>, by David Hagstrom.</p> <p><i>Reclaiming Our Teaching Profession</i>, by Shirley M. Hord and Edward F. Tobia.</p> <p>(plus recent articles on the teaching of writing)</p>	<p>Reading List:</p> <p><i>To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development</i>, by James E. Groccia and Laura Cruz</p> <p><i>Teaching Literacy for Love and Wisdom: Being the Book and Being the Change</i>, by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm and Bruce Novak.</p>	<p>Reading List:</p> <p><i>Teaching and Learning from the Inside Out</i> (New Directions for Teaching and Learning series), edited by Margaret Golden.</p> <p>Other readings recommended during the <i>Conference on College Composition and Communication</i> or while on retreat with Parker Palmer.</p>
<p>Write: Journal writing, with particular focus on summary writing based on the academic reading. Summary writing is a key feature in my teaching of developmental students and I need to spend time following my own formula for summary writing!</p>	<p>Write: Keep a detailed journal about the retreat with Palmer and outcomes based on that retreat. Evaluate the experience and explore that in a more formal essay, which will help me work on the model I teach my own students.</p>	<p>Write: Begin work on a formal essay, completed by the end of summer, on best practices in small group dynamic as an integral part of transformative teaching.</p>	<p>Write: Keep detailed journal on readings and preliminary planning for Circles of Trust in class and through the CETL.</p>

Conclusion:

In his book, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, Parker Palmer writes, “If we are to live our lives fully and well, we must learn to embrace the opposites, to live in a creative tension between our limits and our potentials. *We must honor our limitations in ways that do not distort our nature, and we must trust and use our gifts in ways that fulfill [our] potentials*” (emphasis added). During the course of the five-year self-study, I lived at my professional limit. I probably lived at my limit for too long; it has taken its toll. But I honor those limitations for what they taught me and I look forward to learning more about my own vocation from my inner teacher in ways that benefit me both personally and professionally. This sabbatical opportunity comes at a unique time in my life as I re-engage my energies solely into teaching and authentic community-building with teachers and students.

Respectfully **re-submitted**

(applicant)

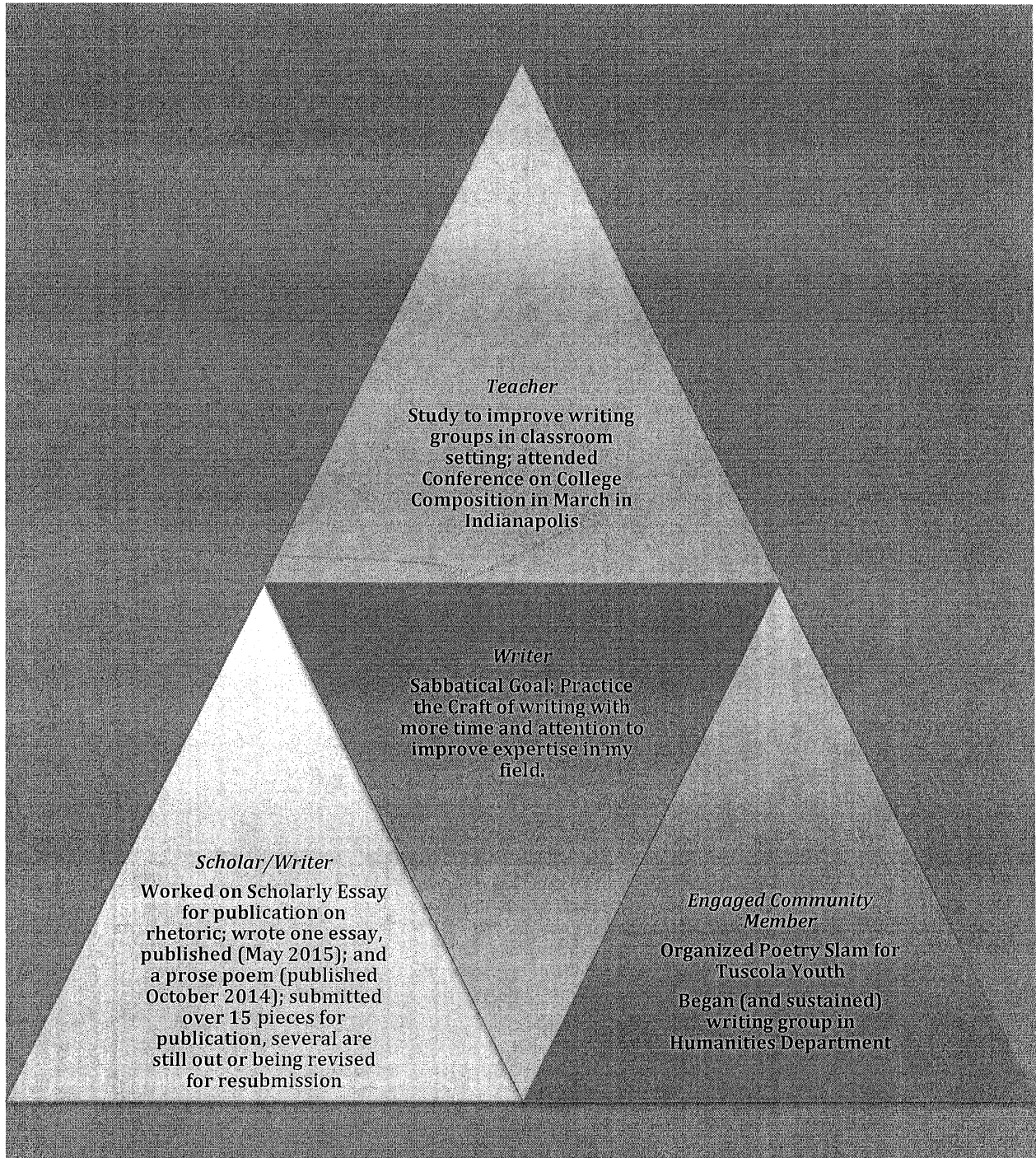
(date)

(department chair)

(date)

Amy F. Penne, Ph.D

Sabbatical Report, November 2014 (Sabbatical activities: Spring 2014)



Parkland's commitment to faculty development through the use of sabbatical time creates better teachers, scholars, and practitioners. It takes sustained time to improve and to develop in one's chosen field and to find renewed energy to bring that to the classroom and other learning environments.

Outcomes: sabbatical renewed my commitment to the discipline of essay writing and afforded me time to create stronger writing communities at Parkland and in my home community of Tuscola to promote writing among high school and middle school students in anticipation of their future success in the college setting, consistent with Parkland's mission to engage the community in learning.