

Sabbatical Leave Report for Spring 2018

Sabbatical Project:
Innovative Curriculum Modules Focusing on Metacognition
and Meta-Affective Strategies for Student Learning

Dr. Juli Soden
Human Development Department
Behavioral and Social Sciences Division
El Camino College

I would like to thank the El Camino College administration, Sabbatical Leave Committee, and Board of Trustees for granting me sabbatical leave for the spring semester of 2018. Sabbatical leave allowed me the opportunity to develop a project that will benefit the Human Development department faculty, our students, and the campus. During sabbatical, I took classes from the University of California (UC) Berkeley and Stanford University. This gave me the opportunity to put myself in a student role again, which was humbling, challenging, and invigorating. I enjoyed learning from experts in my discipline, and I am excited to incorporate new ideas and strategies into my courses at El Camino College. After completing these courses, I completed an independent study project, creating innovative instructional modules for the Human Development department. I look forward to sharing what I've learned at annual Human Development Faculty Retreats held every August and through professional development activities such as "Brown Bags" on campus. The goals of my sabbatical project were 1) to enrich content expertise and 2) to develop innovative content modules for part-time and full-time Human Development faculty to use with their students. I would like to thank Dr. Gloria Miranda, former Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences at El Camino College, for supervising my sabbatical project.

Academic Endeavors: As part of my sabbatical project to create new content modules for our department, I sought to enrich my content expertise. I completed a course in Positive Psychology from UC Berkeley called *The Science of Happiness*. I chose this course because Psychology is a foundation discipline

for our department. The field of Positive Psychology is founded on the belief that people want meaningful and fulfilling lives and seek to cultivate internal qualities (soft skills) necessary to thrive. This aligns with the content and learning objectives in Human Development success and career planning courses.

In *The Science of Happiness*, I studied recent scientific research in social and emotional well-being and gained a deeper understanding of cross-disciplinary research in psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology. This was a particularly exciting part of my sabbatical because of rapidly growing research and literature related to neuroscience and the role of the brain in explaining human behavior. It was invigorating to review recent studies that relate to content in my courses. Particularly informative were studies about the relationships between locus of control, emotional intelligence (both course themes in Human Development), and subjective happiness.

Benefits for Students, the Department, and the Campus: The implications for Human Development faculty are that research confirms the strong relationship between an internal locus of control, high emotional intelligence, and high subjective happiness. This furthers evidence that Human Development's research-proven curricula and learning objectives are critical for student success. Curricula, course themes, and learning objectives are relevant, supported with recent research, and effective in helping students learn and apply strategies and tools for success in college and in life. As a result of the course, I've been able to apply what I've learned from recent research to redesign lectures and learning

activities that engage students in both cognitive and affective domains for maximizing their academic and personal growth.

While the idea of being happy seems simple, it is elusive for many students. Yet, happiness is essential in academic, personal, and career success. A central learning outcome of our courses is that students identify academic and personal goals and then apply appropriate strategies to work toward achieving those goals. *The Science of Happiness* course helped me identify practical strategies and research-based activities designed to foster students' success in college and life as well as in cultivating happiness. As instructors, it's not easy to be at the helm, steering this process for students. Each student is in his/her own unique stage of awareness and growth and progresses at different stages of engagement, reflection, and ownership of success principles (e.g. personal responsibility, self-motivation, self-esteem, self-management, interdependence, emotional intelligence, life-long learning, etc.) While Human Development curricula has consistently been very effective, it is helpful to have new information and fresh ideas that can strengthen my success in facilitating students' mastery of course principles and, ultimately, success in college.

The second course I took during sabbatical was *Blended and Online Learning* from Stanford University. This course focused on practical and useful strategies for improving online pedagogy. While many students are savvy when it comes to accessing the web on mobile devices or using social networks, this does not always translate to skills necessary for success in online learning. Thus, the

way I design my online environments is critical for supporting higher-order thinking and critical discourse.

Benefits for Students, the Department, and the Campus: Through this class, I was able to gain valuable skills in utilizing technology to create learner-centered, inquiry-based, and interactive online content for Human Development courses. Our department's program review recommendations included offering more online sections of Human Development courses and to include online components in our face-to-face courses. Therefore, this course will be very useful in helping me design online supplements for my campus classes in Canvas as I prepare to teach future online courses in our department.

Sabbatical Project: As result of my studies, I created content-specific modules that focus on metacognitive and meta-affective strategies for student learning. Each module provides learning objectives, lectures, active learning strategies, and resources. These new modules will be posted in our department's Google Drive resource site so that faculty can access and utilize them when appropriate in their classes, thus making it easy for faculty (and subsequently students) to incorporate information and activities that I've learned through sabbatical.

Sabbatical allowed me to immerse myself in learning that will enrich my classes and facilitate student learning through innovative metacognitive, cognitive and meta-affective strategies. I've also strengthened my skills in creating effective online learning environments that encourage mastery and deep learning. Overall, I feel both pleased and fortunate to have had the opportunity to study with UC

Berkeley and Stanford University professors who are on the cutting edge of research in Human Development's cross-disciplinary fields and pedagogy. These courses helped me develop practical strategies and research-based activities designed to foster students' success in college, in life, and in cultivating happiness. Finally, I was able to create instructional modules that Human Development faculty can incorporate into their courses. Thus, my sabbatical project enriched curricula and courses for all instructors and students in the Human Development program.