

Sabbatical Leave Report

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Fall Semester 2014

This report will be an account of my observations while on sabbatical leave for the fall of 2014. As stated in my proposal, I did in fact travel to many different educational institutions to observe the various classes being taught. I specifically focused on the beginning to intermediate levels being taught at these institutions.

I began my driving tour in Abilene, TX. There I observed Professor Brandon Philips teaching beginners at Hardin Simmons University. I stayed there for several days and then proceeded to Lubbock Texas. There, at Texas Tech University I observed Professor Von Venhuizen teach both beginning and intermediate level courses. After spending several days there I hit the road making an overnight stay in Santa Fe New Mexico. There I visited some galleries and the Santa Fe Clay Company. It is a clay selling business, gallery and educational institution. My next stop was my first extended stay of my leave. I made my way to Logan Utah to immerse myself in the day-to-day goings on at the Utah State University ceramics department. My host for the next month was Professor Todd Hayes. I stayed in his home and went to school with him every day for the month. Todd teaches and coordinates the studio and day-to-day operations there. I was also privileged with observing Professors John Neely and Dan Murphy, both of whom are very important figures in functional wood fired ceramics and in education.

This month was educational on several levels. It was a bit of a surprise to me that things aren't done so differently there than they are in my classes here at Collin College. The vast majority of students there are art majors if not ceramics majors. That is a big difference from Collin. As such the requirements are a bit more stringent, in terms of numbers and types of pieces made, but quite frankly not that different. In fact, I found that to be true at every school I visited. It was wonderful to be around a completely different classroom studio for an entire month just to see how the "pulse" of it was different than that of my classroom. I did however pick up quite a few bits of information that I now use in my teachings. These things trend towards types of projects and information imparted. While there, I was asked to give a PowerPoint lecture to the student clay club. My lecture focused on the type of work I make and my life here at Collin College.

My next stop was in Red Lodge Montana at the Red Lodge Clay Center. They are a private ceramics educational institution that offers residencies and classes. I made Red Lodge my base of operations for the next month. The state of Montana has become something of a pilgrimage site for ceramics. While there I visited Montana State University and the Archie Bray Foundation.

While in Red Lodge in mostly observed people making work, talked to them and gathered ideas and information. I was also asked to give a slide lecture again. I mostly talked about my life as a ceramics educator and my own work.

My next stop was in Wichita Kansas at Wichita State University to visit Professors Ted Adler and Brenda Lichman. I once again lectured and observed. And of course I talked a lot. I talked quite a bit to students and professors about their educational philosophies and concepts. In fact I visited with a former Collin College student who is in Graduate School there now. It was through these conversations and observations that I began to realize that most of us who teach ceramics impart the same knowledge. It's the way in which we teach that differs.

I was unable, based on time or finances, able to visit Ohio University. I did however have several phone conversations with Professor Brad Schwieger about my sabbatical concept. Brad was quite excited about the concept, as he is a former community college Professor. It was enlightening to hear his experiences and insight on the subject of transferring students as clay majors.

I do feel recharged and re-energized after my leave. It is invaluable to be able to get away, gather perspective and immerse yourself in ones discipline. I do believe this sabbatical to be a very important in my role as a professor, mentor and facilitator in my students' lives after they transfer from Collin College. I have already seen results in my classroom. I thank you very much for the opportunity to learn more, recharge and improve as an educator.