Collin County Community College District
APPLICATION FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

Instructions
Please complete this application by responding to all items. Attach requested documentation (in the order requested) and secure the appropriate signatures prior to submitting the application to the chair of the Sabbatical Leave Committee. Please submit the original and 10 copies.

Name: Pamela Gaiter
CWID: 110726852

Title: Professor of Sociology
Division: Social and Behavioral Sciences
SCC

Have you ever been granted a sabbatical? Yes
If yes: Date: January 2006

Please provide a brief description of your previous sabbatical project:

Spring 2006, I completed an exploratory study on African American landowners in East Texas to examine the historical and current significance of landownership to the African American community. An ethnography study of a group of organized landowners, Texas Landowners Association, and their social and political network revealed how this group was fighting to maintain ownership of property that had been passed down from slavery and other family/community members.

Sabbatical Leave Period Being Requested

Dates: Beginning Date January 2013 Ending Date May 2013

Length: [x] One semester [ ] Two semesters [ ] Other

Applicant’s Agreement

ABSTRACT
During Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement, the African American church not only served as a spiritual force in the community but a political and social advocate as well. The purpose of this one-semester sabbatical is to examine the role of the African American church during current economic and social challenges. Furthermore, since the African American population has been one of the minority groups highly impacted by high rate of unemployment, increase of poverty, decrease in educational attainment, and increase of single-female headed households during recent economic recession, this research will also explore how these challenges have impacted the philanthropy services the church has been able to fulfill to the community it serves. Other questions to explore include, does the church continue to serve as a political activist or has it adopted the idea of 'separation of church and state' especially since many of the churches have partnered with the government to provide social services to the community. Are the services provided solely to the African American community or to others in need, regardless of race, ethnicity or religious affiliation?

The research methodology includes an examination of the literature regarding the role of the African American church historically and currently. Participant observations of African American churches and community services in the North Dallas Metroplex area and interviews with pastors and ministers will be conducted. The researcher plans to include one on one interview with community members who have been a recipient or participant in some of the social services provided by the church. Purpose for including community members is to examine if the manifest role of the services is being fulfilled and how.

Information from this research will be presented as class materials when teaching discipline related courses, such as Minority Studies and Social Problems. And, the information will be presented during African American History Month and during national conferences related to this topic. Researcher also plans to seek publication of research findings.
Throughout history, the African American church has been a central force in the African American community. From the ‘invisible institution’ created in slave quarters to the establishment of organized religious institutions created after Emancipation, the church fulfilled more than spiritual needs of the congregation and community. It has been a political and social powerhouse advocating civil action against racism while providing philanthropy and direct social services to the African American community. In more recent times, the church has also been responsive to global and local crisis, such as earthquake in Haiti, HIV spread in Africa and Hurricane Katrina.

However, the African American population has also been confronted with its own challenges during economic recession. As the nation’s poverty rate rose to 15.1% in 2010, Blacks had the highest rate at 27.4% followed by people of Hispanic origin at 26.5% (Censky). While Texas ranks 6th in terms of people living in poverty, it has the lowest rates of spending on its citizens per capita and the highest share of those lacking health insurance, (24% of population) thus limited government services are provided to those in need (Luhby). Unemployment rates, decrease in educational attainment and increase of single-female headed households are other issues impacting the African American community. Therefore, reflecting more of a need from the demographics that is ‘in need.’ Thus, how does the church continue to provide direct services to the community that has been impacted the most by these social and economic issues? Are these services limited only to the African American community or they are provided to those in need regardless of race, ethnicity or religious affiliation? What role does politics serve as churches obtain more governmental support to provide faith based services? These are the questions the researcher seeks to explore during the one semester sabbatical leave.

A variety of African American churches in Dallas and Collin County will be explored, including Concord Missionary Baptist Church in Dallas, St. Luke Community United Methodist Church in Dallas, Mt. Hebron Missionary Baptist in Garland, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Plano, Good Faith Community Baptist Church in Plano, and St. Marks Missionary Baptist Church in McKinney. These churches were selected based on their church mission goal (reflecting a focus of service to the community), geographical location, and historical involvement in the African American community (especially St. Luke). Furthermore, the researcher has established contacts with pastors, ministers and/or congregates in each of these churches.

The proposed time table includes a review of literature and development of interview questions during the month of January (2013). In February and March, data will be collected through interviews and observations of pastors, church resources and community members. Qualitative data analysis will begin in mid April. Thus completing the finished report by mid May (2013).

The researcher’s abstract regarding ‘Social Activism and the African American Church’ has been approved for presentation at The National Association of American Studies conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, February 2012. Presenting at this conference will provide the researcher with additional network of resources and references to explore and consider during the proposed sabbatical.
Other resources to be used include, The American Sociological Association, Association of Black Sociologists, and other discipline related professional organizations. In addition, various direct services and established philanthropy efforts provided by the churches listed above, including local ministers’ alliance, local God’s closets, food pantries, educational workshops and programs, housing assistance programs and health education programs will be explored. Individuals from the Plano Community Forum will also be interviewed regarding their reflections of the role of African American church in serving the needs of the community, historically and currently. Lastly, other professors in various disciplines (such as history, religious studies and urban development) at Collin College and other institutions of higher education who have researched topics relevant to this proposal will be included as resources.

Information from this proposal will address several of the Collin’s strategic plans. One of these objectives include increase philanthropic giving as these churches may serve a vital role for encouraging and providing scholarship opportunities for minority students to enroll and receive higher educational attainment. Also, the establishment of more college readiness programs through the church for entering freshmen may also increase college retention among community college students. In addition, these readiness programs may be a good opportunity for service learning projects. Moreover, the church can be instrumental in developing programs to intervene with Collin’s at-risk student population which includes minority members of this community.

The researcher has served as a member and coordinator of Collin’s African American History Task force and information obtained through the proposal will be included as part of the African American History Events held on Collin’s campus. Findings from this research will also be presented in courses taught by the professor: Introduction to Sociology, Minority Studies and Social Problems; as well as learning community course taught with political science professor, Dr. Millie Black. In addition, the researcher plans to present research findings in local and national conferences and submit for publication.
Bibliography


Print.

Shirley, Jensen H. “Congregation Activism: Faith-Based Leadership.” NAAAS & Affiliates Conference

1 Dec, 2011.

Print.

Trader-Leigh, Karyn. “Understanding The Role of African American Churches and Clergy I Community
Crisis Response. Joint Center For Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute, 2008.