

**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 Lorena Rodriguez CWID 110704927
Title Economics Professor Division Academic Affairs

Have you ever been granted a sabbatical? No If yes: Dates of Prior Sabbatical(s): _____
Please provide a brief description of your previous sabbatical project:

Sabbatical Leave Period Being Requested

Dates: Beginning Date August 2019 Ending Date December 2019
Length: ☒ One semester ☐ Two semesters ☐ Other _____

Applicant's Agreement

ABSTRACT

Please give a summary description of the project and its significance in improving teaching and learning at Collin College. Please use language that can be readily understood by persons in areas of expertise other than your own. **PLEASE DO NOT EXCEED SPACE PROVIDED BELOW.**

In fall 2014, I began pursuing a PhD in Public Policy and Political Economy at the University of Texas at Dallas thanks to the invaluable financial support of Collin's UTD Doctoral Scholarship. The past four years have greatly improved the way I think about complex socio-economic phenomena, especially in the area of social and health policies aimed at the most economically vulnerable among us. Specifically, my studies at UTD have improved my proficiency performing quantitative analysis of issues in the social sciences. All of this has contributed to my developing a more nuanced approach to teaching my courses, and a willingness to take on new risks by designing new student projects and learning communities. At this point, I have completed all my coursework and am ready to defend my dissertation proposal in early January 2019. A sabbatical leave would allow me to work full-time on my dissertation research and writing in the hopes of completing my Doctoral degree. In my dissertation, I wish to understand the effect that abortion policy has on women's abortion decisions, especially those more vulnerable to changing economic conditions, and what are the conduits for any policy effects. Additionally, I want to understand how the Great Recession may have come to affect women's fertility and abortion decisions.

Proposal for Sabbatical Leave

Lorena Rodriguez

In fall 2014, I began pursuing a PhD in Public Policy and Political Economy at the University of Texas at Dallas thanks to the invaluable financial support of Collin's UTD Doctoral Scholarship. In my Scholarship application essay, I included the following words: "I find that the intersection of economics and people is where my heart and my mind thrive, and that is precisely how I would informally define the term 'public policy'. I would like to become more educated, more capable to foster discussion, and perhaps more involved in researching the issues that my heart and my mind get excited about." Today, upon re-reading those words, I am struck by how they ring even truer today than they did back then. I am also proud to recognize that my dissertation proposal fully embodies the passion and wishes I expressed four years ago.

The purpose of my dissertation is to study the effect that abortion policy has on women's abortion decisions, especially those more vulnerable to changing economic conditions. It is clear that avoiding unintended pregnancies is an integral part of most women's lives, with the average American woman spending approximately thirty years trying to avoid pregnancy. There is empirical evidence of a long list of negative consequences for unintended pregnancy, both for mothers and their children, with regards to physical and mental health, education, and employment throughout their lives. Consistently, almost half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended, and the incidence of unintended pregnancies is higher among vulnerable populations such as low-income (65% unintended pregnancy rate) and women of color (69% and 56% for Black and Hispanic women, respectively). As a consequence of this racial and socioeconomic disparity, the already modest odds of advancement for these women are further damaged by the negative consequences of unintended pregnancy mentioned earlier. Corresponding to racial and socioeconomic disparities in unintended pregnancy, there are also significant disparities in abortion rates among racial and socio-economic groups within the United States. The latest research estimates that abortion rates in 2014 were highest for Black women, for those with only a high school degree, and those with incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. On the policy side meanwhile, as a direct result of the 2007 Supreme Court decision in *Gonzales v. Carhart*, a wave of state-level abortion restrictions have been passed by state legislatures.

My dissertation work is informed by economic models that consider fertility and abortion decisions to be a sequence of utility-maximizing decisions under uncertainty. Within this theoretical framework, I propose to research the following questions:

1. How did changes in state abortion restrictions between 2008 and 2014 affect abortion rates?
2. Is the effect of state abortion restrictions on state-level abortion rates mediated by changes in the rates of unintended pregnancy?
3. What were the effects of changes in US economic conditions between 2008 and 2014 (i.e., the Great Recession) on state abortion rates?
4. Do economic conditions act as a moderating factor for the effect of abortion restrictions on abortion rates?
5. Does state-level socio-economic and racial/ethnic composition have a moderating effect on abortion restrictions?

These questions will be addressed using different econometric approaches to multivariate regression analysis, depending on the nature of each research question.

Proposed Timetable

Since I plan on beginning dissertation work during the upcoming spring 2019 semester, I cannot specifically predict where in the process I will find myself at the beginning of my sabbatical leave. I am listing here the steps that must be completed in order to defend my dissertation, as well as my tentative plans for designing new strategies that improve Economics students' quantitative skills.

Dissertation

- I. Background: Historical and legislative and context of abortion policy in the U.S.
- II. Literature Review: Summary of previous work, organized thematically, stating what is already known about the effects of abortion policy and what approaches have been taken by previous studies
 - A. Effects of state-level abortion restrictions on abortion rates
 - i. what we know
 - ii. discrepancies and unknown issues
 - iii. methodological approaches used in the literature: strengths and limitations
 - B. Mediating effects of unintended pregnancy
 - i. what we know
 - ii. discrepancies and unknown issues
 - iii. methodological approaches used in the literature: strengths and limitations
 - C. Effects of economic conditions on abortion rates
 - i. what we know
 - ii. discrepancies and unknown issues
 - iii. methodological approaches used in the literature: strengths and limitations
 - D. Moderating effects of economic conditions
 - i. what we know
 - ii. discrepancies and unknown issues

- iii. methodological approaches used in the literature: strengths and limitations

E. Differential effects of abortion policy on vulnerable subgroups

- i. what we know
- ii. discrepancies and unknown issues
- iii. methodological approaches used in the literature: strengths and limitations

III. Data and Methodology

A. Datasets to obtain, merge, and summarize:

- i. Guttmacher Institute's 2008 and 2014 Abortion Patient Survey.
- ii. Guttmacher Institute's 2008 and 20014 unintended pregnancy estimates.
- iii. Data on state-level abortion policies.
- iv. Age, sex, race/ethnicity, and poverty status data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey or Current Population Survey.
- v. Survey data on attitudes, beliefs, and ideology about abortion, by state.
- vi. Data on state-level economic conditions in 2008 and 2014 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

B. Methodology: Refine methodological approach to be used in order to address research questions and test appropriate hypotheses.

- i. Research question 1: difference-in-difference analysis of state-level abortion rates.
- ii. Research question 2: multivariate regression method appropriate for cases of unidirectional dependency between endogenous variables. Currently considering two-step ordinary least squares regression with instrumental

variables or, alternatively, a structural equation model estimation using maximum likelihood.

iii. Research question 3: difference-in-difference analysis of state-level abortion rates.

iv. Research question 4: ordinary least squares regression with interaction effects.

v. Research question 5: ordinary least squares regression with interaction effects.

IV. Results: Present results of analysis described in above section.

V. Discussion and Implications

A. Discuss findings in light of stated hypothesis and relate to existing literature.

B. Discuss limitations of present study.

C. Discuss implications for public policy as well as future research.

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