

SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSAL

Name: Allen Hartter

Department: Social Science and Human Services

Description of current job responsibilities:

I currently teach four political science courses: Introduction to Political Science, American National Government, Constitutional Politics and Civil Liberties, and International Relations. I also have taught State and Local Government, Urban Politics, and Introduction To Comparative European Governments.

Length of time proposed: One Semester **Semester:** Fall, 1996

Dates of leave: August, 1996, through December, 1996

Alternate plan: January, 1997, through May, 1997

Proposal Summary:

I wish to study the teaching of participatory democracy in entry level political science courses — Introduction to Political Science and American National Government. I believe that many Americans are distrustful of their elected leaders and cynical toward their governmental institutions. Signs of this malaise are declining voter turnouts, the success of negative campaigning ads, and the low level of discourse on talk radio shows. These conditions, if lasting, undermine democratic government's reliance on citizen participation.

Faculty who teach political science in the most democratic of higher learning institutions, the community colleges, should, I feel, analyze these factors to determine their consequences for the teaching of participatory democracy. We educate a large number of the people who take an interest in public affairs and bother to vote. In doing this we have real power to strengthen American democracy.

During my leave, I will examine: (a) the literature on participatory democracy, (b) how other faculty are dealing with distrust and cynicism in their teaching of participatory democracy, and (c) what additions or deletions should be made to the teaching of participatory democracy in Parkland College political science courses.

Signature of Department Chairperson:

Signature Fred Johnson

Date 11/17/95

HISTORY AND RATIONALE

Parkland College's first mission is "To guide and assist students in becoming active, responsible, self-disciplined citizens in our democratic society." (*Policies and Procedures Manual*, pg. 3). This statement establishes a goal of democratic civic responsibility for all students. College students should comprehend that, as responsible citizens, they have an obligation to participate in the affairs of their government. And, that participation will enrich both their lives and the larger society

Participatory democracy is the direct involvement of citizens in the political process. The goal is to have as many knowledgeable people as possible making key political, economic, and social policy decisions. Historically, participatory democracy emerged with the Athenian city state, developed through the Swiss cantons, to the New England town meetings and neighborhood crime watch programs of today.

Differing from representative democracy, participatory democracy emphasizes the importance of citizen involvement in nongovernmental as well as governmental realms. Authoritative decisions in modern industrialized societies are not limited to Congress, the courts, or city councils but are made in the workplace, labor unions, churches, and schools as well. In fact, the decisions and rules made by these institutions can have more immediate and lasting effects on people's lives than governmental policies.

As an instructor of political science, I have endeavored to teach students four basic principles as a basis for their democratic participation: (a) an understanding of the history, structure, and ideology of government, (b) a sense of the importance of being informed, (c) an ability to hold and express their own opinions, and (d) an acceptance of community responsibility that emphasizes the interconnections of people.

While the students are absorbing these fundamentals, I present them with opportunities for participation through mock elections, debates, writing letters to elected officials, interviewing elected officials, working for candidates, etc. I also have also staged model legislatures at Parkland dealing with actual legislation before the Illinois General Assembly and I have organized Parkland students for competition in the Model Illinois Government at Springfield. Participation, therefore, is integral to my pedagogical approach. This is in keeping with the Parkland College Mission Statement that the college is "To provide an atmosphere, both in and out of the classroom, for the discussion of ideas, concerns, and social issues." (*Policy and Procedures Manual*, pg. 3)

Ironically, despite an alleged climate of cynicism that threatens to discourage participation, many Americans continue their involvement in local groups focused on influencing a variety of public policies. In our community, for example, there are active associations for environmentally concerned persons, for the furthering of Hispanic culture, for the rights of handicapped persons, as well as organizations to further the interests of university and college employees. Parkland students and community residents, then, do not have to run for political office nor work for political candidates in order to participate in the civic society. A wide range of participation opportunities are available. Both students and residents need to know, however, about their obligations and opportunities for group participation.

SABBATICAL ACTIVITIES

A. During the Sabbatical semester:

First, I will review recent literature on participatory democracy. This would include, for example, such works as *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement*, by Harry C. Boyte, and Richard C. Harwood's *Citizens and Politics: A View from Main Street America*.

(See **Working Bibliography**).

Second, I will review computer software. Textbook publishers are now providing ancillary software and CD ROM materials along with the usual texts and workbooks. Two examples are Harper Collins' *Race for the White House*, a CD ROM simulation based on the 1996 presidential elections; and the Interactive CD-ROM *American Government and Politics Today, 1995-1996*. With the addition of the social science computer laboratory, and access to PARKLAN, Prairienet, Internet, etc., we are now in a position to utilize the latest technology in the classroom setting.

Third, I will contact community college political science faculty, from a number of selected campuses in the U.S. I will also contact faculty in the six senior public universities in the state of Illinois to collect syllabi and information pertaining to the teaching of participatory democracy.

Last, after organizing and evaluating the materials, I will compile a manual based on my research of the teaching of participatory democracy.

B. After the Sabbatical semester:

1. The manual will be available to full and part-time faculty and staff through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. One section of the manual will focus on sources of governmental information. For example, Biology faculty might want to access the Environmental Protection Agency's latest regulations for the disposal of solid wastes. Business faculty might wish to obtain copies of the latest corporate filings to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Math faculty might wish to locate census tract data to illustrate measures of central tendency or dispersion in their statistics courses. Boxer Math already has a trigonometry CD-ROM that uses "real world" examples and graphics for high school students. And, nursing faculty could be interested in finding comparative state certification or licensing regulations for their students.

A second section will cover teaching strategies that may be employed college-wide. Participatory democracy lends itself to nongovernmental situations — situations in the workplace, for example. In examining *SimCity* and *SimWorld*, two sophisticated computer simulations, I will determine what educational applications they may have for Parkland students. I anticipate that empowerment, role-playing, and decision-making strategies can be incorporated within many disciplines. These strategies could be as useful to chemistry majors seeking employment with corporations as they are to political science majors pursuing careers in the Social Security Administration.

In the last section of the manual I will develop a compendium of annotated resources that will primarily provide a basis for making additions to or deletions from the Parkland political science courses. The resources, however, will be available to anyone in the college.

2. I will offer to do workshops for high school social science teachers in the Parkland district based on the results of my Sabbatical. From previous work with Parkland college district high school social science teachers and staff, both in staging model legislatures and doing North Central evaluations, I have found interest in the subject. Rantoul, Mahomet-Seymour, and Urbana High schools, in particular, have social science faculty who encourage participatory democracy.

I will make a "brownbag" presentation for Parkland faculty and staff to focus on ways faculty might utilize the materials.

I will make presentations, as I have in the past, to the Parkland Life Long Learners Association and other similar community groups.

I will use the research and manual as the basis of an article for publication in a professional journal, such as *The Community College Social Science Journal*, *The Community College Review*, or *College Teaching*.

BENEFITS

A. Personal

It is in my own interest as well as the interests of my students and the society that supports me to pursue this sabbatical. I am committed to furthering the democratic values that I feel are essential to individual and societal development. Time away from teaching would allow me to refresh my energy and update my knowledge of the teaching of participatory democracy. It would enable me to produce up-to-date resources for use by Parkland faculty and students. Perhaps best of all, I would have an extended opportunity to read, research and think.

B. Parkland College

Parkland, by its very nature, is part of the community that it serves. The college needs to help all citizens, not just Parkland students, to understand the importance of participation in the government. The information and insights gained from my sabbatical could generate new ideas to encourage citizen involvement. For example, the college could provide a setting, perhaps a forum, on a regular basis for people in the community to gather and discuss topical issues. This would be an excellent opportunity for Parkland staff and students to interact with district residents and community leaders.

Dialogue is the lifeblood of democratic society and the faculty who serve in its public institutions. Parkland College would benefit in that I would be able to renew communications with other teachers, researchers, and political scientists. I would then recommend political science resources for the library, e.g., books, videos, and periodicals, as well as software and CD-ROMs for computer usage.

I will integrate the information I obtain from the sabbatical into Parkland political science courses. Understanding the importance of democratic participation involves much more than knowing what is in the U.S. Constitution and being able to explain the operation of the three branches of government. I hope that my research will shed light on how to cope with the cynicism that threatens to devalue citizen participation. Our democracy works only to the extent that citizens appreciate the value of responsible political participation.

Length of full-time service to Parkland: I am now in my 25th year.

Date of last sabbatical: I have not previously taken nor applied for a sabbatical.

Budget: I would appreciate \$200 for travel costs to visit other faculty and institutions.

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

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