

## **Personal statement**

**submitted as part of my long-term professional development application**

**Monica Malamud – December 2017**

Dear Members of the Professional Development Committee,

I am submitting my application for a long-term professional development project for Fall 2018. For this project, I intend to engage in research on language acquisition, focusing on the development and maintenance of second/foreign language acquisition as well as of heritage languages. Although first language acquisition happens naturally and almost effortlessly during one's early years of life, this is not usually the case for second/foreign language acquisition, nor for the reintroduction and maintenance of heritage languages, which normally require teaching. I am interested in researching successful models for the teaching of languages around the world, especially in societies where high levels of bilingualism are attained.

This is a very ambitious project and it will require a great deal of time and travel. At the same time, this project is extremely worthwhile: I expect the results of my research to have a great impact on me professionally, on the students I teach, and on other faculty in my field. I have been teaching Spanish in the US for twenty-four years, including the last seventeen in our District. Although I conducted research and presented papers at conferences during my first few years at Cañada College, I have not taken advantage of our professional development program to attend a professional conference or engage in research for over a decade. I feel it is time for me to engage once again in research, an activity that I used to find personally and professionally fulfilling, and to continue to develop my expertise in language teaching for the benefit of our students.

It is a well-known fact that the US population does not compare well to the rest of the world in terms of multilingual skills. Still, mastering more than one language is common for humans; actually, the majority of the world's population is bilingual. Therefore, I will learn more valuable lessons about successful language acquisition by looking at countries other than the US.

Although I originally conceived this project as a year-long sabbatical, I am aware of the funding constraints for faculty professional development at Cañada College. If I were to request funding for an extended leave, my request would exceed the entire annual faculty professional development allocation for the college. It is very unfortunate that our level of funding cannot support even one faculty sabbatical per year. With this in mind, I am requesting a leave of only one semester for Fall 2018, and I will match this with a leave in Spring 2019 using my own banked units.

I will complete my proposed research and be able to report outcomes after Fall 2018. In Spring 2019, I will use the leave funded through my banked units for potential follow-up and/or deeper exploration. I will also test the findings which result from the Fall 2018 research on myself: I intend to learn another foreign language and travel in a country where that language is spoken in order to do a real-life assessment of my newly-acquired language skills. This activity will have another benefit: being a language student myself allows me to be a better teacher too. I strongly believe that we teachers should always be students as well, so as to understand and experience the learning process from the student's perspective.

In what follows, I address the topics required by this long-term professional development application.

**1. Project, program, activity or work experience, including a statement of purpose and objectives:**

a. Purpose:

- to learn about language acquisition/teaching models for both non-native and heritage languages in which speakers are successful in achieving high levels of proficiency
- to update, enhance and expand my skills as a language teacher

b. Objective:

- to determine factors, practices, materials, attitudes, teaching/learning conditions, etc. which result in the attainment of high levels of language proficiency, including bilingualism/multilingualism
- to benefit language students in our District by incorporating what I learn through this research project into language courses and lessons in our college and district

c. Project:

***Research how languages are taught in at least three countries/cultures (in different world regions) where people attain high language proficiency levels. For each country, the language pair may be: first and second language, heritage language and dominant language, regional and national language, etc.***

**2. Activities involved:**

- a. Based on preliminary research on countries with bilingual/multilingual populations, select three countries in different world regions
- b. Research their language learning policies, methodologies, materials, etc.
- c. Set up site visits and establish local contacts; schedule and plan travel accordingly
- d. Conduct extended site visits (international travel), which may include: class observations; examination of teaching materials; interviews with teachers, students, faculty in higher education; conversations with community members about language use and attitudes, attendance to professional conferences

**3. Enhancement to existing course or program area (a plan for sharing the results of the activity):**

- a. Students in my classes will directly benefit from my expanded repertoire of teaching techniques and broader perspective on language teaching methodologies
- b. I will share with my students, as well as with colleagues, what they can do to be more successful at language learning and teaching
- c. My findings, as applicable for our community college environment, will inform curriculum design and development at Cañada College and in our sister colleges, not only for Spanish, but also for other world languages as well as ESL, both for on-campus as well as for study abroad programs
- d. I will advise on ways to capitalize on our District's study abroad programs as an opportunity to further our students' knowledge of languages
- e. I will make presentations based on my research project and findings. Possible examples include:
  - CIETL presentation to faculty colleagues on my project
  - Flex workshop conducted jointly with other faculty who have recently embarked on semester-long professional development projects, to inspire our colleagues to take advantage of this opportunity so as to enhance our educational programs
  - Presentation about language teaching in the countries which were the focus of my project, for foreign language and ESL faculty in our college/district
  - Workshop for students about the importance of developing/maintaining a heritage language. This is particularly relevant at Cañada as an HSI, but it is also applicable to other student groups in our district, such as Filipino students at Skyline

I am very excited about this project and I hope that I will receive support in the form of release time for Fall 2018 so I may conduct this research. Although there will be necessary travel expenses associated with this proposal, I am not requesting any travel assistance at this time. I may submit a request for travel expenses once I have determined where I will be traveling to. However, this project will be carried out with or without funding for travel costs, as I am an experienced budget traveler and I will find a way to make it work either way.

I trust you will consider this application as soon as you are able to, so that we may plan accordingly for Fall 2018 and make the necessary adjustments to the Spanish schedule before the Fall 2018 Cañada Schedule goes to print.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

*Monica Malamud*