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Tenure Statement
Fall 2009

*Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.
Nelson Mandela*

Introduction

The purpose of this tenure statement is to illustrate how my work at Gustavus Adolphus College meets the four criteria for tenure set forth by the *Faculty Manual: excellence as a teacher, emerging pattern of professional and scholarly activities, an emerging pattern of involvement with the college and evidence of sympathy with the goals of the College mission*. These four areas, although represented in this statement as four distinct sections, are in reality not separated, but integral, interconnected and overlapping in various ways across all the work that I engage in at Gustavus. My professional and personal life are shaped by a number of what I will call central tenets:

- Our natural world is an inspirational gift
- Children are our future; I care deeply about them and their education
- Curiosity and passion are fundamental to teaching and learning anything
- *It takes a village* (the African proverb) to do anything

These core tenets will weave in and out of this narrative as documentation of my journey as a faculty member at a remarkable liberal arts institution that is Gustavus Adolphus College. Ariel Levy¹ recently wrote about “the pleasure of finding the thing that you are best at, and devoting yourself to it with abandon.” Let me share with you my pleasure, devotion and sense of abandon when it comes to the work that I do here at Gustavus as a teacher, a scholar, and an engaged member of a vibrant community.

Teaching

(1) The continuing excellence and growth as a teacher, as evidenced, for example, by student and peer evaluations, course and program development, or participation in workshops and seminars related to one's field of expertise or teaching.

A couple of years ago, while in the moment of teaching with our pre-service teacher candidates, I found myself characterizing *teaching as a journey of learning*. This phrase became a way for me to convey to future teachers, my students, the complexity, the process, the iterations, the dedication, the passion, the surprises,

¹ Levy, A. The New Yorker. *Nora knows what to do*. July 6 & 13, 2009

the hard work, and the deep reflection that are all part of teaching and learning and ultimately contribute to the pleasure and the angst that are part of being a teacher. I think often and deeply about my teaching. Like many of my students, teaching has been my calling since my youth. Over the years, my commitment to teaching and learning has not diminished. Indeed my commitment to teaching and learning has only strengthened as my vision of what it takes to be an excellent teacher has expanded. My professional work as a teacher is shaped by several core beliefs, all of which will be found throughout this section.

: 1) learning is socially mediated and constructed; 2) you cannot teach well what you do not understand; 3) *all* students can learn; 4) ethics and equity are not always visible in our work as teachers, but they should be fundamental to all the work we do and 5) teaching and learning is praxis².

Teaching Before Gustavus

I began my work as an elementary classroom teacher many years ago with a vision that is shared with many of my teacher candidates: to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. This vision propelled me to move away as a young teacher from teaching methods that felt boring and dull to more active inquiry based methods of teaching and learning. I did not realize at the time that my teaching methodologies were in alignment with a theory of learning called constructivism. Constructivism focuses on the human mind's active attempts to make sense of the world and is influenced by the work of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky. Although I was not able to name the theory that was inherently part of my teaching, I continued active and inquiry based practices because I saw the results: my students were engaged and interested (and happy) in what we were doing in the classroom. I prematurely congratulated myself on making a difference with my students. It would be many years before I realized that I only made a difference for *some* students, not *all*.

I always loved teaching science and math to my students. It was easy to teach about the patterns, the order, the beauty, and the delicacy that are part of our natural world, however, I did not understand why the natural world worked in the way it did. I was curious about the way things worked and wanted to know more (or at least more than you might find in an outdated teacher's manual). I began to strengthen my own background in science and mathematics by enrolling in undergraduate science and mathematics courses in chemistry, physics, geology and biology at Minnesota State University, Mankato. As I continued course work in the natural sciences, I started attending state and regional meetings of the national science and math teacher organization. It was at

² Praxis has been described differently in the critical theory literature. Giroux suggests that praxis represents a transition from critical thought to reflective intervention in the world (*Ideology, Culture and the Process of schooling*, 1981). Roth and Tobin (2002) extends this definition by inferring that praxis is part of an epistemology about teaching that arises from conversations that we have from looking inside teaching, phenomenologically, from which new understanding emerge (*At the elbow of another: learning to teach by co-teaching*).

these meetings where I began to understand the enormity of the issue that a lack of content knowledge (in math and science) had on the confidence and of course the desire of teachers to teach math and science. I also realized how low confidence and phobic attitudes hindered the math and science education of the children I care so much about. My awareness and desire to change this downward spiral and provide hope and confidence to teachers (and their students) led to my action and subsequent enrollment in a master's program at Fresno Pacific University in science and math education. It was at FPU where I became a teacher of teachers, which led me ultimately to Gustavus Adolphus College in 2000.

Teaching at Gustavus

As would be expected, the structure and substance of the courses that I have taught at Gustavus have changed in response to a number of factors including my experiences of teaching with preservice teachers, my growth in understanding of the research literature in science, math and teacher education, my own contributions to the research, conversations with other teacher educators, feedback from students, observations of my students' teaching in area classrooms, the increasing diversity and changing demographics of Southern Minnesota, and my own praxis and reflection using critical theory. My teaching load typically includes one section of EDU 371: *Elementary Science Methods and Materials* (.5 credit) and EDU 373: *Elementary Mathematics Methods and Materials* (.5 credit) each semester. I co-teach EDU 385: *Teaching and Learning Curriculum* (1 credit). I teach EDU 246: *Science for Elementary Educators 1* (1 credit) in the fall and EDU 247: *Science for Elementary Educators 2* (1 credit) in the spring. I teach EDU 248 (.25 credit) *Science Connections* every other spring. Finally, I taught for the first time in spring of 2009, CUR 260: *The Natural World* (1 credit). Syllabi and schedules for courses I have taught in the last two semesters may be found on my website at <http://homepages.gac.edu/~mkoomen>.

In the next section, I will briefly overview each of the courses I teach. More information on each course may be found in my file or above through my website.

EDU 371: Elementary Science Methods

Each semester, I use different science content topics such as matter, dinosaurs, insect ecology, plants, space, or global climate change to guide students to learn about teaching science with inquiry based methods. The science topics are further used as a medium to understand how we embed necessary standards for science (*Minnesota Academic Standards, the Board of Teaching Standards of Effective Practice* or the vision of the *National Science Standards*) assess student learning and support the learning of *all* students.

[EDU 373: Math Methods and Materials](#)

In the Mathematics Methods course, I use various math strands (number sense and operations, for example) to build together an understanding of research based mathematics teaching and learning methods. The various math strands are used, like in the science methods course, to think together the standards important to math and math teaching, (*Minnesota Academic Standards in Math*, the *Board of Teaching Standards of Effective Practice* or the vision of *the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards*), how we assess and think about student understanding, and how we support learning for *all* students.

In addition to the goals included on the Method's courses website, over the past three semesters, the students and I have worked together to co-construct goals, especially for the science methods course. These goals allow me to focus on the needs and expectations of my students from the beginning of our semester together. The co-constructed goals also offer junctures for assessment and feedback. Each semester, the co-constructed goals are different. Here are some of the co-constructed goals for spring 2009 in science methods.

1. We hope to learn a variety of teaching strategies (or a tool box of ideas), including using inquiry methods in science and we would like to be able to practice these ideas and teaching strategies.
2. We would like to learn how to integrate other subject areas into science, including reading.
3. We would like to learn how to implement constructivist teaching and learning in science and continue to build our educational philosophies and understanding about the way kids learn.
4. We would like to learn how to make science relevant to the lives of our students and to embed current science findings into our teaching.
5. We would like to know how to keep science classrooms safe and to develop safe handling of materials and living organisms.

[EDU 385: Elementary Interdisciplinary Methods and Materials or Teaching and Learning Curriculum](#)

EDU 385 is a team taught course, for many years with Jill Potts and now in the past year with Katrina Imison-Mázy. The three of us teach each semester the elementary methods block (social studies, language arts, reading, as well as science, mathematics and Kindergarten) that elementary education majors take the semester before they student teach, sharing the same group of students between our 5 courses. EDU 385 is an interdisciplinary teaching and learning course that allows teacher candidates to build bridges from their education coursework into public school elementary classrooms. Jill, Katrina and I talk regularly about the planning of this course.

[EDU 246/247: Science for Elementary Educators 1 and 2](#)

These two courses complete a yearlong sequence of fundamental science content, required of elementary education majors. The courses meet for four hours of lecture-discussion and a two and a half hour lab per week. EDU 246/247 were developed in response to changes (2000) in Minnesota licensure requirements that stipulated that students eligible for license must complete course work in physical, life and earth science within their undergraduate programs. These two courses attempt to develop science as envisioned by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, 1989) and the *National Standards for Preparation of Teachers of Science* (1996), meaning learning that is inquiry and field based. I teach these courses with assistance from other Gustavus faculty, including adjuncts. In EDU 246 in the fall, Eric Koser, adjunct instructor, teaches the physical science lecture-discussion segments for 7 weeks. I continue to teach the labs. In the spring, I generally have three guest instructors including Chuck Niederriter (twice for astronomy lecture and one lab at the GAC observatory), John Lammert (twice for genetics and reproduction) and Jim Welsh (geology: 2-3 times per semester). All together I teach about 75 percent of the course content across the two courses using a combination of lecture, inquiry and investigative activities, fieldwork and hands on laboratories.

[EDU 248: Science Connections](#)

This course is one of the courses I enjoy teaching the most at Gustavus. It is a course taken only by those education majors who will seek middle school licensure in science or are science secondary teaching majors. The main thrust of this course is to make connections across the various genres of science: life, earth and physical science. It is a seminar style course with generally a small student population of less than 8 students. I use environmental science topics to bring together the three main disciplines of science. In the past we have studied together issues related to energy and the environment, water as a natural resource and global climate change. We meet every other week during the semester for two hours.

[CUR 260: The Natural World](#)

In the spring of 2009, I taught the *Natural World*, CUR 260, the required NASP area credit for students enrolled in Curriculum II. The purpose of this course is to focus on the evidence, theories, methods and practice of science within the context of the natural world. Since this course features a broad overview of science, it included fundamental and integrated concepts of life, earth and physical sciences. This course illustrates a Natural Science Perspective (NASP) by introducing the student to the mechanics of natural and life processes, and the quantitative basis for understanding these processes. The focus of science includes several big ideas and systems, including the science content of two upcoming Nobel conferences (2009 & 2010), history and nature of science, evolution, the hydrologic cycle and water as a natural resource, ecological systems and interactions of species, the application of science with food and

global climate change and the challenges facing our planet as we continue to become hot, flat, and crowded. CUR 260 places emphasis on the strengths and limitations of the methods employed, the philosophical assumptions, the boundaries and connections with other disciplines, and relationships to social, ethical, and political problems. We build an understanding of how science shapes culture and society, public policy and ethics.

J-term 2009: South Africa and Namibia: Building Global Citizenry

In January 2009, I was one of four faculty members who traveled abroad with 32 students to Namibia and South Africa. I traveled and co-taught this course with: Elizabeth Baer, John Clementson and Lois Peterson. The course to Namibia and South Africa allowed students from a variety of disciplines to explore social justice as it relates to the countries and their people. Some of the topics included in this course were: legacy of apartheid, the challenges of decolonization and reconciliation, gender, education, health, indigenous cultures and sustainability. Students participated in a home stay with a Namibian family, worked with teachers and students in schools, and meet with numerous civic leaders and agencies. Planning and teaching this course illustrates my interest in developing collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching opportunities with colleagues from across campus.

Ruminations and Taking a Closer Look at My Teaching

Things that I do well in my teaching:

- I prepare carefully for all of my classes and teaching. Student evaluations of teaching (SETS) state, “she’s always well prepared for class.” I work hard to stay current with the science and math content and research based pedagogies in all that I teach. I spend many hours reviewing course readings and supplemental texts before I teach each class even though I have taught many of the same courses for years. My syllabi, readings and assignments are revised each semester.
- I simply care a great deal about the content that I teach in science and math and thus my teaching is passionate and heartfelt. Students describe me as “enthusiastic, full of energy and passionate” (SETS). “Michele is very knowledgeable and passionate about science” and “very knowledgeable about content and science beyond our course” are additional comments from students that affirm what I bring into the classroom.
- I believe that all students, all kids, all people can learn. I diligently guide my students to see the strengths that each child brings into their classrooms, and not the challenges or deficits that are so often the focus of working with kids with academic or behavioral challenges. In my methods courses, I equip my students with a problem solving model and

specific strategies that they may use to support the learning of all students. Together we read research, including my own, regarding inclusion and diversity, that allows the preservice candidates to enlarge their image of what it means to teach and to teach *all*.

- I guide them to understand how research informs and improves our teaching first by reading research articles and second, and more importantly by applying the results of their own research in their teaching.
- I support my students in their learning. I meet with students outside of class frequently (often times without any “appointment”) or mentor them through e-mail discussions regarding lesson design and teaching and learning. Student comments include: “Michele is very helpful and personal. She understands how we learn, how much we have to get done, and is very accommodating to our needs.” I check in with the methods students when they are immersed in planning for their practicum classrooms by dropping by the computer lab many, many nights before I go home. I provide open office hours for EDU246/247 as important deadlines or an examination is in sight.
- I support my students as learners and as future teachers while they are in the schools. I help them to navigate their practicum classrooms and work collaboratively with their cooperating teachers as they teach math and science lessons in the schools. Students report that “she is easy to approach and is willing to help answer questions, she is preparing us to be great teachers, and Michele helped us figure things out during a difficult time” (SETS).
- I continue to grow in my ability to facilitate difficult conversations with my students regarding issues related to classroom teaching and practice or invisible inequities in the classroom. In fact, I embrace difficult conversations, because if I do not show them in class how we navigate sensitive and difficult topics, how will they begin to do this with colleagues in their schools and/or become advocates for kids?
- I enjoy my students. Probably the best and most unexpected outcome for me about traveling with students to Southern Africa was the relationships that you build as an instructor in the most unexpected places. The shared conversations that I had in the back of the bus or at the pool were some of the best parts of the trip for me.
- I have high expectations for my students and I ask them to increase their own expectations for themselves. Let me explain with a major assignment

called the *Study of Teaching* that students complete in the two methods courses for me as a culmination of our work together.

A cornerstone of the Department of Education at Gustavus is a *Conceptual Framework* that is communicated as a “three-part cycle of learning -- knowledge > experience > reflection.” Over the past few semesters this conceptual framework has been closely tied with a research project that students in the math and science methods courses complete. Students develop the *knowledge* portion of the conceptual framework through readings, class discussion and classroom investigations; they apply their knowledge through *experiences* within the classroom by teaching math and science lessons using research based practices in local elementary schools; finally they *reflect* on their teaching by looking closely at their teaching using phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenological inquiry is a research method that is designed to “awaken teachers to see beyond their habituated perceptions, and in so doing become more mindful of individual children, classroom dynamics and their teaching practices” (Kesson, K., Traugh, C. & Perez, F. 2006) and thus work toward improving their own practice.

As part of their phenomenological inquiry, students are asked to video tape their science and math lessons. As they analyze their videotapes and after teaching notes, the pre-service teachers apply qualitative research methods, including a modified literature review, and analysis to uncover patterns or trends within their classroom teaching, all toward the goal of improving instruction and learning. Learning to apply qualitative research methods within the context of classroom teaching at the same time that they are learning to teach is a formidable challenge for our students and is something that they resist. However tenuous the start, students over and over again, describe the merits of looking closely at their teaching and the value of this research project for them as teachers.

Chelsey Cook wrote: *The study of teaching was valuable to me because it allowed me to really look at my own teaching, and interaction with the students. Through out the course we look and study a lot about other teachers and theories of best practice, however by looking at my own teaching I am able to see the positives of my teaching and also the things I need to continue to work on in the classroom. By studying my teaching I was able to see that questioning was something I need to continue to work on in the future as I continue to teach. It has also taught me, that it is important to continue to study my own teaching, because unless I take the time to reflect and study what I do in the classroom, I won't know the things I need to improve on.*

Alan Woitas wrote: *I thought the study of my teaching was valuable because it*

allowed me a time to evaluate myself as a teacher. By looking at a topic like gender bias I am going to be more aware when teaching as to how I am treating different groups of students. This will hopefully make students feel that they are all treated fairly and allow them to achieve their highest academic potential.

I know that this research assignment challenges my students and pushes them further than many expect they can go. Their completed projects and their achievements are clearly exceptional and really serve as a capstone of their own learning as teachers at Gustavus. I am exceptionally proud of what they learn about themselves as students and as future teachers. Last spring, I invited several students to present their work in the *Creative Inquiry Exposition*. I have already invited several more for the spring 2010.

Responding to student feedback (SETS) in my courses

I have always solicited evaluation and feedback by my students for my teaching both as formative and summative assessment (see file). These evaluations and the SETS from most years, indicate my students perceive me as a good teacher. As I wrote in my third year statement (spring 2008) in response to student feedback in the SETS, I continued to work on organization of my daily class sessions by posting a daily agenda and sticking close to the schedule of topics on my syllabus. With my third year review, I believe, I also demonstrated greater clarity in assignment descriptions and expectations evidenced by the lack of comments regarding these areas in the SETS from the semesters leading up to my 1 third year review. Because, this current tenure review is only a little more than one year after an extremely positive third year evaluation, I was confident that these two areas were satisfied, at least from the perspective of my students.

However, my SETS from fall 2008 and spring 2009 were not where I would have predicted. As they often do, my students gave me the opportunity to reflect deeply about my strengths and challenges as a teacher. For someone, who prides herself on thinking often and hard about teaching, the critical comments feel like a set back and help to remind me that, as teachers, we can *never be complacent* about our teaching. During the academic year 2008-2009, I made some changes in both assignments (EDU 371/373) and in the number of guest speakers for EDU 246/247 that I think are important contextual elements in which to place the substance of the comments by students via the SETS.

EDU246/247: One of the challenges inherent across these courses is that they are science *content* courses in life, earth and physical science, not education or methods courses, yet housed in the Department of Education at Gustavus rather than a science department. The interdisciplinary nature of the two courses precludes their ownership by any one department of science. As noted above, I rely on guest science faculty from geology, biology and physics to develop much of the specific content of science that is required for licensure in the state of Minnesota for future elementary teachers. I believe our students receive an excellent background in basic science from our expert faculty who teach in their

area of specific expertise. Over the years, this model has worked well, as evidenced through SETS. In the spring of 2009, I increased the number of guest instructors, with the permission of John Clementson (Education Chair) on Tuesday evenings as a way to decrease my teaching load so that I might explore teaching other classes (CUR 260). Instead of 7 guest instructors, we had 11, meaning that out of 14 Tuesday evening sessions, I taught three. Comments from students in the spring of 2009 (“she taught only one or two classes”) reflect my decreased role as a course instructor in EDU-247-001 Science Elem Educators II. The syllabus and the schedules for EDU 246/247 clearly indicate that this yearlong course involves the use of guest instructors. However, I now understand that I need to be even more proactive and transparent about the co-teaching model that is used in this sequence of courses and my own role in it. It was clear from comments from the SETS in spring 2009 (“it makes me wonder why she is not teaching”) that students are not clear about my role. I will address student comments regarding my class organization by developing a daily agenda on the board that will become a point of reference for me as I am teaching whether in the EDU-246/247-001 (Tuesday evening class) or the EDU-246/247-003 (lab). In addition, I plan to solicit feedback from other department faculty as I revise assignment descriptions and course expectations with the goal to making them succinct. I would like to invite the guest science instructors into more conversations about the EDU 246/247 course design, goals, and delivery, including methods of using inquiry-based instruction. Finally, I believe the EDU 246/247 students would benefit tremendously by understanding from the science faculty why they are particularly suited to teach their subject specific science to the preservice teachers.

EDU 371/373: I wrote above that one of my core beliefs about teaching is that learning is constructivist and as such is cognitively guided. I cannot “pour” information into my students; each and every student must think and process what they are learning, individually and with others. This way of thinking of learning, in most cases, is in sharp contrast to the ways in which they learned in their K-12 schooling. A challenge in our teacher education program here at Gustavus is to get students to reconceptualize how they view learning and subsequently to re-construct their views on what it means to teach and learn. This is a formidable task and one that each and every faculty member in the Department of Education grapples with.

Many of our education students come to our department with positive experiences at being successful and dedicated students with a knack at being good at schooling. For the most part, their schooling experiences used more traditional methods of teaching and learning, especially in math and science. Many of our students were good at completing worksheets, adept at solving problems, or learning facts in science. Missing for many of our students is an understanding of why something works the way it does in math or in science. Much of our learning in math and science methods involves building greater understanding for the students for *themselves*, first, as learners and second as

future teachers of elementary math and science of the content in math and science. Our education students, like their peers across campus, are learning how to learn in ways that most, if not all, have not experienced before. I ask them to think critically, to question, and to become, at least somewhat, comfortable with ambiguity. Learning is messy not neat and tidy. There are no easy solutions or easy answers to complicated and interdisciplinary knowledge, whether in science or math or anything else. When a student points out on their SETS that they “taught themselves” a great deal, I feel actually proud as their instructor. They are indeed, learning how to learn. Hooray!

As I wrote above, one of my methods course expectations is that students look closely at their own teaching via their “*Study of Teaching*” assignment that I initiated in the fall of 2008. It is in this particular assignment that students really bring together their own synthesis of the Department of Education’s *Conceptual Framework* as a “three-part cycle of learning -- knowledge > experience > reflection.” Students are asked to learn basic qualitative research methods as they analyze their teaching, all with the intention of improving their own teaching and instructional delivery methods. Because this study of teaching potentially brings so much together for our teacher education students related to “knowledge, experience and reflection” it is “worth much more than lesson plans” (SETS). As I wrote above, learning to apply qualitative research methods within the context of classroom teaching at the same time that they are learning to teach is a formidable challenge for our students and is something that they resist. However tenuous the start, students over and over again, describes the merits of looking closely at their teaching and the value of this research project for them as teachers (see above p. 8 for student comments). Unfortunately, the SETS administered in EDU 371/373 are at a time of the semester when my students are feeling overwhelmed by all that they are doing as they prepare for teaching, including writing lesson plans for all of the methods courses and teaching these lessons in the local schools during practicum, completing a large project on writing, and for me studying their own teaching. Comments on the SETS such as “much of our class is stressed and frustrated with the amount of work, so I feel these surveys will represent more negative aspects than usual” support the notion that students are indeed struggling with the overall Methods’ course workload and have yet to realize the value in all they are asked to do. For many, the real value of the math and science methods courses comes at the end of the semester when they look back on what they have learned in the context of studying their own teaching. This fall, I plan to share some of the feedback from former methods students about what they learned about themselves as teachers, while I guide my new students into thinking deeply about their own teaching. I will end this section on my methods courses with an excerpt from a letter by John Clementson (May 15, 2009) for my fifth year review (see my file for the full letter):

Each semester, as part of our elementary methods block, Michele engages her students in an in-depth research project (Reflective Inquiry) aimed at examination of their own teaching practices. Many students find the graduate level readings to be difficult and at first offer significant resistance to the project. Michele carefully explains the material and urges students to move forward with their projects. Once students are able to overcome their initial apprehensions and the cognitive dissonance created by the project, they find the work to be extremely interesting and informative. One of our senior seminar students recently reflected on the project as part of her senior portfolio. She wrote:

I was given the Reflective Inquiry assignment during my Science and Math Methods course. We were told to choose an aspect of our teaching during practicum and to reflect on that aspect. I was instantly overwhelmed and confused. What was reflection? Why did it have to be so labor intensive? As I delved into the project more, I realized it was something I had been doing all along. All I needed to do was document it more formally. Through the completion of the project, I began to narrow my reflection to specific areas of teaching. I was also able to have more meaningful conversations with peers and colleagues about these areas because I took the time to think about them and process my own experiences. My previous views of reflection as a tedious and unimportant chore of teaching changed because I saw directly how my reflection benefitted the students I was working with. My feelings of responsibility to these students made the reflections worthwhile, and the research I found to back up my implications showed me that reflection is something that must be done often and with good intention. I have taken this experience with me into my student teaching semester. Notes are taken during each lesson and I am able to use them in my reflection post-lesson as well as in conversations with other parties about my teaching. Reflection is a tool that I needed to learn to use in order to fully appreciate its benefit.

Things that I am working on in methods courses:

- **Organization:** As is noted above, I publish all my schedules and syllabi on-line via my website. I will sync this schedule into Moodle as a one-stop source of course documents and easier access to weekly readings, discussion topics and other activities for the week. Secondly, I plan to stick as close as possible to the class schedule of topics. Third, I have revised my course packet pages to sync with my course schedule and subsequently with Moodle.
- **Assignment descriptions and expectations:** I have streamlined most of my assignments so that they are less verbose. I plan to ask for input on the clarity of my assignments from other faculty in my department.
- **Less is more:** I updated my schedules for both my methods courses so that we spend more time on fewer topics (thus less reading) for greater

conversation and application of the elementary classroom.

Things that we are working on in EDU 385:

As a team, we will revisit the model lesson-plan and explore other options that might make this seem less cumbersome and more valued to our students. We need to keep in mind that preservice teachers in the research literature often describe lesson planning as tedious.

CUR 260: There are several faculty who are in the rotation to teach this class now. If, I teach this class again, I will take into account the comments of student SETS as I prepare.

As I wrote above in the section on my teaching strengths, I support my students in their learning. This means that I make myself as available as possible for their questions or concerns. Included in my tenure review file are copies of supporting notes that I have received over the past few years regarding my support of my students from many former students.

Continued growth as a teacher

Over the years that I have been at Gustavus, I have continued to grow as a teacher through a number of opportunities.

- Presentation of papers at research conferences: Each time I present a paper at a conference, I enter into conversations with others about the work that they do in preparing teachers in science and math.
- Teaching *Insect Ecology* at the University of Minnesota with scientists (2005, 2007-2009): Each summer I have the opportunity *to teach at the elbow* of another (Tobin) about science. I am a better teacher of science and inquiry because of the work I have done at the U.
- Service Learning and Social Justice to Namibia, summer 2006: This professional development opportunity allowed me to come to know twenty-one other faculty from Gustavus. Over the course of this trip, several faculty and I talked about common challenges that we face in teaching at a liberal arts college (for example: navigating tough conversation with students). I have had the privilege to learn from observations of teaching outside of my own department with two of our best teachers at Gustavus Adolphus College: Cindy Johnson-Groh and Florence Amamoto.
- Completion of a doctorate at the University of Minnesota: This is by far the most significant contribution to my growth as a teacher since I have been at Gustavus. My graduate course work created multiple opportunities to think and learn together with others about math and science education. I do not think I would fully understand the impact of research on the work that I do at Gustavus with teacher candidates if I had

not completed my degree.

Scholarship

(2) An emerging pattern of professional activities as reflected, for example, by presentations at scholarly meetings or conferences and, in the arts, manifestations of creativity demonstrated through exhibits or performances; another example may be involvement in professional and/or public organizations, boards, or commissions related to one's academic field(s) or college assignments.

My professional activities have evolved over my years at Gustavus, shifting from a focus on practioner related activities to research related activities, along the way developing greater collaboration with two specific organizations: Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and Sci/Math^{MN} Teacher Research Network (TRN). Let me highlight some of my professional activities.

Presentations of Workshops at National, Regional and State Meetings

As part of my contribution to mathematics and science education, I presented over the early years of my appointment at Gustavus a number of workshop sessions at national meetings that were aligned with the national reform documents in science (*Science for all Americans*, AAAS, 1989, 1999 and the *National Science Education Standards*, National Research Council, 1996, NSTA, 1992) and mathematics (*National Council of Teachers of Math Standards*, 1989, 2000). In these presentations sought to provide practicing teachers with multiple strategies for teaching mathematics strands with understanding and intelligent practices. Science presentations focused on the thinking, process and analysis that are part of inquiry based teaching and learning. As in all scholarly work, each presentation or session is subject to peer review. Workshops at the national meetings are highly prized because of the competitive scrutiny and review of each proposal.

- In 2004, I presented a workshop titled *Helping Children to Master Basic Facts* at the National Meeting in Philadelphia of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). The purpose of this workshop was to bring aspects of mathematics research in learning basic facts to practicing teachers at the elementary level.
- At the Minnesota Science Teachers meeting (2001), the regional meeting of Science Teachers in Minneapolis (2003) and the national meeting of Science Teachers in San Diego, California (2002), teacher participants left the workshops with specific ideas about how to plan and teach simple chemistry concepts using inquiry methods in their classroom.

As my scholarly focus changed to research in inclusion, diversity and social justice/equity in science and mathematics, my presentations and workshops have also changed. The Minnesota Science Teachers Association meeting in

October 2005 was my first presentation of research findings and literature that support learning in science and mathematics for students who are mainstreamed in said classrooms with a workshop entitled: *Meeting the Needs of the Diverse Life Science Student in Middle Schools*. Attendees left this workshop with a number of methods to support learning in science including various mechanisms that promote science vocabulary, a common challenge for students with diverse learning needs.

Collaborative Research and Scholarship

TRN. The Teacher Research Network (TRN), with funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Education has been a significant part of my collaborative research and scholarship since I joined the faculty at Gustavus in 2000. The Teacher Research Network (TRN) was formed in 1998 by a group of five higher education institutions (Minnesota State University, Moorhead, St. Cloud State University, and the University of Minnesota at Duluth, Gustavus Adolphus College and St. Mary's University of Minnesota) that collectively prepared over half of all K-12 teachers in TRN the state. Currently institutions of higher education include: Minnesota State Universities at Moorhead, Winona and State Cloud, the University of St. Thomas, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Olaf College, the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and the College of St. Scholastica.

Beginning in 1999 (before I joined Gustavus), and culminating in 2004, we conducted a longitudinal study of beginning science and mathematics teachers in Minnesota during the first three years of their teaching. Sixty-four new teachers participated in this study involving, ultimately, eleven institutions of teacher education in Minnesota. The study focused on five aspects of new teachers: knowing mathematics and science, knowing pedagogy, knowing students as learners, establishing a learning environment and developing as a teacher. Analysis of the data revealed several prominent themes: new teachers need a strong content background to teach math and science; new teachers perceive that there are constraints in the learning environment; new teachers perceive that there are few mentoring opportunities available to them and new teachers perceive that there are limited professional development opportunities available to them (see copy of paper presented at ASTE in my file for more information on this study). My work throughout the years of our study included writing profiles of teacher graduates of Gustavus Adolphus College after analysis of data collected in interview transcripts and classroom observations, analysis of profiles from other institutions resulting in summative review documents of our findings (2001, 2002, 2003) and setting a course for closure of this project with the writing of a summary document (see my file) and delivery of one of a series of papers delivered at a national meeting for teacher educators of science, ASTE (Association for Science Teacher Educators) in January 2006 (see ASTE paper in my file).

WRELC. I led the effort to develop a partnership with Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center (WRELC, Ely, MN) and Gustavus Adolphus College where we act as partners in preparing student teachers in 2003. Teacher candidates have the option of completing one of their student teaching sessions at Wolf Ridge Environmental Center. Eligible teacher candidates apply for a year long naturalist/student teaching in training program at WRELC in the fall of the year before they student teach. Students complete their first session of student teaching at WRELC from August to October of their student teacher semester. Supervision of their teaching involves a cooperating teacher at WRELC working in partnership with a supervisor from GAC, me. Beginning in 2004, several of our teacher candidates have selected this option including 3 in 2004, 2 in 2005, 2 in 2007, 1 in 2009. While these numbers are not large, they do suggest that this is an important option for the right student. The opportunity to student teach at WRELC creates a platform to hone outdoor and environmental education teaching in a pristine natural environment with highly supportive faculty (GAC and WRELC). In addition, this program positions our teacher candidates to develop background in an area that is increasingly valued in local schools: environmental and sustainability teaching and learning. In the world of environmental and outdoor education, Gustavus is the first institution to couple student teaching experiences with naturalist training. As a matter of fact, Wolf Ridge and Gustavus were invited to share their collaborative efforts in student teaching publicly in October 2006 at the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAEEE) meeting in St Paul. I shared an overview of this partnership with TEAC: the Teacher Education Advisory Committee at GAC in the fall 2006 (see my file for a copy of the PowerPoint that I used).

Emerging Individual Research

My research interests do not stand alone or apart from the work that I do at Gustavus Adolphus College in preparing teachers, indeed they are integral to everything that I do here, as should be evident to the reader by now. I began my doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota with no clear idea for a research direction. My path for research became clear to me as a result of a supervision incident that I will describe briefly here.

- *Chad*. In the fall of 2001, I was supervising a number of student teachers across the metro area of Minneapolis, including one student who was placed in fifth grade at a private school in Minneapolis. Sarah, (a pseudonym), had been a methods student (EDU 371, 373 & 385) of mine in the spring of 2001. Part of Sarah's lesson involved partnered activities at stations, where students would read a set of instructions and perform a simple investigation together, nothing real unusual for fifth grade. The teaching and delivery of the lesson was fine until I noticed, Chad. Chad was not engaged in the lesson or with his partner at all. As a matter of

fact, he was basically distracted by some of the other materials that were in the classroom and was busy using the class time to explore these items. After Sarah completed her teaching, I turned our debriefing conversation to discussing certain students and their engagement in the lesson, including Chad. Sarah's response was, well "that's Chad." Her dismissive attitude about Chad revealed to me that she had no real expectations for his learning. It also pointed out to me that I really knew nothing about how she might go about supporting his learning. My research was born from what I did not know.

Thesis. In this section, I will briefly summarize my thesis research because it has been very important to my scholarly work over the past three years, including writing for publication. My dissertation reported on a phenomenological study of nine regular and special education students as they studied insect biology and ecology in their inclusive seventh grade life science class. Three fundamental data collection methods of interpretive research (student observations, interviews and artifact analysis) framed the data collection of this study. The essence of the lived experience of the study participants reveal a variety of ways working with others in groups supported their learning. Students reported that it was easier to share ideas, ask questions and complete their work when they worked together with other classmates. A second finding of this study, *It's kind of hard in learning science*, exposes some of the anxiety and the challenges that are part of the experiences of both regular and special education students in learning science. A third finding reveals that for the students in this study *the practice of inquiry learning in science is fragile*. Despite daily opportunities in inquiry activities, many students are fixated in finding the "right" answers and just getting their "work done." The perception of practicing science for the special education students was moderated and limited by their viewpoint that science is coupled with language arts. This research has implications for science and special teacher educators. I am grateful for an RSC grant from GAC that I received in 2004 to support my purchase of equipment to complete my dissertation study.

The overall results of my thesis were presented at the Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE) and the National Association for the Research in Science Teaching (NARST) in 2007, both peer refereed meetings. My thesis results are also the subject of a paper that is currently under review titled: *Listening to Their Voices: What can special education students tell us about their experiences in learning science?* In addition, I presented these findings at a **Shop Talk** at Gustavus in September 2008. (See my file for a copy of this paper).

As was noted in my brief sketch of my thesis, my study involved nine student participants. During the last year, I prepared a paper that discusses one student, Dion, as a way to continue the discussion in science education about what we mean by teaching science for *all* by examining his experience using feminist and critical theory perspectives. I presented the case for Dion and the

critical theory perspectives at the 2008 meeting of NARST in April. The paper is currently under review.

Broadening my research into other areas of inclusion and special learners

Over touring break in 2007, I took part in the Latino Academy with seven other faculty from the Department of Education at GAC. As a department we sought to understand the implications of U.S.-Mexico border policy, economics, and social structures for immigrants and their families in order to better serve our education students. Minnesota increasingly is home to many Latino immigrant families. Part of our experience was to travel to El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico where we spent several days visiting with new immigrants and residents from the area as well as personnel from numerous social service agencies who worked to provide the services for the immigrants, including Cristo Rey Church, our host organization. During the Latino Academy, I had many conversations with the Pastor of Cristo Rey Church, Pastor Rose Mary Sánchez-Guzmán, regarding the importance of building an understanding of the immigrant story with teacher educators and with their (our) students: future teachers. With funding assistance from my second RSC grant and the generous assistance and hospitality of Pastor Rose Mary Sánchez-Guzmán, I conducted research in El Paso, Texas in the summer of 2007.

The purpose of the research was twofold: uncover the lived experiences and context for learning of ten linguistically diverse student participants and understand how these experiences and contexts positioned said students to learn in their schools. Analysis of the data set revealed three main findings: the first two speak to *constructs for learning* in the classrooms that serve to (a) mitigate and regulate independent learning of the students and (b) invoke survival or anxious responses from the students. The third finding represents a coupling of a growing self-determination that hinges on a protected place to rest, to settle and to flourish. A paper describing this research was presented at AERA (American Educational Research Association) in New York City in April 2008. This research organization is the largest and most rigorously peer reviewed outlet for educational research in the United States (see AERA paper in my file).

In April of 2009, I presented a paper and a poster at the annual meeting of NARST (National Association for the Research on Science Teaching). The paper, titled, *Understanding the process of applying inquiry teaching methods in elementary classrooms* was initiated by the work that I do at the University of Minnesota with Karen Oberhauser. We co-teach a course on insect ecology (see section on service to the community). I am the evaluator/researcher for this initiative as well as a lead instructor. Over the past two years, I followed closely the work of five exemplary teachers as they apply the content of the course into their classrooms. The paper presented at this conference represents the preliminary data analysis and results of this qualitative research. Briefly, this paper discusses what it means to do inquiry, including the finding that implementing inquiry-based teaching across all grade levels *is more guided by the teacher than initiated by the*

student learner. I intend to continue to follow this group of five teachers for one more year before I begin to write for publication.

My second presentation at NARST was a poster titled: *the Practice of Inquiry Within a Small Group of Hmong Youth*. This poster reported on several findings resulting from the analysis of the collective narratives of the Hmong youth (thesis) including the fact that the practice of science was different for each of the three Hmong youth. For William, the practice of science was tied with the language of science and teeters tentatively on the expertise and interactions he has within his small group. For Mai, the practice of science was dutiful and pragmatic and absent in passion or curiosity. And finally, for David a practice of science that most closely matches a vision of science practice defined by national reform documents. This study sheds some light on learning in science and illustrate how for each of these students, inquiry is experienced very differently. These findings help us to design instructional programs that better meet the needs of our complex and diverse classroom populations as we move toward more culturally responsive teaching pedagogies.

Descriptive and Phenomenological Inquiry (in progress)

As I noted earlier in this narrative, a capstone research project that methods students complete for me is a study of teaching. My latest research efforts revolve around building an understanding of how we as science teacher educators implement reflective practice with our students. To that end, I am currently analyzing interview texts, field notes and course artifacts to understand the process of becoming a more contemplative novice educator. I plan to submit this manuscript for publication in the fall of 2009.

Cognitive load study

Over the past academic year, 2008-2009, Dan Moos, Deb Pitton and I, initiated a study of Cognitive load and Pre-service teachers titled (preliminarily): *Using theory to explain challenges of novice teachers*. Novice teachers are often overwhelmed in the classroom due to the mental efforts needed to address behaviors of individual students and the need to remember and implement lesson plans. Together we are using mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods as we follow participating student teachers in their student teaching placements. We have completed our data gathering efforts and are now processing the data (interviews and surveys) with analysis of data targeted for the end of summer 2009.

Publications

In 2002, *Exploring Math*, a series of math books that I authored, was published by Capstone Press in Mankato, Minnesota. Titles of the series are:

- *Patterns: What Comes Next?*
- *Size: Many Ways to Measure*

- *Sets: Sorting Into Groups*
- *Numbers: Counting it Up*
- *Shapes: Discovering Flats and Solids*
- *Fractions: Making Fair Shares*

Each book featured an illustrated math concept within an emerging reader text. I was honored to have one of my books *Size: Many Ways to Measure* selected as one of the best mathematics books for children published in 2001 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Service to the Community

My professional activities over the past years include a number of outreach components that will be briefly describe here.

- *Two Days of Mathematical Learning and Teaching*, for teachers of Grades K-5: July 31 to August 2, 2002. Math content included: number sense and operations, measurement, data collection and geometry.
- *Wildflower gardens at Mattson Hall*: In 2005 and 2006, I was the summer coordinator for science for the National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) housed at Gustavus Adolphus College. In 2005, I led a group of over 200 middle school aged campers and two instructors in the design and planting of the 5 wild flower gardens near Mattson Hall. These gardens are used and maintained by students in all the courses that I teach at GAC. (See my file for PowerPoint of the Wildlife gardens at Gustavus).
- *Insect Ecology at the University of Minnesota, 2005-2009*: I am the lead or Co-Lead (2009) instructor for one of four graduate level courses for teachers throughout the Upper Midwest at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus, in the College of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology. Over 75 teachers have enrolled in this course over the 4 years that I have been involved. As I noted above, I am following a subset of the teacher participants in an effort to understand in greater depth their application of content and pedagogy from the summer courses and the impact of the course on their student learning. I was a Co-Principal Investigator with Karen Oberhauser at the University of Minnesota in a successful proposal to procure funds from the ITQ program (Improving Teacher Quality) through the state of Minnesota for the course in 2007-2009. (See my file for a documentation of the ITQ grant).
- *Nobel for Kids/Educators: October 2-3, 2009*: Currently, I am working with Mary Morton Strey, and Chuck Niederriter to develop a day long program on the science of water for elementary students and their teachers (see proposal in file). The primary goals are twofold: 1) to promote a program that links the subject content of the Nobel Conference for 2009, *Water: Uncertain Resource*, with Science Faculty at Gustavus Adolphus College and local elementary school teachers and their students and 2) develops an understanding of how the ubiquitous and

transdisciplinary nature of water can become an exemplary tool for development and application of rigorous science content, scientific inquiry and the principles of engineering design. The proposal envisions a program on the topic and science of water that reflects the grade level specificity required of the *Minnesota Academic Standards in Science* for grades 4, 5, and 6 in Earth Science, and the Nature of Science and Engineering.

Leadership and Service

(3) An emerging pattern of involvement in the activities of the College in the candidate's department, in the faculty and its committees, or in other college positions.

My years at Gustavus reflect an emerging pattern of involvement in the activities of the college since I finished my doctorate, as would be expected of some one who coupled full time teaching with a full time graduate school load. I am happy to finally contribute to faculty governance. Over the past year, I believe I established myself as a leader through a variety of roles of service to Gustavus Adolphus College.

Service to the college

Co-Chair, Education Department (2009-2010): With the appointment of John Clementson to the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Dan Moos and I stepped forward together and were elected as Co-Chairs of the Education Department. I will take the lead in the more typically administrative responsibilities associated with a department chair at our institution, while Dan will take the lead in the teacher education, licensure and accreditation components that are unique to our department. Although our work has barely begun, we already see this model as effective and look forward to the opportunity this year will bring for us, our department and our students.

Co-Chair of Gustavus Technology Services Strategic Plan and Technology Services Planning Core Committee: In September 2008 at the request of Provost Mary Morton, I accepted the role as Co-Chair of the Gustavus Technology Services strategic planning. In this role, I, along with Bruce Aarsvold, led the Core Committee through an iterative process that led to the strategic plan. This process included a review by the committee of reports including the *Gustavus Information Technology Review (2008)*, a review of relevant literature regarding higher educational institutional technology such as *Student Campus, Technology Trends: 2001-2006* and the *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2008* and implementation and analysis of an online survey. The committee held 24 meetings with all the various constituents of technology at Gustavus including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The data

gathering efforts detailed above and the resulting synthesis and interpretation of the documents, surveys, and meetings resulted in a *Strategic Plan for Gustavus Technology Services* that embrace five core ideas/themes. These five *Core Ideas* are:

- Communication
- Support
- Equipment and Hardware
- Access and Infrastructure
- Ethics of technology/access, use philosophy and culture

I took the lead in writing the plan (see file) as a synthesis of all that we learned. Co-Chairing the Core Committee is additional evidence of my commitment to collaboration across the community of Gustavus. This opportunity allowed me to learn significantly about the tremendous effort, ethics and commitment that are a foundational aspect of our Gustavus Technology Services. As would be expected, this opportunity helped me to develop greater skills in compromise and effective communication as well.

Curriculum Committee (2007-2010): I just completed my first term as Curriculum Committee Chair and was reelected to serve in this same capacity for the academic year 2009-2010. I respect the members of the committee and the insight that they offer as we deliberate over curricular matters at our meetings. This committee has allowed me to understand the nature of our curriculum at Gustavus in greater depth. As the Curriculum Committee Chair, I took challenging and contentious issues regarding our academic programs to the faculty on more than one occasion.

IIAC (2004-2009): Instructional Infrastructure Advisory Committee: I served as the Education Department representative on this committee since 2004. Our main work was to review requests from academic departments and faculty for computer hardware and make recommendations to AOC.

Nobel 2009 Nobel Committee: I have been a member of the 2009 Nobel Conference (*Water: Uncertain Resource*) planning committee since the beginning. I am thrilled to be selected to co-host Peter Gleick with Mary Strey.

Lecture Series: In November 2008, I hosted a visit by Karen Oberhauser to our campus using Lecture Series funds. Oberhauser's research interests include: invertebrate conservation and ecology, with particular interest in monarch butterflies; Citizen Science and ecological monitoring; promoting a citizenry with a high degree of scientific and environmental literacy. During the afternoon of her visit she was a guest instructor in my EDU 246 lab. She gave a public lecture titled: *The Monarch Butterfly as a Flagship Conservation Species: Forests, Prairies and People*. Finally, this visit by Oberhauser is another indication of how collaboration

and community are part of my work at Gustavus. I planned a faculty and student dinner with Karen featured as the guest of honor. In an effort to afford more interactive conversations between all dinner guests, I planned the dinner and the set up of the tables so that Karen moved to a different table with each course. Thus, all guests had the opportunity for conversation with this remarkable scientist.

Other leadership and service activities

- Sustainability Working Group with James Dontje (2008)
- Course Approval Sub Committee (CAPSUB), Chair (2007-2008).
- Selection Committee for Guild of St. Angsar, spring 2007.
- Academic Petitions Committee for one student petition in Spring 2006 at the request of Mark Braun.

Service to the Department of Education

- Part of my work in the department is as a faculty representative for our selective admissions. Over the years, I have served in this capacity many times.
- Departmental searches are part of the ongoing work of our department. Over the years I have served on many search committees. Recent successful searches included Sidonia Alumina (2006) and our new hire in 2008, Katrina Imison-Mázy.
- Advising elementary education majors has been part of my work in the department since 2001. Each year I advise between 25 and 30 advisees.
- I was the elementary faculty representative of our department for the academic year 2007-2009 to TEAC, Teacher Education Advisory Council at the request of John Clementon.
- NCATE (North Central Accreditation of Teacher Education) and BOT (Board of Teaching): Our department completed an accreditation with both of these entities in 2006. Documentation for this accreditation was extensive. I worked, along with many members of our department, on Standard 1 of the NCATE report and completed several Professional Education Program Evaluation reports (PEPER) for teaching of elementary education, elementary with 5-8 math and science middle school specialty.
- Tech support: Joyce Aarsvold is our education department's official IT person, however, I provide informal support to faculty and students frequently.
- El Paso research: I wrote above about this research, however, it deserves mention here because it links with our department's mission to educate students for cultural competence and understandings of second languages acquisition.

Leadership in my profession

I am emerging as a leader in my profession in a number of ways that will be outlined here:

- Member of the Minnesota State Science Standards Revision Committee. (2008-2009): This is one initiative where I believe that my voice made a difference. I worked, with many other dedicated people, specifically on the *Nature of Science and Engineering Standards*, K-12. One of our significant accomplishments is the way that we have portrayed science as a practice at the suggestions of the National Research Council (2008) (see file).
- Chair of Inclusion Forum ASTE (Association for Science Teacher Education): The primary mission of the Forum for Inclusive Science Education includes developing ways to enable ASTE members to improve understanding of and sensitivity to human diversity and is concerned with science teacher education as it pertains to teaching science to students with disabilities and/or students whose race, class, ethnicity, sexual preference and gender have alienated them from full participation in science. As chair, part of my duty is to plan and propose a pre-conference workshop focused on diversity. I also took the lead in establishing a website of resources (primarily bibliographic) for scholars and others interested in issues of inclusion, equity, and ethics. Specific topics found in this resource site are: research and resources in education of students with exceptionalities, gender and equity, gifted education, informal science education, multicultural education and English Language Learners. Index page for the Forum Website can be found at: <http://www.gac.edu/mkoomen/ASTE/ISEF.html>
- Reviewer of research papers on inclusion, equity and ethics for ASTE (2005, 2006, 2007).
- Ethics and Equity Community Member of NARST (National Association for Research in Science Teaching).

Mattson Hall Wildlife and wildflower gardens

I described the work that I did with NYSP that resulted in the establishment of five wildlife gardens near Mattson Hall on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College. The ongoing maintenance and service learning that are part of these gardens is another example of my service to Gustavus.

Mission

(4) Continuing evidence of sympathy with the aims and purposes of Gustavus Adolphus College as stated in the Mission Statement of the College.

The evidence for sympathy with the aims and purposes of Gustavus Adolphus College as stated by the *Mission* of the College are found in all of the work that I do here, including teaching, scholarship and service (although, for me, I believe that “harmony” is a better descriptor of my alignment with the mission of GAC).

First of all, the *Mission* parallels my own thinking and beliefs. I am a strong advocate for the liberal arts: although, I did not attend an undergraduate liberal arts institution, three of my children did. After I completed my doctorate, I had the option to choose another institution for my professional work. I chose Gustavus as the place to continue my career in education with full knowledge of what a liberal arts setting is and aspires to.

I believe that I work hard toward *excellence* in all that I do both as a teacher, a scholar and a member of the community that is Gustavus. I am critical of myself, sometimes overly so, when I do not measure up to said excellence. I have high expectations for my students as learners, future teachers and as human beings in the world. I believe that my teaching and my scholarship speak loudly to my commitment to encouraging *respect for others*, and *sensitivity to diversity*. In addition, I embrace critical theory and pedagogy in my scholarship and teaching as a way to evaluate my own advancement toward democracy and greater humanization. I have been deeply influenced by the work of Paulo Freire³ and like him, imagine a world “that is less ugly, more beautiful, less discriminatory, more democratic, less dehumanizing, and more humane” (2001, p. 25), a vision that I believe is completely in sympathy (harmony) with the Gustavus Adolphus *Mission*.

I have always supported international travel as a means of *broadening our understanding of international perspectives*. As I wrote earlier, I traveled with 32 students to Namibia and South Africa during Jterm 2009. I was fortunate to be part of the fourth GAC faculty development Service Learning and Social Justice travel seminar in June of 2006 and during touring week of 2007, the Latino Academy in El Paso/Juarez. The experience of learning about post-apartheid Southern Africa, plight of women, access to health care, challenges of equity in education (among others), and issue related to immigration and schooling at the borders, influenced my professional and personal life and has fostered greater commitment to working in developing countries for me with our GAC students.

During my sabbatical leave (2010-2011), I will be part of professional development for math and science teachers in Namibia and South Africa. I received an invitation by the principal at the Steenkamp School in Katutura, Namibia to work with their teachers. I am committed to providing opportunities for teachers that will promote better teaching and learning for their students, but will also be sustainable by them so that there is change in place that may last. It is neither ethical nor desirable, in my mind, to do a drop in sequence of workshops and be done and leave. Their needs are simply too great. As I have thoughts about this, I see the potential power and necessity of developing strong collaborations with an institution for higher learning, which has recently led me

³ Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

to apply for a Fulbright to work in South Africa. I received an invitation to be a faculty scholar at the University of the Western Cape. If my application as a Fulbright scholar is accepted, I am confident that I will significantly increase and *broaden(my) our understanding of international perspectives.*

I will conclude this section with a few remarks regarding faith and the Lutheran tradition. I am in harmony with all of the ideals of the Gustavus Adolphus mission including the core values that are considered to be Christian and faith based. I also value the Lutheran perspective that is articulated by Darrell Jodock in the *Statement of Church Relatedness* that suggests that the Lutheran tradition supports a commitment to excellence, genuine service involving a courageous commitment to justice, love, wholeness and human dignity, a sense of wonder and a foundation for inclusiveness. However, even though I recognize and try to emulate what I consider to be the Lutheran values, and the mission of this college, I am not aligned with any religious entity. My beliefs, so to speak, rest on my core values that are beyond faith, including, but not limited to fairness, honesty, humility, service, excellence, commitment, inclusion, and democracy.

Finally, I must acknowledge the *shoulders of giants* that I stand on in all the work that I do and have done at Gustavus. Gustavus is a remarkable community and I am honored to call it my professional home. I am very grateful for the many conversations I have had with other faculty about teaching and learning. My scholarship continues to focus thanks to the suggestion and careful edits of many other scholars on campus. I am so very fortunate that so many other members of the community took the lead before me in service so that I may benefit from their insight and wisdom as I stepped forward. I feel the support from all of you, and you know who you are, and I am very grateful and blessed to count you as friends and colleagues.