In my application for the Fall 2013 sabbatical, I described my purpose as comprising three areas: 1) research into current developments in the field of Organization Development (OD) and the relationship between the OD field and other systems-oriented communities of practice; 2) professional development in support of my role as Academic Coordinator of the SSU's OD MA Program; and 3) the creation of a solid foundation for developing and enhancing the curriculum of that program.

Research:

My work in this area built upon a chapter I was asked to write for a collection of essays entitled *Traditions of Systems Theory: Major Figures and Development*, which was published by Routledge in late 2013. The chapter, entitled "Systems Theory and Practice in Organizational Change and Development," grew out of my work with the OD MA Program and my interest in exploring the relationship between OD and other systems-related approaches to organizational and social change. It is a testament to the relevance of my research to the OD program that the paper has been used in both the first and second year courses during the 2013-2014 academic year.

The focus of my research during the sabbatical was on developing a better understanding of the models and methodologies that have been developed in the field of OD, in particular, and in the broader field of systems practice in general. In addition to an extensive review of current literature across both areas, I joined the first year students in OD 554: Organization Systems Inquiry, which is an introduction to the systems models and methods used in the OD field. Drawing on this work, I was asked to present an introductory workshop for the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy on "The Systems Approach: A Brief Introduction - Theory, Models and Methodologies for Understanding and Changing Complex Systems," in December of 2013. In many ways, this presentation and workshop embodies the culmination of my work during the sabbatical semester.

Given the emphasis on action research as a central practice in the OD field, I was pleased to learn that one of the members of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (whose conferences I have been attending for the past twenty years) had proposed a new special interest group on the topic, with the first session to be included in the annual conference in July 2013, where I presented a paper entitled "Systems Theory & Practice: The Role of Action Research in Organizational Change and Development."

As a result of my participation in this session, I was subsequently invited to participate in a week long "Conversation" hosted by the International Federation for Systems Research in Linz, Austria in April 2014. These biennial Conversations bring together teams of researchers to work
collaboratively during the course of a week to share ideas and develop a paper summarizing the results of their collective efforts. As noted in the invitation, "participation in IFSR Conversations is by invitation only and is only available to a strictly limited number of participants," so it is an honor to be invited to attend.

The team I worked with (and am continuing to collaborate with on a larger project) includes representatives from the U.S., Canada, Australia, India and China, and focused on the general topic of systems research. The team began working together in November 2013, through WebEx meetings and various on-line repositories for reference materials and preliminary discussion. My initial motivation in joining the team grew out of my ongoing interest in developing a more detailed and comprehensive overview of the wide-range of practices in the applied systems field. As the team evolved, the focus shifted to addressing the question of what distinguishes systems research from other more traditional approaches to research. The collaborative process has been rich and rewarding and, as noted above, we are continuing to work together on a book project. We have already developed a book proposal and a general outline, with specific areas to be developed by each of the members of the team. At the annual meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences, in July 2014, the team presented a plenary panel on the proposed project, inviting input from the membership.

Professional Curricular Development:

With regard to my role as Academic Coordinator of the OD MA program, although I have decided to take advantage of the Faculty Early Retirement Program, beginning in Fall 2014, I remain committed to the program. In fact, the lighter teaching load will allow me to engage more fully and actively. The opportunity, during my sabbatical, to sit in on some of the courses, gave me a much better understanding and appreciation for the value of the program and the skills that the students develop over the course of the two years. Once I returned to full-time teaching in the Spring of 2014, I was no longer able to engage at the level I would have liked. During the Fall 2014 semester, I will be participating in two courses (OD 513: Facilitation and Training in the first year and OD 557: Redesigning Human Systems in the second).

Also during the fall sabbatical, in collaboration with Sara Tickler, a key member of the OD faculty, and with the support of the Dean and the Director of Business and Operations in the School of Extended Education, as well as the Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities, I developed a proposal for an innovation grant from the CSU Commission on the Extended University, which was submitted in February 2014. The abstract reads in part:

This proposal seeks funding to strengthen and restructure the curriculum of the Organization Development MA Program at Sonoma State University, in order to extend access beyond the local geographic area, with a particular interest in attracting members of the international community and providing opportunities for international engagement for all of our students. In addition, the project will include the development of a certificate program and stand-alone workshops geared to the needs of working professionals in a broad variety of fields. Beginning with a comprehensive survey of other Organization Development (OD) graduate programs, the project will explore the use of virtual technologies to enhance learning and support access for working adults, as well as prospective students from outside our traditional service area. Building on this initial research,
the project will focus on the creation of a hybrid version of its current program that would combine intensive face-to-face sessions with web-based instruction and on-going support.

SSU's OD MA program offers state of the art instruction to equip its learners with the knowledge and skills to be effective partners with organizations and community groups in pursuit of change and growth. Graduates are routinely involved in civic engagement activities in public, private and non-profit organizations that have high impact both on campus and in local communities. While we believe that the guiding principles of OD, which have historically been heavily weighted toward strong interpersonal competencies and processes that bring people together, remain vital, the technology-mediated revolution in social interaction necessitates reevaluation of current teaching practices and program formats. Our goal is to identify the best online practices for a program that is intrinsically experiential and conversation-based. Grant funding would allow us to research how best to create online learning experiences that not only foster personal transformational change, but also enable students to develop the practical skills necessary to bring forth transformational change in organizations.

While we were not successful in receiving the funding for the current year, the comments were positive ("overall, good concept; thorough proposal; project has merit") and we were encouraged us to resubmit with Academic Master Plan approval. This is something I intend to pursue in the coming year.