I am extremely grateful that Sonoma State University has chosen to support faculty invited to serve in the Semester at Sea Program. By my count, I am one of five or six current or recent colleagues who have been granted this opportunity. I know from my own experience and from having spoken with these colleagues that the opportunity is an extraordinary one that brings rich added value to our professional identities and skill sets. As I noted in my DIP application, Semester at Sea does pay a token stipend to faculty; but the amount of the stipend and the costs of embarkation are such that lack of material support from SSU would doubtless deter many faculty from accepting the opportunity. Below is my report covering my activities during four months of DIP leave, January through April, 2015.

The Semester at Sea Program is a “floating university” enrolling over 600 students and hiring several dozen faculty per voyage. The academic program is currently managed by the University of Virginia. I was hired for the spring 2015 voyage, which sailed most of the way around the world, visiting a dozen ports in Asia and Africa primarily. My job was to design and direct the SAS Writing Center and to teach one class in academic composition. My experience aboard the MV Explorer, I believe, materially benefits SSU and my professional life in the three major areas of my work here, as enumerated below.

1. Writing Center Director. Hired in 1997 to design and direct the SSU Writing Center and having served in the capacity of Director since that date, I was keenly interested in the opportunity to experience writing-center work in the unique laboratory of the shipboard university. Overseeing a group of three colleagues, I helped to develop a Center that was very successful in its reach and impact aboard the campus. We served well over twenty percent of the students via direct tutorial instruction and many more via workshops, in-services, and presentations. Thanks to this experience, I see major growth in my work as SSU Writing Center Director in the following areas:
   - Staff training. Working in the SAS Writing Center afforded me the opportunity to do a great deal of tutoring personally and to observe tutoring closely—for the first time in some years, as my duties have taken me away from direct day-to-day encounter with regular SSU Writing Center work. Through this close engagement, I renewed my love of and faith in tutoring, to put it simply. This renewal has given me many ideas for refocusing training on the acts and arts of tutoring and student engagement.
   - Range of services. The SAS Writing Center served a very wide range of students, from around the world, across the disciplines, and from every level. It’s clear to me that the SSU Writing Center has a growth area in learning how to adapt tutoring and workshop services to differing constituencies, majors, and levels. I hope to move forward with developments in this area in the fall.
   - Targeting of services. It’s also clear to me that the SSU Writing Center could do a great deal more to capitalize on the varying levels of expertise found among tutors.
Younger staff members have gifts to bring that more senior ones lack, and vice versa. I hope to theorize about these varying abilities in such a way as to better target services for varying populations.

- Philosophy and concept. Directors of writing centers always confront elemental questions: what is a writing center? And what should the writing center here, in this institution, do or be? Following my experience on SAS, I feel ready to revisit the SSU Writing Center’s vision and mission with an eye on our local and global roles. This fall the Center will embark on a new visioning process which will involve the whole staff in revising our key policies and statements.

2. Professor of English. My SAS course, entitled “Mythical Encounters,” was a freshman-level course in composition and academic argument; the course was submitted to and approved for academic credit by the University of Virginia. The course employed the topic of contemporary and traditional mythology—fantasy stories—in transnational and transcultural contexts, requiring me to extend my reading and understanding of common topics for my courses at SSU into a much broader frame. I also developed several new writing assignments and inaugurated the use of two new textbooks for the course. I would love to teach a version of the course at SSU; failing that opportunity, the reading and preparation I did for the course have prepared me to teach my existing courses (such as my Theory of Rhetoric course slated for fall 2015) with considerably greater knowledge and creativity.

3. Coordinator of the Freshman Year Experience Program. Here is where I believe that my experience on Semester at Sea offers the richest immediate benefits to my work at SSU. The Freshman Year Experience Program meets two GE requirements, A3 (Critical Thinking) and C3 (Comparative Perspectives). Putting it simply, sailing the world for me, as well, I’m sure, for all voyagers, was a nonstop immersion in comparative perspectives. The experience was nothing less than four months’ worth of intensive study in human diversity, political arrangements, social habits, global art, architecture, and cuisine, and natural and human-created environment. Amid the diversity, there was a constant thread of common humanity as well as, unfailingly, human kindness, worldwide. Encountering all these sights and experiences was profoundly life-shaping. Thus I feel myself to be vastly better equipped to support the faculty and students of the FYE Program as they embark upon their own voyages of study into the world and its spectacular and beautiful array of perspectives.

I so sincerely hope that SSU continues to offer material support to faculty interested in serving in programs like Semester at Sea. SAS in particular creates faculty members who have learned in a visceral way what it means to be global citizens, learning which teaches them a great deal about their disciplines and their work back home. They are empowered to return as different kinds of participators in their home institutions. I greatly look forward to all the coming opportunities to bring new knowledge and awareness to bear on my work, for the benefit of our community.