I am here today to thank you for approving my sabbatical application and giving me this wonderful opportunity for learning and renewal. As someone whose career is about helping people learn, I feel that it is my responsibility to deeply and joyfully engage in the learning process myself. But all too often, the day to day responsibilities of course development, class preparation, advising, grading and meetings seem to get in the way.

My sabbatical began by educating myself about the challenges and opportunities of climate change. Then, armed with a little knowledge, I was able to start giving back to the college and the community in a number of ways. I even found a little time to relax. Here’s a quick summary of my sabbatical “by the numbers”.

- I attended a 1 week solar apprentice training course and assisted in the installation of 1 solar PV system
- Attended 4 conferences and 16 lectures on sustainability and the environment
- Camped for 3 nights on the shore of Lake Superior and visited my 90 year old father in Arizona 2 times
- Gave 6 presentations, helped to organize 5 sustainability events, gave 3 concerts and 2 interviews
- Read 10 books and viewed 16 video presentations about sustainability, organizational change, and education
- Talked with dozens of faculty, staff and administrators about sustainability at WCC
- Rode 12 miles on city buses, 600 miles on my bicycle, and 4,000 miles on Amtrak
- And ate dinner with my wife 60 more times than if I had not been on sabbatical.
Looking back, I think my sabbatical was really about meeting people and having conversations about “questions that matter”. Having spent a large part of my career holed up in electronics laboratories, it was a stretch for me to get out and dialogue and make connections with people, but I’m very glad I did, and it would not have been possible with a full teaching load. Here is a sampling of the people I met and the conversations I had on my sabbatical journey.

I was too excited to wait until fall, so I secretly started my sabbatical in May with a seminar on implementing the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. It was extremely valuable to meet colleagues at schools around the country who were farther along the path toward sustainability than we were. Among others, I met Oberlin College’s Nathan Engstrom, and learned how students, faculty and administration worked together to design a building that serves as a living laboratory for their Environmental Science program, similar to the idea proposed by Dr. Whitworth for the remodeled OE building.
And I met Jaclyn Olsen and learned how the Harvard Green Campus Initiative has developed a $12,000,000 fund to support environmental projects by pumping the millions of dollars of savings back into the fund.

As the summer progressed, I began diving into books on Climate Change and Sustainability. Starting with Plan B 3.0, Mobilizing to Save Civilization. Supported by lots of data, Lester Brown makes it clear that global warming is only one of many environmental crises that are increasingly affecting the ability of civilization to maintain itself. Peak oil, rising food costs, emerging water shortages, shrinking forests, advancing deserts, collapsing fisheries, disappearing plant and animal species, and increasing human population are all stressing the earth beyond its carrying capacity. The second half of the book presents a plan for restoring the earth and stabilizing civilization.

While I was still digesting Plan B, my wife, who’s often years ahead of me on these things, introduced me to Plan C, and the Transition Towns movement which started in a community college in England. These people are envisioning a day in the not too distant future, when the combination of peak oil, climate change and economic instability will lead to massive disruptions in society, and they are actively working to build resilience into communities through localizing food production, energy production and transportation, and re-skillling people to learn ways of living which minimize energy use and maximize community. Perhaps this will be the primary role of the community college in the post peak oil era.

At the national meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, I had the privilege of hearing Yale Law graduate and Oakland community organizer Van Jones share his vision for a Green Collar Economy. Van makes a convincing case that we can revitalize the American economy and restore our devastated environment by investing in a new green economy that engages the genius of all people at all levels of society. A major component of his plan involves the kind of training and education for which community colleges are well suited.
This theme was echoed in a talk I viewed by Wilson Community College President and sustainability “evangelist” Rusty Stephens. He asserts that community colleges are “quintessentially positioned” to lead their communities in becoming sustainable.

Throughout my sabbatical I became increasingly aware of the terrific network of environmental organizations in our own community and how WCC is a part of this network. The Huron River Watershed Council and the Ecology Center both held their annual meetings at the college and the Environmental Education Network of Washtenaw has asked us to host the Ann Arbor Earth Day festival in 2010.

One of my local environmental heroes is Amanda Edmonds, Executive Director of Growing Hope, an Ypsilanti based organization dedicated to “helping under-resourced and disadvantaged people improve their lives and communities through growing their own nutritious food.” They are one of the few organizations that understand the connection between the environment and economic justice and are actively working to overcome the barriers that exist between people on both sides. I learned directly from Amanda how invaluable the WCC Residential Construction program has been to her organization. This partnership is an excellent example of the kind of community outreach the college is urged to make by the President’s Climate Commitment.

Since “returning” from my sabbatical, I have been working to help implement the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. The Commitment is an agreement by over 600 institutions across the country including WCC, that climate change is the defining challenge of the 21st century, and that colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities to meet that challenge.

### The ACUPCC Commitment

- Global warming is real and is largely caused by humans.
- Global emission of greenhouse gases must be reduced by 80% by 2050 or sooner.
- Colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by modeling ways to eliminate global warming emissions.
- Campuses that address the climate challenge will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society.

### ACUPCC - Implementation Steps

1. Dr. Whitworth has signed the Commitment.
2. The Environmental Committee has been designated as the “internal structure” to implement the Commitment.
3. The Environmental Committee has chosen four “immediate tangible actions” to demonstrate the college’s seriousness.
4. We have started to compile a comprehensive inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions.
5. We will next develop an action plan for becoming climate neutral.
6. We have begun to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum for all students.
Dr. Whitworth has designated the Environmental Committee as the “internal structure” to implement the Commitment at WCC. The committee has recommended four “immediate, tangible actions” to the President: supporting public transportation, encouraging waste minimization, establishing a LEED building policy, and establishing an Energy Star purchasing policy.

We are currently conducting a Greenhouse Gas Inventory of the college. The next step will be to develop a college wide action plan to become climate neutral and completely eliminate or offset the college’s greenhouse gas emissions. This is a tall order, and will require vision and support from the entire campus.

The college has already taken some first steps in this direction thanks to work on building efficiency, waste minimization, landscaping and green materials by Damon Flowers and the Facilities department.

Finally, the Commitment requires that the college “make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experience for all students”.

On the extra-curricular side I was fortunate to be able to help Ian Griffin, Director of Student Development and Activities put together an excellent environmental lecture series this year. The seminars have helped educate and increase awareness among hundreds of students, staff, faculty and community members.

In the fall I conducted an informal survey of faculty about sustainability content in existing courses. I was encouraged to find several faculty from a diverse group of departments, who have taken on the challenge.

To mention a few, I found instructors in Graphic Design, English, Architectonics, Sociology, Biology, Construction and Automation Technology who had each come up with innovative ways to help their students make connections between their course material and the environmental challenges we face.

Now, with the help of the Faculty Professional Development Committee, we have initiated a Sustainability in the Curriculum group to support each other and help other faculty move in this direction.

Being a signatory to the Presidents Climate Commitment makes WCC somewhat of a leader in the higher education sustainability movement, but there is a lot to do and a lot we can learn from other colleges. For example:

- Middlebury College has already committed to becoming climate neutral by 2016.
- Community colleges across the country have started programs in Renewable Energy, Green Building and Sustainable Agriculture.
- The campus of Seattle University is a certified wildlife sanctuary and has all but eliminated pesticide use.
- Bates College in Minnesota buys fresh, organically grown food from local farmers, and either comports or donates all of its post- and pre-consumer food waste.
- The University of Michigan is partnering with Google in a green computing program which aims to reduce electricity consumption by around $1.75 million per year.
As we move into the energy-climate era, we’ll need people with technical skills in construction, research, design, and manufacturing. But sustainability isn’t just about technology. We will also need people who know how to work in diverse teams, connect the dots, and do systems thinking. And it’s not just about the whales and the polar bears anymore. It is about saving the humans and the habitat we live in. It’s about caring, learning, reaching out to people with limited means, working in partnership with communities to solve economic and social problems and improve the quality of life... values that you will find in our mission statement, to which we are dedicated, and at which we excel. I look forward to being a part of the WCC community as we build a sustainable future together.

Thank you,
- Dale Petty, April 28, 2009

This talk and a sustainability resource list are on the web at:
http://courses.wccnet.edu/~petty/index_files/Projects.htm
Appendix: Details of What I Did On My Sabbatical

• Attended training
  o Great Lakes Regional Energy Alternatives (GLREA) Solar Photovoltaic Apprentice Training, October 20-24, WCC

• Created a web site for Sustainability at WCC
  o http://orchard.wccnet.edu/~petty/index.htm

• Attended conferences
  o Creating a Culture of Sustainability Conference (sponsored by AASHE), Denver, May 28-30, 2008
  o The 4th Annual Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference, October 17-19, 2008 Marygrove College, Detroit

• Read books
  o Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect, David W. Orr, Island Press, 2004
  o Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change, Peggy F. Barlett and Geoffrey W. Chase, MIT Press, 2004
  o Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization, Lester R. Brown, Norton, 2008
  o Hot, Flat and Crowded, Thomas L. Friedman, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008
  o Learning for Sustainability, Peter Senge, et al, Society for Organizational Learning, 2006
  o Appreciative Intelligence, Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006
  o The World Café, Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2005

• Gave talks, interviews, concerts, organized events
  o The Vine... A world turning green, by Daniel Smolkin, Science & Tech Editor for the Voice, Sep 2, 2008 (interview)
  o Environmental Committee table at WCC Welcome Day, Sept 16, 2008 (set up and staffed), WCC
  o Green Challenges and Opportunities, Tom Penird’s “Innovation” class, Sep 19, 2008 WCC, (speaker)
  o What’s Your Carbon Footprint, Sep 26, 2008, WCC, (speaker and organizer)
  o Walkin’ Jim Stoltz – Come Walk With Me, Sep 28, 2008, Allen School, Ann Arbor (primary organizer)
  o “Envisioning a Sustainable Future at WCC, a Faculty Professional Development Committee presentation led by Dale Petty with Tracy Komarmy, Tom Penird, Don Werthman and Tom Zimmerman, Nov 6, WCC, (speaker and organizer)
  o How Large is Your Carbon Footprint?, by Daniel Smolkin, Sci-Tech Editor for the Voice, Dec 1, 2008 (interview)
  o An Evening of Sacred Song, Dec 6, 2008, Temple Beth Emeth/St. Clare’s Episcopal Church, Ann Arbor, (performed music)
  o Strategies for a Sustainable Future”, Greater Ann Arbor Society of Human Resource Management (GAASHRM), Ann Arbor, MI, Dec 9, 2008, (speaker)
Your Personal Carbon Footprint: Strategizing to Save Money, Save the 'Hood and Save Civilization, Dec 11, 2008, Student Activities Environmental Lecture Series, WCC, (speaker and organizer)
Pathways to Sustainability at WCC, Anne Broderick’s WTMC Biology class, Dec 16, 2008, WCC, (speaker with Barry Wilkins)
Blossom Pre-school Solstice Celebration, Dec 19, 2008, Schaeffler Park and Leslie Science and Nature Center, Ann Arbor (performed music)
Pinecrest Adult Care Home, Nov 28, 2008, Prescott, AZ (performed music)

Attended lectures and events
- Germany’s Greenest Mayor, Boris Palmer, Discusses Climate Change and Ann Arbor’s Sister City of Tübingen, May 13, 2008, Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor
- Global Warming: Can Michigan Meet the Challenge?, Henry Pollack, PhD, U of M Professor of Geophysics, Joyce Penner, PhD, U of M Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, Barry Rabe, PhD, U of M Professor of Public Policy, May 15, 2008, Concordia University, Ann Arbor
- Ann Arbor Mayor’s 8th Annual Green Fair, June 13, 2008, Ann Arbor
- Celebrating Water: Replacing Storm Pipes with Beauty, landscape architect Cory Gallo, Sep 10, 2008, Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor
- Tour of Platinum LEEDS home on Ann Arbor Home Remodelers Tour, Sept 14, 2008, Ann Arbor
- Hot, Flat and Crowded, Thomas L. Friedman, Sept 17, 2008, EMU
- Go Solar Ann Arbor, John Wakeman and GLREA, Sept 20, 2008, WCC, (attended and helped set up)
- Fourth Annual Hope’s Harvest, Growing Hope Fundraiser Dinner, Sept 21, 2008, Ypsilanti
- Dave Strenski, Solar Presentation, Student Activities Environmental Lecture Series, Sept 23, 2008, WCC
- Sustainability and Social Justice, Guy William and Donele Wilkins, Sept 25, 2008, Crazy Wisdom Bookstore, Ann Arbor
- Third Annual Agrarian Adventure Harvest Dinner, Nov 7, 2008, Tappan Middle School, Ann Arbor
- John Deere Wind Farm and Laker School District, Nov 15, 2008, Pigeon, MI
- 3rd Annual Ecology Center Fall Fundraiser, Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D., internationally recognized expert on the links between the environment and human health., Nov. 20, WCC

Viewed video presentations and listened to audio CDs
- National Conference on Sustainability for Community Colleges, April 16 & 17, 2008, Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon
- Sustainability: Community Colleges at the Heart Center, Rusty Stephens, Ed.D. President, Wilson Community College
  - Preparing for Life in a Climate Neutral World, Denis Hayes, President, Bullitt Foundation
- An inconvenient truth, Al Gore, Paramount Classics and Participant Productions
- The Next Industrial Revolution: William McDonough, Michael Braungart and the Birth of the Sustainable Economy, Bullfrog Films, 2001
- Shell Energy Scenarios to 2050, http://www.shell.com/home/content/aboutshell/our_strategy/shell_global_scenarios/scenarios_videos/
  - Frances Beinecke, President, Natural Resources Defense Council
  - Anthony Cortese, President, Second Nature
- William Ford, Executive Chairman, Ford Motor Company
- John Hofmeister, Former President, Shell Oil Company
- Rob Walton, Chairman of the Board, Wal-Mart
- US Representative Edward Markey (D-MA)
- US Representative Fred Upton (R-MI)

**Bioneers Conference Plenary Sessions, Oct 18, 2008, San Rafael, CA**
[https://secure.bioneers.org/2008_conference](https://secure.bioneers.org/2008_conference)

- Nature’s 100 Best: Top biomimicry Solutions to Environmental Crises, Janine Benyus, founder of the Biomimicry Institute
- Sustainable Solutions Over Centuries: A New Business Model, Dune Lankard, Eyak Athabaskan native and lifelong commercial fisherman
- Sustainability in Action, Ray Anderson, founder of Interface, Inc.
- Some Like It Hot, But Lots Don’t: the Changing Climate of US Politics, David Orr, professor of Environmental Science at Oberlin College
- The Environmental Life of Children – from Placenta to Puberty, Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D., internationally recognized expert on the links between the environment and human health

**Native Sun, CNN International “Global Challenges” presentation**

**Fuel Efficient Stove Project, Trees, Water, People**

**Re-Naturing Education, David Orr, Cheryl Charles, Fritjof Capra and Lisa Bennett, Bioneers Conference Workshop, 2008**

**Thinking together: collaborative learning in science / interactive teaching in physics, Eric Mazur, Derek Bok Center Series on College Teaching (Harvard), 2007**

**The art of discussion leading, Chris Christensen, Derek Bok Center Series on College Teaching (Harvard), 2007**

**Pathways Out of Poverty Through Green Collar Jobs: The Role of Scholarship in Improving Quality of Life for Urban Residents, Dr. Raquel Pinderhughes, PTK 2008 Honors Seminar Series**