

TO: Grossmont College Academic Senate, GCCCD Chancellor and Governing Board  
FROM: Sheri Strothers, Communication Department faculty  
Re: Report on Sabbatical Leave Activities

For my sabbatical project I was able to research and develop a groundbreaking “Leadership Communication” class and forge connections within the East County on behalf of Grossmont College. The following report includes the answers to the required questions and a copy of the syllabus that will be submitted to the curriculum committee during the Fall of 2024 and an abstract of my completed work.

Thank you for your attention to and support of this project,



dr. sheri strothers  
Communication Faculty  
Grossmont College

*The following is the required final report for Sheri Strothers' sabbatical project.*

### **what was accomplished**

As proposed, I created a brand new communication course that qualifies as both a GE transferable course and a course for the A.A. in communication. In my work, it was discovered that the course will also meet the requirement for a leadership minor at SDSU. During the preparation for my new course, I met with several local leaders from both elected and nominated positions to discuss the needs for leadership in the East County and how Grossmont College can aid in the development and engagement of those needs.

### **the implications for the individual**

Both professionally and personally I was able to reignite and deepen my passion for and knowledge of leadership studies. Creating a new class was quite an undertaking and I was pleased to return to a few pedagogical roots that connected me back to the classroom and more deeply into our community at large. I was also able to make a direct connection with SDSU's leadership department. This new course will be a boon for us and provide relief to them.

### **the implications for the discipline**

Both fields of leadership and communication have existed for millenia; however, the merging of these is relatively new for the discipline of communication. As the world steps away from the global pandemic and into new struggles internationally, domestically and locally, the need for better communication among and from leaders is glaring. This project drew from those needs and, in the greatest sense, provides a communicative learning experience toward better solutions. In a simpler sense, this project puts a new class on the map for Grossmont College; therefore, creating a path for other community college communication departments to follow.

### **the contribution to the educational goals of the district**

- (1) The power of diversity and inclusion, as stated in the Grossmont College mission statement, means that we take seriously the needs of all members of our community and that we strive to provide opportunities for all students. This includes fostering a "climate for learning that considers diverse perspectives to be a powerful component in the education of every individual, valuing and accommodating both differences and commonalities," (<https://www.grossmont.edu/about-grossmont/mission-and-values.php>) which is exactly what this leadership course intends to accomplish. Diverse perspectives are not only a "component" of the learning process, they are integral to the actions taken by students in and out of the classroom to successfully complete the course.

## **the contribution to the educational goals of the district (continued...)**

- (2) From a historical perspective, “the representatives of the community directed the college to provide an education through which students may create rewarding lives, productive for themselves and for society, based on an understanding of the relationship between the past and the challenge of the present and the future” (<https://www.grossmont.edu>) which is specifically satisfied by this new course. In addition, Grossmont College has a history of creating new courses that become standard lower division offerings in our discipline. This trailblazing course is another in the historical lineage of our department and college.

## **abstract**

### *A New Course in Leadership Communication – In Review*

My sabbatical project included incredible professional and personal growth. I created an original course in leadership communication, widened my teaching repertoire and increased connections with community members. A serendipitous addition to my sabbatical was the collaboration with SDSU faculty on this lower division leadership class.

This Fall (2024) I am submitting the new syllabus (copied below and attached) to the curriculum committee for approval. If/ when the course is officially approved, students will benefit from leadership communication tools and theory that apply to their various pathways in life. My department, and eventually community colleges across the nation, will prosper from this new course. The East County of San Diego will benefit because Grossmont students will be physically, actively engaged in real-world problems and understanding diverse perspectives as they solve societal problems and engage with community members.

It was true upon my application and perhaps even more true now in this divisive election cycle: communication is a key tool for leadership that can enable inclusivity, compassion, equity and ultimately understanding. Over time, through my sabbatical work, I hope to reduce division and enable more students to “value fair, respectful, thoughtful interactions, based on a positive approach, that promote reflection, foster deeper understanding of phenomena, and [encourage] achievement of common goals” (<https://www.grossmont.edu/about-grossmont/mission-and-values.php>).

Thank You.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Stroth", written in a cursive style.

Instructor: Dr. Sheri Strothers  
e.mail: sheri.strothers@gcccd.edu      t: 619.644.7242 office: 24-268b

### Required For The Course

- **Texts:** Hackman, M. and Johnson, C. (2018) *Leadership: a communication perspective*. Illinois: Waveland. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. ISBN-13: 978-0-205-02941-9 ISBN-10: 0-205-02941-8  
**and** one other leadership book, personally chosen for an in-depth oral & written report.
  - **Electronics:** access to the internet for canvas (available on campus)
  - **Supplies:** a camera (your phone camera is fine) to take photos of your project
  - **Time:** To succeed in any college course you should plan on spending (at minimum) the same number of hours outside of class that you spend in class every week.  
If you cannot commit this much time, your learning and grade will suffer.
- \* note: please save all of your graded work from this class until you receive your final course grade\***

**Objectives:** This class has four broad objectives (numbers here relate to outcomes below).

The first (1) is that you increase your understanding of leadership, communication, ethics, decision-making, human conflict, and crisis management within both small and large group.

The second (2) is that you develop a personal philosophy of leadership and learn to analyze community issues through the lens of that philosophy. The third (3) is that you make this course relevant to your personal and professional life. The fourth (4) is to heighten your sense of curiosity and community awareness!

**Course Learning Outcomes.** Students who successfully complete this course will:

The numbers here correspond with those (in parentheses) above:

- 1) You will be able to lead in a dynamic and organized manner with both small and large groups, and you will feel good about your effort.
- 2) You will be able to articulate why and how your philosophy is effective.
- 3) You will choose your topics and affect areas in your life that are important to you, thus validating your life's experiences and connecting them more deeply to your life & learning.
- 4) Your sense of wonder will increase as well as your understanding how to affect your community.

**Assessment:** During the course you will be assessed in a variety of ways, including: written work, self-reflection, a community project and exams.

**Accommodations:** Students with any form of disability, who may need accommodations in this class, are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact any & all appropriate resources on campus early in the semester so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented as soon as possible.

**Core Belief:** *Leadership is Action, taken up by a person over a specific period of time, within a group of people, to enact change.      Leader is a person exercising leadership.*

## **Course Specific Policies and Procedures** (some intentional repetition herein):

### **Concerns or Disagreements:**

Any concerns regarding the policies or procedures of this course, as stated in this syllabus, or, as they occur in class should be discussed directly with me either after class or during an office visit. There is one provision to this: we cannot discuss a grade until 24 hours have passed since you received the grade AND you have reviewed the requirements of the assignment. There will be no “make-up” work after final, course grades have been issued.

### **Attendance:**

This class involves cooperative, speaking and listening experiences that are critical to your learning. As a common and professional courtesy, please advise me when you will miss a class meeting. A quick e-mail is sufficient notice of an absence (sheri.strothers@gcccd.edu)

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the act of presenting work, either written or spoken that is not your own. This will not be tolerated. If caught plagiarizing you will fail the assignment, likely fail the course, and possibly be expelled. The offense will be noted in your permanent record. Utilizing AI tools (chaptGPT, Apple Intelligence, CoPilot, etc) is considered plagiarism.

### **Writing Assignment Policies:**

Written work that is turned in after the time it is due is considered late, will not be graded, and is only eligible for 50% of the available points. Some assignments are due in class & some on canvas.

### **Speaking Assignment Policies:**

There are a few speaking assignments in this class: formal, informal, small group and impromptu. If you have a conflict with a scheduled presentation, you may make it up in advance, not after the fact, if prior arrangements are made.

### **Makeups:**

There will be no make-up exams or speeches or presentations. Ask in advance if you have a timing conflict. Emergencies will be handled on an individual basis.

### **Leadership Class Protocol:**

Make sure all devices are silent and tucked away, unless specifically in use for class. Weapons, drugs and alcohol are never allowed in the classroom. In all ways, please respect each other and our classroom environment.

### **Basic Class Expectations:**

All persons will be treated fairly and with respect. We may discuss and even engage in “hot topics” and must do so with compassionate, social decorum. Honest ignorance is okay, but rudeness, aggression and/or violence will not be tolerated. If these expectations are not met, the violator will be appropriately chastised and disciplined.

*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then is not an act, but a habit”  
(Aristotle)*

## Assignments

### Written:

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**Journal** (3 x 15 points / 45 total) - Our auxiliary text, *The Transforming Leader* by Carol S. Pearson, connects you to your purpose as a leader and your greater role in the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a personal journey and journal. I will read it at a cursory level and mostly ask questions. Your grade will be based on unique thought, completeness, and reflection. The journal is to be legibly handwritten, in a black composition book (think 7<sup>th</sup> grade) and submitted twice during the semester.

In the end, your complete journal will consist of 34 total, 1 paragraph entries, broken down as such:

- \* One (paragraph) entry to begin the journal that includes your working definition of leadership, where you “are” and what you expect from this particular reading.
- \* 32 separate chapter entries, 1 paragraph each, that reflects your thinking on the chapter content, how it applies to your life, thoughts on leadership and any lingering questions.
- \* A final (1 paragraph) entry summarizing your thoughts/feelings, crystallizing your definition of leadership, and an explanation of how you might apply this in the future.

**Book Report** (20 points) - After reading a book on leadership, you will submit a 1-2 page double spaced report that includes the 3 items below. Correct grammar, spelling and citation(s) are expected.

- 1- a summary of the text.
- 2- your opinion on the material. (for clarity, please enumerate your submission)
- 3- how you will specifically apply the content.

**Failure Case Study & Recommendations** (25 points) - After reading a detailed case study (not from our textbook), please submit a 2-3 page double spaced paper that includes all of the below.

Correct grammar, spelling and citation(s) are expected.

- 1- a summary of the case (for clarity, please enumerate your submission)
- 2- your opinion, with cited support from either our textbook or outside materials, why the organization (or an aspect of an organization) failed, and
- 3- your recommendations, *either* how they could have prevented the fail, or how they should proceed.
- 4- two citations (in text cite and a brief work cited or references page)

### Quizzes & Extra Credit:

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**Quizzes** (13 x 5 points each = 65 points) - Every chapter will have a 5 question, multiple choice quiz on canvas, due at 12p the day we plan to discuss the chapter in class. Coordinate our class schedule so as not to miss a quiz! Please see the EAC and advise if you need accommodations.

**Extra Credit** – 15 points total – There are various forms of extra credit that will be offered during our semester, usually revolving around community engagement. Ask in class!

## *Presentations:*

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**Leadership Quote** (10 points) - Early in the semester you will share a leadership quote with the class and explain what it means to you, how it relates to leadership and why you chose to share it.

Your presentation will be in discussion format, 1-3 minutes from our desks. Professional decorum is expected.

**Leadership Definition** (15 points) - Early in the semester you will share your working definition of leadership, including at least two citations or examples you used in development. Please clearly state the definition, its heuristic value, and actionable examples.

Your presentation will be 2-3 minutes from the podium. Basic public speaking protocol is expected.

**Book Report Discussion** (25 points. 5-6 minutes) - After reading a personally chosen leadership book you will write a brief report (see separate assignment herein) and then share the basic summary of the book, how it impacted you, how you can utilize the material in the future and end with a 2-3 minute discussion whereby you pose questions and create a class-wide discussion.

**Text Case Study** (10 points) - Once in the semester you will be responsible to share a case study from our textbook, from the assigned chapter for that day. In your 5-10 minute discussion, please include:

- 1- a brief summary of the case
- 2- how the case helps to explain the chapter (or elements thereof)
- 3- any known updates since publication
- 4- three specific questions, to which you will answer / discuss the answers

**Final Group Project & Presentation** (35 points. 12-25 minutes) - Because leadership is inherently communicative, group activity *and* action oriented, toward the end of the semester you will form small group and complete a (real) project together. The project needs to demonstrate a leadership challenge and be community based. All applicable elements of our course should be employed in both the development and implementation of the project. During the last week of class you will present in your groups and discuss 1-5 below.

All members must participate. The goal is analysis, growth & fun!

- 1 - your project (how it developed, what you did exactly, what positive changes are the result?)
- 2- your process: who did what? why? how? what changes occurred in your group over time? why?  
(Everything should be discussed through the lens of leadership)
- 3- what specific leadership theories were intentionally employed over time?
- 4- what was unexpected?
- 5- what did you learn and will definitely do and not do next time?

*Never doubt that a small group of concerned citizens can change the world;  
indeed, it is the only thing that ever has (!) ~Margaret Mead*

In-class:

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**Participation:** (25 points) Communication is an active and participative activity; therefore, a portion of your final grade will be based on your participation in class. Basis for participation points will include, but is not limited to: asking thoughtful questions, taking part in discussions, basic enthusiasm and demonstrating an encouraging character.

**Daily Lessons:** (25 points) Every day that a new chapter is scheduled to be discussed in class, one person in your assigned group is responsible for facilitating a discussion. When facilitating, please distribute a brief agenda (paper or electronic is fine), including questions about the content, activities or exercises and examples from your own experience. I will check agendas.

Each group is responsible for maintaining its own master schedule of facilitators.

You will be penalized for missing your scheduled day, for any reason.

At the end of the course you, individually, will turn in a report including:

- 1- a list of the chapters you presented
- 2- a brief discussion of how you prepared for your lessons
- 3- a brief discussion of your improvement (or not) over the course of the semester
- 4- a critique of the daily lesson assignment, including what you did and did not like
- 5- the number of points you deserve out of 25 strictly for the daily lesson assignment

**Summary of Assignments/ Points** \_\_\_\_\_ available / earned

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written

Journal # 1.....	15.....	_____
Journal # 2.....	15.....	_____
Journal # 3.....	15.....	_____
book report .....	20.....	_____
failure case study .....	25.....	_____

presentations:

leadership quote .....	10.....	_____
leadership definition .....	15.....	_____
book report discussion .....	25.....	_____
text based case discussion .....	10.....	_____
group presentation .....	35.....	_____

in class:

daily lesson evaluation .....	25.....	_____
participation .....	25.....	_____

quizzes/other

chapter quizzes (13 quizzes. 5 points each).....	65.....	_____
extra credit (available, not required).....	/0.....	_____

Group Presentation Rubric (final “exam”)



FROM SYLLABUS: Final Group Presentation (25 points. 12-25 minutes) - Because leadership is inherently a communicative, group activity *and* action oriented, toward the end of the semester you will form small group and complete a project together. All applicable elements of our course should be employed in both the development and implementation of the project. During finals' week you will present in groups and discuss the below items. All members must participate. The goal is analysis, growth & fun!

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Please address each of the following, as if it were a final exam:

**PROJECT:** What did your group do? Explain the failures and successes.

**PROCESS:**

Technically, how did your group function? How were decisions made and actions taken?

Relationally – how did individuals get along and how did the group “feel?”

Communication – Describe any *intentional* leadership and small group communication behaviors in which you engaged that you would not in the past.

Problem Solving / Conflict – what disagreements occurred and how were they handled (or not) in the group?

**ROLES:** What roles did individuals take on and what roles did the group “put on” people?

**HIDDEN AGENDAS / ISSUES:** what hidden issues or agendas were in play and how were they handled (they need to come out before they are known, but, avoidance is one way they may have been “handled”).

**LEARNED FOR NEXT TIME:** each group member must state/explain something he/she learned that was useful about small group communication and how that knowledge will be brought forward.

SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ /25

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- 2- a brief discussion of how you prepared for your lessons
- 3- a brief discussion of your improvement (or not) over the course of the semester
- 4- a critique of the daily lesson assignment, including what you did and did not like
- 5- the number of points you deserve out of 25 strictly for the daily lesson assignment

Summary of Assignments/ Points \_\_\_\_\_ available / \_\_\_\_\_ earned \_\_\_\_\_

written

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quizzes/other

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## Group Presentation Rubric (final “exam”)

FROM SYLLABUS: Final Group Presentation (25 points. 12-25 minutes) - Because leadership is inherently a communicative, group activity *and* action oriented, toward the end of the semester you will form small group and complete a project together. All applicable elements of our course should be employed in both the development and implementation of the project. During finals’ week you will present in groups and discuss the below items. All members must participate. The goal is analysis, growth & fun!

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Please address each of the following, as if it were a final exam:

**PROJECT:** What did your group do? Explain the failures and successes.

**PROCESS:**

Technically, how did your group function? How were decisions made and actions taken?

Relationally – how did individuals get along and how did the group “feel?”

Communication – Describe any *intentional* leadership and small group communication behaviors in which you engaged that you would not in the past.

Problem Solving / Conflict – what disagreements occurred and how were they handled (or not) in the group?

**ROLES:** What roles did individuals take on and what roles did the group “put on” people?

**HIDDEN AGENDAS / ISSUES:** what hidden issues or agendas were in play and how were they handled (they need to come out before they are known, but, avoidance is one way they may have been “handled”).

**LEARNED FOR NEXT TIME:** each group member must state/explain something he/she learned that was useful about small group communication and how that knowledge will be brought forward.

SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_/25