Monday, October 25, 2021

Dear Professor Klavins,

I am writing to provide the following detailed plan in support of my application for sabbatical leave all three quarters of the 2022-2023 academic year (Fall 2022, Winter 2023, Spring 2023).

I intend to devote my sabbatical leave to radically deepening my expertise in the reasons and methods for advancing equity and access in all aspects of my work in the engineering academy.

In what follows, I assume that the following observations are uncontroversial: there are gross inequities between people, both locally and globally; inequities limit access to institutions that advance, teach, and practice engineering; and existing structures and systems – in academia and broader society – impose inequity and inaccessibility on people based on characteristics like gender, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, and country of origin that individuals generally do not get to choose.

My central hypothesis is that the potential to make groundbreaking or paradigm-shifting contributions in engineering is uniformly distributed across people. Combining this hypothesis with the preceding observations, I conclude that lowering or removing the barriers that prevent most people from learning, researching, or serving at academic institutions has outsized potential for transformative impact on our field and society. In short, *I believe that advancing equity and access is the most important and strategic work I can undertake in the academy*.

Why am I a good candidate to do equity and access work?

As a member of the majority race, sex, and gender identities (white hetero cis male), I am in a privileged position to undertake this work. It is unfair and ineffective to expect members of historically under-represented and/or marginalized groups to bear the responsibility of advancing equity and access, since others may perceive such efforts as self-serving, and it is well-documented that members of our female, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and disability communities (and others) are already over-committed in service roles – instead, members of majority groups need to step up and work on behalf of those born with less privilege. I have already demonstrated my commitment to this work by voluntarily leading our Department's efforts to establish a sustainable and impactful strategy for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) – initially as our first DEI Coordinator in 2020-2021, and subsequently as our first Associate Chair for DEI in 2021-2022. (I should note, both for transparency to express my gratitude for being granted the opportunities, that you appointed me to both positions.)

Why is UW ECE a good place to do equity and access work?

Governing bodies in other nations, states, and institutions ban this work – officially or unofficially – or "silo" it – e.g. hire a "diversity officer" but exclude them from the decision-making and power structures. In contrast, I think the University of Washington is geopolitically well-positioned, both locally and (inter)nationally, to champion this work and establish successful models that could be adopted elsewhere. More specifically, I think our Department has begun to take a leadership role in our College and field, so I aim to build on these successes.

What equity and access work will I do?

I have two key tangible goals for my equity and access work during this sabbatical leave:

1. obtain the expertise and skills needed to train others in equity and access work;
2. create a "handbook" of equity and access best practices in all aspects of academic work.

The first goal is motivated by my experiences as DEI Coordinator and Associate Chair for DEI. When we undertake any kind of equity and access work inside our Department, we currently must seek expertise and training from outside our Department because we lack internal "capacity", that is, people with expertise and skills needed to define and lead the work. This lack of capacity limits the sustainability of the work and imposes significant overhead and obstacles to doing the work. I think there is value in bringing in outside expertise to determine what work to do, but I think we (tenured faculty) are in the best position to implement the work in our own institutions and fields. UW ECE currently lacks the needed "in-house" expertise – I want to acquire this needed expertise for myself and acquire the skills needed to help others acquire their own expertise.

The second goal is motivated by my experiences on the tenure track as an Assistant Professor. There is no comprehensive evidence-based resource of equity and access work best-practices for *any* aspect of this job, so when an individual or institution decides to undertake such work they generally end up "reinventing the wheel". This duplication of effort is inefficient and leads to ineffective implementation. I want to collect best practices in an open-source, wiki-style "handbook" that span all aspects of our work as faculty: in classrooms, on committees, in research, on panels, in conferences, on advisory boards, in administration, etc.

I will consult a variety of sources, including the lists of *readings* and *programs* enclosed below. If successful, I will return from sabbatical equipped to train colleagues at UW and beyond.

How will my Department, College, and University benefit from my equity and access work?

Superficially, I am apparently proposing a "service" sabbatical, in the sense that the direct focus is on strengthening my *service* pillar in the *research*, *teaching*, and *service* triptych of faculty obligations that forms the foundation for the tenure system in the American academy. However, I contend that radically deepening my ability to advance equity and access in the university will have profound impacts on research and teaching – of myself and my colleagues.

For instance, I hear a lot of talk about creating inclusive classrooms. What does this mean, actually? Can we measure or assess it? Can we detect and correct for non-inclusive practices? As far as I can tell, we do not have the capacity in ECE or CoE to provide clear and actionable answers to these questions: the Center for Engineering Teaching & Learning is under-resourced, and the established systems of course and peer evaluations provide limited feedback by folks who lack needed expertise. We can't afford to hire educational consultants for every instructor and every course. But, I think, we *can* afford to acquire the capacity in our tenured faculty to answer these questions for ourselves and our colleagues – I propose to use my sabbatical, in part, to gain the expertise and skills I need to serve in these capacities.

As another example, I hear a lot of talk about broadening participation. What does mean, actually? Do we just need to recruit more female and BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ and disabled faculty, staff, and students? Do we also need to support them when (if) they join us? Do we also need to revise the criteria and processes for graduation / retention / promotion / tenure? As far as I can tell, we do not have the capacity in ECE or CoE to conceive of or effect the changes that will need to occur if we are ever to meaningfully broaden participation. But many of these changes will have to occur within the ranks of the tenured professoriate – we will not abide others restricting how we recruit or evaluate trainees, approve tenure packages, etc. Thus, I think, we can't afford *not* to acquire the capacity in our tenured faculty to answer these questions – I propose to use my sabbatical, in part, to gain the needed expertise and skills.

What other work will I do?

I have two active grants funded by the National Science Foundation and 5 current PhD students that will extend through my proposed sabbatical leave. I plan to continue working on these grants and mentoring these students at the same level of effort and support as I currently do.

I have two proposals under review by Department of Defense funding agencies (AFOSR, DARPA) that, if funded, would require and support significant effort from me. Since I am only requesting 67% FTE support during my sabbatical leave, I already have the additional bandwidth needed (33% FTE) to accommodate these new projects if/when funded.

I submitted my first provisional patent this year on a topic I think has real commercial potential. I plan to use part of my sabbatical leave to meet with mentors and colleagues to learn more about the prospects for licensing or commercialization. Depending on the outcome of these conversations, and depending on whether the grants I have under review are funded, I may use the unfunded portion (33% FTE) of my time to pursue a startup based on this technology.

Conclusion

Tenured faculty are uniquely positioned to effect change in the academy – they wield power through their roles in shared governance and administration of academic institutions, and enjoy greater job security than any at-will employee or unionized trainee. As a first-generation college graduate, I am honored to be part of the academy, and eager to expand its reach.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

[signature]

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Enclosures (2): Readings for equity and access work; Programs for equity and access work

Readings for equity and access work

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Programs for equity and access work

Coursera
https://www.coursera.org/collections/diversity-and-inclusion

eCornell
https://online.cornell.edu/diversity-and-inclusion

LinkedIn Learning
https://careers.uw.edu/linkedin-learning/

National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
https://www.facultydiversity.org/join

National Effective Teaching Institute (NETI)
https://www.neti-workshop.org/

NextProf
https://nextprof.engin.umich.edu/

Rising stars in EECS
https://risingstars21-eecs.mit.edu/

University of Washington ADVANCE
https://advance.washington.edu/

University of Washington Center for Engineering Teaching & Learning
https://depts.washington.edu/celtweb/

University of Washington Center for Evaluation & Research for STEM Equity (CERSE)
https://depts.washington.edu/cerse/

University of Washington Professional & Organizational Development
https://hr.uw.edu/pod/