I requested and was approved for a sabbatical during the Spring Semester of 2012. The purpose of this sabbatical was to continue our [National Environmental Literacy Assessment (NELA) Research Team] research into the state and development of environmental literacy. Beginning in 2005 our ongoing research has been funded three times by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and/or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and supported by the North American Association for Environmental Education. Phase One of NELA was designed to establish a baseline of environmental literacy among middle school students (6th and 8th graders) in the U.S. All data for Phase One were gathered using:

- The Middle School Environmental Literacy Instrument (MSELS) to gather data on students’ levels of environmental literacy and demographics.
- A school representative was asked to respond to questions on The School Information Form (SIF) concerning the school and student populations at the school.
- Each teacher was asked to answer questions concerning their preparation and instructional practices (e.g., type of licensure, how they teach and assess) as well as questions on their attitudes toward the environment on The Teacher Information Form (TIF).
- Teachers were asked to complete the Program Information Form (PIF). A form requesting that teachers describe their environmental programming.

During Phase Two of NELA we requested that experts in the field of environmental education nominate middle schools that they believe were doing exceptional work in the development of environmental literacy with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. These nominations were then screened and, if deemed acceptable, were included in the study. Data were generated using the same instruments as in Phase One.

Analyses of Phase One and Two data from the MSELS (student literacy scores) have been completed, presented at the local, national, and international conferences. However, data from the SIF, TIF, and PIF have not been analyzed. Analyses of the data from these three sources and the results of the MSELS (Phase Three) will help the field of environmental education identify the conditions that best contribute to the development of environmental literacy.
The third phase, Phase Three, of the NELA was the aim of my sabbatical. My three stated sabbatical goals were to:

1. Organize and complete the NELA Phase Three data analyses.
2. Organize and begin preliminary writing of the NELA Phase Three Report.
3. Prepare and present NELA Phase three results to appropriate audiences.

Goal one (1) is complete. When combined, Phase One and Two included 112 middle schools and 9,969 students. Between Phase One and Two there were three data bases that needed to be generated and checked. These data bases were for the SIF which included questions representing 10 variables, the TIF which included questions representing 23 variables, and PIF which included questions representing 17 variables. Each contained student demographic information. Each data base was checked and rechecked for accuracy and is extensive in its inclusion of variables. During my sabbatical the SOF and the PIF were completed. At the date of this report, all data bases have been completed.

During the preparation of these data bases the research team met in Melbourne, FL from May 8-13. During this meeting, the first task was to think through all of the variables gathered and associated with Phases One and Two and how these variables either alone or in combination could affect the development of environmental literacy in middle level students. The team created seven clusters of research questions with each cluster containing one or more research questions (RQs). These clusters include:

1) Explanations of Variability within Data Sets (RQs 1-4)
2) Bivariate Relationships within Data Sets (RQs 5-8)
3) Sequential differences (RQs 9-11)
4) Variability within the Data Sets (RQs 13 & 12)
5) Comparisons among Phase 2 Schools (RQs 14 & 15)
6) Comparisons between Phase 1 and Phase 2 Studies (RQs 16-18)
7) Modeling (RQs will be determined through the RQs 1-18)

Each of these clusters contain research plans (i.e., unit of analysis, included Phases, types of data files, type of analysis/outputs, special notes, specific RQs with associated variables).

As the Principle Investigator, I had applied for funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the work of this sabbatical. Because of Federal financial issues, the funding was not awarded until early in the fall (2012) and backdated to May 1, 2012. Because we did not know if the grant would be awarded until this fall no progress was made on goal number two (2).

Following the development of the data bases for the SIF and the PIF, we were able to conduct and present preliminary analyses of our findings. Goal three was accomplished in the following ways:
1. As a member of the steering committee, I helped plan and presented at the Research-Based Practices for Environmental Education in Annapolis Maryland. This workshop was sponsored by NOAA, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. A $7,000 grant was written to and awarded by the U.S. National Park Service to fund travel and provide stipends for the presenters. Presenters at the workshop included Dr. Bora Simmons, National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education; Dr. Mark Stern, Virginia Tech University, Dr. Michaela Zint, University of Michigan; Dr. Trudi Volk, Southern Illinois University, Emeritus and others. Planning for the workshop took place during the spring of 2012 and the Workshop was held at the end of August.

One of my Workshop presentations was a reporting of the schools in the Phase One and Two studies that represented the “Mid-Atlantic” or bordered on Chesapeake Bay. This group is a subset of the Phase Three research.

2. Preliminary Phase Three findings were also presented the North American Association for Environmental Education’s 41st Annual Conference in Oakland, CA. The presentation, Looking for Links Between Environmental Literacy and School and Societal Variables was given on Saturday, October, 13.

3. I applied to present in the Spring Semester for the UWP-LAE Faculty Forum in the spring semester, 2013. The application was submitted on Feb. 22, 2012, but was not accepted.

Overall, my sabbatical was short but productive. I would like to thank the University, the Provost and the Improvement of Learning Committee for this opportunity.

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