

Qualifications and Motivation Statement

Academic Preparation:

B.Sc. in Chemistry

B.A. in English

M.A. in Literacy Studies

All of my life's work--educational, occupational, personal--seems to have led me to this point in space and time. I have several degrees from several universities from across the world, so I suppose I have had the requisite preparation for the rigorous road ahead of me. But in addition to the obvious qualities of subject matter knowledge and expertise, my education has also provided me with more intangible qualities such as a curious and analytical mind, which, I would think, would be the most fundamental requirement for a doctoral candidate. Additionally, having an interdisciplinary background shows, I think, a certain flexibility and ability to move across domains, and has also provided me with the scientific background necessary to conduct sound research. And finally, the fact that I am an immigrant and have been to school in two different countries allows me to have a unique perspective on education.

Research/Projects:

Currently, I am working on two research projects, the first of which is looking into collaborative learning, specifically into developing protocols that enhance student collaborations. My co-investigators on this project found (using videotaped student focus groups) that students are often wary of collaborative projects, finding them to be time-consuming, contentious, and generally not very personally or educationally beneficial. I suspect that some of their negative experiences results from them not having had any kind of discussion or instruction on how to successfully collaborate *before* commencing a project. My goal for this project is to develop some pre-collaboration protocols and instruction that would enhance the students' experiences with collaboration.

The second project I am working on is part of an initiative between two institutions wherein the two universities (and possibly a third) are trying to set up online international classrooms in order to enhance global understanding and competence among diverse student populations. The impetus for this particular project comes from a Center for International Education and a general campus-wide initiative on globalization to provide our students with opportunities to have a more multicultural and global experience and education without necessarily having to incur the prohibitive cost of traditional study abroad programs.

Professional Experience:

Currently I serve as an administrator of a Writer's Resource Lab. As part of my duties, I am responsible for the training and supervision of tutors at the campus writing center. Additionally, I help coordinate the support activities in a Learning Community program.

For the last seven years, I have been a lecturer at a large and very diverse public university in California. I have taught courses in English Composition, as well as in English Education. Additionally, I have taught ESL at one Community College, and Developmental Reading at another.

In addition to my teaching duties, I have also served on several committees at including the Composition Committee, the English Education Committee, the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee—all of which have helped me to learn how research and praxis fits in with policy.

Finally, I serve as a faculty mentor to four first-generation college students from whom I have learned much about what it takes to succeed at college.

CSU:

I have spent the last ten years at a CSU campus, first as a student and now as a faculty member, and over the many years that I have been here, what has struck me the most is the sense of welcome and belongingness I feel here. This campus is one of the most diverse campuses in the CSU, serving students from many under-represented populations in the state, and it is this diversity that interests me the most, that makes me, an immigrant woman of color, feel the most at home. It has always been my ambition (and my intent) to devote my professional life to serve those who need it most, to provide a quality, affordable education to all, and the CSU system, the largest comprehensive university system in the US, provides me the perfect context in which to do so.

Program of Study:

Broadly speaking, I would like to look into the issue of literacy in higher education, specifically as it relates to the first year experience, and the impact it has on student success, retention, and graduation. I teach at a public university where the vast majority of students come from urban and inner-city schools, and it is this population that is of particular interest to me. In my years as a composition teacher, I have noticed that more and more students are coming into the university system ill-prepared to meet the basic requirements of academic reading and writing. At our campus alone we have a good 45%

of incoming freshmen placing into developmental writing courses instead of the usual English 100 or freshman composition courses, suggesting that, perhaps, there is a “gap” between the preparation they receive in high school and the academic expectations of the university. It is this “gap” that interests me. What is going on (with regards to reading and writing) before these students get to the university, and more importantly, what can we, at the university, do to close this gap so that students have the best chance of success?

My educational goals (to examine the first year experience) align perfectly with my professional aspirations (to serve under-prepared student populations) which in turn support and enhance my ability to serve a diverse student body.

Ph.D. Programs:

I have applied to four doctoral programs—two UC’s and two well know privates—each of which offers me a strong and relevant (albeit a bit different) program of study in my field of literacy.

One UC program in Language, Literacy, and Technology affords me the opportunity to integrate two of my sub-specialties (language learning and literacy) with technology and the advantages that provides not only in terms of curricula and pedagogy, but also in terms of access.

Another UC’s commitment to issues of social justice and equity in education is perfectly aligned with my own philosophical bent that believes that an education is only as good as the power it has to effect positive human and societal change. Two leading institutes there would provide me with the perfect context within which to conduct my research.

One of the private’s emphasis on higher education in urban settings matches my own interest and experience in serving under-prepared, under-represented, students at public universities. My work at my current CSU campus would inform my research in the field of literacy in higher education, and in turn, I suspect that my research would inform/enhance the work I do with under-prepared, under-represented student populations at the CSU.

And finally, the other private University’s trans-disciplinary program reflects my own life, learning, and professional experiences insofar as I have lived in several different countries, earned several degrees in a couple of disciplines (Chemistry and English), and taught in multiple departments (English, Liberal Studies, Human Communication), all of which make this private’s program a good “fit” for me.

At this time I have been accepted into two doctoral programs— one UC and one private—but have not made a final decision as I am waiting to hear back from all the schools first.

Diversity:

As a lecturer at one of the most diverse campuses in the largest comprehensive university system in the country (CSU), I have had the opportunity to work with a wide range of students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. My work as a writing instructor brings me in contact with the full spectrum of students at the university—from freshmen to graduate students, developmental learners to President's scholars, women and men, most of whom (over 50% according to 2007 campus Institutional Research demographic data) report belonging to a non-caucasian racial group (my campus is now recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institute).

In my role at the Writer's Resource Lab on Campus, I see this diversity reflected in the students who come to the writing center. Additionally, the writing center serves our international students as well, many of whom seek help in meeting the GVAR requirement, so I have occasion to work with not only ESL students, but EFL students as well.

Finally, as a faculty mentor in our Partners for Success program, I work with four first-generation college students—a segment of the student population that continues to grow each year—helping them to navigate the unfamiliar waters of academe.

I am eager and excited to embark on this next leg of my educational journey. I feel certain that the experience I have gained over the last seven years, coupled with my own personal experiences as a bicultural, multilingual (six languages), interdisciplinary (Chemistry/Literacy), interfaith woman will help me to succeed in the doctoral program.