I. Description of the plan to carry out the project

I am requesting a one-semester, full-pay sabbatical to pursue scholarship related to social work and mental health services in Vietnam. Specifically, I propose to a) complete a manuscript arising out of our current project to improve social work education in Vietnam, and b) conduct research and complete a manuscript about mental health services in Vietnam. I have applied for a teaching award through the Fulbright Core Scholar program for the sabbatical period (spring semester, 2016) in Vietnam, however the proposed sabbatical activities can be feasibly conducted regardless of the outcome of my Fulbright application.

The Vietnamese government recently estimated that more than 10,000 skilled, professionally trained social workers are needed to meet the demand for services – including a high need for mental health care providers [1]. Trained social workers are needed to work in government-run clinics and non-profit agencies that provide mental health services [2]. Mental health services have been provided in the country for some time, however the scope of services has been limited by a narrow set of covered diagnoses (until recently, only schizophrenia and a few neuro-developmental disorders were recognized as eligible for government care, despite high prevalence rates of other diagnoses such as depression and alcohol abuse [3]) and an emphasis on the use of institutional care (hospitals and residential settings), rather than community clinics and outpatient services [4]. Recent legislation has been put forward to remedy this with an ambitious plan to overhaul the entire behavioral health care system in the country. The legislation expands prevention and community-based alternatives, as well as social work workforce development [5].

To address the significant gaps that exist in Vietnam’s social work education [6], SJSU’s Social Work Education Enhancement Program (SWEEP) is aimed at improving undergraduate social work education by improving the administration of social work programs, faculty development, curriculum development, and collaboration among our eight partner universities. The project, funded by USAID, began in October 2012, and ends in September, 2015. My role as Co-Investigator has been, in collaboration with the Principal Investigator and three faculty leads in content areas, to oversee and participate in the technical
assistance components, which include brief training events in Vietnam as well as training “academies” for visiting faculty and university administrators in San Jose. As part of my current responsibilities with SWEEP I have co-authored several major presentations describing the program; one completed policy brief (as lead author) on mental health and social work in Vietnam, which was accepted for a conference held in Vietnam; seven substantial progress reports to USAID, and various evaluation plan documents as required by USAID. I am also currently co-authoring the first manuscript describing the SWEEP project, intended for submission to a peer-reviewed journal by the end of the fall, 2014 semester.

**Project A. Social work identity in Vietnam**

The first manuscript scheduled to be completed during the sabbatical period would address the evolving role and identity of social work in Vietnam. This is of great interest since the profession of social work (and its educational pedagogy) originated in Western countries and cannot simply be transferred to other cultural contexts without local adaptation to meet the unique needs of the country [7]. We know from our work in SWEEP that Vietnamese educators desire to develop educational pedagogy to match the needs of populations there. In my own experience teaching in Vietnam prior to SWEEP, I realized how “western-centric” our textbooks are and that there is a need to adapt them to the Vietnamese context [8]. Aspects of professional identity of practitioners and faculty in Vietnam might be similar to, or markedly different than, those in other countries. My role in this manuscript would be lead author, co-authoring with other SWEEP team members and possibly faculty in Vietnam. Preparation of the manuscript would involve a review of existing literature on “social work identity” and the roles of social workers in the international context, and applying this to the unique cultural and socio-political contexts of Vietnam. Once IRB approval is obtained, key informant interviews would be conducted via Webex with faculty and practicing social workers in the country to explore individuals’ views on the evolution of a professional social work identity. Research sites will include Da Lat in the rural central highlands (Da Lat University would host my visit should I receive a Fulbright) and Hanoi, the country’s capital. The SWEEP partner universities in Da Lat and Hanoi can assist me in identifying relevant informants. With the interview data (obtained via Webex conference calls if not in person) I will analyze anticipated and
unanticipated themes. The paper would report the findings from these interviews using qualitative analysis. Existing data from SWEEP would also be used since the project involved comprehensive needs assessments in the various areas of social work education, as well as lessons learned from the SWEEP activities. My objective is to contribute to the literature on comparative international models of social work.

**Project B. Mental health research in Vietnam**

The second project involves conducting research about the role of social workers in the provision of mental health services in Vietnam. The research aims to explore a) the extent to which social workers are receiving training in mental health care, b) the types of settings where social workers are providing services, and c) the perceptions of university faculty and community agency representatives about the readiness of social workers to become mental health service providers. The literature review will also address epidemiological research about mental illness in Vietnam, in order to better define the need for services, beyond the limited categories previously identified by the government, thereby linking the estimated need for services with the professional role of social workers as mental health service providers. I plan to conduct key informant interviews with university faculty, practicing social workers, other mental health professionals, and researchers in Vietnam, to explore these issues. Key informants will be recruited as in Project A., with additional input from government health and welfare ministries that oversee health services.

**II. Project’s benefit to the University**

These activities will inform the efforts of globalizing SJSU’s research and education. CASA has made great effort to cultivate relationships with Vietnam government ministries, NGOs, and universities as part of the mission to globalize SJSU. The proposed activities will continue this effort beyond SWEEP and serve to highlight the groundbreaking SWEEP accomplishments. The activities will further our reputation as an important player in international social work. In addition, the scholarship will contribute to the field of international social work in general.
III. Applicant’s ability to complete the project

The indicators of my ability to complete the project are a) a successful record of 16 publications in peer-reviewed journals (10 since my hire at SJSU); b) my continued and integral role in the SWEEP project, and involvement with stakeholders in Vietnam; c) the readiness of Da Lat and other universities to collaborate; and d) my interests in international social work and commitment to continue its development as an academic field at SJSU.

IV. Timeline for completion for Projects A. and B.

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5. Vietnam Office of the Prime Minister, Decree 1215 (1215/QĐ-TTg) - On Approval of Community-Based Social Assistance and Functional Rehabilitation For Mentally Ill And Mentally Disordered 2011: Hanoi, Vietnam.