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Dear President XXXXXX,

I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to teach at Olive-Harvey College for the past semester. In this short time, I have had the chance to work with a group of highly dedicated faculty, academic advisers, and administrators from whom I have learned a great deal. I have also had the pleasure of helping students get closer to reaching their professional and personal goals. I honestly cannot think of another place where I would rather be teaching. I would like to submit my 13-week portfolio as a summary of the growth experiences that I have had this semester.

I feel that I have learned perhaps even more here than I did during my formal education. Since arriving at Olive-Harvey College I have learned something new every day which has led to the betterment of myself as a teacher. The teaching experiences that I have had over the past semester have been invaluable. I have honed my communication skills, learned about new teaching techniques, become familiar with learning theory, and realized the importance of assessment to enhance student learning and to improve the quality of my own teaching. The college has been extremely supportive in helping me to develop my abilities, the so-called “talents of teaching,” and I am truly for grateful for that.

So far, in my first semester I was able to participate in the CCC Tenure Orientation Seminar, which I found to be a very valuable experience. This seminar provided me with guidance on syllabus design, classroom management, and assessment techniques, many of which I have since incorporated into my classroom. It also addressed classroom diversity, heightening my awareness of the issues our students face and how I can adjust my teaching to better serve our student population. I also attended several on-campus workshops. These included training sessions on the use of Smartboard technology, iPads in the classroom, and contextualized learning. Currently I am enrolled in a graduate-level course called “Infectious Disease Surveillance”, which has helped me to stay up-to-date in microbiology, one of the subjects which I teach. I will continue to seek out opportunities to improve myself as a teacher, as I know there is always room for growth, no matter how many years of experience one has.

My teaching skills have benefited greatly from the invaluable feedback of my colleagues. My TAP leader and faculty mentor have been especially instrumental in enhancing my teaching skills. I have been meeting with both of them at least monthly since I started teaching at Olive-Harvey College and I have found our discussions to be immensely helpful in facilitating my growth as a teacher. I have asked my faculty mentor, Dr. R.S., who is a very experienced instructor, to observe my class this semester. She provided me with examples of strategies which she uses in her own classes, including the use of “Skeleton Notes” and role-playing, to make her lessons more interactive. I adopted both of these strategies in my class this term and found that they indeed led to greater student engagement and were particularly beneficial to students who do not learn as effectively by conventional lecture methods.

Thanks to the feedback from my Dean of Instruction and Department Chair, I now have many ideas on areas in which I can grow and strategies for making those improvements. My dean recommended that I encourage students to take more ownership of their learning and to demand more “mental stretch” from them. As a result, in the upcoming semester, I will be making some significant changes to my teaching methods, including the adoption of a more “flipped-style” of instruction. To begin this change, I am in the process of learning how to use lecture-capture software to allow me to post lessons in advance. My hope is that students can learn the more basic concepts on their own, prior to a class session, so that we can spend more time in class on challenging material, where they are more likely to struggle and need greater assistance. I received similar feedback from my department chair, who recommended that I spend more classroom time on critical-thinking and hands-on activities which would shift the focus to the student as the learner and discoverer, rather than the teacher as the provider of information. I wholeheartedly agree with her and will begin to make appropriate adjustments to my teaching next semester.

Finally, as a new faculty member, I have sought out opportunities to contribute to our college. In particular, I have observed meetings of Local Committee A and the Assessment Committee. I have learned about curriculum design from attending the Local Committee A meetings and it has inspired me to consider creating two new Biology Courses. The Assessment Committee has given me ideas for how I can measure student learning in my own classes and use this data to make meaningful changes to instruction. I plan to become an active member on both committees in the near future and make positive contributions to the college as a whole.

I look forward to the continued opportunity of working at Olive-Harvey College and being able to empower our students in both their professional and personal lives.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Monroe

Linda M. Monroe, Ph.D.

Instructor

Department of Biology