Commitment to Scholarship

As a scholar, I am devoted to adding new perspectives in the field of Communication. Since I have been employed at Western Washington University, I have focused my primary research in the areas of scholarship of teaching and learning and critical cultural studies with an emphasis in disAbility and race. I have a passion regarding how to develop a more inclusive, culturally relevant pedagogy for all cultures. I believe that it is my duty to accurately articulate the experiences of student with disAbilities, people of color, students of the majority, and other audiences who can further our understanding of valuing diversity. In addition, my secondary area of research has been in organizational communication (i.e. relationship development). My research has been summarized in my vita and cover letter located in my dossier. I will provide a discussion regarding each of my areas of interest.

Areas of Study

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

First, my research is committed to the scholarship of teaching and learning. It provides inquiry into how students learn. This form of research allows me to improve teaching practices by publishing and presenting this type of research. As a researcher I utilize qualitative research since this is widely used in the scholarship of teaching and learning. I use the following research methods common in the scholarship of teaching and learning: focus groups, interviews, case studies, action research, participatory research, and face to face interviews. I look at what service-learning student leaders (e.g. research assistants, teaching assistants, peer mentors, etc.) learn from being involved in service-learning. I study what motivates college students to learn in a professional communication and small group communication course. More specifically, as a researcher I focus on the communication process that allows students in teams to succeed and make it through the various challenges. Professors are also interviewed to explain the outcome of their current practices that they are using in the classroom and ways in which students have helped to improve their pedagogy. Recently, I have focused attention to what students and professor co-authors gain from their interpersonal relationships.

Service-Learning

An area that I examine in communication studies is service-learning (SL) in the classroom. I use a scholarship of teaching and learning lens to study this form of experiential learning. This pedagogy permits students to learn in class concepts and apply them to real life situation by participating in the community. Students are required to reflect about their experiences in order to better understand their actions and knowledge gained. In the courses I teach, students are paired up with various non-profit organizations and work directly with organizations that emphasize diversity. They are taught to apply in class concepts to their service-learning experience through the process of reflection. Giving students the opportunity to have outside the classroom experience adds to their learning of course content. Since I was amazed at how student teams effectively worked together and enjoyed their in class project, I decided to further my research in SL. Thus far, my research has focused on the following: the integration of
service-learning student leaders in the classroom, the communication process that makes service-learning work, and student motivational leadership. I have conducted several studies in the area of service-learning.

**Critical cultural studies/disAbility Studies**

Second, my research in Cultural studies focuses attention to the economic, political, legal, ethnicity, Ability, social class, etc., of different cultures. It examines the imbalance of power experienced by non-dominant groups (i.e. minorities). Cultural studies scholars attempt to provide investigate and change the dominant structures. As a research lens, cultural studies permitted me to explore the experiences of college students with disAbilities and African American college students.

My interest in critical cultural studies began with my dissertation which focused on the learning and accommodation experiences of college students with learning disAbilities and/or attention related disAbilities. I viewed these students as a group who shared similar and different cultural practices as they were socialized into the dominant culture. I was interested in bringing forward the silent voices of college students with disAbilities given that their narratives regarding how they have been accommodated, taught, and included as culture in the university setting was not widely discussed in research. Through qualitative research, many of my participants discourse was against the educational setting that kept them silent and shared how they were able to gain a voice in a culture that was not adequately set up for their daily needs. The outcome of outcome of the student’s lived experiences provided a new lens for me to establish a critical pedagogy.

I also use a cultural studies lens to understand the experiences of African American college students at predominantly Caucasian American institution. I look at how these students succeed in college. My research has informed me that African American students experience struggles due to different power ideologies that exist within academic settings. The need for social support and mentors during their stay in college helps them to succeed.

**Organizational Communication**

Third, organizational communication is the study of the different ways in which people communicate in the work place. Based on the specific organization, the way employees and employers communicate can fall into different paradigms such as classical, human relations/human resources, systems theory, cultural diversity, critical theory, socialization, etc. Before selecting a job, it is important to research the climate of the organization to explore whether or not one fits with the company. This is something I encourage my students to do when they begin their career search. I also stress the importance of organizational communication and the role each concept plays at work. Organizational climate can positively or negatively affect the type of relationships that form at work. I study relationship development between coworkers and the changes that occur from one stage of development to the next. My research focused on the deterioration of coworker relationships and looked at how these coworkers communicated the termination of their relationship. The strategies coworkers used were avoidance, discussion of work and no personal talk, etc. I believe that understanding effective ways to communicate at work can nurture relationships, save many relationships, and create a productive environment.