Date and title of any previous SFSA or FRACAA project(s):

I have had no previous SFSA or FRACAA projects.

Provide an abstract/succinct summary of the proposal (50 words or less):

This project focuses on knowledge and study of stereotypical French accent and their potential as a tool to teach and learn authentic French pronunciation. Findings may lead to the recommendation that the study of stereotypical accent be incorporated to the French language curriculum as early as the onset of learning.

Describe your proposed work (e.g., objectives or goals, activities, timeline, outcomes, products, or other relevant information), including the connection, if one exists, with any previous SFSA or FRACAA project:

My project investigates knowledge of stereotypical French accent and its potential as a pronunciation teaching and learning tool. To determine the extent of knowledge of stereotypical French accent and how it evolves with increased proficiency, WMU French students at all levels will record their pronunciation of French and English texts, for the latter with an authentic and a stereotypical French accent, during spring and fall 2017. Additionally,
students enrolled in the French pronunciation course (FREN 3200) during spring 2017 will study and practice characteristics of French stereotypical accent featured in English audio passages and strive to transfer relevant features to their own pronunciation of French. The pronunciation features of interest in the recordings will be isolated before they are submitted to French native speakers who will rate them for intelligibility and accuracy during June 2017. The Support for Faculty Scholars Award will allow me to compensate the French native speakers for rating the students’ production.

If results validate these innovative teaching and learning techniques as beneficial, they will allow for the recommendation that the study of stereotypical accent be incorporated to the French language curriculum as early as the onset of learning.

I have had no previous SFSA or FRACAA projects.

Describe how the proposed work will make (a) a significant and (b) original contribution to the discipline:

Stereotypes are often wrapped in a negative light because of the fragmentary and reductive perspective to which they lead. For this reason, they are generally fought and rejected. This project examines one case in which one form of stereotype—stereotypical accent—perhaps should not be rejected but welcomed and used in second language pronunciation learning, as knowledge of stereotypical accent may turn out to benefit the pronunciation acquisition of second language learners. This project examines the unprecedented use of both stereotypical accent to study and practice French pronunciation characteristics and English speech as the carrier of those characteristics. This approach departs from the traditional one, which bases the identification and processing of those characteristics on authentic French accent featured in French speech. Because this is an innovative approach, and because research associating stereotypical accent and second language pronunciation learning is scant, this project shows promise of original and significant contribution to the research field of second language pronunciation learning. It will also contribute to the language teaching and learning communities, as results will inform pronunciation teaching practices in second language courses at all levels.

Describe the mechanism for dissemination:

Results will be presented and discussed at conferences, including the Ninth Annual Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference held at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City on September 1-2, 2017. The project will also result in the publication of two research articles written for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The first article, titled “French stereotypical accent and pronunciation learning,” will address the benefits of using stereotypical French accent as a learning aid for pronunciation improvement at the intermediate level. It will be submitted for publication to Journal of Second Language Pronunciation. The second article, titled “Interaction between knowledge of French
second language pronunciation and reporting on knowledge of stereotypical accent and how it evolves with increased proficiency in French, will be submitted to *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* for publication.

**Describe how the proposed work will enhance your reputation and that of WMU.**

This project gives me the opportunity to expand my research into new areas while applying the expertise I have gained over the past 15 years. In my previous research, I studied the benefits of feedback in pronunciation acquisition. I am now shifting my focus from its visual to its oral form, from computer-generated, visual acoustic analysis of speech to the identification and capitalization of key oral cues featured in stereotypical accent. This shift also allows me to explore and learn new research tools for data analysis, including the use of qualitative statistical analysis. Indeed, in my previous research projects, I exclusively used quantitative analysis, as pronunciation improvement was measured from performance ratings. In these projects, I will use the same approach, and will additionally resort to qualitative statistical tests to describe and compute the characteristics of stereotypical accent present in the speech of French learners. The resources available in WMU’s statistics department will allow me to refresh—and expand on—the introduction to qualitative statistics I received during my doctoral studies.

Not only will this project allow me to deepen and expand my knowledge of second language pronunciation acquisition, but it will also give me critical information to incorporate to both the French linguistics courses (FREN 3200, French Phonetics, FREN 3260, Introduction to French Linguistics, and FREN 5200, Advanced French Phonology) and the French language courses (FREN 1000, 1010, 2000, and 2010, Basic and Intermediate French I & II) that I teach and supervise at WMU. Furthermore, the presentation of the project’s results in various national and international conferences, as well as their publication in peer-reviewed journals, will contribute to WMU’s increased visibility and recognition.

**Provide an itemized budget and budget justification. A proposed budget greater than the allowed maximum amount of $2,000 will disqualify the proposal. Such a proposal will not be reviewed. Fully justify why the budgeted expense is necessary for the project.**

The data consists of approximately 23,000 recorded sentences and isolated words. These recordings must be assessed by French native speakers for pronunciation quality and intelligibility. The ratings obtained will serve for statistical analysis.

The rating of a recording takes an average of 10 seconds. The rating procedure is estimated to last 65 hours per rater, including two hours of training ensuring inter-and intra-rater reliability. Based on the pay rates found on the Educational Testing Service website, contracted raters receive $13 an hour.

65 hours x 3 = 195 hours at $13/hour = $2,535
Proposed budget:

153.84 hours at $13/hour = $1,999.92