October 26, 2011

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Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Project for fall 2012

Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status

Full-time Hire Date: August 2006
Part-time Hire Date: August 2005 (Moorpark College)
Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Background

Ventura College (VC) has an impressive Biology Program. The courses offered through the Biology Program at VC present students with a wide array of life science choices that meet the requirements for students transferring to four year institutions among other benefits. The General Biology course offered at VC serves as a general education requirement. Anatomy, Physiology, and Microbiology are pre-requisites for the VC Allied Health Program. Plant Biology is a requirement for the VC Agriculture Certificate. Biotechnology and Field Biology are specifically designed to prepare students for the job market. Most biology courses at VC include a mandatory laboratory section. These laboratory sections require a great deal of preparation. It is the responsibility of the biology faculty to determine the content of laboratory exercises and laboratory technicians assist with preparation of the laboratory sessions. This preparation includes collaboration with instructors for the purchasing of laboratory supplies, the preparation of solutions and the set up of required laboratory equipment and supplies for corresponding lab sessions.

VC is equipped with highly sophisticated and expensive equipment. For example, an autoclave for sterilizing media is utilized in various disciplines, primarily Microbiology. Laboratory classes also require a number of less sophisticated equipment. Human models are an invaluable teaching tool for Anatomy laboratories and animal specimens are useful for a number of biology courses (e.g. General Biology, Marine Biology, Organismal and Environmental Biology). Currently, VC only contains a minimal collection of Algae specimens. There is currently no collection of plant specimens. The lack of a functioning herbarium is somewhat concerning considering the number of biological disciplines that would benefit from such a collection (Plant Biology, General Biology, Field Biology and Organismal and Environmental Biology). Herbariums are common at teaching institutions. Museums tend to hold impressive plant collections (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris France has 8.9 million specimens). Four year universities may have herbarium collections that contain hundreds of thousands of plant specimens (Iowa State has 640,000 specimens). Two year institutions such as ours may have only hundreds to several thousand specimens. The addition of a herbarium at VC would only compliment the current inventory and serve as a great benefit to students, faculty and the academic community.

Value to Ventura College Students

The herbarium collection will serve as a teaching tool to enhance student learning. Students will gain knowledge through the herbarium collection by utilizing plant specimens for multiple purposes including distinguishing between different plant species, identifying common plant structures and personally contributing to the herbarium from specimen collection.

Value to Ventura College the Instructor

Though I have collected plants for plant presses and have assisted in plant mounts on herbarium paper in the past, I’ve never been involved in initiating or maintaining a herbarium collection. However, I have some wonderful resources, including collection managers at several institutions, who can assist and guide me as I work on this project. I have already met with a collection manager at California State University, Northridge who has walked me through the specifics of developing and maintaining a herbarium collection. Thus, I am confident I can adequately meet my goals. I am most excited about starting this project and learning the steps it takes to build a herbarium collection from scratch. It will also allow me to become a more effective instructor in the classroom, as it will provide me with many of the necessary specimens I can use in teaching. I can make small modifications to some of our curriculum to include the use of plant specimens. Building a herbarium collection will increase the number of plant names I have learned throughout the years. It will also help me review and learn related information about a variety of species. I believe this project will be an invaluable learning experience for me both as a biologist and as an instructor.

Sincerely,

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