

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal for Fall 2021  
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Submitted October 24, 2020

Faculty Status: Full-time, tenured

Hire Date: August 2014

Previous Leaves: 0

Background and Statement of Purpose:

I have long valued health and wellness as an integral part of my life. As a certified yoga instructor, I understand that simple practices focused on well-being can have a significant impact on our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health. However, in my twenty years in the field of education, I've seen that it can be incredibly challenging to prioritize health and

have created unprecedented stress for many people across the globe. While I've been pondering this sabbatical proposal for more than a year, I believe it's even more important than ever to prioritize the health and well-being of our campus and district community so that we can continue to be a beacon of learning and opportunity for our students.

"Healing is a matter of time, but it is also sometimes a matter of opportunity."  
-- Hippocrates

Rationale:

Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD) Sabbatical Policy (8.6.A) states the following: "These professional growth opportunities will focus primarily on the growth of the individual in order to maintain a dynamic faculty, one equipped with the mental and emotional tools to provide exceptional service to the students and the District in an era of constant change." This proposal is centered around providing "mental and emotional tools" that faculty need in order to best support our students.

Faculty aim to be proactive in meeting the health and wellness needs of students with resources such as the Student Health Center, mental health referrals, Behavioral Intervention Care Team (BICT) reports, and more. What is lacking, however, is the priority for faculty to proactively share and implement health and wellness strategies on a recurring basis. In particular, there seems to be an opportunity through New Faculty Orientation to address this matter, specifying self-care as a critical component to our own success as faculty and ultimately the success of our students. Additional benefits of a focus on the health and wellness of faculty (and administrators and classified professionals) could be improved morale, enhanced overall health, and moreover, could serve as a model of health and wellness for students.

While the primary focus of this proposal is on faculty, I believe there could be opportunities for faculty to share their own health and wellness best practices with students. For example, in our Guided Pathways efforts we seek to help students clarify their career and academic goals, enterden

b. Yale University's "Health Behavior Change: From Evidence to Action"

course and perhaps one kinesiology or dance activity course if it's needed for a graduation requirement. It would benefit our students to know about the value of taking these types of courses, and/or practicing the principles learned in these courses throughout their time in college and as they continue into careers after college. Students will benefit from learning how to incorporate health and wellness strategies into their life beyond Ventura College.

As a result of the recommendations of the RP Group's "[Six Success Factors](#)", Ventura College adopted the same factors as our "Beacons of Success" a number of years ago. These factors include supporting students to feel directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected and valued. Much of our work on Guided Pathways, Student Equity and Achievement (SEA), and previously Student Success and Support Program (3SP), has centered on the *directed* and *focused* elements. While we aim to connect students to our campus, to help them feel engaged, nurtured and valued, we often focus our services on core academic planning, teaching and learning, without incorporating all of the success factors. An increased focus on the health and wellness of students can serve to truly *nurture* each holistic individual we serve on our campus, to show that we *value* who they are beyond the limits of instruction and course performance, to *engage* them on a fundamental level of self-awareness, and to *connect* them to themselves and their peers in a dynamic way. I am hopeful that my research and collaboration with colleagues will lead me to identify strategies to foster these success factors that faculty can incorporate easily into their courses and interactions with students.

"What is called genius is the abundance of life and health." --Henry David Thoreau

Value of Project to the District:

It stands to reason that a focus on improved health and wellness of employees can lead to more productive, happier employees, employee retention, and a positive impact on students' well-being. Development of a New Faculty Orientation component built on a foundation of health and wellness principles can serve as a model for all three campuses in the district and in support of all new faculty hires. Moreover, my hope is that there will be general recommendations developed from my research which could be utilized for supporting current faculty as well. The tenure process often provides support for faculty members' development within their discipline, but to my knowledge, and based on my own experience, there is no emphasis on how to approach acclimating to a new job/campus and balancing a multitude of responsibilities with a focus on well-being. I firmly believe we can do better to support our faculty (and students) in a holistic way.

"Your health is what you make of it. Everything you do and think either adds to the vitality, energy and spirit you possess or takes away from it." --Ann Wigmore

Value of Project to College & Department:

In many of my experiences attending department, division, and various committee meetings, I've witnessed a climate that often belays a feeling of hurriedness, intensity, stress, fatigue, and an absence of checking-in on the well-being of one another. It is my sincere hope

that an increased focus on the health and wellness of faculty, classified professionals and administrators can serve to help us center ourselves before meetings, improve productivity, and increase a sense of collegiality. It doesn't take long to institute a moment of mindfulness at the start of a meeting, to check in with students and colleagues regarding goals and intentions, and to provide opportunities for kinesthetic activity to engage on a deeper level.

I was grateful to see the efforts started Fall 2020 to provide wellness strategies via

## Dissemination Plan:

My goal is to share my project outcomes with appropriate parties (eg. Professional Development Committee, Counseling Department and Campus Leadership) at the beginning of the spring semester 2022, and to fully implement a new health and wellness component to the New Faculty Orientation plan for the 2022-23 academic year.

“The root of all health is in the brain. The trunk of it is in emotion. The branches and leaves are the body. The flower of health blooms when all parts work together.” --Kurdish Saying

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal Addendum for Fall 2021  
Lauren A. Wintermeyer Ramirez, M.A., Ed.D., Counseling Faculty  
Submitted December 10, 2020

Value of Project for Students:

I have gained insight into the student experience as a general counselor at Ventura College and feel that I have a unique perspective on the challenges our students face because of the work I have done with first year students. Specifically, I have been on the workgroup for our First Semester Course Planning, which is our group counseling experience for new-to-college students, for the past several years. This year we developed a Canvas shell for which I

contribute suggestions of how to better support our students getting back into good standing.

**Value of Project to the District:**

Researching health and wellness and sharing my findings with colleagues at my campus and throughout the district could potentially serve to enhance the following:

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