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Sabbatical Proposal for Prospective Leave during Spring Semester 2018

- Full-Time English Department Faculty Member since Fall 2005
- Proposed leave for Spring 2018
- No prior leave of absence

Topic: Best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, in the college classroom environment. The goal is to provide current and future faculty with the best practices in teaching students with learning disabilities with an emphasis on reading, writing, and critical thinking skills in an effort to highlight the importance of accessibility and equity for these students.

I. Proposed Objectives

- Type a report for campus-wide distribution to my colleagues regarding best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities with an emphasis on reading, writing and critical thinking skills. **This will include online and on ground best practices.**
- Maintain a dialogue with ACCESS and continue to meet periodically with ACCESS Learning Disabilities Specialist and Instructor, Melanie Masters, and ACCESS Coordinator Silva Arzunyan.
- Interview Dr. Shiro Torquato, a clinical and educational psychologist.

- Read articles and books from the tentative bibliography and include in the report for current information regarding learning disabilities and community college education.
- Attend conferences.
- Visit the Educational Assistance Center at Ventura College to discuss their Learning Skills Program, tour their facilities, and talk with colleagues about best practices.
- Visit the Educational Assistance Center at Oxnard College to tour their facilities and talk with colleagues about best practices.
- Create a best practice lesson plan for the English department's Best Practices Workshop, which I currently organize and provide each semester.
- Create additional documents and lesson plans for College Strategies MO1, which I currently teach, as part of the Guided Path to Success (GPS) Program.

II. Post-Sabbatical Activity (Fall 2018 and onward) and Dissemination of Research

- Provide a report for campus-wide distribution to my colleagues regarding best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities.
- Provide a PowerPoint presentation during Flex Week and on Multicultural Day.
- Provide a best practice lesson plan during the English department's Best Practices Workshop.
- Provide a lesson plan for my colleagues teaching College Strategies MO1.
- Present at conferences, such as the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC) and the Young Rhetoricians' Conference (YRC)

III. Background and Rationale

As a faculty member since 2005, I have gotten to know my colleagues and administrators very well and I am thankful for their support regarding students with physical and learning disabilities. ACCESS has been a terrific resource for my students. I teach English 1A: English Composition and English 1B: Literature: Critical Thinking and Composition on ground and online. I have also begun teaching in the Guided Path to Success (GPS) Program, College Strategies MO1. My students with learning disabilities ask a lot of questions, come to my office hours, and make sure that they are on track. They appreciate the organized layout of the classroom, and the scaffolded assignments. The success of this population is very important to me, so I have completed academic and professional research related to my discipline regarding basic skills and learning disabilities. When I was asked to be a panelist regarding equity at a regional conference, I began to recognize the need to see **students with learning disabilities as an important equity-related issue.**

Recently, I presented at the Regional Writing Conference titled “Fostering Equity in Composition: A Cross Institutional Conversation” on April 22, 2016. The panel included my colleagues Jeremy Kaye, Tracy Tennenhouse, and Diane Scrofano. I presented “A Few of the Best Practices to Achieve Equity in the 21st Century Classroom,” which included a list of ten best practices. I focused on equity for all students but emphasized that this also meant ensuring success for students who were at risk of failing, which includes students with learning disabilities.

I have also attended the On Course National Conference on April 7-9, 2016. At the national conference, I met instructors and parents who were willing to share resources and were knowledgeable in this area. They provided me with relevant materials, such as the “Autism Spectrum Guide for Wisconsin Technical College System Staff.” I did this for the benefit of my

students and colleagues but I also have a personal motivation. My son was recently diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

My son, Jonah, is a very intelligent twelve-year-old but he has been failing school since the first grade. I had him tested by doctors and school administrators for the last five years but to no avail. He was fine, they said, but I knew that he was not and his self-esteem was plummeting. Finally, he received an evaluation by Dr. Shiro Torquato, a private clinical and educational psychologist, and she identified his neurological and behavioral disorders so that he may move forward with the curriculum knowing how he learns best. He is now a successful student in the sixth grade.

During this time, it was shocking to me how outdated our notions are about what comprises an ADD or ADHD student. These assumptions imply that a student with ADD/ADHD is hyper, talkative, or physically active. Assumptions for the student on the autism spectrum may be that he or she lives in his or her own world and repeats him or herself, taps incessantly, or reminds us of the lead character in *Rain Man*. This is simply not the case. In fact, there are spectrums within spectrums and each student is unique. Also, a student may have ADD and ASD, like my son, instead of just one as was previously thought.

Therefore, I would like to request a one-semester leave, and I have not taken a leave of absence before. I intend to find out more about learning disabilities through obtaining and reading relevant research, attending conferences, and interviewing Dr. Shiro Torquato, a clinical and educational psychologist, along with my colleagues in the ACCESS program and at the colleges within our district in order to create a document for our campus regarding best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities that includes the most up-to-date information in

order to best serve this population that is currently growing, and will continue to grow, on our campus. **With regard to the value of the proposed leave to the college, the goal is to provide current and future faculty with the best practices in teaching students with learning disabilities with an emphasis on reading, writing, and critical thinking skills in an effort to highlight the importance of accessibility and equity for these students.**

IV. Communication with Colleagues at ACCESS and “Value of the proposed leave on instruction or service to students”:

- According to Moorpark College Fast Facts, in the fall of 2015, 14,055 students attended our college. The “value of the proposed leave on instruction or service to students” would be the direct impact that the report and/or presentations have on my colleagues and how they utilize the resources in their respective classrooms. In addition, my students will be directly impacted by the findings. I teach 120-150 students per semester on ground and online. Over the next twenty years, the impact of my research may positively influence 6,000 students.
- Spoke with ACCESS Student Services Assistant, Bonnie Lara, regarding my sabbatical.
- I have viewed the ACCESS Web site and have picked up literature at their office.
- I will meet with ACCESS Learning Disabilities Specialist and Instructor, Melanie Masters, on November 1st to discuss the importance of her position and how she helps students on our campus along with best practices to assist students with learning disabilities in the classroom and general student success and equity including Title V, which supports the retention and preparedness of students attending an Hispanic-serving

institution. This ensures that the materials I create will complement what is currently being offered.

- I will meet with ACCESS Coordinator, Silva Arzunyan, on November 1st to discuss the current and on-going vision of ACCESS along with applicable resources for my research.
- I have communicated with Obalid Younan, who is a Student Services Assistant in the DSPS office. He has provided me with **data regarding the students ACCESS serves:**
 - For Fiscal Year 2015-16 (Summer 2015, Fall 2015, and Spring 2016):
 - 1,253 students in ACCESS (unduplicated count)
 - 4,419 exams were administered in the testing center

V. **Results and Benefits to Moorpark College and “Value of the proposed leave to the college”:**

- With regard to the value of the proposed leave to the college, the goal is to provide current and future faculty with the best practices in teaching students with learning disabilities with an emphasis on reading, writing, and critical thinking skills in an effort to highlight the importance of accessibility and equity for these students.
- For the campus-wide community, the results would be having access to a report along with a presentation on the topic of best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities through the following: Flex Week and Multicultural Day.
- The benefit to the college departments will include access to a report along with a lesson plan that demonstrates best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities for the M01: College Strategies course in the Guided Path to Success Program.

- I will provide the English department with a Best Practices Workshop concerning my sabbatical along with a lesson plan that demonstrates best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities. I provide these workshops for my colleagues each semester and highlight various topics.
- **All materials will be provided electronically and will be posted on the English department's Web site and elsewhere, where applicable, for accessibility.**

VI. **Consistent with the VCCCD Mission and “Value of the proposed leave to the district”:**

- My sabbatical is consistent with the district's vision and mission statements.
- The district's vision statement asserts, “Keeping in mind that students come first, we will model best practice in instructional and service delivery, student access, community involvement, and accountability.” The focus on best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities is a “student first” issue and will offer an opportunity to provide the campus community with a “model best practice in instructional and service delivery” with a focal point on “student access.”
- Furthermore, per the district's mission statement, I will be actively providing the campus community with “access to comprehensive quality educational opportunities that support student learning and student success” regarding learning disabilities through campus presentations.
- I plan to visit the Educational Assistance Center at Oxnard College to tour their facilities and to discuss best practices with colleagues.

- I plan to also visit the Educational Assistance Center at Ventura College to tour their facilities and to discuss best practices with colleagues concerning their Learning Skills Program, which provides specialized classes that emphasize the importance of individual learning styles and are self-paced.
- I will send my report to my colleagues at the respective Educational Assistance Centers upon completion.

VII. Prospective Attendance at National Conferences

- Modern Language Association Conference (January 2018)
- Conference on College Composition and Communication (March 2018)
- Annual National Autism Conference (April 2018)
- Online Teaching Conference (California Community Colleges Online Education Initiative) (June 2018)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness California Annual Conference (August 2018)

VIII. Proposed Timeline and Activities

- **January:** Attend Modern Language Association Conference and begin typing report for campus-wide distribution regarding learning disabilities. Maintain a dialogue with ACCESS and continue to meet periodically with ACCESS Learning Disabilities Specialist and Instructor, Melanie Masters, and ACCESS Coordinator, Silva Arzunyan.
- **February:** Read articles and books from the tentative bibliography. Visit the Educational Assistance Center at Ventura College to discuss their Learning Skills Program, tour their facilities, and talk with colleagues about best practices. Visit the Educational Assistance

Center at Oxnard College to tour their facilities and talk with colleagues about best practices.

- **March:** Attend Conference on College Composition and Communication. Interview Dr. Shiro Torquato, a clinical and educational psychologist.
- **April:** Attend the Annual National Autism Conference. Begin working on and complete the PowerPoint presentation for Flex Week and Multicultural Day.
- **May:** Finish the report for campus-wide electronic distribution create a lesson plan demonstrating best practices for teaching students with learning disabilities for the English department's Best Practices Workshop and the M01: College Strategies course in the Guided Path to Success Program.
- **June:** Attend the Online Teaching Conference (California Community Colleges Online Education Initiative)
- **August:** Attend National Alliance on Mental Illness California Annual Conference.
(Tentative depending on the dates.)

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