



VENTURA COLLEGE SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSAL

Proposed Project: Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Awareness, Support and Prevention Programs

Submitted by: Lucy Capuano
Psychology Department

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Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status: **Full time hire, Fall 1991**

Request for: **Spring 2019**

Previous Sabbaticals: **0**

BACKGROUND FOR SABBATICAL PROJECT:

Part of the healing process is sharing with other people who care – J. Cantrell

National Statistics:

The rate of sexual assault and intimate partner violence in the college population has reached epidemic levels. The Department of Justice reports, between one in 5 and one in 4 women and between 3% and 6% of men, experienced attempted or completed sexual assault in college. (D.O.J., 2000). According to the Center for Disease Control: "Sexual violence includes a continuum of behaviors such as attempted or completed rape, sexual coercion, unwanted contact, and non-contact unwanted experiences like harassment."

The National Domestic Violence Hotline, reports that more than half (57%) of college students who report experiencing dating violence and abuse said it occurred in college. The Sexual Assault and Prevention and Awareness Center at the University of Michigan, found that the rate of domestic violence among college students, equals that of sexual assault. Their research found that 1 in 5 college students, has experienced intimate partner violence (2014). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports: "Intimate partner violence is most common among women between the ages of 18-24. (2015, NCADV). Domestic Violence, includes physical, emotional, sexual violence and stalking.

VCCCD 2017 Annual Security Report:

The *Clery Act*, requires colleges and universities to collect and disclose crime statistics on their campuses. In compliance with the *Clery Act*, The Ventura County Community College District has published the 2017 District's Annual Security Report. The following table summarizes the combined crimes statistics for Ventura College, Moorpark College and Oxnard College. It

includes statistics for Sexual Offenses and Intimate Partner Violence, on campus and off campus, for the following years: 2013-2016, and as of date, for the year 2017.

OFFENSES:	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Sex Offenses, Forcible:					
RAPE	1				
FONDLING			1		
SEXUAL BATTERY	1	2			3
Sex Offenses, Non-Forcible:					
INDECENT EXPOSURE	1	2	2		
OTHER (not specified)			3	1	
VAWA Offenses:					
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE			2	3	1
DATING VIOLENCE			2		
Miscellaneous:					
Sex Offender Registrants	17 (8 at VC)	22 (10 at VC)	No Info Avail.	26 (11 at VC)	No Info Avail.

a more comprehensive list of all offenses reported in the Annual Security Report (2017) follow this link:
http://www.vcccd.edu/sites/default/files/files/departments/police/2013-2015_3-year_comparison_w_non_campus_public_properties.pdf

Potential Obstacles Facing College Students:

As compared to the national average, the number of crimes reflected in the Ventura County Community College 2017 Annual Security Report, may seem small in comparison. Many victims of sexual assault and domestic violent offenses, including those in the Ventura County Community College District, typically do not report the crimes. The above numbers do not clearly reflect the magnitude and seriousness of the problem in our district. The following are some of the numerous reasons why college students decide not to reach out and get help:

- They don't want anyone to know.
- They feel ashamed and partly responsible for what happened to them. This is especially true if the victim is a male.
- Feeling stressed and overwhelmed with school, work and family responsibilities.
- Ignorance, fear and lack of a support network. Victims often feel alone, isolated, helpless and hopeless.
- Unaware of services available to them.
- Didn't know how to report the incident.
- History of Domestic Violence at home. Not knowing that intimate partner violence is "not the norm."
- Students may not understand what constitutes a criminal offense. Feel the crime was not serious enough
- Lack of trust in the mental health and judicial system

Available VCCCD Prevention and Awareness Programs:

As a professional in the mental health field for over 30 years, first as a therapist and now as an educator, I am shocked to see how many of our students lack the basic information regarding the issues of intimate partner violence and sexual assault. In my psychology classes, we examine these topics at length. It is clear to me by the discussions we have in the classrooms, that most of our students are not aware, or have the knowledge necessary to understand and effectively address these complex matters. Frequently, I find myself referring students to the health center for mental health counseling, or referring students to other organizations that can help them.

As the faculty adviser for the Psychology Club for the last 10 – 15 years, the club has organized the annual *Clothesline Project*. <http://vcpsychology.homestead.com/Clothesline-2017.html> Clothesline is designed to increase awareness on domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and bullying. During this event, students are given the opportunity to create t-shirts displaying their own personal stories with sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and/or bullying. The Psychology Club has collected over 400+ shirts over the years. These shirts have been crafted solely by Ventura College students. Many are able to, for the first time ever, share their experiences with sexual, emotional and/or physical violence.

At this time, the Ventura County Community College District, provides a number of valuable and essential programs regarding sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking. These include, but are not limited to: Title IX training, classroom lectures, various services provided by the campus police and health center, mental health counseling, online education, etc. Given my training, observations and experience in this field, I believe that these programs are not sufficient given the extent of the problem.

PURPOSE OF SABBATICAL PROJECT

The purpose of this proposed sabbatical project includes the following components: (1) visit other colleges to learn what they offer in the way of sexual assault and intimate partner prevention, awareness and support programs for their students. (2) Developing and organizing workshops presented by faculty and professionals, hosting discussion panels, screening relevant films, and increasing overall awareness and understanding of intimate partner violence and sexual assault in both male and female college students, and (3) visiting other campuses which have implemented the R.A.D. program and becoming certified as a Rape, Aggression and Defense Systems (R.A.D.) Instructor, with the goal of implementing this program on our campus.

http://www.rad-systems.com/about_us.html

VALUE OF SABBATICAL PROJECT TO VCCCD AND VENTURA COLLEGE

According to a study by Mengo and Black, published in the Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice (2015), students who experienced both physical/verbal and sexual violence experienced a significant impact on their mental health and a drop in their overall grade point average. These students were also more likely to drop out of college. The added burden of dealing with the long lasting effect of having been victimized, often proves to be too overwhelming for these students. The stress, anxiety and depression may be too much for them to handle.

The proposed goals for this project, will ultimately benefit the VCCCD and Ventura College, by providing added mental health and educational support services that will aid in the retention of students. In addition, these services will help students get help, stay in school, complete their assignments and raise their GPAs.

VALUE OF SABBATICAL PROJECT TO VENTURA COLLEGE STUDENTS

As stated throughout the proposal, many of our college students are not well informed on the issues regarding sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. Educating students on prevention skills, increasing their awareness of the problem, and providing support for victims of these crimes, will ultimately help them make better decisions in protecting and advocating for themselves, and will encourage them to seek out help when necessary. The Rape Aggression and Prevention System training (R.A.D.), may give them added security by providing education, discussions and self-defense strategies. And since many of our students will be transferring to a four-year university, they will be better informed of the danger of sexual assault on college campuses.

VALUE OF SABBATICAL PROJECT TO THE INSTRUCTOR

As a therapist, my primary focus was working with survivors of child abuse, sexual assault and clients who had been raised in very dysfunctional, sometimes violent households. There were many times when I would come home and I just couldn't stop thinking about the stories I heard in the therapy sessions. It was heartbreaking and taxing hearing case after case of emotionally wounded clients who were trying to heal from the aftermath of horrific and tragic experiences. I would find myself crying and sometimes feeling at a loss in how to help them.

When I was hired as a Full-Time Psychology faculty in 1991, I decided to leave my practice and focus exclusively on teaching. For the last 26 years, I have found teaching to be an exceedingly rewarding and gratifying profession. I am very grateful to be able to work closely with our students. When I first started at Ventura College, I promised myself that even though I was no longer doing therapy, I would continue to educate and provide resources to those who have been victimized and in need of help. Part of my curriculum, is addressing the topics of domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, mental illness, addiction, suicide and more. As difficult as these topics might be, I find myself feeling comfortable examining these issues in the classroom. It wasn't long before I would hear students share about personal experiences involving some kind of violence during these lectures.

Regularly after exploring these topics, I ask students to provide written, anonymous feedback about what we talked about in class. Several state how helpful it was to have an open discussion about these taboo subjects. Those who were able to relate, stated they no longer felt alone, and were willing to get counseling or at minimum share their stories with friends and/or family members. On average, I refer between 10 – 15 students every semester to the health center or other related agencies.

As the Psychology Club adviser, hosting the annual Clothesline Project, has become the highlight of the year. Club members become energized and want to make a difference in their community. For this event, the club organizes speakers and invite organizations to participate. At the event, students have the opportunity to create their own shirts. Even though it is a highly emotional day, seeing students create and hang their shirts on the clothesline, is an indescribable feeling. Seeing the community of students supporting one another in these often heartbreaking times, leads me to think that these kinds of projects help in the healing process, while providing a supportive environment for them to share their tragic stories. My hope is that this proposed project will teach prevention skills, educate and provide support to those who need it.

I thank the committee for your time and consideration.

Warmly,

Lucy Capuano
Psychology Professor
Faculty Adviser to the Psychology Club