

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Empowerment & Leadership Development Project for Fall 2024
Submitted by Dr. Rocío D. Hernández
CalWORKs Program/Counseling
October 2023

Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status

Full-time hire date: July 2017

Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Background of Sabbatical Project:

"Self-efficacy and ability are correlated, how an individual applies their own abilities is dependent on their level of self-efficacy" ([Bandura, 1997 as quoted in Hernandez, 2006, p.40](#)).

I discovered Albert Bandura's theory while working on my thesis as a graduate student in Counseling at Cal State Northridge. Since then I've been highly influenced by his Social Cognitive Theory framework, specifically with his concept of Self-Efficacy. Bandura defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave," (Bandura, 1994, p.1).

As a Counselor, I am in a position to positively influence student self-efficacy. My role within CalWORKs gives me the opportunity to encourage students to reach beyond their participation in Welfare to Work. My goal is to adhere to the mission of CalWORKs and prepare our students by promoting their economic self-sufficiency. During my time as a Counselor and Coordinator here at Ventura College, I have found that the many of our post traditional students, especially our single head of households, arrive to our campus with low self-efficacy, lack of confidence, and imposter syndrome. I have found that students often times lack confidence in their ability to succeed in their education and gain access to economically sound employment.

[CalWORKs](#) is California's welfare reform program designed to help head of households become self-sufficient through a variety of educational and work-related activities, including attendance at Ventura College. [CalWORKs at Ventura College](#) is 67% Hispanic and 94% female (based on verified CalWORKs students Spring 2023 through Fall 2023). For the current Fall 2023 semester, 82% of the students in CalWORKs are single head of household. My role as counselor and coordinator of a program where the majority of the students are female and Hispanic, includes a responsibility for ensuring that in addition to earning their education they have the skills to serve in diverse roles and leadership capacities in the work force. While more Hispanic female students, and female students of color in general, are enrolling in college in comparison to their male counterparts, this does not automatically mean or translate to their having the tools for success, feeling sense of belonging and preparedness for their education. Focusing on the fact that more Hispanic female/Latinas are enrolling and earning degrees than their male counterparts

and thereby considering that the end of the success of our Latina student population takes away from the assistance and preparation they need to enter the workforce. While the college enrollment and degree attainment of Hispanic female/Latinas is higher than that of their male counterparts, they are still underrepresented in the workforce and leadership roles ([Hernández, 2023](#)). This project aligns with the [mission of the Ventura County Community College District](#) and its' commitment to “excellence in serving the diverse needs of its educational institutions, constituent groups, and communities.” The self-efficacy these students gain while at Ventura College needs to be further developed to ensure it follows them in their ability to enter the workforce in diverse roles and leadership capacities. This additionally aligns with the [Ventura College mission statement](#) in ensuring workforce preparation opportunities.

Purpose of Sabbatical Project:

The purpose of my project is twofold (1) achieve certification for emotional intelligence and/or strengths coaching and/or cultural responsiveness to assist in skills development for one-on-one counseling and workshop facilitation (2) develop curriculum for a summit with focus on Hispanic female/Latina students on empowerment and leadership development (by way of self-efficacy and imposter syndrome) with initial focus on CalWORKs students.

Components of Sabbatical Project:

- **Summit Development:**
The first phase of the project includes research, networking and partnership development with local county and national organizations that work to improve the opportunities for our Latine community, specifically Hispanic female/Latinas. This may include travel to organization offices and/or institutions providing leadership development for Hispanic female/Latina students. Examples of organizations include the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators (AHSIE), the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), St. Augustine College (approximately 83% Hispanic, 82% female). The purpose is to gain knowledge and best practices on the work these organizations do in improving leadership development through opportunities provided for Hispanic female/Latina students.
- **Facilitator Skills Development:**
In order to fulfill the facilitation of this summit I will enroll in courses/online certification program(s) in emotional intelligence and/or strengths coaching and/or cultural responsiveness to assist in skills development for workshop facilitation and one-on-one counseling. Completing one of these certifications will assist in adding to my tools for use in one-on-one counseling with students as well as in workshops.
- **Creation of Summit Content and Materials:**

The final phase of my project will include the creation of summit sessions and materials. In 2019 I began implementing panel presentations focused on the experiences of Hispanic female/Latinas in higher education both regionally and nationally. Eventually out of these sessions I had the opportunity to publish and edited anthology titled *Diverse Experiences of Latinas in Higher Education, Chingonas on their Own Terms*. I will use my experience and research from these presentations and publication in combination with my research, networking, partnership development for this project as well as the skills development course(s)/certification to assist me in the creation of this summit. This summit will then be utilized to create an annual experience focused on Hispanic female/Latina students for our college and district wide with initial focus on CalWORKs students.

Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD and Ventura College:

The development of an empowerment and leadership development summit will help our Hispanic female/Latina students, especially within CalWORKs, to gain self-efficacy beyond the degree and into the workforce. This will include the creation of a template (via SharePoint) so as to duplicate the summit at Ventura College and district wide. Collaboration with county organizations has the potential to strengthen the role of Ventura College in the education of our Latinx community and the relationship with the county and CalWORKs program. This can have a positive impact on enrollment in career programs.

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students:

The facilitator training courses will equip me with new skills and strengthen my role as a counselor and positively impact students. Hispanic female/Latina students need to see themselves in diverse roles and leadership capacities in the workforce and beyond the degree and representation in the curriculum and in the workforce matters. I will have more tools to serve students in CalWORKs and all students on campus. In providing empowerment and leadership development, I believe these students will increase in motivation and self-efficacy in and outside of the classroom.

Value of Sabbatical Project to the Instructor:

The completion of this project will strengthen my counseling skills and strategies tool box for one-on-one student appointments, for building rapport with county partners for CalWORKs, and workshop facilitation. This project will help in building and strengthening relationships with county and local organizations and strengthen my coordination and networking skills.

I thank the committee for their time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Rocío D. Hernández, Ed.D
Associate Professor, Counseling