Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal: Spring 2016

English 3 Textbook
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Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status: Full-time hire, August 2000; one year temporary full time, August 1999. Number of sabbaticals: **1**: Spring, 2009.

BACKGROUND FOR PROJECT

This semester my students paid $85.00 for their English 3 text: *Real Writing with Readings*. In a good semester, we exhaust 50 percent of the material. This is not uncommon for composition texts—they carry a year's worth of content. I have looked at several, and this is about as good as it gets.

Furthermore, entire MLA and grammar instruction and exercises are available at no cost online through a variety of educational sites: Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) and citationmachine.net, for example.

The readings are okay, but limited and inconsistent: several are too heady, for example; others so culturally disconnected they're not worth reading. So I supplement with six or seven pieces through the semester. I also—and importantly—feature several of their peers' essays from over the years (see below). Finally, the costs of the textbook has prevented me from assigning a full-length book, whether it be the One Book selection or another.

Increasingly, we're a basic skills institution, and basic skills instructors have a special challenge: We must meet the students where they are and help them improve their academics. I love teaching this level, and I know my students. I know what they need and don't need. After a lot of struggle, I've found a good rhythm, a good balance between nurturing them and challenging them. They are vulnerable for a number of reasons: lack of confidence, financial stress, weak academic skills. I've found a teaching approach that best suits them, with one exception: the textbook.

And so the next step is to create the text, to make the class whole in approach and content. It will invite them into the writing process, building their ability and confidence in a way that the "big" texts don't.

PROPOSAL

I will write an English 3 text more suitable and more affordable than the ones offered by the big textbook companies.

Student learning outcomes, grading criteria and course requirements will be the same.

I will make no money. Students will be charged the cost of printing.

many are the first in their families to attend college. Acclimating to the college culture is essential to helping them grow into confident, proud students.

This section will feature information on the Library (including online searches, databases, etc.), Reading Writing Center, Tutoring Center, Health Center, EOPS, and EAC. Activities will supplement information.

READINGS

Using Pearson's Mercury Reader Custom option, I will collect a dozen or so level-appropriate shorts essays. We will read the One Book choice, if appropriate; if not, then another full-length book. At least two VC student sample essays included in each essay section.

BENEFITS

Students

As stated above, the project will help students academically and financially. The projected cost of my text, reader and book is $35. That's $50 back in their pockets. At semester's end, they're free to sell their copies or give them to other students.

The text will be revisable according to student needs. I can change it semester-by-semester. They will use *the whole thing*, which is written to *them*.

Personal

As noted, I have committed myself to teaching basic skills after years of teaching 1A and 1B exclusively. I find this level challenging and rewarding. Creating this text will center the class to my teaching style and students' needs in a way that I strongly believe will benefit everyone.

I look forward to the opportunity to create another writing book. Although it may not seem so, it's actually a very creative and invigorating process. I like the idea of leaving out what they don't need!

College

As I develop the text I will get feedback from other VC composition instructors. I will present the book at a department meeting and a flex activity. I'm hopeful that others will be inspired to create their own texts as well. They are, of course, more than welcome to use it for their classes.