

Oxnard College Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Spring 2010
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Statement of Purpose:

Counselors and educators need a broad range of skills to assist in the education, retention, persistence, and transfer of students with disabilities. The purpose of this spring semester sabbatical is to do research and produce a document for counselors and faculty that will focus on the intervention strategies that are necessary for students with disabilities to succeed in school, work, relationships, and life. This research will also be submitted for publication in a national journal.

Due to the recession and the California budgetary constraints placed on California Community Colleges as well as, the increase in returning Wounded Warriors from the Wars. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs have confirmed that post-secondary institutions of higher education will see an influx of students and military veterans with disabilities. Past practice has been for general counselors to refer any student with a disability directly to Disabled Student's Programs and Services (DSPS). Students with disabilities have a right to see any counselor for academic advisement and can still receive services for their educational limitations through DSPS. College counselors, faculty, and departments need to take an active role in the process of working with this population in order to ensure student success.

College counselors and classroom faculty must have firsthand knowledge of issues that make students with disabilities at risk of dropping out and failing. Most educators who have been in the profession for a number of years know that where academic performance is high, relationships among students and staff are generally good. The success rates of students with disabilities completing college or ever getting and retaining employment is at best very poor. The ability to cope with the residual effects of acquired injury or chronic illness is correlated with many variables. This includes: the disability or disabilities (person's functional capabilities and limitations), psychological and emotional factors, social issues, educational background, vocational experience, spirituality and belief systems, culture, ethnicity, financial stability, medical support team, role change, age, gender, gradual or sudden onset, self-esteem, stability of disability, severity of disability, and balance of a person's resources and deficits.

One of the most significantly apparent tools for coping with disability is to understand one's own disability and coming to terms with their disability. Another construct of this proposed research project will be how one adapts to their disability. This project will review definitions of adaptation and adjustment to disability, theories and models of adjustment to disability, and measurements of adaptation to disability.

In order to counsel, teach, and assist these increased numbers of disabled students entering college and attending classes, counselors and classroom faculty need to

understand why so many fail college. This research will explore and address why students with disabilities need strong coping skills and adaptation to their disability in order to succeed in college, employment, and life.

Background of Project and Specific Activities:

In my past fifteen years of research regarding people with disabilities, I have published ten book chapters and fourteen journal articles regarding the medical, attitudinal, psychological, sexuality, and psychosocial aspects of people with disabilities. In my recent review of literature, I have found limited studies or research discussion on the strategies and successful interventions that are necessary for students with disabilities to succeed in school and in life. These strategies and interventions would include a change in student's attitudes, behaviors, and adapting/coping skills to their disabilities.

The study of success rates among students with disabilities in academia and employment is of particular importance to the field of education and counseling because these students are among the highest at risk students to drop out of school and are the least employed in the United States.

I will engage in research and practice of current theory and methodology in the fields of rehabilitation counseling and psychology. This sabbatical will examine the theories and models of adjustment to disability but also examine the factors that place these individuals at higher risk by examining societal and faculty attitudes towards disability, people's reaction to specific disabilities, and factors that relate to self defeating thoughts and low self esteem related to a particular disability.

Value to Students, Faculty, and Community:

Students

Students with or without disabilities will benefit from the opportunity to understand how students with a disability who possess good coping skills, have an understanding of their disability capabilities and limitations, and have a positive self regard for themselves can become successful. It will also give students insight as to why not coping and adapting to one's disability can be the biggest barrier to one's success and happiness.

Faculty

Faculty will have the opportunity to become familiar with and recognize their own attitudes towards disability by understanding the psychological, psychosocial, and medical aspects of students with disabilities. This will be accomplished by understanding how students' disabilities can be a barrier to their success unless they learn to cope and adapt to their disability.

Community:

Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities have been the rule, not the exception in society. This research will be an effective vehicle toward educating the community as to why students with disabilities are at risk of dropping out of college and have a lower rate of obtaining and retaining their employment than the general population.

Relevance of Project:

As earlier stated, there is limited research regarding strategies and successful interventions that change student's attitudes, behaviors, and adapting/coping skills in relation to disability. The lack of knowledge regarding these issues has a profound effect on the ways student's access and persists in education. This sabbatical will look into addressing how educators and counselors can use this information to better understand the psychological, psychosocial, vocational, and educational limitations of students with disabilities.

Outcomes:

The end product of my research will be to produce a document for publication and a plan for integrated service delivery of information and resources that support scholarly research that enhances counseling, teaching, and learning at Oxnard College. Also, it is this researchers desire that knowledge of the final product will help inform and create a learning environment that meets the specific needs and support of students and faculty.

Timeline:

This project will be completed during the spring semester 2011 and ready for publication and presentation to the Oxnard College President and Ventura County Community College Chancellor and Board of Trustee's.