

# **Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal**

Creation of Learning Communities through Service Learning Project

Fall 2012

Submitted By: Lauri Moore  
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November 2011

## **Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status**

Full-time Hire Date: January 1996, Part-time Hire Date: January 1991

**Previous Sabbaticals: 0**

## **Background of Sabbatical Project:**

Learning Communities while present at Ventura College have in the past been limited to "Paired Classes" where two instructors have either taught two different courses back to back crossing disciplines and curriculum or where two instructors have been present in both cross-disciplined courses. These paired classes provided students a vehicle for applying and integrating curriculum across disciplines as well as providing the instructors opportunities to expand their knowledge of each other's subject while also gleaned new strategies of teaching techniques from one another. While these strategies for building community within the classroom and college have been very successful, the development of a holistic approach to the fullest potential of Learning Communities has yet to reach its full potential at Ventura College.

I was one among nine of my colleagues who was fortunate to have attended a Summer Institute hosted by the Washington Center this past June, focused on the development of Learning Communities across the nation. It was during this week-long Seminar that I was exposed to a broadened definition of what constitutes a "Learning Community" and the expansive variety of methods in which to enhance both the students and faculties learning opportunities in the classroom, on the campus and within the community.

My Social Problems (Sociology V02) course which I have taught now for over 20 years has always had a "service learning" component to it. In the past it was called "volunteer work." The new paradigm includes the application of integrative learning through both experiential and theoretical modalities. The students are now required to take the concepts and theories learned in the classroom and apply them through hands on/real world experiences in the community and write up the connection and

present their findings in both a written and oral/visual presentation. Currently the students are responsible for securing their own Service Learning opportunities which has been problematic in the past.

One of the goals of the Mission set forth by the members of the Learning Community Committee in our action plan was to expand Learning Communities at Ventura College in an effort to: promote student engagement, student effort, engagement in classroom discussions, student to faculty interaction, faculty to faculty interaction, student to student services interaction, and student to community interaction. Another goal was to: Create a holistic approach to engage students actively participate in their own learning to achieve success, retention and persistence. And one last goal that fits perfectly with my proposed project is to: Provide learning opportunities for applying and integrating curriculum across the disciplines. My proposal for **Creation of Learning Communities through Service Learning Project** addresses most if not all of these goals. The Service Learning aspect enhances learning experiences for the students through creating a sense of “community.” Service Learning can be a powerful tool towards retention and student success. It also brings Ventura College into the community.

My goal is to utilize my sabbatical leave to establish yet another component to our Learning Community here at Ventura College by establishing a Service Learning Component. This will provide the students a comprehensive opportunity to explore areas of interest in the community for the selection of a possible choice of major and or occupational field of interest to pursue while applying their experiences across the disciplines.

### **Purpose of Sabbatical Leave:**

The purpose of this sabbatical project has three dimensions: (1) to research the best practices utilized by other community colleges which have Service Learning as a component of the Learning Communities, (2) to collaborate with Psychology and Political Science faculty to develop materials for a multi disciplined course incorporating Poli Sci V01 SL, Psych V01SL and SocV01SL and (3) to explore and secure Service Learning projects and develop partnerships with local agencies and service provider in the community with the goal of establishing three collaborative Service Learning projects that will be utilized for the multi disciplined course.

## **Components of Sabbatical Project:**

### ➤ Research Best Service Learning Practices

The first phase of my sabbatical will be to research and identify community colleges that have Service Learning programs within their Learning Communities. Once I have secured four such programs I will contact the lead faculty and schedule a visit to the college to meet with the lead faculty and interview them about the development of their program, their challenges and their successes. I will also attend at least one class per college that is utilizing Service Learning in the classroom. While there I will observe the class and informally interview the students. I will schedule and visit a minimum of four colleges. California State University Channel Islands has a well established Service Learning program and they will be one of the four colleges I will be visiting. The remaining three will be community colleges. The goal will be to glean the “best practices” for implementation here at Ventura College.

### ➤ Develop Course Materials for PolSciV01/PsychV01/SocV01

Once I have secured the information from my research of best practices I will schedule meetings with my colleagues in Political Science and Psychology to share my findings. These findings will be utilized as a base for application in the development of a comprehensive curriculum across the three disciplines. This will enable the faculty involved to craft an optimum applied Service Learning experience while creating a “Community of Learners.”

### ➤ Identify and Secure Service Learning Opportunities/Projects

One last dimension of the sabbatical project will involve the exploration of possible semester long projects opportunities available in the community. Contacts will be made to local government agencies as well as non-governmental agencies and service providers in the community in an effort to identify and secure at least three collaborative “Service Learning” options that will best suit the needs of the students, the curriculum and the community. These three projects will be incorporated into the multi disciplined PolSci/Psych/Soc SL course that will be offered in Spring 2013.

## **Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD and Ventura College**

In Sociology the students learn about the theory Structure Functionalism. In a nut shell the functionalist perspective says that every part of society is interdependent and interrelated and that all parts work together for the common good, that every part has a function and when one part changes, all parts change to adjust and adapt. This project has a function that will benefit to not only the students involved, but the District, the college, the faculty and the community. By creating a “Service Learning” component to an already existing “Learning Community” a community of learners is expanded. The faculty will benefit in their collaborative efforts of not just the development of curriculum for the course but the valuable experience of learning “best practices” of teaching from one another. The college will benefit by having a lead person to consult for the further development of Service Learning across the campus. The benefits to the College and the District will come in the form of recognition and appreciation by the community for bringing much needed assistance to the agencies by having students in the field performing services and tasks that will benefit the community at large.

## **Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students**

The most important question to ask is, “What value will this project provide Ventura College students?” The answer is, the students will gain many benefits for having been part of a “Learning Community” and having participated in a “Service Learning” project. The first obvious benefit would be the opportunity to provide the students with a vehicle to effect positive change in their community, to develop a sense of responsibility and foster civic engagement. Secondly, the students will benefit by seeing and making the connection between the theories and concepts they are learning in their courses and the application of these in the “real world.” The collaborative nature of the Service Learning projects will provide them with hand on experiences in critical thinking, time management and leadership skills. The exposure to community organizations and community learning experiences will provide them avenues to explore areas of interest for identifying a possible major field of study and or future occupational opportunities. When applying to the universities the student’s transcripts will reflect their having taken a course in Service Learning. This will be an added benefit in the application process and can be utilized in their personal statements for admission. Most importantly this Service Learning Project will enable and empower students to “become the change they wish to see in the world.”

Ghandi

## **Value of Sabbatical to the Instructor**

I became a teacher because I love to learn. I am very excited at the possibility of having an opportunity and avenue to further my knowledge regarding “Learning Communities” and “Service Learning.” What better way to broaden my education than to collaborate and learn from those who have gone before me. Visiting colleges and classrooms and ascertaining what works and doesn’t work will give me the proper tools to implement an effective Service Learning experience for my students and share my findings with a broader community of learners through the Learning Communities Committee as well as the Teachers’ Exchange Group. The benefits abound, for myself, my colleagues, the college, the students, and the community. It is a win-win scenario.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my proposal.

Respectfully,

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