

**Ventura College Sabbatical Leave in FALL 2025**  
**Report**

Project Increase Enrollment: IDS V01 & Skills Development  
Submitted by Dr. Rocío D. Hernández  
CalWORKs Program/Counseling

**Background Summary:**

This sabbatical project focused on strengthening engagement, enrollment, and verified participation within the Ventura College CalWORKs program through the reactivation of IDS V01 CalWORKs Orientation. College CalWORKs operates in collaboration with the Ventura County Human Services Agency Welfare-to-Work program and serves students who are verified cash aid recipients and enrolled in Ventura College coursework. Because state-reported CalWORKs participation is dependent upon county referrals, verification, and course enrollment, the program's official head count differs from the total number of students served. The proposed orientation course would provide prospective and current participants with an introduction to Ventura College, CalWORKs services, educational planning, and career education pathways while helping students overcome barriers related to unfamiliarity with the college environment and low self-efficacy. The course would also support increased student engagement, persistence, and verified enrollment by creating an accessible entry point into the college system and strengthening collaboration between Ventura College and the county Welfare-to-Work program. This project aligns with the missions of both Ventura College and the Ventura County Community College District in promoting educational access, workforce preparation, and opportunities for underserved student populations.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of my project was to: (1) Research CalWORKs orientation courses at comparable institutions in the process of development, (2) Develop and update the IDS V01 course, including objectives and content, (3) skills development and training to assist in the teaching and facilitation of the course and to improve counseling skills.

**Components (1) of Sabbatical Project:**

- ✓ Research CalWORKs orientation courses at comparable institutions.

**Results:**

- Santa Barbara City College
  - Conducted consultation with Maria Montejano-Thayer regarding program operations, student engagement practices, and service delivery models within the CalWORKs program.
  - Identified that Santa Barbara City College does not currently offer comparable CalWORKs-specific coursework or program structures aligned with Ventura College's existing service model.

- Gathered information regarding SBCC's CalWORKs student orientation process, which is delivered fully online to increase accessibility and accommodate student scheduling needs. The program utilizes incentive-based engagement strategies tied to completion of key onboarding and counseling milestones, including participation in counseling appointments, development of an educational plan, and course registration activities.
  - Learned that SBCC's CalWORKs program operates in conjunction with the EOPS/CARE program structure, allowing for integrated student support services. Orientation activities are frequently combined across programs, which reportedly contributes to increased student participation, improved attendance rates, and broader student engagement during onboarding processes.
  - Discussion also highlighted the value of coordinated support services and incentive-based participation models as potential strategies for improving student engagement and orientation completion rates among CalWORKs students.
- Los Angeles City College
    - Conducted consultation with Rey Garcia regarding statewide CalWORKs program practices, student engagement strategies, and implementation models across community college programs.
    - Identified that Los Angeles City College does not currently offer a comparable CalWORKs-specific course designed to support onboarding or program engagement for CalWORKs students.
    - Received information regarding LACC's CalWORKs orientation structure, which is offered in both online and in-person formats to accommodate the larger student population served throughout Los Angeles County. Discussion highlighted the importance of flexible delivery methods in improving accessibility and participation among students balancing education, employment, and family responsibilities.
    - Learned that LACC utilizes incentive-based engagement practices to encourage student participation and completion of onboarding activities, including attendance at counseling appointments, completion of educational plans, and course registration milestones. These strategies were identified as effective approaches for increasing student follow-through and sustained engagement with CalWORKs services.
    - Discussion also included information related to the implementation of the GAINS Act, scheduled to take effect July 1, 2026, which is intended to strengthen support and educational opportunities for CalWORKs participants statewide. Shared best practices emphasized the importance of coordinated student support services, early intervention, and structured orientation processes to improve student persistence and program outcomes.

- College of the Canyons
  - No Response
- Antelope Valley College
  - Declined Meeting Request

### **Components (2) of Sabbatical Project:**

- ✓ Develop and update the IDS V01 course, including objectives and content

### **Results:**

- Successfully completed a five-week Canvas recertification course, renewing authorization to teach online and strengthening proficiency in online instructional technologies, course design, accessibility standards, and effective distance education practices.
- Developed and refined course objectives and instructional content to align with the structure and expectations of a one-unit course, ensuring clear learning outcomes, academic rigor, and a student-centered approach to instruction.
- Created course key topics and learning activities designed to promote student engagement, critical thinking, skill development, and alignment with institutional standards and course objectives.
- Designed a draft hybrid course shell with one module that strategically integrates both online and in-person instructional components to support flexible student access, engagement, and effective course delivery.
- Participated in a summer curriculum project stipend initiative under the leadership of the Articulation Office, gaining additional familiarity with the curriculum development and approval process, including course design considerations, curriculum standards, and institutional review procedures in preparation for FALL 2026 course submission process.

### **Components (3) of Sabbatical Project:**

- ✓ Skills development and training to assist in the teaching and facilitation of the course and to improve counseling skills.

### **Results:**

- Completed re-certification course for Canva, online teaching. Utilized updated course outline as potential course material in practice shell to begin developing prospective course.
- I was accepted into Escala's spring course on cultural responsiveness training. Given my role and oversight of a program that serves a student population that is approximately

70% Hispanic/Latinx, primarily women and single heads of household, this training would have meaningfully strengthened both the facilitation of the CalWORKs course and my counseling practice. Unfortunately, I was unable to complete the training due to the associated cost. At the time, an exception was recommended based on the availability of carryforward funds and the benefit to students and the campus. While the recommendation was not advanced from the office of the president for further approval, I remain committed to pursuing professional development opportunities that enhance culturally responsive practice and student support.

- Continued education was completed for existing Social & Emotional Intelligence Certification. Refresher courses completed include:
  - Coaching Emotional Intelligence
  - Using Positive Psychology to Coach Emotional Intelligence
  - Leader as Coach
  - Coaching Resilience | Instilling Grit
- Read the following material for consideration to include with Emotional Intelligence Module for CalWORKs Course: “Set Boundaries, Find Peace” by Nedra Glover Tawwab, “The Let Them Theory” by Mel Robbins.
- I revisited and studied Top Five Clifton Strengths as they relate to my work as both Coordinator and Counselor.

### **Summary:**

Completion of the sabbatical project provides even stronger support for the reactivation of IDS V01, strengthening the Ventura College CalWORKs program by helping students understand college and county requirements, explore degree and career pathways, and build confidence toward self-sufficiency. The project aligns with the Ventura County Community College District Strategic Goals focused on equity, student achievement, and workforce development, while also enhancing counseling services through updated training and certification. Ultimately, the reactivation of this course can serve as a model for the other colleges within our district who also have college CalWORKs programs.

As a faculty counselor overseeing the College CalWORKs program, I am invested in serving our students and in the continued collaboration with the Ventura County Human Services Agency. The success of our students impacts their children and is an investment in our community. The completion of this project strengthens our referral process with our county partners, improves enrollment in our program and thereby our college.

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