



Nathan Cole
SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSAL
DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS
“Innovative Online Course Design and Performance for
the Theatre and Performing Arts in a COVID-19 Space”

INSTRUCTOR SABBATICAL LEAVE STATUS

FULL-TIME HIRE DATE: August 05, 2013

PREVIOUS SABBATICALS: 0

BACKGROUND

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities in Theatre and the Department of Performing Arts at Ventura College were moved to remote learning and performance activities. Although I feel my colleagues and I have been innovative with our approaches to creating engaging remote learning environments in both Zoom and Canvas, along with producing performance opportunities for our students using virtual technologies, my concern is how the coronavirus pandemic may affect the future of education and my discipline. I feel it is important to update my online teaching skills by learning the latest technologies and to explore the many possibilities to create more innovative online classrooms and virtual performance space.

To help with the transition to remote learning for the entire institution, I offered to assist our campus’ instructional designers with grading and mentoring for the Online Teacher Training Course taught over the summer. Over the summer and this past fall, I mentored seven full and part-time faculty and continue working with some to prepare for the spring semester. In addition, I begin the 4-week Peer Online Course Review (POCR) training offered through the OEI and @ONE next week. I do this because I want to be of service to my colleagues and the institution as we forge ahead through the effects of COVID-19 and how it is redefining education and the lives of our students.

I am currently applying to the Masters of eLearning program at Cal State East Bay and will register for one to two courses during the Fall 2021 semester. During the sabbatical, I plan to take six to nine units to get closer to completing the degree.

For information about the degree, please visit <https://www.ce.csueastbay.edu/ce/programs/elearning/>

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

For the past few years I contemplated entering a masters and doctorate program for instructional design. Considering the current state of affairs and the government’s national response to the pandemic, now is the appropriate time to ensure my discipline and department stay relevant in a COVID-19 world.

OUTCOMES FOR THE SABBATICAL:

- Identify current and developing online technologies and platforms used to create innovative online curriculum and performances for theatre
 - Expand current curriculum to include more innovative online content
 - Develop better strategies for creating and producing theatrical works in a virtual environment
 - Incorporate strategies and technologies to create more equitable learning and performance experiences and to improve access and educational opportunities for students in the performing arts
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VALUE OF PROJECT TO VENTURA COLLEGE AND VCCCD

It is important to do this work so that discipline of Theatre Arts does not become obsolete at the institution and within the district. Most important, the quality of education must continue to occur in an ever-changing environment. This work will allow me to help my colleague in my discipline and department to continue to evolve as we face the unknowns presented by the pandemic. By learning more innovative pedagogical approaches in online instruction, I become a pioneering mentor and more inventive peer reviewer as I aid the institution to get qualify more courses for the OEI. In addition, I will become more resourceful in aiding faculty who struggle with creating virtual curriculum and content for disciplines that do not easily translate to remote instruction. Most important, this work may be applied to the industry as many arts organizations and professional theatre companies are struggling to stay open and plan for future openings as the pandemic continues to plague the nation.

VALUE OF PROJECT TO STUDENTS

This work will be invaluable as I continue to develop curriculum and content to face the challenges students are currently encountering. There have been numerous times both this and last semester where instruction stopped to discuss the obstacles and fears students are experiencing on a daily basis and address the best ways forward. As the pandemic continues to grow and limit our everyday activities, I find that the opportunities we offer students allow them an escape and a way to cope and feel a small sense of normalcy. This project allows me the opportunity to improve that space and engage them in new ways and keep them on a path to achieving their educational goals.

VALUE TO THE INSTRUCTOR

As mentioned before, I spent my summer working with faculty to prepare for the fall. On top of this, I frequently met virtually with students to edit and finish their directing projects from the spring. The moment we began remote instruction in the spring, we as a community find ourselves in a constant state of reacting. As an institution, we have made incredible strides to push all instruction into an online format to continue to provide quality education. However, it is a struggle. My discipline is very demanding and

creating everything in a remote format is extremely challenging and time consuming. By allowing myself a semester to focus on nothing but best practices in online pedagogy and to research and investigate new platforms and technologies, I will be able to approach what we face from a proactive mindset. This will allow me to return to the college with a stronger approach to better plan to navigate an unknown future and the effects of COVID-19.