

Sabbatical Proposal- Fall 2023

Tamarra Coleman, English Faculty & DEI Coordinator

Proposed Leave- Fall 2023

Years of Service: Spring 2017-present

Previous Sabbatical Leave- None

Background/Context:

In 2015, I spent three months in Costa Rica at Earth University completing a 12-week internship in *Agricultura Urbana* (Urban Agriculture). It was my sabbatical project at my former institution, Moraine Valley Community College. I chose this project as a way to deepen my understanding of *sostenibilidad* (sustainability), more specifically sustainable agriculture. At that time, I had been serving as the Faculty Coordinator of The Democracy Committee—a national initiative for community colleges to support civic-engagement and practice—a commitment to sustainability and social justice were core tenets. As the first person in this role, I developed and facilitated programming, professional development and community engagement opportunities for students, faculty and staff. I infused civic practice and sustainability into my courses, as a faculty member, and I desired to gain greater knowledge to bring back to my students and the institution. I learned far more than the implementation of sustainable farming practices. I learned about *desarrolla la comunidad* (community development) and the institutional framework that promoted this kind of thinking and practice among its students at *Universidad La Earth* (Earth University). I was able to bring this concept back to my former institution, and more importantly, carry it with me throughout my career and bring this to Moorpark College. The idea is that it is the role of institutions of higher education to prepare students to be citizens of the world and stewards of the land and committed to the development of their communities. This framework and practice has informed my thinking.

In 2018, only one year after I was hired, I was invited by former president Luis Sanchez to speak about the importance of civic engagement and practice in community colleges at the college's Strategic Planning Retreat, a commitment that was subsequently included in the college's Master Plan and goals. In support of this goal, I led an MC L.E.A.D.S. workshop for students in spring 2020 (Advocacy 101) and virtual workshop in fall 2020 for faculty, staff and students responding to the college's heightened social justice focus after the murder of George Floyd. In 2021, I was asked by President Julius Sokenu to present on social justice in the community college at the Strategic Planning Retreat. This has become the foundation of our work at Moorpark College—a focus on serving and providing a space for self-actualization for all of our students, a space that is equitable and just. I have been committed to encouraging student voices, democratic practice on campus and social justice in my roles as Multicultural Project Specialist, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator and the founder and Chair of VCCARA

(Ventura County Colleges Anti-Racism Alliance). I also participated in the All-African Diaspora Education Summit in Ghana in September of 2022. All of this work is evidence of my commitment to my personal growth, and also my growth as a faculty leader on our campus.

I have always had a passion for social justice, and my time in Costa Rica and my most recent trip to Ghana has deepened my commitment to the work and peaked my desire to learn from a global perspective about justice and equity and sustainability. Costa Rica is a country that is committed to environmental sustainability, democracy and peace. Costa Rica became the first country in the world to abolish their military in 1948. Because it no longer spends resources on a military, Costa Rica has been able to fund schools and hospitals. Public education in Costa Rica is free and mandatory. Costa Rica has a 96% literacy rate. Since 1987, Costa Rica has been leading the way in environmental conservation. Recognizing the errors of their ways in deforestation and unsustainable agricultural practices, Costa Rica has shifted its focus to sustaining the people, economy and the environment.

This aligns with Moorpark College's Strategic Goal #3 (Students Success), Goal D (Promote Civic Engagement, Advocacy and a Global perspective).

Project:

On this proposed visit to Costa Rica in the fall semester of 2023, I will take five classes at Universidad Para La Paz (University for Peace) focused on Global Leadership. I will also have the added benefit of three individual coaching sessions to help develop my skills as a leader. As an identified leader of social justice and anti-racism on our campus and in our district, I believe these courses will enhance my leadership practices and my theoretical understanding of leadership and community building.

Global Leadership Diploma– University for Peace, Costa Rica

Five Courses required: *sample*

- Positive Leadership
- High performance Teams: Embracing Our Differences
- Skills for Effective Negotiations
- Design Thinking
- Educating in Changing Times

These courses are taught by faculty from around the world bringing a variety of perspectives and experiences to the course content. University for Peace, created by the UN General Assembly, is an institution built on the foundation of peace and global

awareness and has been training leaders to address problems in various social and environmental contexts to promote human well-being.

“Located in Costa Rica, within the University for Peace, established by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UPEACE), the UPEACE Centre for Executive Education delivers dynamic courses to leaders from around the world. We use educational platforms to connect nonprofit leaders, business executives, educators at all levels, UN staff, students and other professional audiences.”

“There is a strong need for more changemakers in this world, and we believe that everyone has the potential to make a difference. At the Centre, we empower people to use their passions and strengths to be agents of change. We help them see their own potential and develop the skills, mindsets and networks to make a positive impact on the interconnected world in which we live.”

-University for Peace

Value of the proposed leave on instruction or service to students

Cultural Competency and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is about understanding and valuing different cultures. Time outside of the United States borders offers an incredible opportunity to see the world, myself and my students from a different perspective. Learning from and with faculty and students from around the world will broaden my understanding and deepen my compassion and empathy for our students, particularly those from disadvantaged and marginalized communities. This professional development experience also offers me an opportunity to enrich my students with the knowledge I gain about other cultures, social contexts and social problems from a global perspective. As an educator and as a champion for diversity, equity and inclusion, my experience will aid in the development and implementation of curricular and co-curricular programming that will enhance the student experience inside and outside of the classroom.

This is in alignment with Moorpark College’s Strategic Direction #1 (Student-Centered Curriculum), Goal F (Culturally responsive course content, teaching and academic counseling methods). And VCCCD Strategic Goal #3 (Closing Equity Gaps by developing and using culturally relevant curriculum and instruction)

Value of the proposed leave to the college

Moorpark College is a finalist for the coveted Aspen Prize. The college’s commitment to social justice and student success are leading factors. To continue to be successful as an institution in a time where demographics are rapidly changing, it will require transformational leaders to change with the times and create a campus that breaks down walls and borders that have once divided us and acted as impediments to student

achievement. Leadership with a global perspective and knowledge and skills to build communities and teams to achieve common goals in a diverse environment is invaluable. My development as a leader on our campus is an asset to the ongoing work of the college to meet its mission:

Grounded in equity, social justice, and a students first philosophy, Moorpark College values diverse communities. We empower learners from local, national, and global backgrounds to complete their degree, certificate, transfer, and career education goals. Through the integration of innovative instruction and customized student support, our programs are designed to achieve equitable outcomes.

This aligns with Moorpark College's Strategic Goal #3 (Students Success), Goal D (Promote Civic Engagement, Advocacy and a Global perspective).

Value of the proposed leave to the district

I am an identified leader in the district. I have been a DEI champion and an anti-racism advocate and a flag-bearer for social justice. I have been committed to collaboration, unification and development on all of the campuses in our district through my work in VCCARA, as DEI Coordinator and my work as Multicultural Project Specialist. I have also served on district and board committees to offer input and perspective on DEI issues. I have intentionally gone beyond the scope of my responsibilities at Moorpark College and reached out to the sister colleges because I believe as a district, we must move forward together. My professional development at the University For Peace will provide the district an even greater resource to continue to move toward the California Community College's Vision for Success. I will be better equipped with the tools to lead this work using a framework and leadership model that supports and encourages the development of new leaders and new voices.

This is in alignment with VCCCD Strategic Goal #1 (Instill a culture that values diversity, students, our communities, collaboration, and the success of each employee). Major Strategies: A. Implement the VCCCD Leadership Academy and establish coordinated district/college new employee orientation. B. Support professional development activities, engagement in participatory governance committees, and employee training on safety, discrimination, harassment, Title IX, and ethics as examples.

Outcomes

1. Presentation at Spring 2024 Flex: Summarize experience, learning and implications for Moorpark College and the VCCCD.

2. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop leadership training for students interested in furthering efforts towards social justice (i.e. equity, sustainability and global education). Possible partnerships:
 - a. Manager of Student Activities & ASMC
 - b. Environmental Science faculty & related clubs
 - c. Director of International Students
 - d. Director of Student Equity
3. Partner with the District Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workgroup for the development and support of district wide professional development opportunities for faculty, staff and administrators.