

Beth Megill

Sabbatical Application Request

One Semester Sabbatical for Fall 2024

Sabbatical Project Overview:

Please note: this project was proposed last year but did not rank high enough for selection. This was prior to the campus-wide awareness of these issues and the depth of their grave effects. I have since added to the proposal recounting some of the essential events that I hope will strengthen the narrative of why consent culture and theatrical intimacy training is so essential to the performing arts department and the success and safety of our students in the arts and campus wide.

The work of keeping our students safe while learning is never ending. Safety in the performing arts is essential both physically and emotionally for the students to do their work as dancers, actors, musicians, performers. The negative impact of sexual harassment in the arts is something our students should be aware of and prepared for as they enter into four-year programs or professional careers in the arts.

Since the first submission of this proposal last fall, issues surrounding student safety and sexual harassment have escalated, culminating in a campus protest regarding sexual harassment and assault policies on campus in December of 2022.

Here are a few links from that time:

- [VC Star Article about the Dec 2022 Protest](#)
- One of a series of [articles in the Simi Valley Acorn](#)
- A 27-minute spot on [Branching Out with Acorn Newspapers Podcast](#)

All of the above highlight the student voice and a call for reform both systemically and in the hallways of campus. As a campus we have since hired Grand River Solutions as a third party to help process the reform of the system and address lingering issues about the initial complaints, held district PD sessions on the nature and processes of Title IX on campus, and appointed a new position at the district office. However, I believe these administrative actions are often addressing the issues too late. We need consent culture to be in the water in order for students to learn essential skills for professionalism and personal safety.

Suzanne Fagan from theater and I have worked extensively to bring the issue to a practical point in the classroom and hallways of our campus. We have been working to bring specialists from the [Theater Intimacy Education group \(TIE\)](#) for intensive sessions with faculty and introductory sessions with students. I have since created new classroom materials addressing consent culture that have been used in both theater and dance audition processes and in my own face to face classes.

What I have learned in this time is that consent culture is rooted in equity practices and restorative justice. It is a deep and rich area of philosophy, pedagogy, and practice that I want to learn more about through a semester long sabbatical project. I hope upon return to provide much needed support to the Performing Arts community on campus by being the boots on the ground for this issue, modeling the best practices in my own classroom, training fellow faculty on practical basics, and providing expertise in high intensity rehearsal and performance situations.

Need for stronger Consent Culture practices:

Since COVID closures (and the momentous MeToo movement), I have witnessed an even greater need for students to learn how to consensually interact with each other physically, verbally, and creatively in dance and theater spaces. I believe it is our job to model and convey the best practices of the field while teaching our students what is and isn't appropriate behavior between choreographers, directors, dancers, and actors. Hostile or uncomfortable work environments especially in a field which can require touch and vulnerability can disrupt entire projects resulting either in students dropping and/or being dropped from productions and classes.

This sabbatical project aims to cultivate safer spaces for our Moorpark College Performing Arts students as I would receive newly available training in the field of Intimacy Direction and Coordination. The work of an intimacy coordinator or director is to ensure that the performers on stage or screen are safe and comfortable while working on a show or project that requires sexual scene work or other intimate touch. This is useful and applicable to dance interactions as well as live theater and musicals.

This proposal outlines essential coursework through a certifying body called the Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC) and self-directed research for coaching intimacy in live performance to ensure best current practices in the dance and performing arts program at the Moorpark College. I would return with stronger skills for establishing better boundaries and clearer expectations of our students and would be able to consult and work as needed with other faculty on projects of this nature.

What does an Intimacy director do?

Intimacy directors and choreographers have existed for the past decade or so but have become more central to the creative process since the MeToo movement gained momentum and national recognition in 2017. As of 2022, organizations and unions are strongly recommending intimacy direction as a best practice. Students coming through our programs and entering the industry should know about and expect to be working with intimacy director and coordinators as professionals.

To learn more about the field of Intimacy Coordination and Direction, please view the following resources:

- Choreographing Intimacy on Set: CBS News <https://youtu.be/GLu2-FY6dic>
- SAG-AFTRA Explains their support for intimacy directors: <https://youtu.be/FsigNtQKnV0>
- Comparing Intimacy and Stunt Coordinators: <https://youtu.be/Ws6Rpre6gnw>

For an introduction to common sexual harassment issues in theater, please read the following:

- Facing (and Fixing) the problem of Sexual Harassment in Theater:
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5984c4a0cd39c369f61bbf0f/t/5bce80bee4966b5e2c2388c7/1540260045383/MeTooSouthernTheatre.pdf>
- On Stage Blog (April 2018) Article concerning sexual harassment between students/peers in productions:
<https://www.onstageblog.com/columns/2018/2/4/the-ugly-truth-of-sexual-misconduct-in-our-community-and-college-theatres>
- On Stage Blog entry (Oct 2022) outlining unskillful behavior on behalf of a HS Theater Director. <https://www.onstageblog.com/editorials/2022/10/5/tx-high-school-theater-director-accused-of-sexual-harassment>

One of the key solutions identified by Lehman and Morris in their article *Facing (and Fixing) the Problem of Sexual Harassment in Theater* (linked above) is to clearly establish expectations for performers, crew members, and staff early in a production. The role of the intimacy director is to do exactly that, so that people entering into a creative or production process feel safe and can skillfully complete the work (or learning) that needs to be done.

Value to the individual faculty:

I intend to learn new ways to invite students to be both safe and expressive in intimate situations as required in a live dance or theater performance. A few years back I completed the Safe Zone training through Moorpark College, but otherwise have no formal training that relates specifically to intimacy in the dance field or theatrical performances. I hope the course work through the IDC and the self-selected reading will give me new tools strengthen the transformation begun in the PAC.

In my formative years of schooling and performing there was no such thing as intimacy coordination. I recall my first kiss was a stage kiss as Dream Laurie in Oklahoma. No one told me anything, taught me anything, or asked for any permission to touch. Fortunately, I felt more or less comfortable (even if a little nervous) as a heterosexual 16-year-old female with a gay male partner (and now that I think of it, he was well over 18). In the “theater and dance world,” this is just the way it has been.

I recall another situation when I was 15, and I missed a quick-change entrance. I had to get down to tights and a bra in order to change costumes in exactly 60 seconds on the side of the stage. The director, upset that I had missed the change, called everyone over to watch me with

my dresser try to do it timed so he could see what was happening. So, I did it. Granted, I had the benefit of a stable body image as a confident, CIS gender body and was more or less comfortable with doing what was needed to get my quick change down. But, in retrospect, there was no permission sought, and there was no verbal consent given. There was only authoritarian direction from my male director toward a young girl in front of a cast of mostly adult performers. This is just an example of how a power differential can cause discomfort in performers seeking to please their director or choreographer. Fortunately, this is the worst that I experienced. However, for many this would be nothing.

In short, this is an education I need because I never got it. And, after almost a year of discussions, and meetings with administration, student health, staff and fellow faculty on the topic of how to make lasting changes that are effective and meaningful, I realize that much more training and practice is needed to do this work with confidence.

Value to the students:

Upon my return, students will benefit from having an educated professional steering the helm during creative processes that involve touch, exposure, or other sexual content. Students participating in performances will experience a greater sense of safety and trust moving forward knowing that I have dedicated specific time and training to this important work.

I will be able to maintain standards of creative excellence in the program while keeping students safe and modeling for them the best practices of using touch and intimacy in their own creative projects. I want to foster a safe and creatively robust environment for the Moorpark College performing arts students so they can enter their professional world with integrity and confidence. They need to know what to expect from professionals in the field and be able to identify and respond to circumstances that are out of integrity.

Value to the college and district:

When I last proposed this sabbatical, I don't think the campus understood how critical these issues have become for the students in the PAC (and campus wide). Not until the protest and townhalls have we determined the necessity to take action and direct resources to the issue.

Having felt the effects of the alleged student perpetrator in my classrooms, I understand how important an established consent culture is for all students. The rumors alone ground the gears of learning and art making to a halt. I am keenly aware that mental health challenges from COVID closures and the resulting isolation have further changed the game. Students don't know how to be physically together in the same way they did before. We have strayed farther into unskillful behaviors.

Students are generally familiar with traditional classroom code of conduct, but when you have the heightened emotional experience of a "show climate," boundaries can get blurred. Working on a show there is competition between performers for roles, peer pressure to be accepted, and the fear of displeasing a director or choreographer or being labelled "hard to work with."

These are some of the conditions that lead to increased numbers of Title IX issues in the performing arts.

Social justice movements including MeToo and Black Lives Matter among others have changed the game. It is essential that we continue to move in the direction of equity, access, consent, and safety for all individuals making this awkward topic important to address in the dance studio, stage, and beyond.

I would be able to bring my new knowledge and skills back to the Performing Arts Center as a whole. I am already invited into theater performances as a movement coach to help support the students with embodied expression. This is another way I can help serve the department, division, and campus to foster safer relationships involving choreographed touch and exposure of a sexual nature. It is possible that upon we return there may be a need for new resources (in the form of stipends or other development resources) to be directed toward supporting and upholding consent culture and best practices in high-risk performance situations.

Previous Sabbaticals granted:

2014-2015

Sabbatical Topic: Inclusion and Access using Language of Dance (Dance Notation)

Seniority of Service:

Fulltime at Moorpark College since 2007

Likelihood of Continued Service

I currently have at least 12 years before I can apply for early retirement. I have a long way to go!

Reasonable distribution of sabbaticals in service area:

The Dance program last received a Sabbatical for 1 year awarded to Robert Salas in 2016-2017

Size and Scale of the Project:

This project should be conducted within one semester timeframe. I plan to spend an average of 35-40 hours a week to complete online classwork, selected readings, homework, dance program analysis (curriculum and best practices), and other relevant activities.

The two courses through the IDC will last 10 weeks: Level 1 is a 4 week course with zoom sessions on the weekends for 4 hours and asynchronous assignments during the week (Estimated total hours: 89) Level 2 is a 6 week course with weekend Zoom sessions and asynchronous assignments during the week (Estimated total hours: 150)

I plan to spend the following time on specifically Moorpark College Performing Arts projects:

- Intimacy and Consent practice sessions: 80 hours (2 weeks)
- Additional reading and research: 80 hours (2 weeks)

- Curriculum analysis and/or generating best practices materials to be shared with the community upon return: 80 hours (2 weeks)

Relevance to current teaching assignment:

I anticipate this training will support my work in all my teaching and program planning. However, I expect strongest application being in the following courses:

- Musical Theater Dance M17 (Our large-scale interdisciplinary performances)
- Movement Improvisation Danc M20ABC, M20H
- Dance Performance Danc M55ABCD

In addition, below are few examples from common PAC performance circumstances that will benefitted from the presence of an intimacy coordinator. As a collaborator on many PAC performances, I hope that my training will allow others to navigate common situations, and I could be further consulted or invited in for more intimate situations as needed.

- The portrayal of sexual assault
- The use of partial or frontal nudity
- Actors disrobing each other
- Specifically, the context of student written and directed one acts involving intimate situations which may involve practice outside class hours.

Objectives of the project:

1. Complete Levels 1 and 2 of the online course work entitled “Foundations of Intimacy: through the Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC) professional organization. (10 weeks)
2. Complete 5-6 additional workshops through IDC online offerings. (20 hours)
3. Conduct a foundational literature review from the IDC recommended resource list (80 hours)
4. Gather resources on intimacy and consent culture relevant to our Moorpark College student performer and choreographer/director population. (20 hours)
5. Cultivate skills and apply best practices for keeping our student performers safe during the various creative practice and performance opportunities at Moorpark College. (40 hours)
6. Review current Moorpark College dance curriculum and classroom standards to ensure we are operating with sensitivity and excellence regarding intimacy and performance. (80 hours)

Proposed Timeline:

Certification course work and Workshops:

The IDC offers courses on a regular basis. I expect that I will be able to complete the initial course and two levels of certification work within 3 months, leaving 2 months to conduct

further research into my areas of interest and the relevant context of a community college performance arts setting.

Additional workshops may be selected as they are available and relevant to dance education and performance in a community college setting.

As of writing this proposal, here is a list of upcoming workshop titles through the IDC:

- **Foundations of Consent & Intimacy Online Level 1 Begins Oct 26th**
- **Applications of Consent and Intimacy Online Level 2 Course Begins Nov 12th**

Stand Alone Workshops and Continuing Education:

- **Lean Forward: Intimacy Choreography Analysis, Oct 25th**
- **Considerations for Indigenous Intimacy, Nov 8th**

All current offerings can be reviewed at www.idcprofessionals.com/workshop

Self-Directed Reading and Research:

In addition to the certification course work and community workshop classes, I plan to read and review 3-5 books from the recommended reading list provided by the IDC. Titles may include books such as the following (to be determined as part of my course work and research to find the most relevant titles for dance and live performance).

Ask: Building Consent Culture by Kitty Stryker
The Ethics of Touch by Ben E. Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe
An Acrobat of the Heart by Stephen Wang
The Body Speaks by Lorna Marshall
The Lucid Body by Faye Simpson

If determined necessary or more relevant, I may choose to substitute 3-5 articles for a single book. Articles may include some of the following as deemed relevant:

“The Bases of Social Power” by John R.P. French, Jr. and Bertram Raven
“The Power Matrix” by Valeri Miller, Lisa Veniclausen
Fatherly: “How to Teach Young Kids About Consent
Edutopia: “How to Teach Consent to Elementary Students”
Planned Parenthood: “What is Sexual Consent?”

Proposed benefits or expected outcomes:

1. I will return and share my new knowledge and skills with my fellow faculty through division, department, and PAC advisory committees. The format will be a written or PowerPoint summary of my findings including any recommendations or key resources for reference. Additional resources may be helpful upon return to best disseminate the

information to the campus-wide community. Because content culture is “practiced,” there is a need for continued effort to uphold the standards.

2. I will be able to serve as a facilitator of best practices in a variety of performance context in the MC PAC.
3. I will review and revise current curriculum and classroom practices to ensure they are meeting industry standards. Should any recommendations surface, I will share them in the summary mentioned above.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any further questions about my proposal, the nature of the project or how it will be achieved, please feel free to contact me at bmegill@vcccd.edu.

Sincerely,
Beth Megill

Support from colleagues in the College, AME Division and PA Department, leaders:



MOORPARK COLLEGE

7075 Campus Road
Moorpark, CA 93021
www.moorparkcollege.edu
805 378 1400

October 31, 2023

Subject: Letter of Support for Beth Megill's Sabbatical Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express support for Beth Megill's sabbatical proposal. Over the past 18 months I have had the opportunity to collaborate, support, and observe the talents and passions of our performing arts faculty. Professor Megill stands out as an expert in her discipline and in her ability to connect with students. I've witnessed first hand the impact and importance of her instruction and leadership in the division. This sabbatical proposal involves research on the critical area that will benefit our entire campus.

Recently, I witnessed a small sample of how this topic can promote equity within and beyond the performing arts department. I observed Professor Megill co-lead a flex day session on how to deploy consent culture strategies in the classroom. The session was extremely well planned and delivered. Faculty and staff from across the college were discussing how these strategies provide practical ways to make our spaces safe for all students. In equity work, it's sometimes easy to say we support equity, but hard to find the observable effective ways to do that. Consent Culture strategies are equity work.

I have all the confidence that Professor Beth Megill's sabbatical will impact her division, but also the entire campus. This proposal has the support of my office for bringing this research into our campus and promoting it throughout all departments.

Sincerely,

John Forbes, Ed.D.

Vice President of Academic Affairs
jforbes@vcccd.edu
805-378-1403



October 30, 2023

Dear Sabbatical Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I strongly recommend Beth Megill for sabbatical leave consideration. Beth's sabbatical proposal speaks to the current needs of the college. Her proposal incorporates intentional strategies and training that will promote a culture of consent through best practices and intimacy training. Past Title IX incidents and protest highlighted the need for further policy development and training is needed in this area. Beth's proposal provides a unique opportunity to develop best practices, training for students and faculty on consent culture and intimacy training, and informed consent trainings that contribute to the reduction of Title IX episodic situations. Additionally, Beth's proposal will incorporate specific professional development training, completion of related coursework, and scholastic research in the field of Intimacy and consent culture. Her proposal includes a deliberate, holistic and comprehensive approach to developing needed training that supports students and is intended to create a safe environment that is founded on mutual trust.

The implementation of Beth's sabbatical proposal will be beneficial to students, faculty, the AMC division, and the college community. Students and faculty will understand, be informed, and participate in best practices that include consent culture and intimacy trainings intended to promote a safe learning environment within Performing Arts and beyond. The division and college would also benefit by the reductions of incidents categorized as Title IX, Student Conduct or in need of Behavioral intervention referrals. Moorpark College can also become a leader in higher education on Consent Culture and Intimacy training development.

I enthusiastically support the sabbatical proposal submitted by Beth Megill – it is currently relevant and much needed. The approval of her planned sabbatical would provide her with the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to develop proposed activities as a result of her completion of the planned professional development and research engagement. I encourage the committee to strongly consider the associated benefits of Beth's sabbatical proposal to students, the AMC division and college in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth David

Elizabeth David
Dean of Student Learning
Arts, Media, and Communication Studies
Moorpark College

October 24, 2023

Dear Sabbatical Leave Committee,

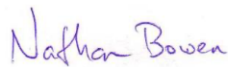
I am writing on behalf of Beth Megill to recommend her strong consideration for sabbatical leave. Beth's proposal is not only cogent and well-organized, but extremely relevant and needed for our students in the Performing Arts. She applied for this work last year and it was not forwarded with high priority last year. With all due respect to the Committee, it is my opinion that this was a colossal missed opportunity for Moorpark College to show that we can be leaders in Title IX by investing resources in faculty training. Fortunately—though unfortunately reactively instead of proactively—in the wake of events relating to Title IX this past year that brought the College and District into the public eye, we have seen movement by the District and the College to invest in restructuring Title IX processes and procedures.

It is my hope that, as Beth applies *again* for sabbatical leave to work on intimacy coordination, this time the Sabbatical Leave Committee will understand the import, relevance, and urgency of Beth's proposal and prioritize her work with strong marks. Her intention to receive continued intimacy and safety training is motivated both by personal professional development—gaining the kind of training she never had and should have had as a student dancer—and by filling an educational gap in meeting student needs.

Sexual harassment within the Performing Arts and the entertainment industry has drastic negative consequences. It can have significant ramifications on our programs, classes, and productions as trust among peers and collaborative artists are so vital to being able to create cohesive productions. In my role as Department Chair in Performing Arts I have become aware of how important it is to help students feel safe, and that students working in close proximity with one another need guidance on how to work with each other respectfully and comfortably. Beth's training would be an asset to colleagues and students in being able to model professionalism within the context of intimate situations.

I wholeheartedly recommend Beth for this sabbatical leave project, and she has my full support. We in Performing Arts would greatly benefit from this kind of leadership and training to help set the proper tone, provide support, and model professionalism for our Performing Arts students as they prepare for careers in the arts. Please review her proposal carefully as you consider the merits of all applicants.

Thanks,



Nathan Bowen, PhD
Chair, Performing Arts Department
Honors Coordinator



Robert Salas

RE: A quick note of recommendation?

To: Beth Megill

October 24, 2023 at 10:33 AM



Hi Beth,
See below for my brief statement.

R

Dear Sabbatical committee,

I whole heartily support Beth Megill's request for this important tenure objective. Consent culture and intimacy training has become a huge issue in both, stage productions and classroom setting where shared personal space and intimacy contact are a part of the performing art experience. Not only will this type of training benefit our student's safety and define consent and proper interactive behavior, it will also help those student and faculty who have been mistakenly accused. Understanding what consent and proper intimate contact in performance and class will provide a beneficial and safe learning environment for all those involved.

Sincerely,
Robert Salas
Dance Faculty

Original Letters of Support from 2022-23 proposal:



Priscilla Mora

RE: Sabbatical proposal draft

To: Beth Megill

October 24, 2022 at 5:56 PM

Dear Beth,

That sounds great!

Someone else in our division is requesting a sabbatical too, and she got feedback that it's important to include a note of support and/or a quote from leadership in your area. Feel free to include this response if needed.

Yes, I agree that the sabbatical project you proposed will be very useful to deepen practices and understanding of how to professionally and sensitively address intimacy issues that may impact dance/performance pieces. The knowledge you build will be useful not only to program colleagues but also to faculty in the performing arts in general. The topic is especially timely given the rise in concerns regarding sexual harassment prevention and education.

Best wishes,

Priscilla



Suzanne Fagan

Re: Intimacy Coordination and Direction Sabbatical

To: Nathan Bowen, Beth Megill, John Loprieno

October 26, 2022 at 4:01 PM

Dear Beth and all,

I have read your proposal and fully support your decision to take sabbatical and become well versed in this discipline. Having taken the first level with IDC Professionals in NYC via zoom myself, I immediately thought of you Beth. Their approach is very much in tune with what I know of yours, Laban notation and all.

In addition, the more PAC faculty that can be well-versed in this career path and approach, the better. The current climate of things demands it.

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[See More from Nathan Bowen](#)



John Loprieno

RE: Intimacy Coordination and Direction Sabbatical

To: Beth Megill, Suzanne Fagan, Nathan Bowen

October 26, 2022 at 4:31 PM



Beth,

I, too, am in full support of this. With all of the Title IX concerns that come through the PAC, it would be great to have someone in the building that is well versed in how to frame discussions on intimacy and to help establish guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Please LMK what more I can do to support you on this!

John