

Sabbatical Report – Ioana Schmidt, Ventura College Fall 2023

I. Summary of the Project

The sabbatical project focused on creating a comprehensive **Social Work and Human Services Internship Handbook** for Ventura College's SWHS program. This handbook establishes clear guidelines for the supervised field experience course (SWHS V10L). This includes detailing student roles, agency collaboration, and faculty support. The project also involved strengthening relationships with local agencies, reviewing curriculum to align with workforce demands, and exploring paid internship opportunities, particularly in behavioral health, a recognized workforce shortage area.

II. Components of the Sabbatical Project

Internship Handbook Development

The primary focus of this project was to create a **Social Work and Human Services Internship Handbook** for SWHS V10L. It integrates Ventura College's program goals, Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) core competencies, and fieldwork requirements. This handbook provides a standardized framework for field experiences, ensuring consistency and clarity for students, faculty, and agency supervisors. The handbook also includes important forms designed to guide and evaluate the fieldwork process:

- **Learning Agreement:** Outlines student objectives and activities. This form's details are developed collaboratively by the student with the agency supervisor and faculty to align with program goals.
- **Site Supervisor Final Evaluation:** Provides a detailed assessment of the student's performance, focusing on professionalism, skill application, and adherence to learning objectives.
- **Student Self-Assessment:** Encourages students to reflect on their strengths, challenges, and overall growth during the internship. This form also supports faculty in tailoring feedback and identifying areas for ongoing growth.

These forms streamline communication between students, supervisors, and faculty. They help to ensure accountability and a shared understanding of expectations. They are also used to assist in the final grading for the course.

Community Agency Partnerships

Relationships with seven community agencies were strengthened or formalized, offering students diverse opportunities for practical experience:

- **Turning Point Foundation:** Provides support for adults with serious mental illness and gardening therapy through Growing Works.
- **Interface Children & Family Services:** Focuses on human trafficking prevention and intervention.

- **Project Understanding:** Supports individuals at risk of homelessness, offering services such as tutoring and food services.
- **VC Caregivers:** Matches students with older adults to provide companionship and assistance with daily tasks.
- **Help of Ojai:** Addresses basic unmet needs for vulnerable populations in Ojai, including seniors, low-income families, and unhoused individuals.
- **CASA of Ventura County:** Engages students in a court-appointed advocacy role for children in foster care.
- **Ventura County Student Worker Program:** Provides paid internship/work opportunities in behavioral health, child welfare and social services.

Meetings with agency partners confirmed the current curriculum aligns with workforce needs, and no revisions were necessary at this time. Discussions with the new internship advisor in Career Services helped to strengthen cross-departmental communication and collaboration, ensuring students have access to career-building resources and support.

Efforts to create paid opportunities for students are ongoing and may potentially connect to the new state Wellness Counselor designation. The goal of integrating stipends into field experience offerings is ultimately to help reduce financial barriers for students and support equitable access to professional experiences.

III. Future of the Project

Future efforts will focus on expanding paid internship opportunities, building additional partnerships in youth behavioral health, and refining the handbook based on student and agency feedback. Ongoing collaboration with Career Services and community agencies will ensure the program continues to meet workforce needs and prepare students for success in social work.

IV. Value of the Sabbatical Project

The sabbatical provided the time and focus necessary to develop a critical resource for the SWHS program. The Internship Handbook enhances consistency, strengthens community partnerships, and ensures students are well-prepared to meet workforce demands. This project supports Ventura College's mission to place students at the center of their learning in an inclusive, equitable environment. By formalizing the internship process, the handbook ensures Ventura College Social Work students—particularly first-generation and Latinx learners—have the tools and support needed to navigate professional experiences. The structured field experience provides clear pathways for transfer to BSW programs or entry-level positions in social services while fostering collaboration with community partners.