



Ventura College

Sabbatical Leave Proposal

Faculty Member: Dorothy M. Farias, Ed.D
Division: Career Education II - Agriculture Department

Title of Proposal: Development of Noncredit Agriculture Training Courses and Certificate in Agriculture Systems Fundamentals to Expand the Ventura College Non-Credit Offerings to Agricultural Workers.

Proposed Term of Leave: Fall 2026
Full Time Hire Date: August 2018
Previous Leaves Requested: 1
Previous Leaves Granted: 0

I. Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this sabbatical project is to design and develop a new noncredit Agriculture Systems Fundamentals Certificate of Completion consisting of a series of stackable training courses to create an entry-level pathway into Ventura College's existing Agriculture Supervisor (COCN) program. These new noncredit offerings will provide accessible, short-term, bilingual training opportunities for farmworkers and entry-level agricultural employees, supporting skill development in both technical competencies and English language literacy relevant to agricultural workplaces.

Ventura County ranks among the top 10 agricultural counties in California, generating over \$2 billion in agricultural sales in 2024. Agriculture remains not only a cornerstone of the local economy but also one of the largest employers in the county, sustaining tens of thousands of jobs in crop production, harvesting, equipment operation, and food safety. Despite this, many workers in the sector face barriers to advancement due to limited access to formal training and English-language instruction that is contextualized to their industry.

This project directly addresses that need by creating bilingual, culturally responsive noncredit courses that teach core agricultural, safety, and workplace skills in Spanish, while simultaneously reinforcing English language and technical literacy. The micro-training model will allow students to progress at their own pace, earning recognition for specific skill areas such as Agriculture Technical Literacy, Safety, Equipment Operation, and Workplace Effectiveness. These micro-courses will stack into the new Agriculture Systems Fundamentals Certificate, providing a structured pathway to more advanced study and upward mobility within the agricultural workforce.

This work aligns with Ventura College's mission to promote equitable access, community engagement, and workforce innovation. It supports regional workforce goals by addressing the language and technical training gap for Ventura County's large population of Spanish-speaking agricultural workers. By designing bilingual, skills-based, and industry-aligned curriculum, this project will empower local farmworkers to strengthen their technical expertise, gain recognition for their learning, and build confidence in both their Spanish and English communication skills—ultimately advancing both workforce development and educational equity in one of California's most critical agricultural regions.

II. Project Description

During the sabbatical semester, I will design and develop:

1. A series of noncredit micro-credential courses organized into five thematic skill areas (outlined below).
2. A new noncredit Certificate of Completion in Agriculture Systems Fundamentals, with the micro-credential courses articulated as stackable components.
3. A complete program narrative and documentation package for Curriculum Committee submission.
4. Statewide collaboration with peer colleges developing similar programs through the F3 AgTEC and EFI grant initiatives (e.g., West Hills College Coalinga, Merced College), to ensure alignment with regional and statewide workforce priorities.

Courses/Micro-Trainings Framework

1. Agriculture Technical Literacy

- Digital Literacy for Agriculture
- Applied Technical Reading and Writing for Agricultural Workplaces

2. Agriculture Systems

- Introduction to Agriculture Systems
- Crop Production Systems Fundamentals
- Crop Pest Control Fundamentals
- Animal Production Systems Fundamentals

3. Agriculture Safety

- Basic Workplace and Field Safety (including Heat Safety training)
- Tool and Equipment Safety
- Pesticide Safety
- Food Safety and Harvest Hygiene

4. Equipment Operation

- Basic Equipment Operation
- Configuration and Calibration of Implements
- Troubleshooting and Maintenance Basics

5. Workplace Effectiveness

- Industry Communication Skills
- Interpersonal and Team Effectiveness in Agriculture Settings

Each course will be designed for noncredit short-term training (9–18 contact hours), with completion of 3 out of 5 areas leading completion of larger Agriculture Systems Fundamentals Non-Credit Certificate of Completion (COCN).

III. Objectives

1. **Curriculum Development:** Develop detailed Curriculum Outlines of Record (CORs) for 10–12 new noncredit agriculture courses.
2. **Certificate Design:** Create the Agriculture Systems Fundamentals Certificate of Completion, including course sequencing, outcomes, and program narrative.
3. **Industry Relevance:** Ensure courses align with the skills and competencies identified by local agricultural employers and workforce agencies.
4. **Regional Collaboration:** Connect with other community colleges (e.g., West Hills Coalinga, Merced College) participating in the F3 AgTEC grant collaborations to share frameworks and align curriculum, as well as meet with the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) Ag workforce industry leads to determine which areas of training are most in demand.
5. **Pathway Integration:** Establish clear pathways from noncredit training in the Ag Systems Fundamentals COCN to the existing non-credit Agriculture Field Supervisor program for those interested in skilling up to management positions. Likewise, create potential future bridges into credit programs in areas of Food Safety, Pest Control Adviser and Plant Science, and their related certificates and degrees.
6. **Equity and Access:** Design curriculum that supports English learners and adult students through bilingual and visually supported materials.
7. **Implementation Readiness:** Complete all Curriculum Committee documentation for submission and approval by course submission and program submission deadlines.

IV. Methods and Activities

- Conduct a needs assessment with regional agriculture employers, advisory boards, and community partners.
- Review existing noncredit agriculture and technical training curricula across California community colleges.
- Collaborate with faculty and program leads at West Hills Coalinga College and Merced College, as well as through F3 AgTEC/EFI networks to identify best practices.
- Draft Course Outlines of Record (CORs) and the program narrative for the new courses, including measurable outcomes and SLOs.
- Create sample instructional modules and assessment rubrics that emphasize applied learning and workforce competency.
- Prepare documentation for submission to the Ventura College Curriculum Committee and CCCCCO for approval.

V. Expected Outcomes

By the end of the sabbatical semester, the following deliverables will be completed:

1. 8-10 noncredit course outlines aligned with the Agriculture Systems Fundamentals COCN framework.
2. A complete noncredit Certificate of Completion in Agriculture Systems Fundamentals, including program narrative, objectives, and required documentation.
3. A curriculum and implementation plan detailing course sequencing, micro-training structure, and industry relevance.
4. A summary report of collaboration with industry partners, other community colleges, and F3 AgTEC/EFI grant participants.
5. Sample lesson plans and evaluation rubrics to support pilot course delivery and faculty onboarding.

VI. Benefits to Ventura College

- Expands noncredit offerings within the Agriculture Department and strengthens noncredit-to-credit pathways.
- Positions Ventura College as a regional leader in agricultural workforce innovation and adult education.
- Builds stronger collaboration with local and statewide partners, including industry and peer colleges.
- Advances the college's mission of equity, access, and community engagement by serving farmworkers and adult learners.
- Provides scalable, flexible training aligned with regional labor market demand and Vision 2030 goals.

VII. Timeline

Month	Activities
August	Conduct needs assessment; meet with industry and advisory partners; connect with peer colleges and F3 AgTEC/EFI collaborators
September	Develop first 4 micro-training course outlines; gather relevant labor market data (LMI) in order to begin program narrative. Notify South Central Coast Regional Consortium (SCCRC) of intent to create program.
October	Complete remaining course outlines; submit by VC Curriculum Committee deadline and correct any issues that arise in Technical Review. Finalize Agriculture Systems Fundamentals certificate framework and program narrative
November/ December	Develop implementation plan; complete COCN program narrative and submission to VC Curriculum; compile final sabbatical report

VIII. Dissemination of Results

Results and deliverables will be shared with:

- Ventura College Curriculum Committee
- CE II Division and AG Department faculty
- Regional workforce and industry advisory partners
- South Central Coast Regional Consortium (SCCRC)
- F3 AgTEC and EFI grant networks
- Ventura College Academic Senate – Sabbatical Subcommittee

IX. Conclusion

Ventura County’s agricultural sector stands as one of the most vital economic engines in California—ranked among the top ten agricultural counties statewide, with over \$2 billion in agricultural sales in 2024. Agriculture is not only a cornerstone of the regional economy but also one of Ventura County’s largest sources of employment, supporting a diverse labor force of farmworkers, technicians, and supervisors whose expertise sustains the county’s food systems and global competitiveness.

As the community’s public institution for higher education and workforce training, Ventura College plays a pivotal role in advancing equitable access to education, fostering economic mobility, and meeting the evolving needs of local industries. This sabbatical project directly supports that mission by developing bilingual, accessible noncredit training pathways designed to equip Ventura County’s agricultural workforce with essential technical and language skills for success in a modernized, technology-driven industry.

By creating new noncredit micro-credential courses and a Certificate of Completion in Agriculture Systems Fundamentals, this project will establish clear, stackable pathways for farmworkers and entry-level employees to gain industry-recognized skills in agriculture systems, safety, equipment operation, and workplace communication. Equally important, the courses will be designed to support Spanish-speaking learners in building English literacy within an agricultural context, ensuring that language barriers do not limit career advancement.

Through collaboration with regional employers, community organizations, and peer colleges involved in the F3 AgTEC and EFI initiatives, Ventura College will strengthen its leadership in workforce innovation and agricultural education. The resulting programs will not only enhance the professional capabilities of Ventura County’s agricultural workforce but also reinforce Ventura College’s commitment to equity, community partnership, and lifelong learning.

In a region where agriculture defines both the economy and the community, this initiative embodies Ventura College’s dedication to preparing students—and the local workforce—for success in a rapidly changing industry, ensuring that the county’s agricultural legacy continues to thrive through education, opportunity, and innovation.

About Equitable Food Initiative

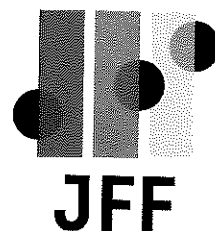


Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) is a multi-stakeholder skill-building and certification

organization committed to creating and sharing value in the produce industry for workers, growers, retailers and consumers. Our mission is to transform agriculture and the lives of farmworkers through a collaborative, continuous improvement approach to building better workplaces and successful, inclusive growing operations. EFI is now working with 80 growing operations in 5 countries that together employ over 60,000 workers. These farms, packhouses and processing facilities meet the highest labor, food safety and integrated pest management standards in the industry because on each operation we certify, EFI first trains a worker-manager "leadership team" in continuous improvement, communication, and problem-solving skills, which they then use to bring their farm into compliance with our standards.

Learn more: equitablefood.org

About JFF



JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. Join us as we build a future that works.

Learn more: jff.org

L.A.T.T.I.C.E.

Leveraging Agricultural Talent Through Industry Credentialing and Ecosystem-building

Our project aims to develop a credentialing system and career lattice for frontline farmworkers by refining and validating essential knowledge, skills, and abilities for a new Farmworker credential. Through data collection, focus groups, and industry engagement, we are assessing key competency areas to inform the credential's development. This initiative seeks to provide a business case and valuable insights that will benefit both farmworkers and employers in the agricultural sector.

Acerca de Equitable Food Initiative

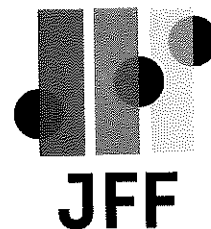


Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) es una organización de certificación y desarrollo de habilidades integrada por diversos sectores y comprometida

con la creación y el intercambio de valor para trabajadores, agricultores, minoristas y consumidores en el sector de los productos agrícolas. Nuestra misión es transformar la agricultura y las vidas de los trabajadores agrícolas mediante un enfoque de colaboración y mejora continua para crear mejores lugares de trabajo y operaciones de cultivo inclusivas y de éxito. En la actualidad, EFI trabaja con 80 empresas agrícolas en 5 países que, en conjunto, emplean a más de 60.000 trabajadores. Estas granjas, instalaciones de empaque y procesamiento cumplen con las más altas normas laborales, de inocuidad de alimentos y de manejo integrado de plagas de la industria ya que en cada operación que certificamos, EFI primero capacita en mejora continua, comunicación y habilidades de resolución de problemas a un «equipo de liderazgo» compuesto por trabajadores y gerentes, que luego aplican para lograr que su operación cumpla con nuestras normas.

Más información: equitablefood.org

Acerca de JFF



JFF es una organización nacional sin ánimo de lucro que impulsa la transformación de la mano de obra y los sistemas educativos estadounidenses. Durante 35 años, JFF ha liderado el diseño de soluciones innovadoras y escalables que crean acceso al progreso económico para todos. Únase a nosotros para construir un futuro que funcione.

Más información: jff.org

L.A.T.T.I.C.E.

Leveraging Agricultural Talent Through Industry Credentialing and Ecosystem-building (Potenciar el talento agrícola a través de la acreditación industrial y la creación de ecosistemas)

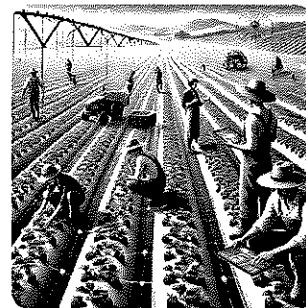
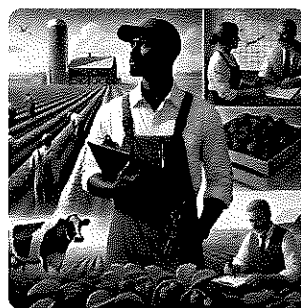
Nuestro proyecto tiene como objetivo desarrollar un sistema de credenciales y una red de carreras para los trabajadores agrícolas de primera línea mediante el perfeccionamiento y la validación de conocimientos esenciales, habilidades y capacidades para una nueva credencial para trabajadores agrícolas. A través de la recopilación de información, grupos focales y la participación de la industria, estamos evaluando las áreas de competencia clave para informar el desarrollo de la credencial. Esta iniciativa busca proporcionar un análisis comercial y conocimientos valiosos que benefician tanto a los trabajadores agrícolas como a los empleadores del sector agrícola.

ASAP

ADULT SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Agriculture Workforce Readiness

- Labor shortages & high turnover create production delays.
- Without structured training, workers rely on trial-and-error learning, increasing errors, inefficiencies, and safety risks.
- Employers struggle to assess worker competencies before hiring.



The ASAP Agriculture Assessment

Tailored for Farm Work & Processing

- Crop cleaning & field maintenance
- Farm equipment safety & operation
- Problem-solving & decision-making

Industry Impact & ROI

- High turnover & skill gaps disrupt farm operations.
- 32% of U.S. adults struggle with multi-step problem-solving
- Employers who invest in workforce development see higher productivity

(Sources: Adult Literacy & Learning Impact Network, ProLiteracy)

The ASAP Assessment Solution

A hands-on, competency-based assessment to ensure workers are ready for the field.

For Agricultural Employers

- Reduce safety risks and prevent costly mistakes
- Improve hiring and worker placement
- Ensure standardized training across teams

For Agricultural Workers

- Gain industry-recognized credentials
- Improve equipment handling, safety awareness, and crop care skills
- Get structured feedback for career growth

Agriculture Modules & Competencies

Module 1: Crop Cleaning & Maintenance

- Recognizing and managing weeds
- Proper handling of farm equipment

Module 2: Equipment & Safety Procedures

- Safe operation of agricultural tools

Employee Performance Profile



Meet Alejandro Rivera, Entry-Level Grower

Background:

- 1 year of hands-on experience in planting and crop management
- Recently transitioned from harvesting

How the Agriculture Credentialing Assessment Supports Alejandro

Validates Early-Stage Competencies

- Confirms foundational knowledge in planting, irrigation, and soil health
- Demonstrates safe handling of farm tools and equipment

Identifies Skill Gaps & Provides Targeted Training

- Highlights areas needing additional training, such as pest management, greenhouse operations, and advanced irrigation techniques
- Creates a structured learning pathway to help Alejandro progress toward higher-level grower roles

Accelerates Career Growth & Recognition

- Serves as proof of competency for employers, reducing the need for repetitive, informal training
- Helps Alejandro stand out for promotions into roles such as Irrigation Technician or Assistant Grower

Scan the QR codes below to learn more!



Agriculture Training &
Credential Prototype



Skill Competency
Mapping

Ready to Build a Skilled Workforce?

- Ensure workers have the skills to meet agricultural demands.
- Pinpoint areas where additional training is needed.
- Build a safer, more efficient workforce.

Contact Us Today!

ASAP

ADULT SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Preparación de la mano de obra agrícola

- Escasez de mano de obra y alta rotación crean retrasos en la producción.
- Sin una formación estructurada, los trabajadores confían en el aprendizaje por ensayo y error, aumentando los errores, la ineficacia y los riesgos para la seguridad.
- Los empleadores tienen dificultades para evaluar las competencias de los trabajadores antes de contratar.

La solución de evaluación ASAP

Una evaluación práctica basada en las competencias para garantizar que los trabajadores estén listos para el campo.

Para empleadores agrícolas

- Reduzca los riesgos de seguridad y evite errores costosos
- Mejore la contratación y la colocación de los trabajadores
- Garantice una formación estandarizada para todos sus equipos

Para los trabajadores agrícolas

- Obtenga credenciales reconocidas en la industria
- Mejore las destrezas de manejo de equipos, concienciación sobre la seguridad y cuidado de los cultivos.
- Obtenga retroalimentación estructurada para el crecimiento profesional

Perfil de rendimiento de empleados



Conoce a Alejandro Rivera, Productor principiante

Antecedentes:

- 1 año de experiencia práctica en siembra y manejo de cultivos
- Recientemente transferido de cosecha (pisca)

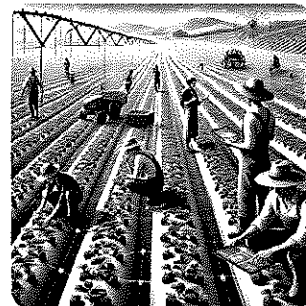
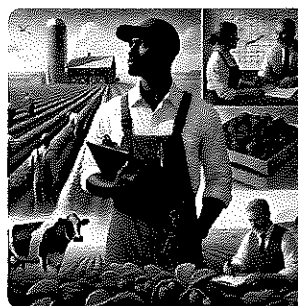
¿Cómo la evaluación de credenciales agrícolas apoya a Alejandro?

Valida las competencias iniciales

- Confirma los conocimientos básicos sobre siembra, riego y salud del suelo
- Demuestra que maneja con seguridad las herramientas y el equipo agrícola.
- Destaca las áreas que necesitan capacitación adicional, como manejo de plagas, operación de invernaderos y técnicas avanzadas de riego
- Crea una trayectoria de aprendizaje estructurada para ayudar a Alejandro a progresar hacia un rol de más alto nivel como productor

Acelera el crecimiento profesional y el reconocimiento

- Sirve como prueba de competencia para los empleadores, reduciendo la necesidad de formaciones repetitivas y no formales
- Ayuda a Alejandro sobresalir para ascender a roles como Técnico de riego o Asistente de producción



Evaluación de la agricultura ASAP

Adaptadas al trabajo y procesamiento agrícolas

- Limpieza de cultivos y mantenimiento de campos
- Seguridad y manejo de equipos agrícolas
- Resolución de problemas y toma de decisiones

Impacto en la industria y retorno de la inversión

- La rotación de personal y las lagunas de destrezas interrumpen las operaciones agrícolas.
- 32% de los adultos en EEUU tienen dificultades para resolver problemas de varios pasos

Los empleadores que invierten en el desarrollo de la mano de obra ven una mayor productividad

(Fuentes: Adult Literacy & Learning Impact Network, ProLiteracy)

Módulos y competencias agrícolas

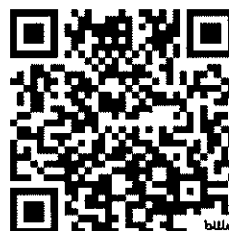
Módulo 1: Limpieza y mantenimiento de cultivo

- Reconocer y manejar las malas hierbas
- Manejo adecuado de la maquinaria agrícola

Módulo 2: Equipo y procedimientos de seguridad

- Manejo seguro de herramientas agrícolas

¡Escanee los siguientes códigos QR para obtener más información!



Prototipo de credenciales y capacitación agrícola



Mapa de competencias por destrezas

¿Está preparado para crear una mano de obra cualificada?

- Asegúrese de que los trabajadores tienen las destrezas necesarias para satisfacer la demanda agrícola.
- Determine las áreas en las que se necesita formación adicional.
- Construya una mano de obra más segura y eficiente.

¡Contáctenos hoy mismo!