

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal for Fall 2026
DACA/AB 540/Dreamers/ Mixed-status family/Undocumented Students

General Counseling Department
October 2025

Full Time Hire Date: May 2016

Previous Sabbatical: 0

Introduction:

My name is Kenya E Galdamez and I have worked in education for the past 25 years. I have served as a tutor, OC EOPS peer advisor, after school program & testing coordinator, parent facilitator & school parent liaison, substitute teacher in settings ranging from K-12, community college and university guidance counselor. In the past nine years at Ventura College, I have worked in EOPS, FYE and currently in General Counseling.

As a former undocumented student, I have developed a deep personal connection to the unique challenges faced by DACA, AB 540, mixed-status family & undocumented students and their families. This experience, combined with thousands of conversations with students through my various roles mentioned above, has highlighted the urgent need for more specialized resources to help this population navigate an evolving political and legal landscape.

Ventura College serves a small yet not insignificant DACA and AB 540 student population. While only 183 students have self-identified on the CCC Apply application as such, institutional data collection limitations mean this figure does not fully represent the number of students who could benefit from specialized guidance. Current political changes intensify the vulnerabilities of these students, and I have observed firsthand that institutional knowledge and resources must be enhanced to meet their escalating needs. While California's Higher Education institutions serve an estimated 102,938 undocumented students, our own records at Ventura College, based on CCC Apply self-identification, likely underestimate the number of students seeking guidance and assistance.

Purpose of Project & Component of Sabbatical:

I am requesting a sabbatical to undertake a concentrated study to enhance my professional capacity and, in turn, provide an advanced level of service to this vulnerable student population. My project plan involves:

- **Literature Review:** A deep dive into current research, policies, and best practices for serving undocumented students in higher education.
- **Networking:** Connecting with state and national organizations to identify emerging tools and services for this population.
- **College-Wide Implementation:** My ultimate goal is to develop and implement new resources and training materials that will be shared with the entire college community, ensuring a sustainable, institution-wide benefit.

This sabbatical will allow me to gain a deeper, more specialized expertise that cannot be achieved during my regular counseling responsibilities. The result will be a better-equipped counseling department and a more resilient, better-supported undocumented/DACA/Mixed-status family/AB 540 student body at Ventura College.

Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD and Ventura College:

This project directly advances VCCCD's commitment to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion by developing resources and expertise that will enhance support for undocumented, DACA, AB 540 and mixed-status family students. By humanizing the experiences of this student population and dispelling common misconceptions, this initiative provides actionable steps toward fulfilling the district's equity mandate. The project also addresses Strategic Goal 2, "Increase equitable access and success for all students," by creating a more inclusive and knowledgeable environment for a historically underserved population.

The sabbatical project is directly aligned with Ventura College's mission to "place students at the center of their learning experience...in an anti-racist, liberating, and inclusive environment". Specifically, this work will create tangible outcomes that benefit students by:

- **Strengthening campus services:** The project will build institutional knowledge that adds significant value to the DREAM Center, increasing its effectiveness as a resource for students.
- **Empowering faculty and staff:** The awareness and training materials developed will empower counselors and interested faculty to better serve and advocate for this diverse student population, creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students:

This sabbatical project involves developing a research-informed counseling framework designed to support the specific needs of Ventura College's Dreamer student population. The research will identify the unique academic, personal, and professional challenges these students face. The resulting framework will serve as a resource for counselors, enabling them to provide more empathetic, informed, and effective guidance. Ultimately, this will empower students to navigate their educational journey more successfully, increasing persistence and improving graduation and vocational outcomes.

Value of Sabbatical Project to Counselor:

This sabbatical project will allow me to develop specialized expertise that will significantly enhance my professional counseling skills. The dedicated time will enable in-depth research into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by undocumented, DACA, AB 540, and mixed-status family students at Ventura College. By becoming a specialist in this field, I will be better equipped to provide informed and effective guidance to these students as they navigate their educational and professional paths despite existing limitations.

The outcomes of this research will allow me to develop and implement new counseling tools and resources. This will result in more realistic educational plans for students, helping them achieve their goals in a safe and proficient environment. The experience will provide me with a deeper understanding of student inequities, which will inform and improve my counseling methods.

Furthermore, the knowledge gained will extend beyond my personal practice. Upon my return, I will disseminate my findings and new strategies to colleagues across all programs within our division. This sharing of expertise will elevate the counseling department's overall capacity to serve this student population, fostering a more welcoming and effective institution for all.

I thank the committee for their time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Kenya E Galdamez

FYE/General Counselor