

Professional Leave Report Cover Sheet

Name: Mariya Yukhymenko

Department: Curriculum & Instruction

College: Kremen School of Education & Human Development

Leave taken: Sabbatical Difference in Pay Professional Leave without Pay

Time Period: Fall 2021

- Spring
- Academic Year
- Other

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DR. MARIYA YUKHYMENKO POST-SABBATICAL LEAVE REPORT

(A) The Accomplishments of the Leave in Relation to The Goals of the Original Proposal

Summary of Goals

I set up a total of three major goals for my sabbatical related to the following: (1) research, (2) teaching, and (3) finding inspiration and future collaboration.

Specifically, for research my goal was to develop a program/workbook (materials, exercises, educational handouts) aimed at increasing a student's academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life, which can later be used for research purposes.

For teaching, my goal was, upon completion my sabbatical, to integrate these activities in the courses that I teach, which would allow me to continue bettering my teaching and reaching my goals related to teaching overall.

Finally, for finding inspiration and future collaborations, my goal was to explore and potentially establish new research projects and collaborations, and to come back to Fresno State with new energy and new ideas.

I was able to accomplish these three goals as planned, as described below.

Goal Accomplishments: Research and Teaching

My goal for the sabbatical was to develop a program/workbook (materials, exercises, educational handouts) that is aimed at increasing a student's academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life, which can then be implemented in classrooms and in future research. During the sabbatical, I developed the program with activities and, thus, achieved the goal related to research and teaching.

Upon my return from the sabbatical, I was planning to pilot test the program with Fresno State's students and to conduct a program evaluation of its effectiveness related to strengthening of academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose. This goal was also achieved. Specifically, I developed the materials, exercises, and educational handouts, a part of which I am currently pilot-testing in my ERE 288: Educational Measurement and Program Evaluation course. I chose ERE 288 for pilot-testing my materials because it has the highest enrollment among all courses that I am teaching in Spring 2022.

The section of ERE 288 that I am teaching is an 8-week section, scheduled for January 20 – March 17, 2022. As of writing this report, this course is completed. The students completed a pre-assessment at the beginning of the course (quantitative), then participated in the activities that I developed during the sabbatical, and then completed a post assessment (quantitative). Additionally, students also participated in a reflective activity at the end of the course to provide open-ended comments about the program (qualitative). The program with activities was integrated in the ERE 288 course in a way that organically incorporated the program into the course, and related it to the course topics. Because ERE 288 is focused on Educational Measurement and Program Evaluation, the program that I developed, along with the pre- and post-assessments in which students participated, were used to illustrate how a program can be developed, implemented, and assessed ("going meta").

Preliminary analyses of the qualitative data suggested positive feedback from students.

Quantitative data will be analyzed during summer 2022. The pilot-testing was conducted for evaluation purposes, not research. However, future goals include moving towards a more formal research project, during which the program that I developed during the sabbatical will be evaluated and its results will be published as a research paper.

In the future, I will also be implementing these materials (the program with activities that I developed) in other program evaluation courses, such as EDL 511 and EDL 561, given that I am assigned to teach them.

Goal Accomplishments: Collaboration

In terms of finding inspiration and future collaborations, I planned to focus my effort on continuing to collaborate with my Fresno State colleagues, as well as to collaborate and seek to establish new collaborations with international scholars and colleagues. I accomplished this goal as well.

In addition to visiting and collaborating virtually with colleagues from Fresno State and institutions in the UK, Japan, and Ukraine as planned, I have also created a workshop and given a lecture to faculty members at the National University “Chernihiv Collegium” of T. Shevchenko (former name: Chernihiv State University of T. Shevchenko, Ukraine). I received a letter of appreciation for it (see Figure 1).

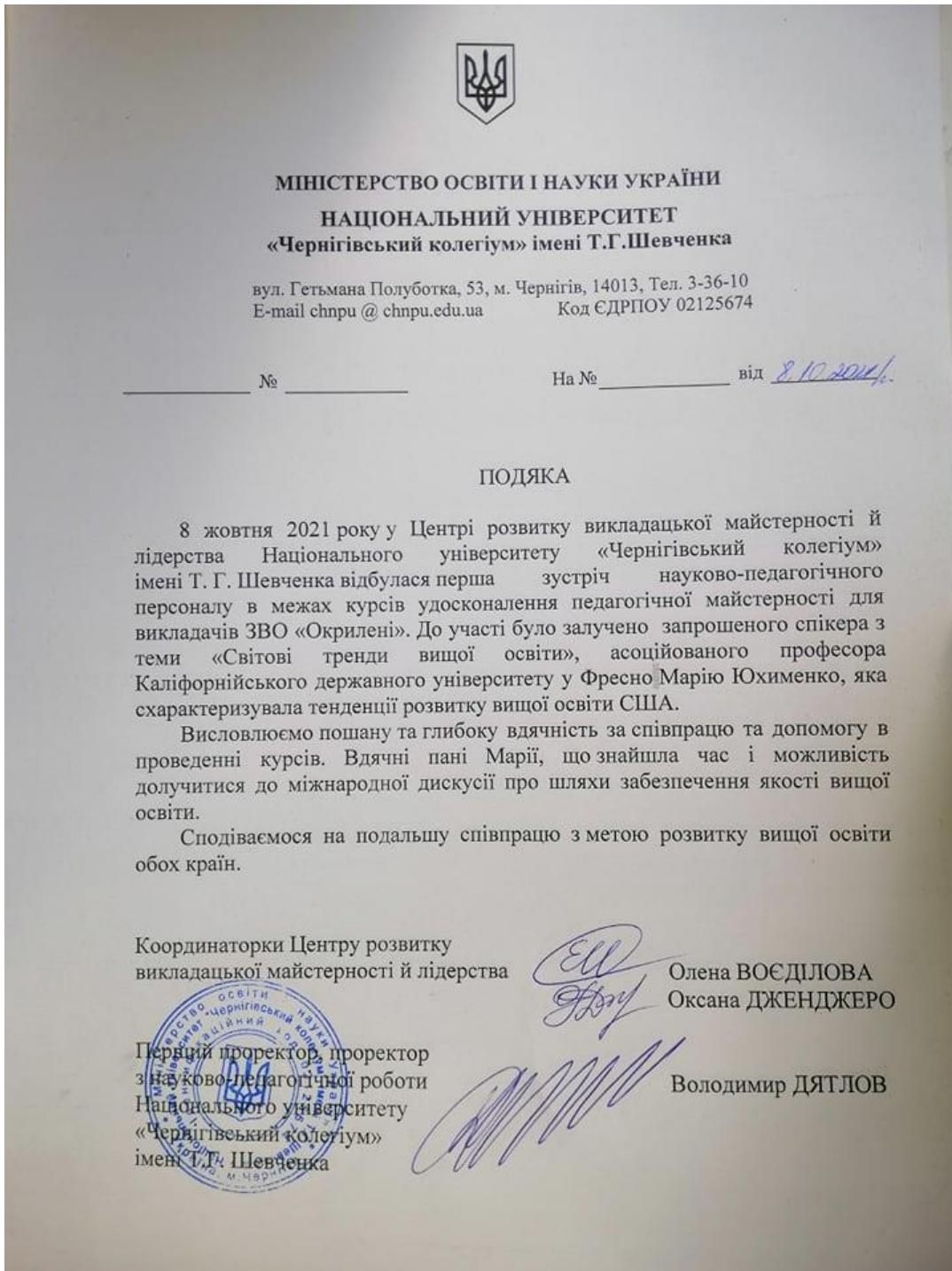
Additionally, I established close relationships with Dr. Olena Voedilova, a faculty member at the Department of Physical Education at the National University “Chernihiv Collegium” of T. Shevchenko. We initiated a new research project, titled “Balancing Academics and Athletics: The Role of Passion for Sport and Academic-Athletic Identity in Motivation, Well-Being, and Career” to examine the well-being of Ukrainian students. On November 22, 2021, this research project was approved (IRB: #1203). We conducted data collection in December 2021 – February 2022 by administering surveys. Therefore, I deem that this goal of my sabbatical was achieved over and above of what was originally planned.

Unfortunately, Dr. Olena Voedilova had to flee Chernihiv, Ukraine because of the war initiated by Russians on February 24, 2022. She is currently located in the Western Ukraine and cannot conduct research activities. Additionally, the University in Chernihiv (the National University “Chernihiv Collegium” of T. Shevchenko) is no longer open. I will be exploring options of how to proceed with this research project and the new collaboration that I established during my sabbatical in the next several months. Ultimately, the war needs to end for our successful future collaboration because Dr. Voedilova’s current circumstances do not allow for engaging in research activities with me.

Figure 1.

Original Letter of Appreciation in Ukrainian (A) and its translation into English (B) from Dr. Olena Voedilova and Oxana Dzhendzhero for giving a virtual lecture/workshop at the National University "Chernihiv Collegium" of T. Shevchenko on October 8, 2021.

(A) Original letter in Ukrainian:



(B) Translated letter from Ukrainian to English:

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
The National University
“Chernihiv Collegium” of T. Shevchenko

Het’mana Polubotka Street, 53, Chernihiv 14013, tel. +38 (04622) 3-36-10
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№_____

№_____ date: October 8, 2021

On October 8, 2021, the Center for the Development of Teaching Skills and Leadership at the National University "Chernihiv Collegium" of T. Shevchenko hosted the first meeting of scientific and pedagogical staff as part of courses to improve pedagogical skills for teachers (organization titled "Winged"). Dr. Mariya Yukhymenko, an associate professor at California State University, Fresno, gave a lecture/workshop to described trends of higher education in the U.S.

We express honor and our deep gratitude to Dr. Yukhymenko for the collaboration and assistance in conducting this course. We are grateful to Dr. Yukhymenko for her time as well as for the opportunity provided to us to be a part of the international discussion on the ways to ensure the quality of higher education.

We hope for further collaboration with Dr. Yukhymenko with the goal to continue developing higher education in both countries.

Coordinators of the Center for the
Development of Teaching Skills and Leadership [signature] Olena Voedilova
[signature] Oxana Dzhendzhera

Senior Vice Provost
for Scientific and Pedagogical Work
National University “Chernihiv Collegium”
of T. Shevchenko [signature] Volodymyr Diatlov

[Stamp]

(B) Modifications, if Any, to the Original Proposal, and the Circumstances That Necessitated These Modifications

No modifications to the original proposal were made. All activities were carried out as planned.

(C) The Objectives of the Original Proposal (if Any) That Were Not Accomplished

All objectives of the original proposal were accomplished as planned. All activities and collaborations were virtual, as planned.

(D) Anticipated Outcomes for the Near Future as a Consequence of the Leave's Activities

Upon completion of the analyses of the pilot-testing of the program developed during the sabbatical, which was already implemented in the ERE 288 Educational Measurement and Program Evaluation course in the Spring 2022 semester (January 20 – March 17, 2022), future goals include moving towards a more formal research project, during which the program that I developed during the sabbatical will be evaluated and its results will be presented at a conference and published as a research paper to disseminate the results of this work. Ultimately, I seek to move towards submitting an external grant application aimed at examining the impact of the developed program/workbook on students' academic performance, retention, and graduation.

I also plan to share the results of this research at the local level and with my colleagues and students. I anticipate that I will implement my developed materials in other program evaluation courses, such as EDL 511 and EDL 561, given that I am assigned to teach them. I anticipate that I will use the developed program/workbook in my classes with Fresno State students to increase academic commitment, persistence, retention, and graduation rates of Fresno State's students. I also anticipate that this program can be adapted for implementation and pilot-testing at the K-12 level through my students (teachers and educational leaders in the courses that I teach).

Finally, I anticipate that I will continue collaboration with Dr. Olena Voedilova from the *National University "Chernihiv Collegium" of T. Shevchenko* in spite of the current circumstances and the illegal war conducted by Russia on the Ukrainian land, and that we will be able to complete a draft of the paper for publication in a peer review journal in the near future.

3. A copy of the original sabbatical leave proposal shall be attached to this report.

A copy of the original sabbatical leave proposal is attached below.

DR. MARIYA YUKHYMENKO SABBATICAL PROPOSAL

Section 1. The Proposal

I am requesting a sabbatical leave for Fall 2021 to complete the research and creative activities identified in this proposal.

Background

Fresno State students are characterized by being from low income, first-generation families, or from underrepresented minority groups. According to the most recent statistics from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, our Fall 2019 students included 53% Hispanic, 64.5% first-generation, and 60.3% Pell grant eligible (OIE, 2020). These groups are at an increased risk for not prioritizing their academics and not having clear prospective career plans, which can result in lower retention and graduation rates. Indeed, Fresno State's 6-year graduation rates are 56.3% (OIE, 2020), which is below the national average of 60% at public institution and 66% at private nonprofit institutions (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Further, the challenges of completing degrees are further exacerbated by the current circumstances due to COVID-19, the inability to socially connect with classmates and feel part of Fresno State's academic culture. Therefore, it is more important than ever to help our students in strengthening their academic identity and cultivating their professional identities through raising awareness of career-oriented sense of purpose in life.

Purpose

During my sabbatical, I would like to concentrate my efforts on creating a program/workbook that can subsequently be used as an intervention aimed at strengthening student' academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life (thus, potentially resulting in higher retention and graduation rates, as well as career satisfaction and job retention). In creating this program/workbook, I am planning to ground its specific activities and tasks in the positive psychology (e.g., gratitude and joy in life) and mental skills training (e.g., goal-setting, confidence building, cognitive reframing) approaches, which will be used to increase students' mental qualities (e.g., confidence, self-worth, and resilience) related to academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life.

It is a well-conceived program because it builds on my previous research and existing contacts. Specifically, it builds on my work on academic identity among undergraduate students and student-athletes (Hagiwara, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2020; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2012; 2014; 2018; in review; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, in review), sense of purpose in college students and working adults (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018, 2019, Sharma, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2018, in review; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, in review), and most recent collaborative work on gratitude (Gabana, Ruser, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., in review; Ruser, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2020; Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., in review). While I have relevant background, I seek to have time to be able to put this together; sabbatical will afford me the opportunity to do so.

As demonstrated through my publications and presentations (e.g., Hagiwara, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2020; Kavussanu, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2020; Kavussanu, Hurst, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., in review; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, in review), I have built preliminary arrangements and contacts with other scholars, who can help me with reaching my sabbatical goals. Specifically, I have established close connections with Dr. Maria Kavussanu from the University of Birmingham (UK), Dr. Goichi Hagiwara from the National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya (Japan), Cheng-Hui Yang from National Taiwan Sport University (Taiwan), and Jen-De Andie Chen

from the National Changhua University of Education (Taiwan). I have also been very closely collaborating with Dr. Gitima Sharma from the Department of Counselor Education and Rehabilitation (Fresno State).

During my sabbatical, I will focus my effort on continuing to collaborate with my Fresno State's colleagues, and I will also continue to collaborate and will seek to establish new collaborations with international scholars and colleagues. Visiting and collaborating with international colleagues will allow me to learn more about the student culture in various institutions, and how student identities are strengthened and integrated in higher education across different cultures. This will be an enriching experience because I will be able to observe and identify the best practices, integrate them in my program/workbook, and bring them back to share at Fresno State.

Because I frequently teach ERE 288: Educational Measurement and Program Evaluation to graduate students, as well as EDL 511: Educational Evaluation, Assessment, and Planning, and EDL 561 Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Planning, as a result of this sabbatical, I will also be able to enhance my classes by incorporating the program/workbook in my teaching to demonstrate how an educational program is developed, implemented, and evaluated using this real-life experience as an example, and, thus, inspire our students (educational leaders, teachers, counselors) to engage in similar activities, which can benefit the local community.

Table 1 provides an overview of schedule for the sabbatical.

Table 1.

Tentative Timeline: Overview of Schedule for Fall 2021

Domain	Activity	August	September	October	November	December
Research and Creative Activities	Collecting background information	x	x			
	Developing activities for the workbook		x	x	x	x
	Putting together the workbook/program				x	x
	Visiting/Collaborating (in person or virtual) with colleagues at the University of Birmingham (Dr. Maria Kavussanu, internationally renowned scholar in moral development and developing interventions)		x	x		
	Visiting/Collaborating (in person or virtual) with colleagues at Chernihiv State University of T. Shevchenko, Ukraine (Dr. Olha Bahynska)			x	x	
	Visiting/Collaborating (in person or virtual)				x	x

	with colleagues at JAPAN and/or Taiwan (Dr. Goichi Hagiwara; Dr. Andie Chen)					
	Collaborating with Fresno State's colleagues (Dr. Gitima Sharma)	x	x	x	x	x
Integration into Teaching and Outreach to Local Community of Practitioners	Incorporation in graduate courses that are focused on program evaluation: ERE 288, EDL 511, and EDL 561					

Background

Academic Identity

Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2014) defined academic identity as a strong identification within an academic domain and valuing academic success (p. 90). Generally speaking, for students with strong academic identities, characteristics such as being a capable student, doing well in school, being satisfied with academic work, getting good grades, and having high GPA are central to their sense of self.

A number of studies have shown that academic identity is a positive and one of the strongest predictors of academic performance and persistence (e.g., Garn & Shen, 2015; Guay et al., 2010; Osborne & Jones, 2011; Walker et al., 2006; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2012; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, in review). For example, Guay et al. (2010) provided strong evidence that academic self-concept predicted academic motivation (but not vice versa). Likewise, Yukhymenko (2012) showed that academic identity was positively correlated with GPA in a sample of 1,400 students participating in varsity athletics and club sport athletics.

Students with strong identifications with the academic domain are much likely to have desirable academic outcomes because their choices to engage in academic activities, effort to succeed academically, and persistence in the face of failure would reflect the centrality of academics to their sense of self (Osborne & Jones, 2011). In contrast, low academic identity is a precursor and a risk factor to academic underachievement; typically, disidentification with academics occurs long before student's attrition (Finn, 1989).

The Role of Academic Identity in Dropping Out

As highlighted by Osborne and Jones (2011), identification with the domain of schooling and academics can provide significant insights into a student's academic motivation and performance, because the extent to which the student is identified with academic domain represents the extent to which academic outcomes are related to an individual's global self-esteem. Therefore, students who perform poorly in academic domain or see no value in pursuing academics are likely to devalue or disidentify with academics in order to protect their self-esteem.

Osborne and Jones (2011) argued that students not only disidentify with academics long before dropping out, but they also seek to identify with another domain that provides positive outcomes for the self. Indeed, research has shown that a strong identity in another domain can be detrimental to academic success. Using student-athletes as an example, the emerging body of literature (e.g., Antshel

et al., 2016; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018) has pointed to the negative consequences of strong identification with athletics on academic pursuits among student-athletes.

Taken together, studies clearly show that students with strong academic identification are motivated to succeed academically. It is, thus, important to help our students cultivate their academic identity.

Professional Identity and Career-Oriented Purpose

Osborne and Jones (2011) posited that domain identification is related to outcomes in that domain. Therefore, in addition to cultivating academic identities in our students, it is also essential to cultivate their professional identities. One approach to cultivating their professional identities is through raising their awareness of career-oriented sense of purpose in life.

Damon et al. (2003) defined purpose as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (p. 121). Purpose provides a connection from the present to the future aspirations and accomplishments (Kosine et al., 2008), and is recognized as a contributing factor to individual’s well-being (e.g., Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2019).

Speaking more generally about sense of purpose in life, a significant body of research identifies purpose as an important component of mental health and wellbeing, including effective coping (Brown et al., 2013; Whitty, 2003), emotional adjustment (Burrow & Hill, 2011), resiliency (Nygren et al., 2005), hope (Bronk et al., 2009, 2019), wellness (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2008), happiness and life satisfaction (Błażek et al., 2015; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2019). In college students, along with health and wellbeing, purpose is also linked with academic success (Martin & Martin, 1977), degree commitment (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), and career development (Kosine et al., 2008).

The Role of Purpose in Academic Aspirations and Well-Being

In one of my recent studies (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, in review), I examined the sense of purpose in life, academic identity, and academic commitment among 421 first time full-time freshman students (62.2% females; 60.1% Latinx), who completed a survey during the first week at Fresno State in Fall 2017. A year later, I recorded the data on their first-year academic performance and retention. The findings showed that academic identity and degree commitment were significant predictors of academic performance (GPA) and first-year retention. Notably, both academic identity and degree commitment were positively predicted by awakening to purpose in life and altruistic purpose (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, in review).

In related studies with Fresno State’s faculty members (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, YEAR), full-time working adults in various fields in the U.S. (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2020), and, most recently, athletic coaches at NCAA institutions (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, data have just finished being collected), results showed that sense of purpose in life, especially awareness of one’s purpose, is strongly, significantly, and positively correlated with life satisfaction and happiness among working adults.

Taken together, there is a strong evidence that academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life significantly contribute to academic performance, academic persistence, and overall well-being. While most students enter the University with some career plans, limited opportunities are provided to students to cultivate their career-oriented sense of purpose. Therefore, offering an educational program that explicitly teaches for purpose, as well as strengthens the academic and professional identities, may help student experience meaning in and commitment to pursuing satisfying careers, achieving true potential, and bringing deeper fulfillment and satisfaction in life.

Section 2. Benefits to Me as a Faculty Member

My goal is to develop a program/workbook (materials, exercises, educational handouts) that are aimed at increasing student's academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose in life. Ultimately, I am planning to develop materials that can be implemented in classrooms and in future research. Therefore, the proposed sabbatical leave will have benefits to me as a faculty member in a number of ways.

Research

First, upon my return from the sabbatical, I am planning to pilot test the program with Fresno State's students and to conduct program evaluation of its effectiveness related to strengthening of academic identity, professional identity, and career-oriented purpose. This will help me achieve my goals related to: (a) presentation, (b) publications, and (c) grant-proposal writing. As I have earned a promotion to Associate Professor, I am currently setting up specific goals for the next six years to complete prior to my application for promotion to Full Professor, and this sabbatical will help me with achieving these goals.

Teaching

Second, I have a goal to integrate the activities developed for the program/workbook in my courses that I teach to graduate students both master's and doctoral. I teach methodological courses, which are generally perceived as difficult and, as a result, are frequently not fully appreciated by the students. By incorporating the developed program/workbook materials, I will be able to reach out to and inspire more students, helping them connect what I teach and what they learn with their career aspirations.

To provide further context, I teach quantitative and methodological courses to doctoral students and other graduate students who pursue their Credentials and master's degrees in education and counseling. These courses are perceived by many students difficult and non-interesting. In a recently published article in Inside Higher Ed about student ratings of instructions, Flaherty (2017) stated, "new study suggests student evaluations are dependent on discipline and they tend to be especially "hazardous" to professors in quantitative fields," highlighting that the student perceptions of methodological courses are generally content-dependent. Therefore, in my classrooms, in addition to teaching the content of my courses, it is typical for me to foster students' confidence, resilience, and cognitive reframing to ease students into the subject.

Aligned with it, my teaching philosophy highlights that I approach my teaching in a way that encourages students to view their learning as a developing and integrated process that occurs over time, rather than an isolated end goal of passing a particular course. In my teaching, I strive to support the attempts of my students to relate course content to their professional and personal goals, to employ diverse instructional formats, and to engage students in both individual and group work in order to integrate these formats in a meaningful way. Regardless of what I am teaching, I recognize that students are not *tabulae rasae* and that they come with pre-existing conceptions and ideas. Therefore, I feel the most successful when I am able to integrate theory and practice in such a way that connects new content to students' prior knowledge and relevant experiences.

Therefore, the current proposed sabbatical project will allow me to continue bettering my teaching and reaching my goals related to teaching.

Finding Inspiration and Future Collaborations

Finally, the proposed sabbatical will also allow me to find inspiration and future collaborations, and come back to Fresno State with new energy and new ideas.

Section 3. Benefit to the University

The proposed sabbatical leave will be of benefit to the department, school, and university.

First and foremost, at the national and international levels, the work conducted during the sabbatical will allow me to make important contributions to the field of education, psychology, and counseling by generating presentations and publications. I am planning to present at national conferences as well as write publications to disseminate the results of this work. I am also planning to share the results at a local level (i.e., at the University) with my colleagues and students.

Second, this work is likely to lead to external grants, because the current project can be viewed as a developmental phase of a study aimed at examining the impact of the developed program/workbook on students' academic performance, retention, and graduation.

Third, during the sabbatical, I plan to actively establish connections with international scholars. Doing so will promote Fresno State at the international level, potentially leading to more international students coming to study at Fresno State and international scholars coming to visit Fresno State.

Fourth, once implemented, the developed program/workbook can be used in classes with Fresno State students and the program/workbook is likely to increase academic commitment, persistence, retention, and graduation rates of Fresno State's students.

Fifth, local K-12 schools might also learn about the program/workbook through their colleagues (teachers and educational leaders in the courses that I teach), which can attract more teachers and educational leaders to pursue their graduate education at Fresno State.

Section 4. Previous Leaves

I have not taken sabbatical or difference in pay leaves.

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