

Professional Leave Report Cover Sheet

Name: Samer Sarofim

Department: Marketing & Logistics

College: Craig School of Business

Leave taken: ☐ Sabbatical      ☒ Difference in Pay      ☐ Professional Leave without Pay

Time Period: ☐ Fall  
☐ Spring  
☒ Academic Year 2023-2024  
☐ Other

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## **POST DIFFERENCE-IN-PAY (DIP) LEAVE REPORT**

Samer Sarofim  
Associate Professor  
Marketing & Logistics Department  
Craig School of Business

The following report summarizes the accomplished goals and anticipated future outcomes of the difference-in-pay leave during the Academic Year 2023-2024.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **1) Advancing Research**

The principal research goal was to advance my research capabilities in the novel interdisciplinary research area of using communication messaging strategies to enhance the transportation safety of vulnerable road users. The objective was to produce research that builds on marketing messaging theory to achieve a societal impact. This objective is timely as it aligns with Fresno State's recent membership in the United Nations Global Compact, supporting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Craig School of Business's focus on engaging in meaningful societal impact activities.

The outcome of this objective was to write and submit a journal article and lay the groundwork for a grant application.

##### **A) Journal Manuscript (Sole Authorship)**

A journal manuscript was prepared and submitted to *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*. This journal is ranked as an "A" journal by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) list, with an impact factor of 3.5. The manuscript is currently under review.

To prepare this manuscript:

- I completed a thorough literature review on transportation safety messaging, in general, and on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities, specifically.
- I conducted in-depth analysis for qualitative interviews with transportation experts to develop a novel conceptual model.
- I conducted in-depth data analysis for quantitative surveys to theorize and test a moderated mediation theoretical model.
- I wrote, revised, and submitted the manuscript.

## **B) Awarded Research Grant**

A research grant from the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) was awarded for the amount of \$69,500. The grant work starts in Fall 2024.

This grant allows for interdisciplinary business and transportation research. The grant's scope of work focuses on the State of California, in general, and Central Valley, in particular, assessing the impact of roundabouts on both the public and the businesses surrounding the roundabouts. This understanding will aid in the development of messaging strategies, including content and framing, to enhance safety behaviors in the roundabouts, hence increasing their effectiveness and acceptance.

The deeper understanding of transportation challenges and the theoretical foundation of utilizing marketing communication strategies to create a societal impact that I gained during the leave supports this grant research work.

## **2) Knowledge Dissemination**

A secondary goal was to disseminate knowledge among students, the academic community, and professionals. This included writing a case study, a conference presentation, teaching advancements, and building relationships with professionals in the community.

### **A) Case Study**

A case study based on interviews and internal company data was written. The case tackles a recent business dilemma for [Inspiration Transportation](#), a transportation non-profit company based in Central Valley that serves a less advantaged socio-economic population. The case focuses on social entrepreneurship, sustainability, equity, and environmental impact. The case can be used in multiple business and engineering courses to foster the connection between students and current regional societal and business challenges and aligns with UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, SDG 3 – Good Health & Well-being, SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Currently, the case is being revised by the Founding Director of Inspiration Transportation to obtain the consent-to-use and submit for publication.

To complete this case study:

- Multiple transportation organizations were contacted, including, VRPA Technologies, Inc., Bancroft Construction Services, and Inspiration Transportation.
- Qualitative in-depth interview questions were designed.
- Multiple interviews were conducted and transcribed
- Organization Internal Data was obtained and analyzed.
- The case study was written following the guidelines of prestigious case study publishers (e.g., Ivey Publishing).
- A teaching webinar was conducted, including sharing materials, to educate Fresno State Transportation Institute (FSTI) student assistants on how to write a case study.

## **B) Conference Presentation**

To communicate research results with the academic community, a peer-reviewed conference presentation was submitted and accepted during the leave.

Samer Sarofim & Aly Tawfik (2024). “Maximizing the Role of Electric Vehicles in Solving Sustainable Transportation Challenges: Hindrances of Electric Vehicles’ Adoption among the Low-Income Population,” Urban Planning & Architectural Design for Sustainable Development (UPADSD); Florence, Italy.

This conference is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **C) Teaching Advancements**

- 1) A lecture is prepared to introduce students in my classes to the foundations of the Transformative Consumer Research movement that aims to employ marketing theory and research to enhance the welfare and well-being of society. The lecture is integrated into my Marketing Research (MKTG 101) class this Fall (2024). I made arrangements to present this lecture as a guest speaker to other marketing classes (e.g., MKTG 110) during this Fall (2024).
- 2) I simplified the results of my research to be efficiently communicated with students. I prepared a lecture to share the motivations, objectives, methodology, analysis, and findings of my research project conducted during the leave with my students in MKTG 101. This shall provide students with an engaging, practical experience with marketing research that solves public challenges and creates societal impact.

- 3) I developed three new creative assignments for my marketing classes. These three assignments are integrated into the classes I teach in Fall 2024:
- **Traffic Safety Campaign:** this assignment allows students to use real data stemming from my research to create a theory-driven and evidence-based campaign that is directed at vulnerable road users to enhance traffic safety in California.
  - **Marketing and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Debate:** this assignment is designed to be an eye-opener for marketing students. The assignment is designed to allow students to utilize marketing concepts to achieve sustainable development goals, countering the common myth that social issues can hinder economic growth.
  - **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Marketing Content Creation:** this assignment is designed to introduce students to the concept of DEI in marketing and requires them to use this understanding in creating more inclusive marketing content.

#### **D) Building Relationships with Professionals in the Community**

- 1) Several meetings were conducted with professionals in multiple organizations, including Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce, Stantec, and BIZ-WERX. During these meetings, I communicated my research motivation and findings.
- 2) Multiple meetings were conducted with professionals at the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) to share my research expertise and explore collaboration opportunities.
- 3) Building on the relationship I developed with the Founding Director of Inspiration Transportation, the director agreed to guest speak in my class during this academic year.
- 4) I prepared the structure and materials to conduct a webinar for the general public, advocacy groups, and stakeholders interested in transportation safety. I shared the concept with the Director of Fresno State Transportation Institute (FSTI) and currently having conversations regarding the logistics of conducting the webinar and, potentially, a workshop.

## **ANTICIPATED FUTURE OUTCOMES**

The difference-in-pay leave experience allowed me to advance my research capabilities in the interdisciplinary research area of communication messaging strategies in transportation safety with an emphasis on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities. It also allowed me to think deeply and improve in integrating the generated knowledge from my research into my teaching philosophy and application, emphasizing the role of marketing theory in creating a positive societal impact.

The following outcomes are expected:

- 1) A Journal Publication: I will follow through the review process for the submitted journal article till publication.
- 2) Submit Case Study for Publication: I will follow through to obtain the consent-to-use for the written case study and submit it for publication
- 3) Grants: I will complete the work of the awarded grant and produce a research report. Hopefully, this awarded grant will be a foundation for more grant applications.
- 4) More Journal Articles: I plan to use the knowledge I acquired during the leave to write more journal articles that link marketing theory to societal challenges.
- 5) More Case Studies: Capitalizing on the developed relationships with transportation professionals during the leave, I plan to write more case studies. I started to gather data and conduct interviews with the operation and marketing manager at BIZ-WERX to write a new case study.
- 6) Case Studies Research Grant: I applied for a grant to fund and support writing more case studies. I hope to be awarded the grant to develop more expertise in case study pedagogy.
- 7) I will participate in developing an educational documentary highlighting the core values of Fresno State Transportation Institute (FSTI), sharing my insights and experiences within our community.
- 8) I will continue to share the results of my research with stakeholders in our community and put in the effort to attract media coverage.

# **DIFFERENCE IN PAY APPLICATION**

Samer Sarofim  
Associate Professor of Marketing

## **Proposal Summary**

I am requesting a difference in pay leave for the fall 2023 and Spring 2024 of academic year 2023-24. The difference in pay leave will help advance my research and scholarly focus on the role of communication messaging strategies in transportation safety with an emphasis on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities. According to the US Department of Transportation (DOT) Strategic Plan (2022), about one in five fatalities are vulnerable road users. Among those vulnerable road users' fatalities, people of color and low-income communities are the most affected. Importantly, this novel research area that I plan to explore during the leave is timely and aligned with Fresno State's recent membership in the United Nations Global Compact, supporting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It's also aligned with Craig School of Business's focus on engaging in meaningful societal impact activities, which positively influence society – at local, regional, national, or international levels, and the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

Advancing my research capabilities in this novel interdisciplinary research area will lead to improved research output in peer-reviewed journal articles and subsequently allow for more competitive grant applications. I will also be able to infuse my research in teaching marketing courses by producing creative assignments and writing a case study that emphasizes ethical marketing and the role of marketing theory in creating a positive societal impact. Additionally, I plan to make the results of my research available to policymakers and transportation professionals by conducting workshops and webinars.

## **Objectives**

The objectives for the difference in pay leave include:

- 1) to review the literature on transportation safety messaging, in general, and on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities, specifically
- 2) to conduct in-depth data analysis for quantitative surveys with vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities
- 3) to conduct in-depth analysis for qualitative interviews with transportation experts (both local and abroad)
- 4) to prepare a journal manuscript based upon my preliminary findings
- 5) to lay the groundwork for a competitive grant application
- 6) to develop creative assignments to integrate this research into undergraduate & graduate classes.
- 7) to write a teaching case study based on the outcomes of this research
- 8) to prepare workshops to educate transportation professionals and policymakers on the role of communication and messaging strategies in changing motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of vulnerable road users

## **Section 1. The Proposal**

### **1.1 Advancing Research, Peer-Reviewed Journal Article, and Grant Application**

According to the US DOT Strategic Plan, about one in five fatalities are vulnerable road users. Among those vulnerable road users' fatalities, people of color and low-income communities are the most affected. The objective of my research project is to develop evidence-based and theory-driven safety communication (including message strategy and framing) and outreach strategies (including message channels and media vehicles) for altering the unsafe behaviors affecting vulnerable road user groups (pedestrians and cyclists) and Disadvantaged Minority Communities. Message framing has been increasingly attracting both scholars' and practitioners' attention as it influences various behaviors (Gerend & Cullen, 2008; Rothman et al., 2006).

The project will contribute to creating safer communities and greater opportunities for use of active transportation modes (i.e., biking and walking) by inducing positive behavioral changes to enhance traffic safety via effective messaging. This research will investigate whether and why various communication and outreach strategies have different motivational, attitudinal, and behavioral effects on various vulnerable road users, minority groups, and motorists with pro-driver implicit biases.

This research aligns with the National Institute of Transportation & Technology (NITC) Transportation Equity & Safety Road Map Goal by providing effective and evidence-based outreach strategies that aim at increasing the effective representation of diverse groups, women, and people of color in transportation signage and advertising. Aligning with the NITC Policy Recommendation to address historical inequalities, this research project will also develop effective communication strategies to increase the use of active transportation modes (e.g., ridership of people of color and women) through a well-research outreach strategy (Lubitow et al., 2019). It also advances previous NITC research by developing an effective communication strategy that specifically targets pro-driver implicit biases towards vulnerable road users (e.g., cyclists) and minority groups (e.g., Older Adults, Women, etc.) (Goddard, 2016).

The research also aligns with the US DOT Strategic goal of Safety: Making our Transportation System Safer for All People. Specifically, this research aligns with the US DOT Strategic Objective & Strategy of promoting safety behaviors and improving travel safety of vulnerable road users, children, and the elderly. This research directly responds to the call, outlined in the US DOT Strategic Plan, to support and engage people and communities to promote safe multimodal access, while reducing transportation-related disparities.

I have been trying to build my expertise in this area of research for the past two years and have been able to get a conference presentation accepted and some local and state-level grants secured. However, I need to advance my knowledge in this novel area to prepare and submit peer-reviewed journal articles and enhance my readiness for more competitive grants. The difference in pay leave will allow me to 1) dig deeper in the literature to expand my knowledge, 2) analyze quantitative & qualitative data, 3) write and submit a journal article, and 4) enhance my grant applications.



## **1.2 Knowledge Transfer to the Public & Transportation Officials, Teaching, and Writing Case Study**

The dissemination of knowledge will require the dedication of time and resources to connect marketing knowledge and research results to promote ethical practices among students and inform professionals & policymakers. During this leave, I will use the time and my professional development funds to enhance my creativity in teaching and research and focus on knowledge transfer. To disseminate and promote the messaging communication & outreach strategies, I plan to conduct the following activities.

### **A. Communicating results beyond the academic community includes activities, such as**

- i. Organization of a workshop with attendees invited from different public and private sectors in NITC communities, e.g., Caltrans (in California), city and county transportation engineers, OTS, advocacy groups, and private firms
- ii. Organization of media interviews to generate press articles and radio interviews to discuss the results and the recommendations and communicate with the general public
- iii. Guest lecturing in different transportation engineering and business classes
- iv. Conducting free webinars for the general public, advocacy groups, and interested stakeholders

### **B. Communicating results with the academic community includes activities, such as**

- i. Submitting the research results to various national and international conferences, such as the TRB, ASCE's ICTD, and ITE Annual Meetings
- ii. Publication of results in conference proceedings and journals

To infuse the results of my research into my teaching, I plan to conduct the following activities.

- A. Introducing students in my various classes (e.g., MKTG 101) to the foundations of the Transformative Consumer Research movement** that aims at employing marketing theory and research to enhance the welfare and the wellbeing of society (Ozanne et al., 2015)
- B. Simplifying the results of my research** to be communicated efficiently with undergraduate and graduate students
- C. Developing new creative assignments** for my various marketing classes. These assignments will utilize data from my research and challenge students to use marketing and communication knowledge to create evidence-based solutions that enhance traffic safety for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities

To further enhance the dissemination and practical impact of my research, I plan to conduct the following activities.

- A. Writing a case study** that can be beneficial to practitioners and academicians
- B. Submitting case study for publication in multiple outlets** (e.g., journals, textbooks, online supplemental materials).

### 1.3 Procedures & Timeline for Completion of Objectives:

The detailed procedures and time schedule of activities planned during the difference in pay leave are shown below.

	Tasks	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Review literature on transportation safety messaging, in general, and on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities, specifically										
	Conduct and analyze qualitative interviews with transportation experts (both local and abroad)										
	Conduct in-depth data analysis for quantitative surveys with vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities										
	Write the data analysis, methodology, and other portions of the article.										
	Complete the article and submit it for publication.										
Grant Proposals	Searching and developing a list of grants related to transportation safety										
	Preparing and submitting a grant proposal										
Teaching Advancements	Preparing lectures to introduce students in my various classes (e.g., MKTG 101) to the foundations of the Transformative Consumer Research										
	Simplifying research into simple visually appealing lectures to be communicated efficiently with undergraduate and graduate students										
	Developing new creative assignments for my various marketing classes										
Case Study	Reviewing existing case studies related to transportation safety communication										
	Writing a case study										
	Submitting case study for publication in multiple outlets										
Conference Presentations	Searching and developing a list of different national and international conferences related to transportation safety										
	Writing and submitting conference papers										
Knowledge Transfer to Community and Professionals	Organizing a workshop and/or webinars with attendees invited from different public and private sectors, e.g., Caltrans (in California), city and county transportation engineers, OTS, advocacy groups, and private firms.										
	Preparing the material for the workshop/webinar										
	Delivering the workshop/webinar										

## **Section 2. Benefits to the Faculty Member**

### **2.1 Scholarship of Research**

I will benefit from the difference in pay leave by further extending my interdisciplinary research agenda. Whereas my previous marketing research projects have appeared in rigorous journals and received research awards, the leave will provide the time for me to employ my research expertise in marketing and communication theory to solve broader problems with societal impact, namely transportation safety for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities.

Since I co-chaired a track at the Transformative Consumer Research conference in 2017 and I have been obsessed with the utilization of marketing and communication theory to transform the lives of the public. My passion to use marketing for the public good has been growing and the difference in leave pay will allow me to conduct research that is both personally meaningful and connected to creating a societal impact. I have begun exploring transformative consumer research and transportation safety communication messaging, in general; however, the leave will allow me to further enhance my expertise and focus more discretely on transportation equity for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged minority communities.

The ability to analyze and interpret new data, write a journal article in this novel area, and develop relationships with relevant professionals in the transportation industry would increase my potential of securing more competitive grants that will further support my research. Ultimately, the difference in pay leave will enhance my research scholarship, contribute to my goals of completing a journal article in this novel area of research, writing a case study, and supporting my goal of becoming a full professor in the near future.

### **2.2 Scholarship of Teaching**

I am extremely passionate about teaching and very honored to be able to share my research with my students in both undergraduate and graduate classes. My goal is to create capable and ethical future business leaders. This leave will allow me the time to infuse my research in my classes in a more structured manner, especially with the proposed novel area of research that opens the door to continue to explore how can we apply marketing theory and research to enhance the welfare and wellbeing of the community.

Specifically, I plan to develop lectures that help my students understand the foundations of the Transformative Consumer Research movements. Students will also benefit from, and be inspired by, my research as I share the results with them. While I previously received national recognition and awards for my innovation in teaching, I plan to use the leave time to develop new innovative assignments for my various marketing classes, utilizing data from my research to challenge students to critically think and develop data-driven solutions for societal problems.

Additionally, students will benefit from the opportunity to examine expanded areas of research through the network of professional and scholarly experts that I will engage. This network will provide opportunities for exclusive presentations and learning experiences.

### **Section 3. Benefits to the University**

This research proposal is timely as CSU, Fresno has recently become the first university within both the California State University and the University of California systems to be selected for membership in the United Nations Global Compact, supporting the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the proposed research project for this leave is aligned with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities as it aims at enhancing the traffic safety of disadvantaged minority groups, who are found more vulnerable to transportation-related fatalities. It is also aligned with SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being as it promotes the welfare and the well-being of society via taking a theory-driven and evidence-based approach. Additionally, it will support grant application that aims at increasing the research footprint of the university.

The proposed research agenda will strengthen the interdisciplinary focus of Fresno State and Craig School of Business in areas of particular importance to the Central Valley and the university. Fresno, due to its high rate of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, is selected as a Focus City. The Federal Highway Administration included Fresno on the list of cities with the highest bicycle and pedestrian fatalities, since 2015 (US Berkely, Safe Transportation Research and Education Center, n.d.). The Focus Cities Program in California, a joint program between UC Berkeley Safe TREC and California Walks is aimed at supporting community efforts geared towards the development of safe walking and biking communities and programs. Hence, the motivation for my research stemmed from multiple interactions with a variety of transportation stakeholders including the Fresno Council of Government, The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 6, and the City of Fresno – Public Works Department. Discussions about the role of effective messaging in changing consumer attitudes and behaviors to increase traffic safety indicated the lack of a cohesive communication strategy.

Exploring communication messaging strategy in the transportation sector will enhance my contributions to the Department of Marketing and Logistics. Exploration in this area opens a broad stream of research potential, including employing marketing theory and research into other sectors, such as healthcare, financial wellbeing, etc. The development of my research agenda will also contribute to the existing publication record of the Department of Marketing and Logistics and the Craig School of Business.

The advancement of this research during the difference in pay period will support the creation of new relationships between the university and industry experts within the region and beyond. I will gain expertise and establish connections in a field that holds broad potential for the Department of Marketing and Logistics, Craig School of Business, and the University at large. I plan to foster Campus-Community Connections to contribute to the university's concerted effort to enhance equity and diversity. The connection I will make will help in bringing industry professionals to guest speak in classes and provide students with practical experience to jumpstart their careers.

### **Section 4. Previous Leaves**

I have not received any previous sabbatical or difference in pay leaves.

## References

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