

# POST SABBATICAL REPORT 2020

KALAMAZOO VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT

# POST SABBATICAL REPORT – NICOLE MCCLURE

## ORIGINAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of my sabbatical is to develop resources specific to the Mathematics Department to better support new adjunct faculty as they acclimate to teaching at KVCC. I recognize that we already have a thorough on-boarding process for our new hires in place through the Faculty Success Center. I do not aim to replicate that process. Instead, I want to deepen the support we have available for new hires with resources that are specific to the Mathematics Department. I wholeheartedly believe that this will enhance the effectiveness of our adjunct math instructors, while also enhancing the effectiveness of our chair and course coordinators. In turn, this will benefit our students and lead to better student success and retention.

In the article, *The Adjunct Faculty Development Process*, authors Burn and Kawai state, “Student success in mathematics relies on having qualified, passionate, and dedicated instructors. In community colleges, such instructors are likely to be adjunct instructors. Thus, improving student outcomes in community college mathematics hinges on helping adjunct faculty members develop and grow professionally.” During this sabbatical, I will focus on improving our math adjunct faculty’s access to knowledge, thus improving student outcomes.

Over the past year, I directly served 152 students in my classrooms. In contrast, recently hired adjunct instructors served 690 students in their classrooms over the past year. And as an even bigger picture, over the past year, our entire adjunct faculty (both new and seasoned) together served 2014 students in their classrooms. By widening the scope of this sabbatical beyond only my classroom, the impact will affect many more students at KVCC.

In addition, this sabbatical will also help me develop professionally as I work to improve my personal technology knowledge base. I will:

- Learn how to administer an online survey
- Improve my knowledge of creating and editing videos using Camtasia
- Learn how to use a Google site or something similar to display documents and videos online

Improving my technological competency will assist me in completing my sabbatical, as well as enhance teaching and learning techniques for my future courses.

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## ACTIVITIES PERFORMED, OBJECTIVES ACCOMPLISHED, CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

### **Objective 1: Determine areas where adjunct mathematics instructors need better support.**

To accomplish this objective, I sought out input in five ways:

1. I had in-depth conversations with recently hired math adjunct faculty about their acclimation to KVCC.
2. I met with Gail Fredericks to learn more about our current On-Boarding process and gather her recommendations of how to build upon that.
3. I connected with math faculty from Tulsa Community College, Community College of Baltimore County, and Kellogg Community College to discover what systems they use to support adjunct faculty.
4. Knowing that the face-to-face conversations with adjuncts may not be completely transparent, I also wanted to provide a method of collecting information anonymously. I learned about a few online survey tools and selected Google Forms. Using this tool, I created an anonymous online survey and distributed it to all adjunct math instructors. A majority of adjuncts responded. I asked questions regarding:
  - the efficiency of the hiring process
  - the instruction regarding the institutional policies and professional obligations such as adjunct contracts, ECARS, CASPERS, course rosters, submission of syllabi and office hours, final grade submissions, student math placement scores, etc.
  - the information given regarding the classes they were assigned to teach (e.g. learning objectives, example syllabi, textbooks, course packs, online homework, departmental exams, etc.)
  - whether or not they know where to go to find answers if they have questions regarding KVCC in general or specifically pertaining to the Math Department.
  - the support in instructional technology efforts (e.g. Moodle, media, and instructional technology support.)
  - the positivity regarding working relationships with other KVCC Math faculty.
  - factors that would make them consider continuing to work at KVCC.
  - factors that might make them consider teaching at another institution instead of KVCC.
  - which topics might be helpful to have tutorial videos.
  - advice they would have for a newly hired adjunct.
  - whether or not the expectations they initially had for being an adjunct instructor at KVCC matched well with the reality of being an adjunct instructor at KVCC.

A copy of the complete survey is located in Appendix A. The statistical results of the survey are located in Appendix B. The comments given by adjuncts in the survey can be available upon request.

5. Connect with full time KVCC Math Faculty to determine areas where they feel our department could better support our adjuncts.

Through the above activities, I was encouraged to discover that from the perspective of both our adjuncts and full-time instructors as well as our colleagues at other institutions, we are already supporting our adjuncts very well in many areas. In fact, in regards to the survey question about if our adjuncts feel they have a positive working relationship with at least one other math faculty member, 86.7% said they “5 out of 5” strongly agree and the remaining 13.3% said they “4 out of 5” strong agree. This is a very encouraging statistic.

However, I also learned of some areas our department could improve upon and was excited to work on that during my sabbatical. The main consistent theme that came up was that at the initial hiring time, new adjuncts receive so much information that it is overwhelming. Multiple instructors told me it would be helpful to have an online site where consolidated information is housed in a central location. Another topic that came up frequently was a misunderstanding of our math placement tests and scores.

Finally, I was anticipating a lot of response to the question regarding tutorial videos. However, the only topic where videos were requested was in dealing with the learning management software (Moodle/Canvas.) Because those videos have already been created by our Faculty Success Center staff, I opted to provide links to those existing tutorials. For my sabbatical, I chose to focus my time on creating a central location housing the important information for new hires. For this website, I made sure to specifically include information on the topics adjuncts listed as areas where we were falling short as a department.

## **Objective 2: Create methods to provide better support in areas determined by objective #1.**

To accomplish this objective I did the following activities:

1. Learn How to Navigate and Utilize Canvas

Since much of our current process of orienting new faculty to our math department could be streamlined by utilizing an online format, the original plan for my sabbatical project included utilizing a Moodle page and a Google site. I originally chose two sites because with the Google site, adjuncts would have access to the public site prior to receiving their KVCC credentials in the mail. However, with Fall 2020 being the launch of the new learning management software system, Canvas, it made more sense to build all of the online content there because Canvas has an option to make the site public. This eliminated the need for an additional Google site. It was a very big undertaking to learn to utilize this new system. I am indebted to the amazing Canvas support I received from Molly Pfaff and David Kobb. They are fantastic teachers.

## 2. Create a Canvas Site for New Math Faculty

I created a public Canvas site so that adjuncts will be able to access the site as soon as they are hired instead of having to wait for direction when they meet face-to-face with the chair or course coordinator. Many new adjuncts want to dive in as soon as possible, but they have limited time to meet with mentor faculty due to obligations outside of KVCC. Often there is a 2-3 week lag between the hire date and the time they are able to meet. They are anxious to begin learning about KVCC in that interim time. Having an online format will also help facilitate continued support as adjuncts will be able to refer back to these online resources as needed throughout their first few semesters at KVCC. This will avoid the need for retraining when they have forgotten information.

Below is an outline of the information posted on the Canvas site. In addition to general information for new hires, each of these sections contains content specific to the Math Department. The full Canvas course can be accessed here:

<https://kalamazoo.instructure.com/courses/1482>

### **GETTING STARTED**

**Advice for New Adjuncts** (from current adjuncts)

**People to Meet**

**Places to Visit**

**Before Classes Start** (Master Syllabi, CAS, Course Coordinators, Office Hours, Welcome Emails, Semester Action Dates, Public Safety)

**First Day of Class** (Course Policies, Correct Placement, Taking Attendance, Building Community, Teaching Content)

### **TECHNOLOGY AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

**My Valley** (Sign In, Email, Catalog, Schedule, Tests to Testing Center, AV Request, Printing Request, ARE form, ECARS, Student Support Portal, How to Videos)

**Student Support Portal** (Class Roster, Uploading CAS, Early Alert, Student Concern Form, Class Welcome Emails, Office Hours, CASPeRs)

**Technology Support** (Canvas, Online Homework, Visualizers, Lecture Capture)

**Student Services** (Counseling, Office for Student Access, Life Resources, Valley Food Share, Math Center, Testing Center)

## **OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Math Placement** (Prerequisites, Flow Chart, ALEKS, Guided Learning Workshops, Misplaced Students-MATH 070)

**Meetings** (On-Boarding Seminar, Department Meetings, Small Group Department Meetings, Developmental Roundtable, College Summit Days, Area Math Conferences)

**End of Semester** (Evaluation Kit, Departmental Final Exams, Final Grade Entry, Gradebook Submission, Retention, Keeping Tests/Gradebooks)

**Adjunct Policies, Contracts, and Handbooks** (Unplanned Absences, Planned Absences, Securing a Sub, Future Teaching Assignments, Classroom Observations, Adjunct Faculty Contract, Faculty Manual)

**Glossary of Acronyms** (Many KVCC acronyms such as AAS, ACC, ALC, AWH, etc.)

The finished product of this sabbatical is not intended to replace the valuable face-to-face meetings the chair and course coordinators have with our new math adjunct hires. However, it will make these meetings more efficient. This Canvas site will be more effective for adjuncts as they will be able to access the information as needed and refer back to it in future semesters. Finally, this process will make the transition between our department chairs or course coordinators smoother as the information shared with new hires will be more consistent from year to year. As a result, the effectiveness of the positions of chair, course coordinators, and new adjunct hires will improve.

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## SUMMARY OF HOW CRITERIA FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSALS WERE FULFILLED

### CRITERIA FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSALS

- A. Likelihood that the proposed activities will enhance the faculty member's effectiveness in the areas of teaching/learning, scholarship including the scholarship of teaching/learning, professional development, assessment of student learning outcomes, and/or usefulness to the college.
- B. Likelihood that the proposed sabbatical leave will enhance the institution's ability to fulfill its mission and/or improve service to students or other publics we serve.
- C. Degree to which the proposed sabbatical leave objectives exceed expectations for routine, ongoing professional development (e.g., not only attendance at a conference/workshop; application of the learning experience; synthesis of how the information learned will be shared; impact on student success/retention; completing a course through another institution, field experiences – direct and indirect; etc.).
- D. Provides an opportunity for reflection and renewal.

### SUMMARY

As the previous pages have evidenced, this sabbatical enhanced my effectiveness in the areas of teaching/learning, scholarship including the scholarship of teaching/learning, professional development, assessment of student learning outcomes, and /or usefulness to the college. The improvement of my personal technology base in Canvas not only enhanced the project created as a result of this sabbatical, but also will extend to my classroom. Both my personal teaching and student learning will improve as a result of this sabbatical.

Furthermore, the role that a chair or course coordinator plays in the support of adjunct faculty will also improve. Not only will there now be more consistency from year to year, but the fulltime instructors who serve the college in these roles will be able to spend less time creating the processes and thus can use their time and talents to serve the college in other areas.

This sabbatical also enhanced the institution's ability to fulfill its mission and/or improve service to students or other publics we serve. The sabbatical fulfilled KVCC's mission statement by improving the overall learning experiences and assessment for students as the support for adjunct faculty has been strengthened. In addition, this sabbatical supports development of faculty that strategically utilizes available resources.

This sabbatical exceeded expectations for routine, ongoing professional development with its positive impact on student success and retention. This sabbatical will improve student success and retention by improving the support of adjunct instructors who serve more than 30% of our students. Deepening the support and training of these instructors will improve what happens in their classrooms. Additionally, I plan to share this project with other department chairs, as they may find a similar need in their departments. I can also serve as a resource for those interested in strengthening their knowledge of Canvas.

The first half of this sabbatical provided an opportunity for both reflection and renewal. It created an opportunity to reflect upon what we do well as a Math Department. This flowed into reflections of how that can be shared with our newly hired adjunct colleagues. The sabbatical also provided me an opportunity to reflect on what we do **not** do well in the Math Department as we attempt to mentor and support adjuncts.

In addition, the time given to step away from the classroom, grading, committees, and day-to-day busyness associated with my job renewed my soul. I love my job. I love my colleagues. I love working at KVCC specifically. However, the demands of my job have taken a toll. The first half of this sabbatical allowed me time to renew my spirit by traveling during months when I do not typically have the opportunity to do so. It allowed me to volunteer at my sons' school during the day which is not an option for me during a typical semester. It allowed me to read for fun, see three Broadway shows, and go to cheap movies on a week day. But most importantly, I was able to be physically and emotionally present for my family. This refreshed me in so many unexpected ways. This was a much needed gift as I headed into the second half of my sabbatical, returning to help the department juggle the sudden shift to online learning for the second half of Winter 2020 as well as plan for alternate deliveries for Summer 2020 and Fall 2020. I am very thankful for the time of reflection and renewal.

Burn, E. and Kawai, J. (2014, September). *The Adjunct Faculty Development Process*. Retrieved from [https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/amatyc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Summer\\_Reading\\_2015/PD-Sept2014.pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/amatyc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Summer_Reading_2015/PD-Sept2014.pdf)