

# Erin Lawley

## Fall 2025-Spring 2026 Sabbatical Proposal

### **Project Description:**

I plan to earn a Certificate of Achievement in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) Studies through Napa Valley College. This 21-unit certificate provides students with a concentrated study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues related to the family, education, and the community. Students will explore a wide range of topics related to how people identify their sexuality and gender and how those identities are impacted and influenced in the family, in schools, and throughout the community. I also plan to read several books by and about LGBTQIA+ folks to broaden my knowledge about that demographic, as well as research current statistics from sources such as the Trevor Project (national) and Diversity Collective (local).

With my further education of LGBT Studies, I want to share this valuable insight with my peers and administration at Oxnard College and hopefully our sisters VCCCD schools. I want Oxnard College to be a welcoming, inclusive, and safe place for all our LGBTQIA+ students, faculty, staff, and administration. I also want to add a LGBTQIA+ health course to the Health curriculum. This will be AA-T and AS-T approved for California's CSU and UC systems as well.

### **Your background as it relates to the project and to your role at Oxnard College:**

I am a tenured Health and Kinesiology Instructor at Oxnard College as well as an Academic Senator, member of the Student Equity and Success Committee and the Professional Development Committee. I also coached the softball team during my first six years on campus. In addition to my official roles in the above, I also regularly participate in school events such as the OC Expo, the Family Festival, and the CondorFest as well as bring my students to the Expo, Transfer Fair, and other events during class time. As a very active participant in my students' experience at Oxnard College, it's vital that I gain further personal growth to assist my advocacy for them. We are more than just educators but also advocates for social justice. My further understanding and promotion of LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion aligns with this mission and will empower me to make a positive impact beyond my classroom.

Many of the themes in this certificate relate directly to health education so I would be able to implement the information immediately. I also have a desire to add a human sexuality course to our health curriculum and my extended education with LGBTQIA+ studies will better equip me in writing this course. In the long run, it would be amazing if Oxnard College could also create its own LGBTQIA+ certification program. And one day, an Associate's Degree. Any and all courses that are added upon the completion of my sabbatical, and help with curriculum, would be a part of this future AS/AA degree. But until then, it could be a part of the Public Health AS-T, as the Public Health List B option (there's only one course now so not exactly an "option" A future class would also fit nicely as a recommended elective and/or GE Pattern E1 Health Education course, in the Pre-Health Professions AS. Due to the increased danger of substance addiction, mental health disorders, and suicide in LGBTQIA+ folks, the Addictive Disorders

Studies and Addictive Disorder Studies in the Criminal Justice System AS degrees would also benefit from this course.

**Project Objectives:**

By continuing my education in LGBTQIA+ studies, I will have an increased awareness and understanding of the experiences, challenges and histories of LGBTQIA+ individuals. This will aid me in creating a more inclusive and empathetic classroom environment. I will be better equipped to incorporate related topics and perspectives into my Health curriculum which will help my students gain a more comprehensive understanding of diverse identities and experiences. I also plan to add an LGBTQIA+ course to our curriculum. The statistics for self-harm, bullying, discrimination, and suicide are much higher for LGBTQIA+ students than for their non-queer peers so with my increased awareness, I will be more effective in addressing any of these instances as well as promoting a culture of respect and acceptance. I will also better understand the legal and ethical aspects of supporting these students. Overall, my increased knowledge and awareness of what these students need, will lead to better servingness of this demographic. I plan to share this information with our new Professional Development Center so others have the opportunity to learn and serve as well.

**Project Methodology:**

I will become a student at Napa Valley College and complete 21-24 units of coursework that range from LGBT Studies, English, Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Human Services, and Child and Family Studies.

I plan to talk with the Diversity Collective, Oxnard College's Rainbow Café, and all three of VCCCD's schools' Health Centers to gather information about the LGBTQIA+ community in Ventura County. I'm planning on my increased knowledge of the community (nationally and locally) to help me better serve them. As well as educate my students about the science of LGBTQIA+ through my current health courses as well as a future to-be-named health course.

I also plan to read several memoirs/autobiographies of LGBTQIA+ identifying folks as well as historical pieces about the community. This is merely an additional way of gathering information about queer folks, in order to better understand the community and what it needs from its educators. The books on my to-do reading list are at the end of this document.

I'm in communication with Napa Valley College and their Senior Dean of of Career Education and Workforce Development Dr. Douglas Marriott and the LGBT Education, Pride Learning Community, and Criminal Justice Education Program Coordinator Greg Miraglia. An email excerpt is at the end of this document.

Professor Miraglia sent me the program's brochure (attached). Each of the program's courses are three units so I expect roughly 157.5 hours of work for each of those 7-8 classes according to the Course Inventory Management for California Community College courses. This will equal roughly 1,102.5-1260 hours over the course of my proposed Sabbatical leave.

This is only one of multiple showings of how further LGBT education is a positive addition to curriculum and the safe learning environment of our students.

**Product of the sabbatical (a paper, a film, an exhibit, etc):**

Rather than a paper, I think a Canvas shell would be a better way to showcase my work and findings. I would like to share this with the Professional Learning Center OC is beginning. I would also have a PowerPoint that instructional faculty could modify/use in their own classes – regardless of the subject matter. This will include ways Oxnard College (and the rest of VCCCD) can enhance their current ways of inclusivity, affirmative LGBTQIA+ sex and health education, and overall safety and inclusivity of our LGBTQIA+ students, staff, faculty, and administration.

Ultimately, I would like the product of my sabbatical to be a course. I understand the rigors and difficulty in making a LGBTQIA+ course a graduation requirement but if this future health class was a part of the health electives (and required in some degrees), I believe it would be incredibly beneficial for those who take it. Representation matters and we've done well to make sure we have DEIA classes for other under-served demographics, mostly related to race, so it's time we included this one.

I'm not currently department chair but I aspire to learn more about the curriculum development process. I'm in my sixth year as an Academic Senator and I'm attending my second Academic Senate California Community College Fall Plenary in November. Curriculum is a large part of our workshops and conversations.

Due to the sensitive nature of some or many of these LGBTQIA+ folks, I will not be interviewing specific students, etc. to collect data or research. But I will work closely with other organizations so that any personal information is gathered safely. I will not be applying for an IRB, CITI, or NIH. This is much more difficult to do individually since I'm not currently studying in a Doctoral program.

**How do you plan to share your sabbatical results at Oxnard College? Do you have plans for sharing your results more broadly?**

I would like to present at (another) Flex Day as well as provide materials for instructors to include in their syllabi and classroom, and educational materials to further support our LGBTQIA+ students and colleagues.

- I did this on August 8, 2024 but would like to enhance my presentation and materials and share district-wide

I plan to work with the library to make sure we're offering a diverse selection of LGBTQIA+ books and materials. I will also continue to work with the Rainbow Café upon my return to make sure we're meeting the needs of those students, and help increase the success of that and the Lavender Graduation.

**Work plan and schedule** (Show the committee the steps in your plan and approximately when you will complete each one, including the product or method of sharing your work).

I'd likely begin my educational journey as soon as the Spring 2025 semester or no later than the Fall 2025 semester. Overall the certificate program is 21-24 units so once Napa Valley College publishes their Spring 2025 schedule and I meet with a counselor at the college, I can map out an

educational plan to make sure I'm able to complete all necessary courses (and perhaps more) by the end of the 2025-2026 academic year. Since my sabbatical application is for a full year, I do plan on taking at least 12 units each of the two semesters I plan to be gone. The LGBT program director told me they are offering more than one of the required courses this spring, so I can begin as early as January. Napa Valley College works closely with San Francisco City College so it's possible I would take one or more classes at SFCC as a part of earning my certificate/degree at Napa Valley College.

I will be writing and reading throughout the entire sabbatical. I plan to read (at least) one LGBTQIA+ book each month, in addition to my required course work. I recently finished my second autobiography of an LGBTQIA+ professional athlete (First was Megan Rapinoe (soccer) and second was Brittney Griner (basketball)). I plan to start building and strengthening my contacts with the Rainbow groups and Health Centers at all three VCCCD colleges, the Ventura County Diversity Collective, Planned Parenthood, and several mental health resources for our LGBTQIA+ students as soon as possible. Those contacts are where I'll get much of my statistical information for Ventura County.

I would have all of what I plan to share, completed, by the start of the Fall 2026 semester. I would make sure I'm available and prepared to share during the pre-fall flex days and make myself available for one or both of the Fall 2026 self-assigned flex days as well. And the Professional Development Center would have access to my Canvas materials then as well. I will have a number of books to recommend to the library too.

**Value of Project** (here, given an overall statement of how this project will benefit you, personally and professionally, as well as how it will benefit others).

The value of this project has no ceiling. It will enhance:

- Inclusivity
- Curriculum development
- Support LGBTQIA+ students
- Improve communication and awareness
- Provide advocacy and leadership and help our campus with its legal and ethical compliance.
  - Assembly Bills, etc.

Beyond the classroom, it will contribute to my personal growth, which will foster greater empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by this marginalized community. I imagine this will be a transformative experience for me as an educator and provide me with the knowledge and tools to create more inclusive and affirming educational environments.

It will of course benefit OC's LGBTQIA+ students but also contribute to the overall diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across campus and our district. Even more so, if I'm able to bring this curriculum to Oxnard College to share with our LGBTQIA+ students and allies, as a Health Instructor, I'm broadening the horizons of so many and further creating a safe space of inclusivity and acceptance onto OC's campus as well as beyond.

### **Additional resources and information:**

Here is the link to the LGBT Studies Certificate of Achievement details:

<http://catalog.napavalley.edu/areas-of-study/lgbt-education/lgbt-studies-certificate-of-achievement/>

And the LGBT Education Associate's Degree (which includes an additional course, for 24 units):

<http://catalog.napavalley.edu/areas-of-study/lgbt-education/lgbt-education-as/>.

According to a study by the University of Texas at Austin found in the National Library of Medicine

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8454913/#:~:text=Further%2C%20students%20who%20say%20that,based%20on%20gender%20expression%20in>):

*“a recent national survey of LGBTQ students (Kosciw et al., 2020) found that when students know how and where to access appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBTQ people at school, they feel that their schools are safer for themselves and other LGBTQ students. Further, students who say that they have learned about LGBT issues at school report less bullying (Greytak et al., 2013; Snapp et al., 2016), more safety (Toomey et al., 2012), less absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2020), and less homophobic language and negative remarks based on gender expression in their schools (Kosciw et al., 2020). Inclusive curricula are particularly relevant to adolescent sexual health education, but sexuality education (if offered as school curricula at all) has often been either silent about or irrelevant to LGBTQ people and issues (Pampati et al., 2020). Yet in one state-wide study, teacher sensitivity to LGB issues in HIV education was associated with lower sexual risk-taking in LGB youth (Blake et al., 2001).*

*The identification of “safe spaces” or “safe zones” for LGBT students has emerged in a few studies as a central strategy for promoting positive school climates (Katz et al., 2016). Safe-Zone initiatives aim to promote inclusivity and support by providing voluntary training for school personnel on LGBT issues and providing participants with “safe zone” stickers that they can use to identify spaces (e.g., a classroom or office) where students may feel free to openly discuss topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Ratts et al., 2013). The available research on “safe spaces” has shown that such initiatives contribute to greater inclusiveness, safety, and connection at school for LGBT students (Evans, 2002; Katz et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2020).*

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

*In the last decade, strong evidence supports four strategies to create safe and supportive schools for LGBTQ and all students (NASEM, 2019, 2020). Everyone—students, parents, school personnel, and policy-makers—can suggest, support, and help implement the strategies described here. Table 1 provides specific, actionable recommendations for each strategy, for these key stakeholders. All our students deserve safe schools.”*

[Ventura County Diversity Collective](#)

## LGBTQIA+ books

- “Stonewall” by Martin Duberman: Explore the pivotal Stonewall riots through the lives of six individuals who were at the heart of this historic event.
- “Sister Outsider” by Audre Lorde: A powerful collection of essays and speeches by the influential poet and activist, addressing race, gender, and sexuality.
- “The Queering of Corporate America” by Carlos A. Ball: Delve into the complex relationship between the LGBTQ+ movement and corporate America.
- “The Engagement” by Sasha Issenberg: A comprehensive narrative on the battle for same-sex marriage in the United States.
- “Real Queer America” by Samantha Allen: A travel memoir showcasing the vibrant LGBTQ+ communities in red states.
- “Gender Trouble” by Judith Butler: A seminal text challenging traditional notions of gender, foundational in feminist and queer theory.
- “The History of Sexuality” by Michel Foucault: An exploration of the social construction of sexuality, offering historical context to sexual norms and behaviors.
- “American Teenager: How Trans Kids Are Surviving Hate and Finding Joy in a Turbulent Era” by Nico Lang: A vivid and moving portrait of eight trans and nonbinary teenagers across the country, following their daily triumphs, struggles, and all that encompasses growing up trans in America today.

Here is an excerpt from a recent correspondence with a Senior Dean at NVC:

*Good afternoon, Professor Lawley,*

*Thank you for reaching out and I appreciate your interest in our LGBT Education Program at NVC!*

*We would welcome you during your Sabbatical and I hope to help.*

*Our Spring 24 schedule is not quite finalized and for that reason I am copying in Professors Miraglia, Powell, and Smyle, to help with your inquiry.*

*They are a GREAT and dedicated team I hope can help with your questions to move forward in the program.*

*Professor Miraglia please see Professor Lawley’s inquiry below and thank you in advance for your help.*

*Best,*

*Doug*

***Douglas C. Marriott, M.Ed., Ed.D – Senior Dean  
Career Education & Workforce Development***

*Pronouns: he, him, his*

***Napa Valley College***

2277 Napa-Vallejo Hwy, Napa, CA 94558  
**Office:** 707-256-7256



The American Bar Association says

[\(https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/intersection-of-lgbtq-rights-and-religious-freedom/lgbtq-inclusive-curriculum-as-a-path-to-better-public-health/\)](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/intersection-of-lgbtq-rights-and-religious-freedom/lgbtq-inclusive-curriculum-as-a-path-to-better-public-health/):

*“According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the potential for risky sexual behavior by LGBTQ youth can be addressed by providing appropriate sexual health education. LGBTQ mental health is also improved by affirmative LGBTQ sexual health education, which aims to remove stigma and lower the likelihood of victimization.”*