April 11, 2016
Kendra Killpatrick, Associate Dean

Dear Kendra:
This is my application for sabbatical leave, to be taken in the Spring of 2018. I currently hold the rank of Professor of Mathematics in the Natural Science Division and have had two previous sabbaticals: the first was in the spring of 1994, the second was a two semester administrative leave for my 1997-2003 service as Associate Dean of Seaver College, a leave that I took in academic year 2010-2011. In the spring of 1994, I served as a visiting scientist (for no salary) at the Hughes Research Lab (HRL Malibu), working in collaboration with Dr. K. Wojtek Przytula in the HRL Signal Processing Group, subsequently producing six publications. During my 2010-11 administrative leave I worked with Dr. Miller-Perrin on life purpose and spiritual development, resulting in five publications. (See my CV for all publication details: http://dt.pepperdine.edu/resume. htm).

My current proposal consists of two components: 1) "Spiritual Autobiography: Self-Portraits of the Academy", and 2) "Christian Meditation: Balancing Soul and Sense.
To accomplish this work, I plan to spend the majority of my time visiting the Great Books programs at St. John's College - Santa Fe and St. Benedict College. I have no plans to seek additional employment. Here is an abstract of my two-fold proposed work:

Spiritual Autobiography: For the last 15 years, in working with Dr. Miller-Perrin on helping faculty develop a sense of vocation or life-purpose, we have collected some 200 spiritual autobiographies from various Center for Faith & Learning Retreats, representing a collection of self-portraits that reveal the interior life of faculty members, providing a glimpse into the soul of the academy. I will organize and analyze these writings into a book of approximately 250 pages, providing readers both within and outside of the academy an understanding of what it means to be called to teach. Christian Meditation: For the last 20 years, while teaching Great Books, I have incorporated a weekly meditation exercise with my students, showing them how to experience prayer and meditation that synthesizes their emotions, bodies, minds, and ultimately their souls. Initially I simply used resources by such spiritual writers as de Mello, Keating, Palmer, Merton, Rohr, and Brother Lawrence. Over time, I have written some 350 meditations of my own. My sabbatical will allow me to place the best 100 of these in a volume of meditations that anyone can use to deepen their spiritual walk.

Thank you for carefully considering my proposal.

Don Thompson

Sabbatical Project - Spring 2018

1. Spiritual Autobiography: Self-Portraits of the Academy

This project is aimed toward the publication of a book on how faculty members navigate their individual vocational journeys. Specifically, I plan to finalize a prospectus to submit to a number of interested publishers (including Jossey-Bass, Eerdmans, and InterVarsity) in order to publish a volume on the research that I have been conducting with colleague, Dr. Cindy Miller-Perrin, since 2002. Our book, to be entitled *Life Purpose in the Academy: Faculty Soul,* is comprised of annotated essay material from approximately two hundred autobiographical essays we have collected from faculty members over the last 15 years. Our plan is to focus our efforts on 1) identifying and describing the driving themes that occur throughout our writing sample, 2) organizing and annotating faculty essays selected for inclusion, and 3) crafting three or four sample book chapters. Much of this work has been done on a smaller scale as appearing in three journal articles[1], and several conference presentations and faculty development workshops[2] we have published, presented, and conducted over the last several years. Many of the essays have come from our collaboration with the Center for Faith & Learning as part of their ongoing new faculty workshops on faith and vocation.

The life of a university faculty member is often solitary, singular, and independent. As a result, the interior life of the faculty member and therefore of the academy itself is not

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[1] Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. (2003). Understanding vocation: Discerning and responding to God's call. Leaven: A Journal of Christian Ministry, 11(1), 48-53.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Vocational discernment and action: an exploratory study of male and female university professors". Review of Religious Research, Volume 48, December 2008.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L."Gender Does Matter: Barriers for Women Living Out Their Vocational Calling in the Academy". Journal of Feminist Studies In Religion. In Press.

[2] Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Vocational discernment and action among university professors." Paper presented at the Faith in the Academy conference, Messiah College, Pennsylvania, October, 2004.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Personal Stories of Faith." Workshop presented to Messiah College Social Science and Education Faculty, Grantham, PA, August 24, 2005.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Personal stories of calling among university professors." Paper Presented at Cultivating a Culture of Calling: Mennonite Perspectives on Vocation Conference, Goshen, IN, October 20-22, 2005.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Peak experiences in personal stories of calling among university professors." Paper presented at Faith, Hope, and Work Conference, San Diego, CA, February 9-11, 2006.

Thompson, D.& Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Gender differences in the understanding and pursuit of life purpose among university faculty." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Jacksonville, FL, November 8, 2008.

Thompson, D., Miller-Perrin, C.L., Jones, T., & Tippens, D. "Vocational Development of Students and Faculty: High Impact Programs at Pepperdine University". Presented at the Council of Independent Colleges, NetVUE Conference. Indianapolis, March 14, 2009.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "Personal Stories of Faith and Vocation." Workshop presented to faculty and staff of North Park University, Chicago, IL, August 17, 2009.

Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C.L. "The Role of Gender and Age in Vocational Calling Among University Professors". Presented at the Division 36 Mid-Year Conference of Psychology and Religion, March 27, 2010. <Presentation Slides>

well understood. Why is this so? Faculty members are a kind of self-employed and self-perpetuating guild, focusing on the life of the mind. Moreover, theirs is a life dedicated to research, the office, the laboratory, the classroom, and to students - where professors close the door and keep the public out. It is a private world. But faculty members, if asked, often want to tell us how they think, how they became academics, and how their lives contribute to a sense of purpose and meaning. Accordingly, this book is about the interior lives of college and university faculty members, based on their stories, as recorded in their autobiographical writing reflections. Why are their stories important? They are the only ones who can tell these stories. They alone, like a royal priesthood, charged with maintaining the academy, can ultimately tell us their understanding of their own life purposes and, therefore, the purposes that form the academy itself. So, this book is an attempt to look inside a collection of faculty lives so that we may understand their culture, what drives it, and what end it drives toward. This book opens the classroom door, the office door, and the department door in order to peer into the faculty soul, letting us connect with them and with a central part of modern culture – the academic world.

This volume is a kind of portrait gallery of the academy. Although each portrait is different, there are similar facial features, so that this work helps the reader understand the common themes tied to entering and staying in the academy, from the perspective of those who make up the academy – its faculty. This is not a collection of success stories or a "how to" manual on becoming a professor. Instead, this is an account of the life journeys of faculty members, in their own words, with all the attendant adventures they experience.

Table of Contents

1. Portrait Gallery
2. Mythical Rules of Academic Culture
3. Our Project
4. Characteristics of the Soul of Faculty
5. Dark Night of the Soul: Barriers, Obstacles, and Challenges
6. Lessons about the Academy by the Academy – Lessons Beyond the Academy
7. Voices of Students & Alumni
8. Bowling Together

This is a work that everyone will find valuable. The lessons about life purpose spoken here are universals. Indeed, no matter what life path we are on, we can each identify with some form of disconnectedness from our colleagues in every community to which we belong. This book fills a need we all have for honesty and vulnerability that allows us to connect with each other on a deeper level. We all can benefit in knowing how our

journeys and experiences tie us to our coworkers and colleagues. Accordingly, this book will be beneficial to all readers, for we have all been students and have more in common than we may realize. Furthermore, this book will help us understand our teachers and academic mentors, as well as those who are part of our larger social and cultural networks.

2. Christian Meditation: Balancing Soul & Sense

Twenty years ago I began a weekly practice of a 10-15 minute Christian meditation with my Great Books students at the beginning of class. I had found that the practice of regular meditation, when learned from a spiritual master such as Anthony de Mello[3] or Richard Rohr[4], had a profound effect on my own spiritual well-being and my ability to weather the daily storms of life. Because of the benefit I have received, I felt the need to pass this on to my students as well as set the tone for our class discussion.

As I began to include weekly meditations I soon realized that students were hungry for both the experience of meditation and learning ways to incorporate these practices into their daily living. Increasingly, students want experiences that are off the grid, interacting with other human beings, tying their sensory world with their souls, bypassing the world of screens and keyboards. They seek experiences that help them make authentic connections to their identities, as described by such authors as James McWilliams[5] and Matthew Crawford[6]. There is no app for this. Computers do not deliver. Text, email and web sites can't pull it off. Instead, students are attracted to the oral tradition of the human voice, which my meditations comprise. When we enter meditation space, students return to the ground of their being and experience the spiritual enlightenment of such sojourners as Brother Lawrence[7], Jean-Pierre De Caussade[8] and Thomas Merton[9].

As a result, my Great Books class meditation experiment has become a weekly habit. Students love it and come to expect it. Alumni of my classes, 10-15 years out, still email to ask for meditations they can use to continue the practice for themselves and with

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[3] Sadhana, a Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form, Anthony De Mello. Image Book, Doubleday. 1984.
[4] Immortal Diamond: The Search for our True Self. Richard Rohr. Jossey-Bass. 2013.
[5] Saving the Self in the Age of the Selfie, American Scholar, Spring 2016.
[6] The World Beyond Your Head - On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, New York. 2016
[7] The Practice of the Presence of God. Whitaker House.1982.
[8] The Sacrament of the Present Moment. Harper San Francisco. 1981.
[9] The Seven Storey Mountain. Mariner Books. 1999.

friends. As a result, over these 20+ years of meditation practice, I have written some 350 new meditation exercises of my own. This portion of my sabbatical project will allow me to organize a book of 100 meditations that students and others can use to learn and practice meditation privately or with small groups. This work is aimed at a singular goal: Union with God. That can only be achieved through our senses, emotions, experience, and a tiny bit of reason, within the following:

Table of Contents

- Stop
    - Learn to be still, be silent, detach, withdraw, learn to breathe. Learn to be quiet, to empty yourself.
- Connect the Soul with the Senses
    - How to get out of our heads and into our spirit through our senses. We focus on the 5 senses and beyond, realizing the ways in which our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- Wake Up
    - See the world differently, see yourself and others differently, see God differently, through your spirit, your soul, beyond your mind.
- The Great Books Connection
    - How reading the Great Books enhances our spiritual journey - Wisdom from Dante, Boethius, Descartes, Milton, Kierkegaard & Dostoevsky.
- 100 Meditations to Connect Sense with Soul
    - Meditation Foci: the present moment, our own space
    - Meditation Skein
        - Scripture or sacred text to animate by the Jesuit practice known as *oratio, lectio & meditatio*
            - "Only a mind that is deeply stirred can utter something
            - noble and beyond the power of others" -- Seneca
        - Sensation Exercise -
            - Sensory Practice - using touch, sound, sight, taste, smell, hapticity, balance, breathing ... to train the body to bypass the mind and tap directly into the soul
        - Replicable exercise, that can be transferred to any time or place, maintaining the link to the meditation foci

I hope to submit a prospectus of this work to Jossey-Bass, for publication in their Personal Development Series.