



Service Learning/Experiential Education

January 21, 2000

To: Bernadette Cheyne, Chair
Academic Senate

From: Service Learning/Experiential Education Advisory Committee

Re: Position on the Governor's proposed community service requirement

We support the Governor's belief that a "service ethic should be taught and reinforced as a lasting value in California" and we see the opportunity to create a continuum of service and educational opportunities as an exciting opportunity to effect positive change. However, we do not support imposed mandatory service requirements for our students. In reflecting upon the complexity and scope of the issues, we have several concerns and recommendations.

There are five broad areas of concern which will need to be fully investigated before we can reasonably define the nature of an appropriate community service program for California's college and university students. They are as follows:

1. Administrative Logistics

- Articulation with K-12 and community colleges
- Need to review effectiveness
- Documentation tracking
- Supervision – programmatic
- Costs of implementation
- Infrastructure/support
- Risk management issues; insurance, background checks, screening placements, legal implications

2. Community Partnerships

- Ability to absorb K-12, community college and HSU students
- Need coordination with K-12 and community college; coordination of students
- Community partners may have limited staff, time and resources to work with students
- Supervision – programmatic, cost to agencies vs. benefits
- Appropriate placement sites and tasks
- Relationships/quality of experiences
- Need for community partner voice in the development, implementation and assessment of service-learning placements.

3. Student Impacts

- 120 unit restrictions
- Impacts in terms of time, working students, students with families
- Appropriate placement sites and tasks
- Transportation logistics, costs
- Possibility of multiple service experiences between K-12, community colleges, and CSU which becomes burdensome

4. Faculty Impacts

- Impact on current teaching load
- Increased amount of time to work with placements and community partners
- Impact on teaching and learning; change in the structure and processes of a class
- Evaluation – instructors, courses and placements
- Risk management issues; insurance, legal implications (faculty are completely responsible for their students' learning environment, in the classroom and out)
- Recognition in terms of retention, tenure, promotion, and merit by the institution
- Lack of understanding of service learning as a concept and the continuum of service and educational opportunities; faculty development and support

5. Pedagogical Issues

- Community service should not be mandated; current programs are working and should be strengthened and broadened
- Should not mandate because service should not be about pay-off; giving is valuable
- Need for increased awareness and education surrounding service learning and the continuum of service and educational opportunities; faculty development and support

Time, coordination and resources will be necessary to address these issues. Therefore, we recommend:

1. That campuses be allowed to build upon existing programs in ways which uniquely fit their communities and community partners, their students, their faculties and programs, and their coordination with local schools;
2. That students be actively involved in the development and consideration of proposals;
3. That faculty participate in the development and consideration of proposals;
4. That community service be conceived of as part of a continuum of experiences that build responsible citizenship; these experiences include experiential education including observation, participation, internships and practica; service learning, and community service as well as the dialogue of the content of our courses;
5. That resources be provided as incentives for campuses to expand the range, variety of, and participation in the continuum of experiential education opportunities including service learning and community service.

If community service is to build an ethic of service and community spirit, opportunity is required for individuals to reflect upon and communicate about their experiences in order to construct and integrate it in meaningful ways. Without this, community service becomes simply an added obstacle to be overcome in the completion of a degree.