

**An Executive Summary from the Academic Affairs Committee**

**On**

**Community Service and Service Learning**

**In**

**The California State University**

**1) State of Community Service and Service Learning in the CSU**

On May 6-7, 1999, the Academic Senate of the California State University passed a resolution (AS-2455-99/AA) which called for a determination of “the appropriate resources and mechanisms to provide the opportunities and incentives necessary to engage CSU students in meaningful service activities,” noting that incentives and opportunities are more appropriate ways of fostering an ethic of service than would mandating community service for all CSU students, and that such mandatory service would raise resources, liability, and public relations issues.

On July 15, 1999, Governor Gray Davis requested that the CSU and the other public higher education segments in California to “establish a community service requirement for undergraduate students.” He asked that such a requirement be approached thoughtfully, and that the Chancellor “develop a plan for adoption by the Trustees that would establish a graduation requirement for community service.” The Governor requested that faculty work together “to create a proposal implementing a community service graduation requirement” and that this process begin with the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates.

In August 1999, representatives of the Senates to the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates agreed that response to the community service graduation proposal should be deferred to each of the System senates, and from them to the faculty on the campuses.

On August 12, 1999, a *Review of Information and Issues to Consider in Developing a Plan to Require Community Service of Public University Students* was prepared by Erika Freihage, Coordinator of Community Service Learning, CSU Chancellor's Office. This review contained questions to address in the development of a community service requirement; theoretical underpinnings in defining outcomes that such requirement would have on students; input from involved faculty, students, community service and service learning practitioners, community agencies and members; types of service activities that students can

participate in; challenges such as philosophical concerns about mandating community service, placements, coordination of placements, infrastructure support, risk management issues, monitoring the requirement, transportation to community, and logistics; and models of effective community service and service learning programs and initiatives.

On September 9-10, 1999, the Academic Senate of the California State University passed a resolution (AS-2471-99/AA/FGA) which requested that the CSU campus senates consider the Governor's request for a community service graduation requirement and respond to the Academic Senate CSU by February 1, 2000. In so doing, the Academic Senate CSU requested that the local senates assess the impact of a community service graduation requirement. Their assessment was to focus on such issues as resource allocation, time to degree, liability issues, faculty/staff workload issues and other aspects of implementing such a change.

It is important to reiterate that the California State University has long accepted that part of our mission as a state-supported system of higher education is the promotion of appropriate forms of service to the communities—local, regional and statewide—within which our campuses are located. The desirability of civic engagement on the part of our students is spelled out in the recent *Study of the Baccalaureate* conducted by the Academic Senate of the California State University.

## **2) Need for Oversight by CSU Local Campuses and Their Faculties**

It is important to note both the responsibility of the faculty in defining curricula and the manner in which core principles of academic freedom grant to the faculty autonomy and rights in the design and execution of their instructional efforts. In response to AS-2471-99/AA/FGA, concerns and input from some CSU campuses include:

- a) CSU Fullerton: it is the historic responsibility of the faculty to determine curriculum and graduation requirements
- b) CSU Northridge: it is the responsibility of faculty to determine degree requirements
- c) SSU: control of the curriculum must reside with the faculty

The CSU as a whole, individual campuses of the CSU, campus administrators, faculty and staff, all could be exposed to potential civil liability should an individual student's conduct, while engaged in mandatory community service, fall short of that deemed legally acceptable. Although they do not comprise an exhaustive list, issues above related to control of the curriculum, academic freedom, and civil liability compel the Academic Senate of the California State University to agree with other campus constituencies that have declared that community service and service learning must not be mandatory for our students,

but rather should be made available to our students, through opportunities to serve, on a voluntary basis.

The terms and conditions of employment for CSU faculty are subject to collective bargaining. As community service and service learning become increasingly integrated into both the curriculum and co-curriculum of individual CSU campuses, impacts on the workload (i.e. terms and conditions of employment) of Unit-3 employees must be assessed. To the extent faculty involvement in community service and service learning programs requires the dedication of time and effort to either program supervision or assigned time loads, the bargaining agent for Unit-3 personnel must be consulted.

### **3) Community Service and Service Learning as Opportunities**

Fostering an ethic of volunteerism and service to one's community is considered, by most, to be intrinsically good. However, an ethic of volunteerism and community service cannot truly be fostered by mandated community service.

In response to AS-2471-99/AA/FGA, concerns and input from many CSU campuses include:

- a) Bakersfield: the potential benefits and burdens of community service as a requirement may not be shared equally among all members of the diverse CSUB population
- b) Fresno: there are philosophical and legal implications of mandating "volunteer" service
- c) Fullerton: required community service may present hardships for some students, most notably those with family or work obligations; believe that a service requirement would be inconsistent with the spirit of service
- d) Hayward: the idea of requiring community service violates the very spirit of community service
- e) Los Angeles: we recognize that there are considerable difficulties, both physical and philosophical, with making such service a graduation requirement; we oppose such service being made mandatory
- f) Maritime: feels that the imposition of a mandatory community service component to the graduation requirements of our public colleges and universities should be refuted
- g) Monterey Bay: has adopted a service learning graduation requirement through which all CSUMB students engage in community service activities as part of their academic coursework
- h) Northridge: the efficacy of mandating volunteerism
- i) Sacramento: promotion of service would best be accomplished through incentives
- j) San Diego: most community partners did not support a mandatory service requirement because of overwhelming numbers of students, a lack of resources to properly handle a significant increase in volunteers, and a sense

that they are not interested in working with volunteers that “don’t want to be there”

- k) San Francisco: provide adequate incentives and appropriate resources for the careful planning and execution of community service learning opportunities for all CSU students than to mandate service as a graduation requirement
- l) San Jose: although we recognize the tremendous importance of a community service ethic, we believe that ethic is better instilled through developing incentives and opportunities than in imposing a requirement
- m) San Luis Obispo: a service ethic is better fostered by providing incentives and opportunities than by mandating service
- n) Sonoma: has not demonstrated any support for requiring community service learning courses as either a part of all majors, or as a graduation requirement
- o) Stanislaus: while our commitment to service is visible in both words and action, we are strongly opposed to a graduation requirement of service for students in public institutions of higher education

#### **4) CSU Support for Community Service and Service Learning**

It is important to state unequivocally that in our response to the Governor’s request for a community service graduation requirement we:

- a) affirm the ethics associated with both community service and volunteerism
- b) recognize the considerable value of a vast array of service learning options currently available to students throughout the CSU
- c) support and celebrate ongoing community service efforts on the part of both students and their mentors within the CSU
- d) recognize the desirability of conducting a needs assessment to identify areas for development and/or expansion of service learning opportunities
- e) express a system-wide commitment to encourage, and, whenever possible, provide the resources for expansion of the already impressive efforts in service that take place
- f) applaud and support the efforts of our faculty as they work to augment the service learning opportunities available on all campuses of the CSU

In essence, the Academic Senate of the California State University’s position urges support of campus-community efforts in identifying and promoting opportunities and incentives for meaningful service rather than mandating such service. Furthermore, we wish to urge the Governor to carefully examine and ultimately acknowledge the commitment and dedication to service that the faculty and students of the CSU have already shown through the years.

#### **5) Need for Infrastructure Support for CS and SL in the CSU**

In response to AS-2471-99/AA/FGA, concerns and input from many CSU campuses indicated the need for infrastructure support for community service and service learning:

- a) Bakersfield: the additional budgetary implications of such a proposal will be substantial
- b) Fresno: over 107,000 hours of service provided to the community each year by over 3,000 students; estimated 8,000 annual placement opportunities and nearly \$500,000 in new funding needed to satisfy mandate
- c) Fullerton: urge Governor Davis to support additional funding to provide for further service learning opportunities
- d) Hayward: a very large percentage of our students work 20, 30 or more hours a week at paid jobs; a requirement to do community service work would impose a substantial hardship on such students
- e) Los Angeles: over 1,200 of our students participate in service programs
- f) Monterey Bay: general fund provides approximately \$400,000 in annual support for the Service Learning Institute
- g) Northridge: requires a significant commitment of additional resources
- h) Sacramento: it will require significant infrastructure in both the university and community organizations to handle 2,000-2,500 students per semester; significant new resources will be needed to build this infrastructure
- i) San Diego: students, faculty and staff contribute more than 1.2 million hours per year to a wide variety of community endeavors; the implementation costs of establishing and policing such a requirement would be very high in both infrastructure and in personnel
- j) San Francisco: currently as many as three quarters of our students engage in some form of service and more than a hundred courses offer significant service learning components
- k) San Jose: thousands of students already engage in community service, but many are disadvantaged and do not have the time or other resources to devote themselves to community service at this point in their lives; imposition of a community service requirement would impose significant fiscal and other costs on SJSU (e.g. implementation of a community service requirement could cost up to \$1.5 million annually); it is unclear whether the State is prepared to provide the funds necessary to successfully implement a community service requirement
- l) San Luis Obispo: more than 3000 students annually engaged in community service and service learning projects
- m) San Marcos: more than \$500,000 would be needed to meet the mandate for community service and service learning as a graduation requirement
- n) Stanislaus: the likelihood is that the 1500-2000 annual placement opportunities needed to satisfy such a mandate are not available; there are significant infrastructure and budgetary implications for the campus; it is estimated that providing the university and the community the services needed to support such a mandate may require from \$250,000 to \$500,000 annually in new funding