

**California State University, Office of the Chancellor  
Office of Community Service Learning  
Strategic Plan: 2008-2013**

**Service Learning in the CSU: Transforming Education**

Beginning in the 1990s, the California State University (CSU) began to recognize the value of service learning as a vehicle that would meet the state's changing educational needs while also imparting vital civic skills and knowledge. In 1997, with the establishment of the first of its kind strategic plan on community service learning, this systemwide effort began to take shape. Infrastructure was established at campuses and the systemwide office, the Board of Trustees passed a landmark resolution calling for the creation of service opportunities for all students, and outside funding was secured.

Since that time, the CSU's reputation as a leader in community service learning has risen to national prominence due to its unique 23-campus and systemwide coordination. Faculty and student enthusiasm and involvement have soared, data collection efforts have begun, many campus and community partnerships have been established, and the breadth and depth of service learning in both general education and major-based courses have multiplied.

**Systemwide Office: Primary Mission and Roles**

In 1998, when the Office of Community Service Learning (CSL) in the Chancellor's Office of the California State University was established, the primary charge was to build capacity among faculty, students, and other practitioners to engage students in community service and service learning. The responsibilities of this one-person office included hosting meetings, visiting campuses, and representing the CSU at various meetings and conferences.

As a result, the CSU was well-poised to seek out systemwide funding and was tremendously successful in securing funds, primarily from state and federal resources. In the 2000-01 academic year (AY), a strong influx of new funds added grantmaking and program coordination to the systemwide office's responsibilities resulting in the expansion of the professional office staff from 1 FTE to 2 FTE. As funding increased two additional staff members were added resulting in the office being staffed with four FTE including an office manager, AmeriCorps coordinator, service-learning coordinator, and director.

During this time of growth, a mission statement for the Office of Community Service Learning was developed that reflected campus and office priorities and the Board of Trustees' Resolution:

*The Office of Community Service Learning in the Chancellor's Office of the California State University provides leadership and coordination among the 23 campuses of the CSU to ensure that all CSU students have the chance to*

*participate in service prior to graduation. Opportunities include academic service learning, community service, and national service. Fall 2000*

In 2004-05 AY, the systemwide office added a rotating faculty scholar position to its team; the scholar serves as a mentor and resource for faculty members. In the midst of office restructuring, staffing levels changed from 4 FTE to 3 FTE, which meant that the office was comprised of an assistant director, faculty scholar, and director. Currently, the office is staffed with 2.5 FTE.

In summary, the systemwide office has largely served in a capacity building mode to CSU practitioners by hosting meetings, serving as an information clearinghouse, and visiting campuses to promote service learning, community service, and national service. In addition, but to a lesser degree, fundraising and public relations have also been priorities. From time to time, there has also been informal communication to campus presidents, provosts, and other influential campus leaders.

### **Current Context: Expansion to Community Engagement**

The CSU's community engagement roots are largely based in service learning, with a great deal of past attention in developing courses with new service-learning components. With nearly 450,000 students, the availability of 65,000 service-learning opportunities in virtually every discipline is no small feat. However, instead of simply maintaining this level of success, the opportunity and challenge before the CSU is to continue to be forward-thinking in institutionalizing academic service learning while also incorporating a broader spectrum of community engagement (also referred to as civic engagement) efforts that advance our purpose as public institutions that serve the public good.

Throughout the nation and within the CSU, the community engagement movement has taken hold, resulting in expansion of the roles of service-learning offices in higher education. National organizations, such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and Campus Compact, have spearhead initiatives that have elevated the importance of community engagement in higher education.

From the Freshman Year Experience through Senior Capstones, service-learning plays a prominent role in CSU community efforts and is integral to the expansion to other activities that encompass the definition of community engagement (e.g., voter registration drives, community-based research, community-centered forums, alternative spring breaks, community based internships). While there are several definitions for community engagement and each campus has the prerogative to develop a definition that represents the culture of its campus and regional community the CSU Chancellor's Office is using the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning's definition. The definition states "Community Engagement describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity."

As the CSU began to examine ways in which it could adapt and meet a broader mission of engagement, having a clear and coherent understanding among our 23 campuses and the systemwide office was crucial. Therefore, during the 2006-2007 AY, CSL in the Chancellor's Office asked all campus service-learning offices (some of which have been renamed to reflect a community/civic engagement focus) without current plans in place to undertake a strategic planning process. In addition, CSL in the Chancellor's Office undertook a strategic planning process.

Parallel to this initiative, in September 2006, the CSU launched a wide-ranging strategic planning effort, *Access to Excellence*, which will set the direction of the CSU for the next 10 years. "*Access to Excellence* focuses on the intersection of [the CSU] with the economic, political, and social environment of the State of California, anticipating what the people of the State will need from the CSU in the next decade, and how best to position the institution to meet those needs"<sup>1</sup>. In the text that follows, the reader will find that the strategic directions, goals and activities set forth in the Center for Community Engagement's strategic plan are closely aligned with *Access to Excellence*. Our community engagement efforts play a pivotal role in securing the CSU's contribution to the public good.

### **Office of Community Service Learning's Strategic Planning Process**

Dr. Kathleen Rice, a strategic planning consultant and former CSU faculty member, guided the CSL strategic planning process. A draft strategic plan was prepared by a design team<sup>2</sup> during the course of five meetings. Faculty feedback during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual CSU Conference on Community Based Teaching and Research on strategies and barriers to community-based teaching and research efforts also helped shape the draft.

### **New Office Name:**

The Office of Community Service Learning will be renamed to the Center for Community Engagement, which reflects a broader vision, mission, and set of responsibilities.

### **Vision:**

In 2013, the CSU Chancellor's Office Center for Community Engagement is a full partner in the California State University's service to the public good through the work of its 23 campuses and its local and global communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Access to Excellence, CSU's March 11-12, 2008 draft, page 5

<sup>2</sup> Members of the strategic plan design team: 1) a campus community partner; 2) a student/alumni; 3) a faculty member; 4) two state and national partners; 5) two campus service-learning directors; 6) two Chancellor's Office colleagues; 7) and two staff members from OCSL. For names and contact information, please see Appendix A.

**Mission:**

The CSU Chancellor's Office Center for Community Engagement, as a driving and innovative force, advances the California State University's systemwide and multi-campus commitment to serving the economic, public policy and social needs of our state.

**Barriers**

The Strategic Planning Design Team and feedback from faculty identified ten (10) key barriers existing on CSU campuses, the Chancellor's Office and beyond. These barriers are keeping our vision from being a current reality.

While these barriers seem daunting, the acknowledgement of their existence was instrumental in shaping the Center for Community Engagement's strategic directions.

- There are many different terms and philosophies of this work (e.g. academic service learning, community service, public service, civic engagement, community based research, field work, international service learning, community based internships and practica).
- Infrastructure levels that support this work are uneven and frequently changing.
- Higher education is often slow to respond to community needs.
- Experience and knowledge of community partners and students are often overlooked by institutions of higher education.
- Students juggle many competing demands on their time.
- Engagement in civic, social and political issues is not always viewed as a core strategy in achieving the CSU's mission and priorities.
- Funding needed to support the work is inadequate and unstable.
- Current hiring, retention, tenure and promotion criteria do not encourage faculty involvement and leadership.
- Collaboration necessary for quality partnerships is fragmented.
- Some CSU policies and procedures inhibit community engagement.

**Strategic Directions, Goals, and Possible Action Steps**

The design team created four strategic directions, which are "broad directions or proposals that impact the future. They are innovative, substantial actions designed to

respond to the barriers and catapult the organization closer to its vision”<sup>3</sup>. To achieve each strategic direction, five-year goals have been identified as well as some possible action steps. Success indicators for each strategic direction will be developed and available online. Based on stakeholder feedback, each year the Center for Community Engagement staff will develop a one-year implementation plan to determine the key actions and measurable outcomes that will build momentum behind each strategic direction and their corresponding goals.

### **Strategic Direction 1 - Build CSU-wide capacity to advance community engagement**

Goal 1: Support the leadership of campus offices in institutionalizing and elevating the role of community engagement on campuses and in the CSU.

- Offer a range of ongoing networking and professional development opportunities that respond to the very diverse strengths, needs and interests of service learning and community engagement leaders
- Design a more efficient means of supporting and training new leaders, including student leaders.
- Identify new strategies for recognizing community engagement champions throughout the system.

Goal 2: Foster partnerships with administrative leaders

- Provide provosts and other key academic leaders who champion service learning and community engagement with specific opportunities to engage in discussions and initiatives with campus and system stakeholders.
- Regularly update presidents with specific information about their campus community engagement efforts and encourage them to use the information in presentations to internal and external audiences.
- Collaborate with statewide Academic Senate members to promote community engagement at campus Academic Senates.

Goal 3: Promote recognition and reward of faculty community scholarship at the individual faculty level

- Coordinate and publicize publishing opportunities for faculty.
- Offer community engagement workshops through various forums (e.g. CSU Community-Based Teaching and Research Conference and campus-based workshops).
- Connect faculty with statewide organizations and programs seeking evaluation and research on public policy issues.
- Create a cohort of CSU faculty who conduct collaborative research on specific community-based issues and identify the collective impact of their research.

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<sup>3</sup> Technology of Participation: Participatory Strategic Planning published by the Institute for Cultural Affairs, 2005 in Phoenix, AZ

Goal 4: Promote recognition and reward of community scholarship at the department/college/institutional/systemwide levels

- Partner with the Chancellor's Office of Human Resources to host systemwide meetings that encourage campus teams – (department chairs, college deans, faculty on RTP committees, etc.) to have discussions on the changing roles for faculty and on methods for assessing and acknowledging community engagement in faculty RTP files.
- Explore the feasibility and usefulness of a CSU or external Review Board to assist faculty in documenting their Scholarship of Engagement.

### **Strategic Direction 2 - Raise awareness and visibility for the importance of community engagement and its connection to CSU priorities**

Goal 1: Introduce key stakeholders to campus and system-wide strategic plans that outline the visions and strategic directions for community engagement throughout the system.

- Publish a “white paper” to make the case for community engagement efforts as critical to the mission of the CSU. Articulate the shared themes and distinctions between offices for service learning and community engagement strategic plans, the Chancellor's Office Center for Community Engagement strategic plan, and the *Access to Excellence* plan, including areas of academic preparation for Pre K-12 youth, a high priority area in the Chancellor's Office.

Goal 2: Expand public relations efforts

- Design branding and marketing materials to publicize the new name, vision and mission of the systemwide office
- Explore recognition opportunities for CSU campuses and community members, including students.

Goal 3: Improve systemwide mechanisms to gather data on the impact of all forms of community engagement on students, faculty, the community, and institutions

- Explore how new data collection measurements from organizations, such as American Association of State Colleges and Universities, can be integrated into the CSU's efforts.
- Determine the type of data that should be collected.
- Identify ways to integrate data collection with Peoplesoft and other institutional databases.

### **Strategic Direction 3 - Mobilize Partnerships to fuel and expand community engagement**

Goal 1: Seek out new external partnerships to expand public participation and political engagement opportunities

- Initiate systemwide conversations with organizations that promote public participation on policy issues and examine suitable roles or resources for the CSU.
- Provide resources to campuses interested in engaging in community/campus dialogue, public issue forums, and/or political engagement education for students and community.

Goal 2: Explore partnerships with other Chancellor's Office programs that expand engagement efforts

- Identify ways community engagement currently is in alignment with emerging state and federal priorities (e.g. veterans' social and economic issues, academic preparation for pre K-12 youth), with the goal of preparing funding proposals and encouraging new and/or strengthened alliances.
- Advocate for shared decision-making on risk management policies between Divisions of Academic Affairs and Business and Finance.

#### **Strategic Direction 4– Seek new, stable, sustainable financial resources**

Goal 1: Pilot new ways to secure additional resources that support the efforts of CSU campuses and the Chancellor's Office

- Encourage campuses to become lead applicants in consortia grant proposals.
- Investigate the feasibility of a systemwide advisory board to assist in fund-development.
- Advocate for the inclusion of community engagement efforts in CSU budget proposals.
- Invest in networking opportunities for advancement officers and community engagement leaders.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with other Chancellor's Office programs on grants.

#### **Conclusion**

In the last ten years, an educational revolution has occurred that has expanded our traditional notions of where learning takes place. Service learning is now widely practiced in the CSU as a vehicle to prepare our next generation of leaders to be active, informed, and committed to community issues. Ultimately, it is the nexus between this historic momentum, with service learning at the core, and the limitless potential ahead that serve as the driving force behind the Center for Community Engagement's vision to be a full partner with the CSU in serving the public good.

**Appendix A – Strategic Planning Design Team**

We would like to thank the members of the design team who generously gave their time and feedback in helping to develop a new strategic plan for the CSU systemwide center for community engagement.

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