

Review of Information and Issues to consider in developing a plan to require community service of public university students

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Prepared by Erika Freihage
Coordinator of Community Service Learning
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INTRODUCTION

The content of this paper was developed from conversations and exchanges with community service-learning practitioners in the CSU. When Governor Davis announced his interest in developing a community service requirement in April 1999, CSU service-learning practitioners began an active conversation on the CSU community service-learning listserv, as well as had individual discussions with the CSU Coordinator of Community Service Learning. This paper represents a culmination of the issues, questions, models, and challenges that were raised over the past 4 months.

I. QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

The following are general questions that should be addressed in the development of a community service requirement. Further explanation, or examination, of the questions appears in the subsequent sections of this document.

- What are the purposes of the mandate?
- How can colleges and universities best meet the purposes of the mandate?
- How is the mandate connected to the “teaching and learning” mission of higher education?
- Who should be involved in the development of the requirement?
- How much time will be needed to develop a plan that meets the interests and needs of the governor, faculty, students, and community members so that all participants benefit from, or are benefited by, the requirement?
- What will the process be to develop the service requirement?
- What are the current opportunities available to students to perform community service on each campus?
- How can a plan be built using the current opportunities that are available?
- How will “community service” be defined?
- How is “community” defined?
- Will students receive credit for the community service activities?
- How will completion of the requirement be recorded?
- Who will be designated to work with students as they work to meet the requirement: a committee? An individual faculty or staff member? Academic affairs? Students affairs? Both?
- What does it cost to effectively administer a community service requirement? Where will the funds come from?
- Is there staffing on each campus and within the community to manage the administrative aspects of the requirement?
- Is the mandate applicable to *all* students in the UC, CSU, and community colleges, regardless of circumstances?
- Are there any reasons why students may be exempt? Who would determine that or oversee it?

- For planning purposes, approximately how many students will be placed in a community service experiences each semester? Each year?
- How will the mandate be monitored from campus to campus?
- How will sufficient service opportunities be identified?
- Must the service experience originate through the university or college? Can students develop and carry out the experiences on their own? How will the requirement be met? Verification of a number of hours? A written reflection of the activity?
- What are the risk management and liability issues?
- Does current university and college insurance cover any and all risk issues related to the service work/community work?
- How will background checks be administered for students who will need them for their community service placements? Fingerprinting? Costs? Timing?
- How will issues of transportation to the service opportunities be addressed?
- When several institutions of higher education exist in a particular geographical area, how will student placements be coordinated across segments, if at all, so as not to inundate community agencies?

Other:

II. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: DEFINING OUTCOMES

The development of a graduation requirement for community service must first consider the hoped for, or expected, outcomes that a requirement would have on students. Just as faculty members first identify learning outcomes for their students when developing a course, the outcomes for a requirement should be articulated, and then inform the development of a requirement.

To that end, it appears that the Governor has identified the following outcomes:

- Developing a “service ethic” in students; developing an understanding of the importance of contributing to their communities.
- Contributing time to the state, as a “return” to the taxpayers of California for their excellent public education.

Secondary points to highlight that result from a community service requirement as identified by Secretary Hart include:

- Contributing significantly to helping address many pressing social problems.
- Enriching students’ educational experiences by linking classroom work to the broader community.
- Providing students with an introduction to the helping professions and possible careers in public service.

What are the desired outcomes as identified by university faculty? Students? Community members?

Note: A CSU working group examining “Assessment in Service Learning” has identified student learning outcomes for all service-learning courses. This may be a model to consider

III. INPUT

It is extremely appropriate that faculty be the primary leaders in the work to develop a requirement. Any graduation requirement naturally falls into the purview of the faculty. However, it is important to note several other constituencies that should be involved in the conversations and work to develop a plan.

- **Students**

Student voice in the development of a proposal is critical. Research has shown (Stukas, 1999) that student perception of control regarding a “mandatory” service experience has significant effects on future intentions and behaviors.

With the widespread emergence of required community-service programs comes a new opportunity to examine the effects of requirements on future behavioral intentions. To investigate the consequences of such “mandatory volunteerism” programs, we followed students who were required to volunteer in order to graduate from college. Results demonstrated that

stronger perceptions of external control eliminated an otherwise positive relation between prior volunteer experience and future intentions to volunteer. A second study experimentally compared mandates and choices to serve and included a premeasured assessment of whether students felt external control was necessary to get them to volunteer. After being required or choosing to serve, students reported their future intentions. Students who initially felt it unlikely that they would freely volunteer had significantly lower intentions after being required to serve than after being given a choice. Those who initially felt more likely to freely volunteer were relatively unaffected by a mandate to serve as compared with a choice. Theoretical and practical implications for understanding the effects of requirements and constraints on intentions and behavior are discussed. p. 59

This study illustrates how important it is to have student involvement in, and confidence with, the requirement if it is to truly benefit students and their learning experiences.

Additionally, on most CSU campuses, students play a critical leadership role in administering community service and service-learning experiences. Continued leadership from students will be necessary to meet the administrative demands of the requirement.

Potential Structures through which to seek input:

- California State Student Association (CSSA)
 - Associated Students on each campus
 - Campus Town Halls/Meetings
 - Surveys
 - Student Newspaper Opinion Pieces; i.e. Daily Aztec
 - Individual Student Input or Testimony, i.e. SFSU students at Hayden hearing
 - Youth Advisory Committee for the CA Commission on Improving Life Through Service
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- **Community Service and Service-Learning Practitioners**
The CSU has community service and service-learning practitioners on each campus. All have a wealth of knowledge on all of the issues related to the field:
 - Developing authentic partnerships with community agencies.
 - Developing meaningful service experiences from which students can learn.
 - Addressing the many logistical questions raised in placing students in the community.
 - Identifying resources to support the overwhelming task of administering a requirement.
 - Sharing “best practices” in the field.

CSU service-learning practitioners have developed a resolution to respond to the Governor. It appears on the web at <http://www.co.calstate.edu/aa/csl>, and currently has 161 supporters.

Potential Structures through which to seek input within the CSU:

- CSU Community Service-Learning Listserv (over 200 members)
- CSU 4th Colloquium on Community Service Learning, hosted by CSU Los Angeles, Sept. 30 and October 1
- Discussions with individual practitioners and service-learning contacts on each CSU campus
- Surveys

Potential Structures through which to seek input outside of the CSU:

- University of California Service-Learning Committee, Chair: Dr. Andrew Furco
- Service-Learning Task Force of the California Community Colleges, Chairs: Dr. Chris McCarthy, Chief Instructional Officer at Glendale Community College; Lisa Fridman, Academic Senate Representative, Glendale Community College
- California Campus Compact, Executive Director: Elson Nash
- California Commission on Improving Life Through Service (CILTS), Executive Director: Dr. Linda Forsyth
- Statewide Network Leadership Team, convened by CILTS, Organizer: Kaira Esgate
- Youth Service California, Executive Director, Debbie Genzer
- California Department of Education CalServe Initiative, Contact: Mike Brugh
- Corporation for National Service, Contact: Javier LaFianza

- **Community Agencies and Members:**

Although not often discussed, a mandate imposed on the students to perform community service is also a mandate on the community and community agencies.

It is critically important to involve representatives of community agencies in which students may be placed to fulfill the requirement. Resources and staffing at these agencies are limited. Opportunities for service may be limited or the community-based organization may have overwhelming needs that this mandate can help meet. We will not know until we have the community agencies at the table to discuss these issues.

Issues of orientation, training, background checks, risk management and liability, scheduling, and developing meaningful placements can only be fully addressed with community agencies involved in the conversations.

Potential Structures through which to seek input:

- Community advisory boards on CSU campuses
- Forums of community agencies, current partners with campuses
- Volunteer Centers of California: There are 41 centers throughout the state, with a newly created state coordinating office in Sacramento

- Non-profit centers, i.e. Long Beach Non-profit Partnership
- Irvine Foundation –Dialogue on Volunteerism and Community Service, Contact: Nancy Peterson

IV. TYPES OF SERVICE

There are many types of service activities that students can participate in. Multiple opportunities exist on each campus. Once again, the options that students have for the requirement depend on the expected outcomes. Below is a listing of the many opportunities already in existence at colleges and universities throughout the state.

Academic Service-Learning Courses

- Individual courses
- Department-wide courses/department requirements
- First Year Experience Courses
- Senior Capstone courses

Community-based Learning Experiences Sponsored by Academic Departments

- Internships and Fieldwork at non-profit organizations
- Internships and Fieldwork at organizations that benefit communities and address community needs
- American Humanics
- Leadership Certificate Programs
- Research projects with individual faculty members

Student-Run Community Service/Volunteer Programs

- Associated Student programs
- Student Service Clubs and Organizations, such as CAVE at Chico; YES at Humboldt; and JUMP at Sonoma State
- Student Organizations that, as a club or organization, sponsor a community service project, i.e. fraternities and sororities
- Honor Societies, such as Mortar Board, Golden Key

University-Sponsored Service Programs

- America Reads
- America Counts
- EPIC programs
- Human Corps
- Pre-Collegiate Academic Development Programs
- Mentoring Programs (ie CSULB)
- Upward Bound Leaders
- Residential Life Service Programs
- University-wide days of service
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day service events

- National Make a Difference Day programs
- National Volunteer Week programs
- Americorps Programs (federally funded)

Additionally there are numerous structured opportunities for community service outside of the university structure:

- Volunteer Centers of California
- Faith-based Service Organizations
- City Cares Organizations, such as LA Works
- Individual Non-profit organizations

V. CHALLENGES

There are many challenges related to the implementation of a community service requirement.

- Philosophical concerns about mandating community service
- Placements
There is concern that there would not be enough meaningful opportunities for the mass volume of students that would need to meet the requirement. A campus in a large community may have more meaningful service opportunities in the immediate surrounding area than a campus in a small community where the population is only 2-3 times bigger than the population of the campus.
- Coordination of Placements
Given that many geographical communities have multiple campuses in their vicinities, there is concern that community agencies would be overwhelmed by the coordination of student placements. Community agencies may not be able to coordinate or accommodate the overwhelming number of students that would come from UC, CSU and community college institutions. For instance, in the north Orange County area, there exists CSU Fullerton, Fullerton Junior College, Hope University, Western Law School, Cypress College, Golden West College, Orange Coast College, Chapman University, UC Irvine, and Saddleback College, to name a few. There would need to be effective communication and administration networks in place to implement the requirement.
- Infrastructure Support
Although all CSU campuses have community service and service-learning opportunities, almost all campuses do not have the current infrastructure to support the involvement of *all* students. Issues of staffing and funding would need to be addressed. At CSUMB, where service learning is a graduation requirement, they have a budget of approximately \$500,000 to place 500 students per semester* in

meaningful service opportunities that are connected to course curriculum. As this indicates, significant infrastructure is necessary.

*CSUMB would like to note that it is a growing campus; student population will double in the next four years; their administrative budget will not.

- Risk Management Issues

The following are just some of the risk management issues that would need to be addressed:

- Institutional liability of negligence of placement program
- Liability for harm caused *by* student volunteers
- Liability for harm caused *to* student volunteers
- State background check requirements, fingerprinting, especially when volunteers are working in child care and K-12 settings.
- Cost for insurance and background checks
- Worker's compensation

- Monitoring the Requirement

Tracking students and their service placements as they meet the requirement is a difficult process. What mechanisms will need to be available to monitor this effectively and efficiently? What "proof" will students need to meet the requirement? Currently, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo has a process for tracking student community service hours, which are then designated on the student transcript.

- Transportation to community

In some communities, there will be difficulty in transporting students to and from the community service placements. What responsibility does the institution take on to help get students to community service placements? Will there be university shuttles? Will students be responsible alone, despite hardships they might face? Will bus fare be provided?

- Logistics

Additional areas of concern about logistics include:

- conducting quality orientation and training
- supervision of students
- debriefing and closing
- personal nature of community service work
- interpersonal experiences

VI. MODELS

There are many models of effective community service and service-learning programs and initiatives. Because each CSU campus sponsors such initiatives, there are many models to examine.

In particular, CSU Monterey Bay currently has a service-learning graduation requirement. They have been successful in implementing the requirement which has significantly contributed to student learning.

There are also several private institutions in California that have some community service requirement, including the University of LaVerne.

The K-12 system of public education in California has also been working to implement service-learning. Many goals for implementing service-learning into the K-12 system are outlined in the "Report of the Superintendent's Service-Learning Task Force" (1999). The Report states the following: "In 1996 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin established goals for implementing service-learning in California: By the year 2000, 25 percent of California's 994 school districts should offer all students at least one community service or service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve) for a minimum of three opportunities throughout their kindergarten through grade twelve education. By the year 2004, 50 percent of California school districts should offer all students at least one service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve)" (p. 2).

The state of Maryland implemented a community service requirement at the high school level about seven years ago. There are many lessons to be learned from their experiences (see *Washington Post* article from June 28, 1999).

CONCLUSION

CSU service-learning and community service practitioners have been extremely thoughtful in examining the issues related to a community service requirement. In order for any requirement to be met with success, the issues raised above must be considered.