

**The Engaged Department Institute and  
the California State University:  
Progress, Process and Challenges**

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## **Introduction**

In 2001, the director of the Office of Community Service Learning in the California State University Chancellor's Office invited us to complement the current assessment work done at Campus Compact's Engaged Department Institute by conducting some evaluation research for a special session of the Institute where the participants were all representatives of CSU campus departments. This study examines how the participant teams fared in the year following the Institute, as they returned to campus to try to implement learning from the Institute.

### **Background: California State University System and Service Learning**

The subject of this evaluation research – the Engaged Department Institute – resulted from a series of events over the past few years. This section briefly describes those events to set the context for this research, and describes the work of the Institute.

In April of 1999, California Governor Gray Davis called for a community service requirement for all California students attending a public higher education institution. Davis' goal was to increase and strengthen students' engagement in their communities. The California State University (CSU) was the first public higher education system to respond to the governor's call. The CSU Board of Trustees passed a resolution on community service and service learning which stated that: a) the Chancellor require CSU presidents to provide community service and service learning to all students, b) service be a requirement for undergraduates, and c) the chancellor will report efforts and progress to the Board of

Trustees. In response to the CSU proposal, Davis allocated \$2.2 million in the 2000-2001 state budget for the “development of new service-learning courses and to create or expand service-learning offices on all CSU campuses” (CSU Office of Community Service Learning, 2001).

CSU created the Service Learning Curriculum and Infrastructure Development Initiative in Fall 2000. This initiative allowed each CSU campus to identify goals and develop strategic plans for expansion/development of service learning courses. As a result, it is estimated that over 1000 service learning courses were offered throughout the system in 2000-2001 (CSU Office of Community Service Learning, 2001). The number of courses offered is expected to increase each year. The Corporation for National Service<sup>1</sup> recognized the CSU effort by awarding the system with the Higher Education Award for Leadership in National Service in January, 2001. Yet, although there is commitment, recognition and leadership on the part of the government and institutions, faculty members face challenges connected to the implementation of service learning on their campus.

### ***Curricular Innovations***

Service learning, like any curricular innovation, relies on the support of faculty to be successful. It will be useful, then, to understand the progress of the participants in the engaged department institute within the context of what research tells us about curricular innovation and academic culture in general.

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<sup>1</sup>. CNS is now called The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

Implementation of a new curriculum is challenging for many reasons, and research has shed light on some of the supports of and barriers to this kind of innovation. If faculty members are not a part of the decision-making process of the curriculum change, they might exhibit resistance because of low levels of investment and involvement (Astin, 1985; Curry, 1992; Levine, 1980; Hall, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 1985; Kozma, 1985; Rogers, 1983; Turner, 1990; Weimer, 1990). Faculty might also be resistant if the innovation is perceived to infringe upon their own academic freedom by forcing them to change their teaching style or learn new skills (Martin, 1994).

Curricular innovations might exacerbate tension between teaching and research, challenge beliefs around publications, faculty roles & rewards, and tenure structure, and typically suffer from lack of administrative and financial support (Astin, 1985; Curry, 1992; Edwards, 1992; Halpern, 1994; Levine & Weingart, 1973; Miles, 1983; Silver, Hannan, & English 1999; Todd, 1993). Other challenges to successful curricular change include competing responsibilities on top of limited time, ineffective professional development, lack of interest, and insufficient skills to develop long-term collaborations/partnerships (Anderson & Pickeral, 2000).

As would be expected, overcoming the challenges just noted bodes well for curricular change efforts. Successful implementation of curricular innovation is more likely to occur when the faculty is involved in and feels supported through the process. Several studies suggest that faculty involved in the decision-making process experience a sense of ownership of their new curriculum (Astin, 1985; Turner, 1990; Weimer, 1990). Other facilitators of success include release time from other responsibilities to plan curriculum, funding, effective

professional development, effective leadership, and alignment of new curriculum with individual's own value and belief system (Curry, 1992; Dean, Acker-Hocevar, & Laible, 1997; Hall, 1991; Hommes, 1997, Levine, 1980; Martin, 1994; Miles, 1983; Rogers, 1983; Turner, 1990; Wolfson, 1996).

In a study that specifically addresses service learning as a curricular innovation, Wade, Vanden Berk, and Siddens (2000) examine how professional development facilitates or impedes the implementation of service learning in a teacher education program. They find that success is dependent on level of ownership, level of decision-making, and fit between service learning and personal values and professional careers of faculty. Barriers to successful implementation include the large amount of time required to incorporate service into a course, instructors' inability to find collaborative partners, and perceptions of a lack of institutional and administrative support. The study's authors propose four suggestions for implementing service learning: 1) "work with willing, interested faculty initially, 2) provide site-specific professional development opportunities, 3) provide resources to support faculty's efforts, and 4) encourage faculty to write down specific plans for implementation" (Wade et. al, p. 12, 2000). If implementers follow these four suggestions, the utilization of service learning as a curricular innovation may be put in place more smoothly and create buy-in on the part resistant faculty members.

In addition to understanding how curricular innovation happens, this study draws from what we know about the academic department as a critical organizational unit in higher education, shaping the professional experiences of faculty and the academic experiences of

students through curricular expectations and norms. In the next section we discuss tensions of implementing change at the department level.

### ***The Collaborative Department***

The Engaged Department Institute was created to support the work of an entire department (or at least a critical mass of the department) to become more engaged in the community, and to understand what such engagement practices mean for student learning. But, some external forces in higher education create a specific context within which interested faculty members and others are trying to undertake these engagement efforts.

In California, the college student population is growing rapidly, and more demands are being placed on higher education. The faculty is being asked to take on more tasks and roles than ever before, including teaching larger (or more) courses, serving an increasingly diverse student body, addressing issues of technology in learning, collaborating on interdisciplinary projects, doing more assessments, etc. The increased demands are creating a tension between expectations and the existing rewards structure.

In the last decade, many universities have begun to examine their rewards structure as well as the academic culture. In 1992, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) constructed the Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards (Forum). The Forum meets annually to discuss issues “centered on the idea that higher education needs to shift the focus of incentives, evaluation, and rewards from individual faculty members to departments or other academic units” (Wergin, 1994). An important fundamental tension between a collective effort to create change as an organizational unit, and the current faculty rewards

structure is that the current reward structure focuses on incentives, research, publications, and tenure of *individual* faculty members.

Spurred on by the discussions that took place at the January 1993 AAHE Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards, Wergin wanted to explore “the idea that higher education needs to shift the focus on incentives, evaluation, and rewards from individual faculty members to departments or other academic units” (Wergin, 1994). He found only a handful of universities that utilized group rewards, and these were still in the early stages of defining and measuring group accountability. In his study, Wergin found four challenges common to the “collaborative institutions” chosen as case studies: tension between group and individual interests, review process for group productivity, redefining review process for individual faculty members, and developing and sustaining academic teams/communities (1994). To address challenges, institutions need to place collective accountability at the center of their work. Wergin states:

Focusing the mission requires focusing the work; focusing the work requires members of academic units to decide *together* how best to invest their time and energy; and this in turn requires unit members to negotiate how the *group* will be held accountable for the results of its labor (1994).

Such processes and decisions are fundamentally different from the traditional academic culture and faculty rewards structure, but are important considerations, especially during a time of increased public demands and expectations.

Campus Compact’s Engaged Department initiative provides departments and partners with an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a department that is ‘engaged.’ Within the context of reflecting on what it means to be engaged, teams face challenges around

implementing curricular innovations, and addressing the tensions around how collaborative work gets rewarded in higher education.

### ***California State University: Building engaged departments***

Within the context of the understanding academic culture and curricular innovation, this study attempts to document the progress of the California State University departments that participated in a ‘special edition’ of the Campus Compact Institute on the Engaged Department in June, 2001. Here, we hope to add to what is known about innovation and collaborations by examining a particular innovation that centers on departments becoming more engaged in their communities.

This evaluation study will address the following questions:

1. How, if at all, did participation in the Summer Institute facilitate the process of becoming an Engaged Department?
2. What barriers/facilitators to becoming an Engaged Department exist?
3. What changes, if any, have occurred in the department as well as the community partner since the Summer Institute?

## **Method**

We used a mixed-methods approach to address the study’s three main questions. We attended the Institute in June to get a sense of the process in which the teams were engaged. We then developed a paper-and-pencil survey for all faculty and university administrator participants, which we administered during November, 2001 through January, 2002. We

conducted telephone interviews with most teams' community partners in February, 2002. And, based on the data collected from the entire group of participants and discussions with the Chancellor's Office, we chose campuses for site visits, from which we developed case studies of the process and progress of becoming engaged departments.

### ***Faculty/ Administrator Survey***

A paper survey was developed for faculty to assess progress since the Summer Institute (See Appendix A for the survey questions). Surveys were mailed to all participating faculty and administrators in November 2001, and the mailing was followed by a reminder email from the CSU Chancellor's Office of Community Service Learning. Because survey responses were anonymous, a second wave of surveys was sent to all participants in January 2002. (Although the survey responses were anonymous, we did tell respondents we had coded the surveys to tell us which campus they came from.)

Of 42 surveys mailed, 31 were completed and returned for a final return rate of 74%. Participants were asked to assess their own as well as the department's familiarity with service learning both pre- and post-Institute. They were also asked to rate the amount of progress made in areas such as "increasing the understanding of service learning among faculty in your department," "evaluation of service learning courses," and "strengthening existing community partnerships." Additionally, faculty and administrators were asked to indicate what or who has acted as a support or barrier in becoming an engaged department.

### ***Community Partner Phone Interviews***

Building upon the faculty survey, the community partner survey addressed the way in which the community-based organization representative viewed the academic department and the partnership (See Appendix B for the community partner interview questions). The conversation with the community partner was a structured interview.

We called the community partners in February 2002 and asked each one to participate in a 30 minute interview. Of the 12 teams, 8 community partners participated in a phone interview.<sup>2</sup> We asked them about the history of their organization, the partnership with the CSU department, and any changes that have occurred in the department and partnership since the Summer Institute.

### ***Case Studies***

Through the examination of data collected from surveys and phone interviews, and in consultation with the director of the Community Service Learning Office in the CSU Chancellor's office, three campuses were chosen as case studies. We wanted to visit campuses that experienced varying levels of support from the institution and their academic disciplines, in order that we might develop some models of the process. Because we were limited in the number of campuses we could visit, we also wanted to choose ones where there was some preliminary evidence of making progress, so we could actually develop models.

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<sup>2</sup>Of the four teams whose partners we didn't interview, 3 had no community partner and we weren't able to reach the remaining partner.

We made arrangements to visit all three campuses during the spring of 2002, but in one case the team was unable to participate, and unfortunately there was not time to solicit the support of a ‘replacement’ case study site as it was the end of the academic year. In the end, then, we conducted case studies of two campus teams from the Summer 2001 Institute: Humboldt State University and California State University, Fullerton in May, 2002.

For each case study, we examined information on the institution and department web sites, collected course syllabi and other documents from the team when we visited, and interviewed the team members (See Appendix C for interview questions). We spoke with the department chair individually and then the team as a whole. We made a conscious decision to use a focus group approach – meeting with the team as a group, rather than to interview individuals. We realize a potential disadvantage to this approach was that team members might not be totally frank with us in front of each other and the department chair. However, we felt the advantage of having the group reflect collectively on its progress was more important, and served the team as well as the study. Indeed, the atmosphere in the meetings seemed open, and it became clear that this was an opportunity for the team to process. In fact, on several occasions we felt we were interrupting lively discussions to draw the groups attention back to the interview, as the group was attending to other business with each other. Nonetheless, the findings from the case studies should be understood with this approach in mind.

Each team consisted of five members: the department chair, 2-3 faculty members, and a community partner. At Fullerton, the campus’ Service Learning Office Director participated in our follow-up interview (she is now part of the team) but had not been hired in

time to attend the 2001 Institute. At Humboldt, the Service Learning Center Director participated in a telephone interview after the site visit, but she was not part of the team attending the 2001 Institute (and was not on campus the day we visited).

At both Humboldt and Fullerton, the department chairs provided an institutional context in which the department was trying to work, while the team provided history and process about their journey toward becoming ‘engaged.’ In both cases, we shared a meal with the faculty member who was the team leader. This informal meeting – in both cases this was before the team interview – was a time to get background information and to help us put our questions for the team in context of what was happening at the institution.

After collecting the data and transcribing interviews, both authors read the transcripts, discussed the patterns and issues, and shared drafts of all findings. Where possible we also confirmed findings with other sources of data (website, syllabi, etc.). In this way we hope the findings section represents an honest interpretation of the focus group interviews.

## **Findings**

We present the findings of the survey data first, followed by the community partner interviews, and finally the case studies.

### ***Faculty / Administrator survey***

The survey we constructed for this project asked people to share their perceptions of various aspects of the work of the “engaged department” team and of their department in the first six months following the Institute (Appendix A). Like many surveys of this nature, individuals on the same team varied in their perceptions of the team’s work and success. We

report aggregate data here because the number of responses from each team are too small for individual department analyses. (See the case studies section for institutional level analysis.) We saw very few patterns of similar responses within teams, however, so we are confident that response patterns are not “masking” differences by institution.

This section focuses on describing progress during what is essentially the fall term at each institution. Given the extremely short period of time, respondents generally seem to feel that their teams have made progress. This section describes the areas in which progress was made (or hindered), with an emphasis on which kinds of support appear to be associated with progress in various potential goal areas.

### **Enhancing individual and departmental familiarity with service learning**

First, we asked faculty and staff to reflect on their own and their department’s level of familiarity with service learning. As was to be expected, participation in the Institute had the overall effect of increasing familiarity with service learning. In the relatively short period of time since the Institute, the number of respondents who identified themselves as providing leadership in their department and on campus grew from 13 (pre-institute) to 21 (post-institute). Similarly, the number of people saying that most of their departmental faculty was *very familiar with service learning* grew from 7 (pre-institute) to 15 (post-institute). Whereas about one out of three respondents said their departmental faculty was *mostly unfamiliar with service learning* before the institute, at the time of the follow-up, no one said their faculty was *mostly unfamiliar with service learning*. At the time of the follow-up, about half of the respondents (16) thought their department was *somewhat familiar with service learning*, and half (15) thought their department was *mostly familiar with service learning*.

### **How action plans fared when teams returned to campus after institute**

By January, most participants (71%) noted that their teams made minor changes to action plans developed during the Engaged Department Institute. Only 10% said their plan had undergone substantial modification, and 19% reported no change in the team's plan. One would expect the plan to undergo some changes as the institute team works to get buy-in to the plan from other departmental and even institutional colleagues. Regardless of the extent of plan modification, of course, the important thing is for the plan to be something that most or all faculty and staff in the department can agree on. This process of bringing the plan to the entire department is elaborated in the findings section for the case studies.

Most respondents (73%) indicated that the team was 'on track' with the action plan they developed at the Institute. Only four people said the plan was not 'on track,' and another four said the team had exceeded their own expectations after six months. Among the reasons cited for not being on track (in an open-ended comments section on the survey) are:

- lack of time;
- not having a project coordinator;
- needing (and not yet receiving) departmental approval; and
- a community partner leaving his/her position, which resulted in the team working with another agency.

Some of the reasons individuals offered for exceeding their own expectations include:

- offering service learning in more courses than anticipated;
- securing outside funding; and
- establishing a community resource center.

### **Progress on identified goal areas**

We asked participants to reflect on the progress made in 14 different goal areas since June, 2001. The areas in which teams report the most progress are the ones related to strengthening awareness of and support for service learning and engagement at the departmental level. Given the emphasis of the Institute, this finding is not surprising, and suggests that the Institute is successful in helping teams raise awareness and support for engagement efforts.

Evaluation of service learning and engagement efforts are lower priorities for these teams, as reflected in fewer than half the respondents identifying these as goal areas. Some teams might view evaluation as an area that “can wait” while they give attention to areas seen as more important in these early stages. Since evaluation is not seen as a goal area by most, it is not surprising to see that progress in evaluation efforts is coming slowly too. We discuss the issue of evaluation in much greater detail in the case study findings sections.

Similarly, integrating service learning into faculty review processes remains difficult. This, too, is not surprising given that only about six months elapsed since the Institute. One would expect that evaluation, and integration of service into the reward processes, as indicators of institutionalization, will come more slowly than will raising awareness and support. Of course, it could be that a department, supported by the institution, already values service learning in the faculty review process (in which case further *progress* may not be a goal). Even within the CSU system, as we note in the case study findings, the degree to which service learning is ‘counted’ in the faculty review process varies among campuses.

In order to get a picture of progress in areas that respondents identified as goals for their institutional team, Table 1 first indicates how many respondents said that progress in this area was actually a goal for their team. The second column that notes the percentage of respondents, among those that marked the area as goal, saying progress was made during the six months following the Institute.

**Table 1. Progress in Team Goals.**

Goal Area <sup>a</sup>	# of respondents marking this as a team goal	% indicating <i>some</i> or <i>much</i> progress
1. strengthen existing community partnerships	25	84
2. develop new community partnerships	22	91
3. increase number of service learning courses	17	88
4. strengthen quality of departmental service learning courses offered	19	90
5. institutionalize service learning in department	17	94
6. increase understanding of service learning among faculty in department	23	96
7. increase support for service learning among faculty in department	12	92
8. increase support for service learning in institution	7	86 <sup>b</sup>
9. refine dept. definition of civic engagement	18	72
10. dept. discussions of meaning of civic engagement in the discipline	7	71
11. set departmental criteria for evaluation of service learning	6	67 <sup>b</sup>
12. evaluate service learning courses	9	67 <sup>b</sup>
13. evaluate departmental “engagement” efforts	10	60 <sup>b</sup>
14. integrate service learning into faculty review practices	10	70 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> the response rate (N) on these items ranged from 26 to 31 respondents

<sup>b</sup> for these items no more than one respondent marked “much progress”

## **Types of Support Associated with Progress in Goal Areas**

We asked faculty and administrators to identify the level of support they experienced from different entities such as the departmental faculty or the CSU Chancellor's Office. Specifically, respondents were asked to mark whether each source was 1) a significant barrier, 2) a minor barrier, 3) neither a support nor a barrier, 4) a minor support, or 5) a significant support to their efforts to become an engaged department. Using cross-tabs, we then compared goal areas and the potential barriers and supports, examining patterns of support sources and progress in goal areas.

Faculty and administrator respondents identified very few areas significant or even minor barriers. The faculty reward structure is the only area seen as a barrier by more than 2 respondents (9 individuals reported it as a significant or minor barrier). Most often, responses ranged from *neither a support nor a barrier* to *a significant support*. Therefore, our analyses focuses on understanding the connections between those people or processes identified as *significant* sources of support and progress in the various goal areas.

In looking for patterns that might associate progress in a given goal area with perceived support from a given source, we didn't see much that would suggest that one person or office is of overwhelming influence. It's a bit more complex, with some sources tending to influence some goal areas more than others. Overall, it seems that progress was made in raising awareness and support for service learning, and little progress was made in areas that reflect institutionalization of efforts, for example evaluation and influencing the faculty reward process. In fact, there were four goal areas for which participants did not report any sources as a significant support:

1. setting departmental criteria for evaluation of service learning,
2. evaluation of service learning courses,
3. evaluation of departmental “engagement” efforts, and
4. integrating service learning into faculty review practice

Even though no one source of support emerged as all-powerful, we did see some consensus among participants that some sources tend to support certain goals more than others. Table 2 details which goal areas tended to be associated with certain sources of support.

**Table 2. Sources of Support and Progress in Goal Areas**

support from:	is associated with progress in these goal areas <sup>a</sup>
department faculty	developing new community partnerships increasing the number of service learning courses offered strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department institutionalizing service learning in the department increasing understanding of service learning among dept. faculty increasing the support for service learning among dept. faculty increasing the support for service learning in the institution
department head	increasing the number of service learning courses offered strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department institutionalizing service learning in the department increasing understanding of service learning among dept. faculty increasing the support for service learning among dept. faculty
the dean	increasing the number of service learning courses offered strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department institutionalizing service learning in the department increasing understanding of service learning among dept. faculty increasing the support for service learning among dept. faculty refining departmental definition of civic engagement
institution	strengthening existing community partnerships increasing the number of service learning courses offered strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department

	<p>institutionalizing service learning in the department</p> <p>increasing understanding of service learning among dept faculty</p> <p>increasing the support for service learning among dept. faculty</p>
Chancellor's Office	<p>strengthening existing community partnerships</p> <p>developing new community partnerships</p> <p>increasing the number of service learning courses offered</p> <p>strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department</p> <p>institutionalizing service learning in the department</p> <p>increasing understanding of service learning among dept. faculty</p> <p>increasing the support for service learning among dept. faculty</p> <p>increasing the support for service learning in the institution</p> <p>refining departmental definition of civic engagement</p> <p>having departmental discussions around what civic engagement means in your discipline</p>
nat'l disciplinary association	<p>strengthening existing community partnerships</p> <p>developing new community partnerships</p> <p>increasing the number of service learning courses offered</p> <p>strengthening quality of service learning courses in the department</p> <p>institutionalizing service learning in the department</p> <p>increasing understanding of service learning among dept. faculty</p>

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<sup>a</sup> Among those respondents that noted the sources of support as *significant*, at least 75% also noted some or much progress in the named goal areas.

### **Other sources of support for progress**

Participants identified the degree to which resources such as leave time and printed resources were available at their institution to support becoming a more engaged department. The most common source of support among those listed is on-campus professional development opportunities, with nearly all respondents saying it is at least a minor support. Frequently, these on-campus opportunities (such as the Service Learning Fellows program we describe in the case study section) are coordinated by a service learning office. Printed resources and administrative support appear to be available – and of at least some support – to most respondents, and off-campus training is seen as a support by two-thirds of the

respondents. Leave time is not a typical form of support, with about 60% of respondents saying it is *not available/not a support*. Table 3 provides an overview of the availability of the six different resources.

Table 3. Resources available for support of engaged department efforts.

Resource	Percent of respondents saying resource is:		
	not available/ not a support	minor support	significant support
leave time (N=29)	58.6	24.1	17.2
printed resources (N=28)	10.7	60.7	28.6
administrative support (N=29)	13.8	51.7	34.5
on-campus training opportunities/ professional development (N=30)	3.3	46.7	50.0
off-campus training opportunities/ professional development (N=30)	33.3	46.7	20.0

### **Awareness of resources available through CSU Service Learning Curriculum and Infrastructure Development Initiative**

The CSU Chancellor’s office provides support to faculty through minigrants, scholarships and conferences. Although it is not a direct goal of the Engaged Department Institute to raise awareness of the availability of these resources, the ability to access resources in general can be an important component of any change effort. This is especially true when the effort means faculty members are spending time revising curriculum. If one is

interested in understanding how a department becomes more engaged, one indicator will be how much resource awareness exists across the entire department.

We asked participants of the CSU Engaged Department Institute whether they felt that their department faculty colleagues were aware of the resources available through the CSU Service Learning Curriculum and Infrastructure Development Initiative. It is important to keep in mind that funds distributed through the Chancellor’s office are made available to faculty on each CSU campus, but each campus has developed its own plan for how to make funds available to faculty.

The availability of service learning minigrants is clearly the resource best known to faculty, with 30.8% of respondents indicating that faculty in their department were *quite knowledgeable* about this resource, and an additional 38.5% saying their colleagues were *somewhat aware*. Participants also think their colleagues are aware of conferences, but less than half of the respondents believe there is knowledge among their colleagues of the scholarships offered through the Chancellor’s initiative.

Table 4. Participants’ perceptions of departmental faculty awareness of resources

Resource	faculty awareness level		
	mostly unaware	somewhat aware	quite knowledgeable
service learning minigrants (N=26)	30.8	38.5	30.8
scholarships (N=25)	56.0	28.0	16.0
conferences (N=25)	28.0	56.0	16.0

The overall survey results suggest that teams are making the most progress in the areas they tended to identify as goals of the Institution, including raising awareness of and support for service learning in their department. Less progress is being made in the areas of evaluation and the faculty reward process. Perceived support for these goal areas varied, depending on the goal, but in general participants identified many areas of support. Faculty tend to be most aware of the minigrants as a resource offered through the Chancellor's office. In the next section, we look at what issues community partners identify as important to the sustenance of these partnerships.

### ***Community Partner Telephone Interviews***

We spoke with the community partners in February 2002 to assess changes in the department and also to learn about the community partner's relationship with the university since the Institute.

The types of organizations as well as strength of relationship with the university partners varies greatly among teams. In several cases the partnership didn't exist last June, and/ or no longer exists, in some cases the partnership is seen as quite strong and mutually beneficial. The department teams are partnering with small social service agencies, county organizations, public schools and other non-profits. In some cases a faculty member initiated the contact, in others the community agency approached the university.

Despite the wide range of partnerships, several common issues emerged. Almost all of the community partners felt that the Institute was valuable because it allowed team members to become further acquainted with one another, and it facilitated a planning process by structuring time together. Several partners commented that the Institute provided an

opportunity for them to form a relationship with the department, or at least with individual faculty members beyond the one person they had known before the Institute.

Continued communication between community and university partners is clearly a challenge common to many teams. A good number of the community partners admitted they had not met with nor even communicated with the team since the Institute. It seems there are a number of reasons for this problem. For instance, one university partnered with a government agency for the Summer 2001 Institute. The team felt that the Institute sparked important discussions, but the faculty felt they needed to focus on ‘internal’ departmental issues such as educating other faculty about service learning, and so far, much less attention has been given to strengthening community partnerships. In another case the person representing the community agency at the Institute left the position, and did not identify who at the agency might carry on the partnership. In this case, when we called, the agency expressed interest in the idea of a partnership, but needed more information.

Another common issue raised was finding time to meet with faculty. Half of the community partners felt that time acts as a barrier to forming strong partnerships. Many found it difficult to schedule a regular time to meet and this has slowed the progress of some action plans. Additionally, community partners said they value the partnership and want to sustain it over a long period of time but at least one felt like a “bother” when requesting a meeting or service from the department because the community is on the “receiving end.” This issue was also complicated by varying levels of support for service learning within departments and sometimes a simple breakdown in the line of communication. On the other

hand, several community partners seemed to see themselves as true partners in the learning process for students, and spoke clearly of their role and their relationship with the faculty.

Lastly, half of the community partners indicated that they have observed changes in their team's academic department since June 2001. These community partners felt that the Institute helped to formalize the partnership. In one case, for instance, the community partner was working with only one faculty member in the department. Since the Institute, the community partner has worked with several different faculty members. Another person commented that the Institute provided the time for the team to really work on their action plan, and now the plan is in place and work is moving ahead.

Regardless of the strength of the relationship between the community partner and the university, the community partner saw the partnership as significant. In general, the community partners wanted the relationship to last because it helped with organizational capacity. We should note that in several cases, we wondered why the community partner was speaking so positively about a relationship that didn't appear to us to be very strong at all. We sensed in a couple of interviews that the community partner was reluctant to be critical of the departmental members of the team. We suspect that this may be due to them seeing themselves as the recipients of something from the university, and perhaps they didn't want to jeopardize that relationship. However, in the majority of the interviews we felt we heard a good deal about what wasn't working as well as what was succeeding, and so we think we have a good sense of the variety of relationships that are in place after the Institute, from the nonexistent to the very strong and integrated partnerships.

### ***Overview of Case Study Findings***

The site visits and case studies provided us an opportunity to take an in-depth look at how two CSU departments are faring since the June, 2001 Engaged Department Institute. This section provides an overview of the issues that emerged on these campuses, and is followed by an individual case study report for each department.

We want to remind the reader that we did not set out to evaluate the performance of these two departmental teams; rather, we wanted to hear from them what is working and what are the elements that remain a challenge, in order to get a sense of the process they are experiencing. Thus, we framed our questions for the interviews around issues of organizational change, and heard what issues the teams felt they faced as they brought learning from the institute back to their colleagues.

### **Institution and Disciplinary Overview**

Conducting site visits with the Sociology department at Cal State Fullerton and the Communication department at Humboldt State allowed us to get a closer look at the efforts of two teams, and to better understand the departmental and institutional contexts within which the teams of institute participants are sharing their learning with colleagues. The departments are both part of the 23 campus CSU system, and during both visits we heard concerns about the potential impact of the statewide budget crisis, specifically that programs that have supported faculty work in developing service learning courses might disappear. At Fullerton the service learning office might not exist, according to the office director.

The fields of Sociology and Communication have both been supportive of efforts to be engaged in the community. The National Communication Association has been

particularly visible and vocal in its encouragement of faculty doing community-based work, and the Humboldt team agreed that the language they use in the departmental mission and values statements – a language which strongly supports community-based work – is probably not atypical. The sociology profession also offers opportunities to publish research on service learning, and service learning article highlighting the work at Fullerton recently appeared in the American Sociological Association newsletter, *Footnotes*. Because the nature of the study of sociology lends itself to work in communities, there is history of and support for various kinds of community work.

In some important ways, though, the teams from Fullerton and Humboldt are operating in very different contexts. Cal State Fullerton is a large campus in the greater Los Angeles “megapolis,” serving a growing and mostly commuter student body that is very diverse ethnically. Much of the faculty at Fullerton also commutes (significant distances) to campus. One team member at Fullerton explained that the Fullerton area is not his community, and as he thinks about involving students ‘in the community’ he thinks about the community close to his home, at least 30 minutes away.

In contrast, Humboldt State is a smaller campus in a rural area, facing declining student enrolments, and serving a largely residential undergraduate student population. The faculty (and staff) live in the area, and as one person said, tend to either leave right away or settle down and stay for their careers. The community can be fairly easily defined as the Eureka / Arcata region, which has many non-profit organizations, not much financial wealth, and attracts lots of artists and other people who tend to live non-traditional lifestyles (some know it as a community of ‘hippies’).

## **Key Findings from Case Studies**

In light of these institutional and community differences, some of the issues faced by these two ‘engaged department’ teams are remarkably similar. In both cases, the issues can be framed in terms of how a group of individuals can influence change at the departmental level, and what kinds of resistance they might encounter as they share their vision with their colleagues. The findings we present here support much of what we presented in the background section when we were discussing other research on curricular innovation and academic culture.

The individual case studies that follow this section highlight how each team is navigating its campus culture as and reflecting on what it means to be an engaged department. Here we focus on what we think are some of the dynamics that might inform the work of other departmental teams undertaking similar efforts. We present these findings as a list of ‘key findings’ from the two case studies.

➤ One person can actually play a very influential role in galvanizing a critical mass.

At both institutions, there was one person who, before the Engaged Department Institute, was known as T-H-E service learning person. In both departments we visited, that person was a full professor who had been engaged in the community for a number of years. In one case the faculty member was doing service learning, in the other department the person was doing similar work, but really resonated with service learning when she was exposed to it a few years ago. In both cases, T-H-E service learning person convinced the chair that the institute was a worthwhile endeavor, and was really the person who put together the team to attend the June, 2001 institute.

- The Engaged Department Institute provided leverage – both teams have moved from having T-H-E service learning person to having a critical amount of buy-in from the department.
- The Institute helped to strengthen the support of the departmental chair – they had a better understanding of reflection and connecting course material to experience.

These two findings were especially true at one institution, but both teams are clear about the value of time away from campus as a team to really reflect on the issue of what it means to be engaged. At Fullerton, the Institute provided the structure and time to think about how and when service learning can be implemented across the major. The Humboldt team really resonated with the broader umbrella of civic engagement.

In both departments, the work of the Institute solidified the support and understanding of the team members, especially the department chair, who had previously deferred to T-H-E service learning person as the point person for service learning and sometimes other community-based issues. The Humboldt team seemed to have more department support for community-based efforts at the time of the institute than did the Fullerton team, but in both cases team members (especially T-H-E service learning person) spoke of a significant increase in the quality of support they perceive as a result of having a team attend the Institute.

- Dialogue among faculty around what it means to be an engaged department has deepened faculty conversations around what they want students to learn.
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- Both teams have connected the work of the institute to larger goals of the department.

At both Humboldt and Fullerton, the engagement conversations among the team at the Institute continued when they got back to campus. For the Humboldt Communication department, those conversations continued in the context of the departmental program

review, a periodic self-assessment process. As we already noted, it is the broader umbrella of engagement that has been so attractive to the Communication team. The team believes that the department is already an engaged department in many ways: about half of the faculty used service learning before the Institute, and there was no resistance from other faculty about the value of service learning. So, the team admits that the Institute may not have been as impactful for their team as it appeared to be for teams from other universities. Nonetheless, several team members felt the Institute deepened the reflections and conversations they were having regarding their mission, vision and values as part of the program review process the department underwent during the academic year since the institute.

For the Fullerton team, the Institute led to a department-wide resolution to become ‘engaged,’ and also led to a winter retreat on service learning and engagement. For this team, the change since the Institute is more pronounced. Team members are clear that they don’t feel the department would be where it is now in terms of the conversations around requiring service learning and reflecting on how they can become an engaged department, were it not for the work the team did at the institute. The Fullerton Sociology department is large, and before the institute it seems there was not much awareness of service learning. Since the retreat this past winter, the team seems to be satisfied that a critical mass of faculty are aware and supportive, even if they are not going to “do” service learning themselves.

Because of the size of the department, and the tendency of academics to resist any hint of being told how to conduct their courses, no one at Fullerton seems surprised that there is not agreement on *how* to implement a service learning requirement. Progress might be

better defined in terms of how *much* discussion there is (and it sounds like some of it has been quite lively), as opposed to painting a rosy picture of everyone in agreement. The Fullerton service learning director notes that she thinks things in the sociology department are changing fast, considering how long it typically takes to implement change in higher education departments.

- Teams want to take advantage of personnel transitions in departments to recruit and hire faculty interested in community-based work.
- The Broader academic culture is seen as a barrier to junior faculty involvement, but the faculty reward process at one institution supports this work.

In both departments recent or upcoming retirements mean hiring new faculty, and this is seen as an important opportunity. At Humboldt, two junior faculty members have been hired in the last couple years, and both are incorporating service into their courses. At Fullerton, a number of faculty are nearing full retirement, and the department has already crafted a position description that includes service learning. They have recently hired three new faculty members, and at least one is engaging in service learning already. As they look to the future, one concern is that the reward process at Fullerton doesn't explicitly support service learning, and at the same time the expectation that faculty be publishing research is increasing. Several team members acknowledge that opportunities for junior colleagues around research and publications need to materialize if the department wants those colleagues to engage in service learning.

At Humboldt, junior and senior faculty members alike said the institutional tenure and reward process supports the use of service learning. But, as one professor notes, it's not as simple as that to encourage junior faculty to use service learning. The larger, national

culture of counting research publications impedes when and if junior faculty want to keep their options open to work at other institutions. Nonetheless, the two junior faculty members in Communication both are service learning practitioners.

What we didn't hear discussed at either institution is the idea that a department might be collectively evaluated on its work. Recall from the background section that this was an area of inquiry undertaken by Wergin, emerging from things he learned at the AAHE Faculty Forum. At these institutions, the traditional system of individual faculty evaluations is the only system we heard about. And, given that at Fullerton the faculty believe the institution is moving to value publications even more, it doesn't appear likely to change soon.

➤ This work continues to be underfunded

Some important supports for this work are funded on soft money that is in jeopardy due to the state fiscal crisis. Through the CSU Service-Learning Curriculum and Infrastructure Development Initiative, the CSU Chancellor's Office allocates state money to campuses to support programs that engage students in their communities. This money has funded faculty stipends and minigrants to develop courses, and supported campus offices of service learning, which can be an important resource for new faculty. This 'Governor's money'<sup>3</sup> is just one source of funding that participants feel is in jeopardy. With the state budget crisis, the chair at Humboldt notes that he doesn't see any new initiatives happening, and even some existing programs may be at risk. New efforts around service learning and other innovations are likely to be put on the back burner.

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<sup>3</sup> The state money is called "the Governor's money" by some as the money is the result of the CSU response to the Governor's Call to Service for all students enrolled in California public institutions of higher education.

At the same time, team members in both departments feel that support for engagement efforts needs to be increased if such work is to be institutionalized. One professor noted that time is more important to her now than is a stipend. Several people expressed the need for increased support for faculty as they supervise students' work in the community, in addition to release time to plan a service learning course. We didn't hear anyone mention that current institutional or department resources need to be reallocated to support this work; we did hear suggestions that the Chancellor fund this work, and that faculty need to have more access to external sources of funds. One person did say that the Chancellor needs to talk to Presidents more so that they understand the importance of this work, suggesting the possibility of institutional resources being reallocated to support service learning.

➤ Departments are not (yet) implementing evaluation.

When they spoke of assessment and evaluation, the teams tended to focus on documenting learning outcomes for students participating in service learning, and stressed the importance of documenting the benefits of service as a way to encourage more faculty to incorporate service learning into courses. One participant hoped the Chancellor's Community Service Learning Office would undertake such research. These conversations tended to be rather abstract, discussing what ought to be done. We didn't hear of any plans in place for evaluation at the department level; it seems it is too early from the teams' perspective to undertake evaluation work when programs are in the formation stages.

At Humboldt, one team member noted that in the coming year the department will be discussing the redesign of the Communication major, and a discussion of what it means to

assess the work of the department might be logical at that point. The assessment of students' growth in civic engagement while in the department/major could be part of a departmental self-assessment.

Although we found a good deal of commonality among the issues that the Fullerton and Humboldt teams are addressing, the two departments are navigating different institutional cultures and issues. They are also at different places in their relationships with community partners. The next two sections go into more detail about what issues are being dealt with in the two departments.

### ***Case Study: California State University Fullerton***

Located in Orange County, about 30 miles southeast of central Los Angeles, the city of Fullerton has a population of more than 128,000. The surrounding area continues to attract tourists as well as residents with developments such as Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, the Laguna Festival of Arts and Pageant of the Masters, the Arrowhead Pond, Edison International Field, the Anaheim Convention Center and the Orange County Performing Arts Center. Additionally, the beach is located less than a half-hour from California State University, Fullerton.

Authorized in 1957, California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) is the 12<sup>th</sup> State College in California. The CSU system prides itself on teaching and its curriculum. CSUF offers 97 degree programs (52 undergraduate and 45 graduate) in addition to credential and certificate programs. It is mainly a commuter campus with students coming from the Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties. Enrollment for Spring 2002 is 30,357; 61% of the students are female. The student body composition is racially diverse: American Indian 1%, Asian/Pacific Islander 22%, Black 3%, Hispanic 23%, White 36%, Unknown 11% and International Students 4% (CSUF website, 2002). The average age of students is 24 years old. CSUF is a large urban/suburban campus which serves a student population that is diverse in many ways, and addressing such a wide variety of needs poses many challenges to faculty members and institutional leaders.

### **Sociology Department**

The Sociology department offers a Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees. Within the Bachelor's degree, students may choose an optional concentration in Family, Gerontology,

Social Work, Education, Deviance and Social Legal Studies, or Race, Class and Gender. Each concentration includes a capstone experience where students participate in fieldwork or a research project. In the 2001-2002 academic year, the department added a non-profit management track to the major. Because sociologists study society and social behavior, the Sociology Department has a history in the local community. Many students have participated in community service through their capstone and internship experiences.

As is common in higher education, the Sociology department is experiencing a significant amount of faculty turnover due to retirements. Six retirements are anticipated in the next five years, resulting in new hires. The six retiring faculty are also participating in the Early Retirement Program, where faculty are allowed to retire and teach part-time. The department is relatively large, with 21 full-time faculty. But it is full-time faculty who are responsible for advising students and serving on committees in addition to their teaching and research load. This is significant because early retirement and part-time faculty do not advise students nor can they serve on committees. Further, the department does not receive funding to replace these faculty positions until the individuals' final retirement.

Part-time faculty members teach a large number of courses. Several team members noted that part-timers are teaching service learning courses, and one assistant professor (of three in the department) is using service learning; it is reaching the tenured, full-time faculty that is proving to be a challenge. As some faculty members retire, new ones are hired, providing an opportunity to recruit people interested in service learning. As one person put it, "I think recruitment will help us in this [service learning] area because we have had one, two new ones coming... we haven't recruited in what, 23 years? So we have three within the past

three years.” We return to the issue of recruiting faculty when we discuss the faculty reward process.

### **Community Partner: Orange County Human Relations**

The Orange County Human Relations program/office was created in 1971 by the Orange County (OC) Board of Supervisors. Since that time, it has become a public/private venture, with nonprofit status, and grown tremendously in scope and size. OC Human Relations is organized into four core programs: 1) The Bridges School Program which examines issues of safety in schools; 2) The Leadership Program, which develops leaders in the community; 3) The Restoring Justice Project, which assists, through mediation, individuals and groups in conflict; and 4) The Community Building Program, which helps to strengthen communities by advocating for justice.

In 1999, OC Human Relations built an internship program into the Community Building component of the organization. During the implementation of the internship program, they turned to an already established partnership with the CSUF Sociology department’s internship program. The department’s faculty internship coordinator wrote a proposal for a mini-grant on OC Human Relation’s behalf. The grant for \$1000 was approved and covered CSUF students’ mediation training with Human Relations. However, OC Human Relations was limited in the number of interns they could absorb, in order that students could have a meaningful experience. Though few in number, students were able to increase OC Human Relation’s organizational capacity through the services they provided while also gaining real-life experience.

The faculty internship coordinator is also the person known as T-H-E service learning person in Sociology, and it was through her efforts that CSUF decided to attend the Engaged Department Institute. And, although OC Human Relations partnered with Sociology for the mediation program, the partnership has not spanned other opportunities, and there is currently no active community partner on the team; developing relationships with a small set of community partners is one area the team is considering.

### **Team's work since the Institute**

The team communicated very clearly to us that there is increased interest in service learning and civic engagement as a result of attending the Engaged Department Institute. Several on the CSUF team became more interested in service learning through the pre-planning process for the Summer Institute, according to the person known for doing service learning before the institute:

“And when we came back to the department I thought it was kind of a different departmental culture because it no longer was just my thing but I mean we have got the leadership in the department. And it just made an enormous difference to have the support of the leadership of the department... now this is a department issue, not just scattered individuals trying out something that might be innovative and just on their own. It's a department movement.”

Another person agreed: “before [team leader] was the one that was probably best informed. We could come back now and speak as a team about how this would be important for our courses and our students.” The opportunity to get away from campus and focus on engagement was also seen as important: “I can't imagine we would be anywhere near where we are now. This forced us to spend time away on a single subject to craft something and to

have it critiqued by other people in the room... you wouldn't have the PowerPoint presentation.”

In fact, upon their return, the team shared their (PowerPoint) action plan in the hopes of creating greater buy-in among their colleagues. The team was pleased that the department decided to pass a resolution to become *engaged* in mid-October 2001. In February 2002, the department chair turned over the annual faculty retreat to the issue of becoming engaged and strengthening service learning. The retreat was well-attended, and included a presentation on service learning by the institution's director of the Office of Service-Learning. The team seems to agree that the retreat was an important vehicle for deepening the discussion of what it means to be an engaged department.

### **Issues at Cal State Fullerton**

The integration of service learning has been a slow process but has sparked important discussions about departmental culture and challenges. As the Sociology department began to discuss the notion of what it means to become engaged, the issue of whether (and if so, how) to require service learning of sociology majors became a focal point of discussion. Additionally, the team feels the current faculty reward process is not supportive of service learning, that more assessment needs to be done on the benefits of this kind of pedagogy, and that the current fiscal crisis in public education will have a direct impact on efforts to expand service learning. We discuss each of these concerns in more detail in this section.

A major challenge for the Fullerton team has been the decision around which courses should incorporate service learning in order that it could become a requirement for majors. Some proponents felt the most logical place for such an experience was in the theory course.

However, the instructor who teaches theory was not in agreement, and wasn't committed to incorporating service into those classes. Some faculty view service learning as a mandate and therefore felt that it might threaten their academic freedom. "How can you tell us what to do in our classes?" Team members think that some faculty may feel insecure about a new way of teaching and also uneasy about having to create new partnerships with the community. "I think people from my informal conversations, people didn't want to commit. They didn't want to put themselves out there and say I am doing it but they kind of wanted to pilot it first without announcing to the world that they are doing service learning but try something on a smaller scale."

Although several of the team members voiced clear support for requiring sociology majors to have a service learning experience, the team also expressed concern about the viability of requiring service learning. If it's required, then the department has to be able to offer classes at a variety of times and in sufficient numbers such that all majors can fulfill the requirement. One team member noted that if the department can't meet the need, the pressure to drop the requirement would be enormous.

A second challenge that the Sociology department is facing is that the institution is shifting in its expectations of faculty in the tenure process. Several participants informed us that junior faculty at Cal State Fullerton are expected to meet increasing expectations around research and publications. Although newly hired sociology faculty members are recruited with service learning in mind, the road to tenure is increasingly focused on publications. Currently, there is a University Policy Statement (UPS) for service learning (UPS 411.600) which went into effect on August 15, 2001. The policy reads as follows:

To provide high quality programs that meet the evolving needs of our students, community and region, California State University, Fullerton provides opportunities for its students to learn from external communities through service learning activities

Although the UPS document names service learning, it does not indicate how service learning is to be valued in terms of promotion and tenure. It was suggested that service learning should also be integrated into another UPS (210). “I think it is always good to have it in UPS 210 because if departments don’t have the guidelines, 210 governs. So you are much safer to have it in 210. CSUF has no service learning guidelines or policies defined for the promotion process. Faculty feel that service learning would be successful to the extent that there is a career advantage, especially for junior faculty. There must be opportunities to conduct research and publish in refereed articles. Otherwise, faculty have little incentive for incorporating service learning.

The last issue to be highlighted is funding, and issue of particular concern here at Fullerton because the campus-wide service learning office is funded by the state. The CSU system received \$2.2 million in the 2000-2001 fiscal year from the Governor’s Office with continued support through 2004. The money was to support CSU campuses in their development of service learning courses and to create or expand service learning offices. However, because of the state budget crisis, there is concern over cuts to even the existing service learning program. Some faculty feel that new or innovative programs will be cut first, and fear that service learning will be one of the first to go. Fullerton’s service learning office may cease to exist. Without such an office, faculty members would lose administrative support needed for the further integration of service learning.

Although Fullerton's Sociology department has identified the above challenges, they are exploring several creative solutions. They have been examining ways to involve more faculty members, and they are looking for various forms of support for both full-time and part-time faculty.

### **Team Recommendations**

The Fullerton team discussed many ways to overcome some of the challenges they face in the process to becoming an engaged department. Their challenges center around providing support for faculty at many different levels while helping to change the institutional culture regarding service learning.

The team feels that the Institute was very valuable and suggested meeting more often as a larger group (with other engaged departments). Upon returning to campus, important discussions were sparked within the Sociology department because the team was able to observe what was happening on other campuses. The time allowed for sharing experiences as well as challenges, creating a sense of community among institute participants.

Several team members also had suggestions about evaluation of service learning at their institution. To get faculty to use service learning, they would like to see an institutionalized process of evaluating service learning courses to demonstrate whether or not first year students are more engaged than students who do not participate in a service learning course.

“I think we need research on this because if you can show to the faculty that yes your students will benefit this way and become more involved with their school board and more involved and better parents maybe, whatever. If you can show positive outcomes, I think the faculty...it's pretty abstract in some ways in the conceptualization, plus it's a lot of work. Right? And we may not be getting rewarded for it in some

ways but if you think you have really good quantitative and qualitative research on how these kids are made better people, I think you are gonna convince them.”

For those junior faculty members already utilizing service learning, the team, whose 4 faculty members are all tenured – is concerned about providing them a career advantage. At present, junior faculty members seem to have little incentive to use service learning. By providing research grants, the institution could support them in their utilization of service learning and also assist them when they are up for promotion. The team members note that information must be widely distributed in order to inform faculty of various opportunities.

Additionally, team members are concerned with publication opportunities and what issues could be explored in Sociology that would be viewed as academically rigorous. Several faculty members thought that an angle for refereed articles was the pedagogy of Sociology. The art of teaching Sociology and its impact on student learning outcomes was valued research. Other areas that have gone relatively untouched are service learning’s impact on the community, or higher education institutions, leaving several angles for faculty to choose from.

With regard to community partnerships, assisting faculty in connecting with a community-based organization in order to form community partnerships may act as an incentive. By hosting an on-campus event where professors and community agencies have the opportunity to meet each other and assess “fit,” professors may be less resistant to using service learning because they felt more supported by the institution. By providing as much support as possible, the process of implementing service learning comes with more ease.

The last concern that the team addressed is the issue of funding. The Fullerton team believes that once the Governor's money is used, their service learning center may not exist. Without that office, a major support for faculty in the integration of service learning disappears. Conversely, if the campus, the Chancellor's Office, or outside funder provides funds, faculty members could attend other institutes and conferences. Faculty members can also complete a number of tasks such as develop syllabi, create community partnerships, or provide transportation for students. Without additional funding, they feel it will be difficult to accomplish more than is already required. Additional funding may also act as an incentive for a faculty member to offer courses at non-traditional times (after 5pm) which are needed for a campus that enrolls non-traditional students, especially if the department is instituting a required service learning experience.

The team had two strategies for gaining departmental and institutional financial support for service learning: 1) placing faculty members who value service learning on various committees across campus, and 2) having the Chancellor speak with CSU presidents about the value of service learning. Committee members who value service learning can champion it specifically when a faculty member is up for promotion. They can also defend service learning by citing research findings that demonstrate the added value of service learning as a pedagogy. Additionally, presidents are in a very important position because they make decisions on budget allocations. If a president outwardly supports service learning then it is more than likely that a substantial amount of money will be allocated to it. Obviously, both strategies will take time.

To sum up, then, the Fullerton Sociology has seen significant change since the June, 2001 Institute, particularly in the areas of raising awareness of and support for service learning among faculty. They continue to wrestle with the challenges of requiring sociology majors to participate in a service learning experience. In the coming months, they will turn their attention a bit more to developing partnerships. They continue to consider what it means personally and professionally for faculty at different points in their academic careers to incorporate service learning into their courses.

### ***Case Study: Humboldt State University***

Humboldt State University (HSU) is situated in the City of Arcata, a rural community 95 miles south of the Oregon State border and 275 miles north of San Francisco. The campus is set between redwood forests and the Pacific Ocean. The HSU campus offers 45 baccalaureate degrees, 73 minors, 12 graduate programs, 17 credential programs, and 16 certificates of study.

HSU has a student population of approximately 7,400 students. Over 90 percent of students are enrolled full-time, and about 80% live on campus or in university-owned housing. About half (48%) of the student population is within the 20-24 year old age-range and is somewhat racially diverse: White 67.8%; Hispanic 7.5%; Asian/Pacific Islander 3.3%; Native American 2.6%; and Black 2.5%. In 2001, approximately one third of students enrolled originated from Humboldt County.

### **Communication Department**

The Communication department at HSU has a small faculty of seven permanent members: three Professors, one Associate, and three Assistant Professors in addition to a few temporary / part-time faculty members. The department's mission is "to serve the university and community by advancing knowledge about human communication as well as promoting the critical analysis of communication contexts and the judicious application of communication skills" (departmental website, 2002). The department prides itself on involvement in the community through a variety of different communication contexts such as interpersonal, organizational, and mass communication. While in the community students and faculty aim to improve individuals' "abilities to communicate in a variety of ways as

well as expand knowledge of how people communicate and understand the role communication plays in shaping lives (departmental website, 2002). Additionally, the department is noted for their excellence in teaching and their diversity of teaching styles.

Service-learning is not new to the communications department. The department has been recognized for their leadership in service learning by the campus, the community, and the California State University system. Two departmental faculty currently serve as campus-wide service learning mentors.

### **Disciplinary, Community and Institutional Context**

As a discipline, Communication Studies has a history of partnering with local communities because of the shared concern for the role of oral, written, and electronic communication in understanding the self and society (AAHE, 1999). The National Communication Association has really pushed for engagement in the community through the use of service learning. The disciplinary culture has provided tremendous support to the department throughout the years.

HSU has a long tradition of community service and volunteerism. It has an overarching culture of being involved in the community – a community that is largely non-profit oriented. One faculty member noted that one reason the non-profit sector might be so prominent in Arcata/Eureka area is that it's just too difficult to make a profit here! The area does tend to attract a large number of artists, and the team members agree there are lots of non-profits operating in the community.

Like many of the CSUs, Humboldt has an office that coordinates service learning – in this case the Office of Service Learning and Experiential Education (SLEE). The office

supports the work of faculty in several ways. Several Communication faculty members have participated in the Service Learning Fellows program, a year long intensive faculty development experience. Past participants in the Service Learning Fellows program then become mentors to other faculty in the program. As the SLEE coordinator notes, Fellows tend to mentor other faculty members in their own department. The office also works to ‘match’ faculty and community partners, although it appears the communications professors tend to make their own connections in the community.

There are several things happening at Humboldt State that provide an important context for the engagement work undertaken by the Communication department. Like many higher education institutions across the country, HSU is experiencing a significant number of retirements, and as a result new faculty are being hired. The Communication department has two new junior faculty members, for instance. This trend has implications for service learning work in the department and across the campus, a finding we elaborate on later in this report.

The presidency of the Humboldt campus is also in transition. The people we spoke with are optimistic about what the change in leadership might mean for support of civic engagement work, but no one gave specific examples of just what they thought the transition might mean. There seems to be cautious optimism.

In addition to the personnel changes on campus, HSU is experiencing difficult financial times and declining enrolments. The budget crunch is perhaps the strongest force identified by participants; a crunch that reflects the larger shortage of funds across California’s public education sector. Unlike most CSU campuses, though, HSU is currently

experiencing a decline in enrolments. As one person put it, “now other universities are exploding and we’re declining in our enrolment and so the systemwide money is going to where the students are and it’s not here as much.” This fiscal environment can have a strong impact on efforts such as service learning and other forms of civic engagement, because they are considered “add-on” and therefore most sensitive to budget cuts

### **Community Partner: Manila Community Services**

The department chose Manila Community Services to be the community partner on their *Engaged Department* team. Manila Community Services (MCS) is a grassroots organization that provides community and recreational services for the local community. Several years ago, a professor from the Communication department contacted MCS to establish a community partnership in order to fill placements for a service learning course. The professor, who is also the team leader of the engaged department team, sent students to MCS to help with an after-school program curriculum and theater performances. The director of MCS told us that the partnership was formalized recently with an agreement with the leaders of the department.

The partnership is valued by the community agency because it provides opportunities for youth at the organization interact with college students and this in turn provides youth with interaction with higher education. They no longer see the university as a foreign place but rather a place that they strive to go to. Conversely, college students gain real-life experience and exposure to the non-profit sector.

One challenge the community partner notes is that of the individualistic culture of the department. Because each faculty member is working on their own projects and research,

from her perspective there is inconsistency in communication between the university and the community. She also points out the need for continuity in terms of students' service. It is difficult to recruit, train, have students develop relationships with the young people, and then watch them leave at the end of the semester. Recruitment and training take a substantial amount of time and money. Service learning is welcomed by the community but better, more coordinated communication with the university would help to strengthen the relationship.

### **Team's Work Since the Institute**

Similar to what seems to happen in other departments, in the Communication department there was one faculty member had utilized service learning in her courses for many years. As she puts it, she was known as "T-H-E faculty member doing Service-Learning," even though there were others doing it too. When she heard about the Summer Institute, she saw it as an opportunity to involve the department as a whole, and to get stronger buy-in for service learning from the chair. The team consisted of the department chair, one full professor, two junior faculty members, and one community partner.

Since June 2001, the HSU Communication team has taken the work they did at the Engaged Department Institute and integrated it into work the department was undertaking around their periodic program review. In this way, thinking about civic engagement has become part of their reflections on who they are and what students learn in communications studies. They have not focused, for example, on the number of service learning courses per se, but really began work on getting to the heart of what it means to be an engaged department. The Institute and the program review process seem to be complimenting the work of each other to facilitate reflective discussions around civic engagement.

The process of program review includes revisiting or developing a mission statement, a values statement and a strategic plan. The team shared with us that when the program review was sent to the College Curriculum Committee, the committee returned it indicating that the vision was not clear (and asking the department to create a vision statement). It was during the College Curriculum Committee meeting that members began to discuss the concept of civic engagement. Student representatives were part of the process, and resonated in particular with the idea of social responsibility.

It was work at the Institute that seemed to deepen this important discussion around the inclusion of civic engagement in the revising of the mission, values, and vision statements and also the strategic plan. Through this revision process, the team has seen increased support for and excitement about civic engagement and service learning within the department. The department was able to collaboratively define civic engagement, and reflect on what it means in the context of the major.

Because of the focus on program review, less attention was given to further implementation of service learning in the department and on campus. Nonetheless, service learning continues to be utilized by individual faculty members within the department. Partnerships had already been established because the department has had a strong relationship with the community. Thus far the team feels they have experienced very little, if any, resistance to service learning. Faculty members who continue to work on their own projects and research still support those who have chosen to utilize service learning.

This kind of passive support, which some might argue is simply lack of support, is notable here because even though the faculty is not uniformly undertaking service learning,

the department has collectively shaped a vision that includes engagement. Becoming an engaged department never has been about every instructor using service learning, but rather including service and engagement in the community as key principles of the department, and cornerstone experiences for students.

### **Issues at Humboldt State**

We asked the team about how their work gets supported by the department, the institution and the disciplinary association. We expected to hear about issues such as the faculty reward process and fiscal support for efforts such as service learning. At Humboldt these issues emerged, but we also heard about a campus wide effort to designate service learning courses in the course catalog, and how that process opened up issues in some surprising ways. In this section we will discuss: 1) the rewards and tenure process, 2) the service learning course designation efforts, and 3) funding for service learning efforts.

Interestingly, Humboldt is an institution at which incorporating service learning into courses is beneficial in the rewards and tenure process (RTP). “Our tenure and promotion documents state very clearly that it’s not just publications that count and that other work, especially service to the community, which I would count [service learning] as being, is equal to publications.” So, faculty members are free to do this work with the assurance that it is valued.

But, the larger culture of academe, which values publications over this kind of community-based work, still exerts significant influence in the department. The way it gets played out, especially for junior faculty members, is that they diminish their ‘marketability’ for academic jobs outside of HSU unless they honor the more prevalent norms. So, as one

person put it, doing service learning is fine as long as the faculty member plans to stay at Humboldt.

Because Humboldt is experiencing a good deal of turnover, and some of the younger faculty are excited about community –based efforts, one faculty member notes that there is an increased need for clear communication between departments about what opportunities are available, and how departments are engaged. Interest is so high, she notes, that departments can be unwittingly complicating experiences for students as they each move ahead independently with service learning courses and possibly requirements. Because HSU is small enough, informal communication can be very important, but one way or another departments need to know what kinds of community-based work are happening elsewhere on campus.

Another issue that has come up this past year at HSU is that of designating service learning courses. The original impetus behind such a designation, according to several people we spoke with, was to inform students' choice in taking courses. However, as the initiative came under the review process by the academic senate, it became clear that several concerns were evident among the faculty. First, they wondered who was driving the initiative – some suspected it was a mandate from the chancellor. Another concern emerged around the issue of evaluation – who gets to decide what 'counts' as a service learning course?

The service learning course designation initiative came to the senate floor twice, and was tabled but not killed. As one participant put it, the proponents of the initiative hadn't done enough 'homework' first, to educate the faculty on the initiative and the reasons it was being brought forth. Supporters plan to bring it up for review again in the coming academic

year. Although faculty members in Communication are aware of the initiative, none are directly involved with it at this stage.

Another issue related to designating courses is counting service learning courses for the Chancellor's office. Assessment and academic freedom are also tied into the idea of counting service learning courses. The team notes that the only courses that are currently being reported to the Chancellor's office are those that are new and have gone through SLEE. Already existing service learning courses apparently do not get included.

As service learning becomes more widely known on campus, and efforts to institutionalize some practices are attempted (i.e. the course designation proposal for the academic senate), HSU is facing some interesting issues. There is, for instance, the issue of who decides which courses get the designation, which is wrapped in larger issues of assessment. One faculty member told us that they would not want their course counted. "In a way, if I were teaching a service learning course, and things were going ok, unless there were some big rewards for getting it counted, I don't know that I'd care to, because then that means that they get to start telling me what to do with the course."

Faculty expressed concern that service learning courses are being overly scrutinized because they will be assessed while other courses will not be. One person compared the potential assessment issue with service learning courses to current efforts around another kind of course, HSU's "diversity and common ground" courses – though the diversity and common ground courses fulfill a university requirement. That team member and a colleague spent the better part of a day recently reformulating a syllabus to meet some new university approval guidelines for diversity courses. This clearly felt like an "exercise" to the

instructor, who noted that no real revisions were made to the course. “And then you do this for our G.E. [general education]... that gets reassessed every so often... So if you have course that is service learning and has diversity and common ground and maybe fulfills yet another requirement for two or three majors...you could have one course being assessed for five or six different ‘masters.’”

We heard from at least one faculty member that the idea of counting or assessing courses can be perceived as infringing upon faculty members’ academic freedom and can act as a barrier to their use of service learning, particularly when the assessment of these courses is considered in context with all the other demands on faculty time. “...I’m just saying that if you don’t want to increase your workload, it’s getting so you just hunker down, try to be a little bit less visible!”

Lastly, perhaps the most salient challenge faced by the department is funding. In light of the budget deficit for the campus and the system (this is an issue at the state level), there is significant pressure to focus on enrollment and credit generation, which form the basis for fiscal allocations by the state. In a small department such as Communication, getting those classroom seats filled seems to be the central focus of the dean. In fact, the dean stated that he sees his responsibility as getting those seats filled and leaving matters of specific course content (including decisions about when and whether to incorporate service) in the hands of the rest of the departmental faculty.

### **Team Recommendations**

The issue of funding is a strong concern for faculty at HSU. Not only is the budget crisis looming, but as one faculty member indicates, the institutional funding process seems

something of a mystery. “Nobody on this campus really knows how anything is really funded...or where the money is coming from or where the money is going.” It is not surprising, then, that the team wants more information on avenues to obtaining outside funding. One team member noted, “...if there were some way to generate ideas of how to get the kind of support this needs to continue. If there was certain funding agencies that would be amenable to this – talking about writing grants for these agencies and identifying others.” Such resources may come from the Chancellor’s office and then get funneled through to campus service learning offices.

Related to securing funds within the system is the idea of “promoting” HSU’s service learning programs to the president, and beyond that office, to others outside of Humboldt county. The team discussed the merits of a letter from Campus Compact to their president to raise awareness about service learning work that takes place across campus. “If Campus Compact [or an organization outside the system] is saying these things, they’re going to pay more attention.”

Another recommendation the team made was assessing students and their level of civic engagement. “we assess the students in terms of their degree of civic engagement, from when they were freshman here or when they entered the program/major to when they’re graduating. Do we see growth in civic engagement? What is their degree of civic engagement?” Another team member indicated, “It would be interesting too to see who are the kinds of students that we naturally attract, are we already getting students – because of the culture we have – are they drawn to Humboldt because they are interested in doing something.” The team would like to see longitudinal data that examines students levels of

engagement in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of service learning programs. They would also use the data to assess the departments own level of engagement. In fact, this assessment issue may be revisited next year when the department looks at revising the major.

Overall, the HSU team thought the Institute was very valuable in terms of civic engagement. Although they concluded in our interview that the department is, in many ways, engaged, they also seem to appreciate the time away and the opportunity to look at what other campuses were doing. They will continue to address areas such as communicating across departments, and looking closely at civic engagement as a construct when they reconstruct the Communication major.

## Conclusion

Here we have presented findings from survey research, community partner interviews, faculty and administrator interviews, and departmental and institutional documents, in order that we might begin to present a picture of the kind of progress departments are making since they participated in the June, 2001 Engaged Department Institute. We have seen from the survey data that progress is mixed, but most teams feel they are making progress in raising awareness of and support for service learning among faculty. We didn't notice much progress being made in the areas that might suggest institutionalization of engagement efforts, but then again the survey was conducted a mere six months after the Institute.

In the case studies we get a deeper understanding of the issues that two different campuses are dealing with as they move forward with the action plans they crafted at the institute. In both cases the state budget concerns are seen as a significant impact. The faculty reward process appears to be more of an issue at one campus than at the other, and the campuses are dealing with different priorities in the process. For the Fullerton team, the focus has been on getting a critical amount of faculty support, and considering how service learning might be incorporated as a requirement for majors. At Humboldt, the team spent this past year immersed in a program-review process, and used their learning from the Institute to deepen those discussions. They will be addressing engagement in the major in the coming academic year.

Community Partners, like faculty and administrators, report mixed success, but many of them seem to value the partnership with the higher education. It does seem that those who

report a personal connection with a faculty member seem to be the partners that experienced longer term relationships. Faculty and partners alike discussed the ways in which they would like to strengthen these partnerships.

The work of departments to become more engaged in their communities bears much resemblance to other forms of change within the academy. We have learned from other research that faculty need to be committed and feel a part of any change effort, and indeed department teams seem to recognize this as they pay attention to that buy-in first. We have seen varying levels of support for engagement work in institutional reward processes for faculty, but nonetheless there appears a committed core group of faculty who will do this work because it is of intrinsic value to them; they also support changing the faculty rewards process. Finally, though some teams are making progress, they express very clearly the need for continued support from all sources, in order that their efforts can continue.

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