

Annual Report of the Service Learning Advisory Committee to Academic Senate 2009-2010

Committee members: Bill Loker, Dean of Undergraduate Education (chair); Sara Rumiano, Director of Procurement & Contract Services; Mike Thorpe, Risk Manager; Lynne Bercaw (EDUC), faculty representative; Mary Flynn, Program Administrator of Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE); Michael Briand, Director of Civic Engagement; Ken Steidley, community representative.

During the 2009-10 academic year, the Service Learning Advisory Committee pursued three main goals:

1. to begin the transition, in conceptualization and in practice, from the relatively familiar idea of service learning to an expanded notion of community or civic engagement that includes but goes beyond service learning;
2. to streamline and standardize the process by which faculty arrange the placement of students in community-based learning settings; and
3. to design, organize, and conduct an end-of-semester Institute, or workshop, for faculty wishing to learn about civic engagement, why it's an essential component of undergraduate education, and how to incorporate civic learning activity into the courses they teach.

1. The first of these three goals—beginning the transition from a focus on service learning to a broader conception of civic engagement—was initiated by the CSU Chancellor's Office in response to a widening concern among educators about the preparation of students for their responsibilities in a democratic society. Here on our campus it has been advanced chiefly through

- planning for the forthcoming faculty Civic Learning Institute;
- development of a new civic engagement website; and through
- informal conversations with members of the faculty both individually and in small groups.

The Service Learning Advisory Committee was created five years ago by Executive Memorandum 05-18 for the purpose of developing procedures for managing institutional risk in service learning. Risk management is an ongoing need, and we will continue to address issues of this nature.

Now, though—in view of the prominence of civic engagement in the mission of the CSU and of this University, and in view of the role envisioned for civic engagement in the redesign of general education—we need a body, on which faculty are well represented, to act in an advisory capacity with regard to all aspects of civic engagement, not just risk management

issues. Accordingly, the Committee will be asking Academic Senate to approve a proposal to re-name the Committee the “Civic Engagement Advisory Committee” and to charge it with not only developing and monitoring additional procedures to strengthen and improve risk management, but also with increasing the programmatic efficiency and effectiveness of civic learning, and with enhancing the quality of the educational experience students receive when they are placed with public or community-based organizations or agencies.

2. Our chief accomplishment during the current academic year involves our second goal. We have been able to streamline, standardize, and clarify the process by which faculty arrange the placement of students in community-based learning settings. This has improved collaboration between the Office of Civic Engagement, which is part of Academic Affairs, and CAVE, which is part of Associated Students. Our hope and expectation is that the revised placement process will have a number of benefits, not least of which will be reduced uncertainty on the part of faculty about how to place students in community settings, and reduced demand on the time and effort they devote to logistical matters. This will become apparent, we believe, as faculty and others take advantage of the automated process embedded in the “Placement Wizard” on the new website.

3. Finally, our third goal is being realized through the first annual Civic Learning Institute, which will be held May 27th through 29th. The Institute will consist of a seminar/workshop followed by a year-long "learning community" for an initial cohort of Chico State instructors.

A central aim of the Institute is to assist faculty in their efforts to infuse civic learning into the new General Education program. This aim grows out of our conviction that today's university must dispel incoming students' misapprehension that a college education is chiefly the process of training for a career. An emphasis on civic learning is needed to help students appreciate that they are destined to become members of a self-governing society who ought to prepare with equal determination for their "*civic careers*"—as citizens who act as analysts, planners, priority-setters, decision-makers, administrators, and executors of their communities' and nation's collective wills.

Making room for civic learning in GE courses has to begin, obviously, with faculty. The upcoming Institute will help our first faculty cohort move from a conceptual and contextual understanding of civic learning to the creation of strategies and techniques for use in courses they currently teach or may teach in the future. The three-day event will culminate in an address by Thomas Ehrlich, senior scholar and co-director of the Political Engagement Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Submitted by: Michael K. Briand, Ph.D., Director of Civic Engagement