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MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Faculty, Administration, and Staff
FROM: Joseph F. Sheley
Provost
SUBJECT: Procedures to Implement Service Learning Courses at Sacramento State

The CSU Office of the Chancellor has defined service learning as: "A teaching method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content. Through reflective activities, students enhance their understanding of course content, general knowledge, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness, and commitment to the community" (<http://www.csus.edu/cec/servicelearning.stm>). Using this or similar definitions, it is widely accepted and understood in the University that service learning is a very effective pedagogy that enables students to enhance their learning in real-world settings while providing valuable services to the community. For faculty members, the opportunity to integrate community-based learning into courses and to connect their scholarly work with the community is potentially a highly satisfying element of the professional experience.

Service learning is therefore a core ingredient of the total learning experience we offer our students at California State University, Sacramento. As important as it is to provide service learning opportunities for our students, it is equally important that we ensure that the processes and procedures we employ in this vein are in line with announced campus practices and appropriate executive orders from the CSU Chancellor's Office (see Executive Order 715 <http://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-715.pdf> and Executive Order 849 <http://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-849.pdf>).

Many departments on campus have made great progress in properly documenting their students' service learning activities. However, a recent audit by the Chancellor's Office of Off-Campus Activities at Sacramento State found that some programs were not adequately adhering to required procedures. (The University's Community Engagement Center (CEC) has also developed a wide range of documentation for service learning courses that are registered with their office. The procedures developed and implemented by the CEC are in line with appropriate risk management guidelines established by the CSU and other recognized best practices for community engagement courses.)

In compliance with various executive orders and system policies, we have instituted the following procedure, now required to offer service learning courses at Sacramento State:

This procedure is intended to: 1) increase student safety, 2) decrease liability exposure to the University, and 3) reduce the liability of faculty members as they – in good faith and after their due diligence – recommend service learning placement to students. Therefore, prior to recommending placement sites to students, departments and faculty members shall:

Option 1: Work through the Community Engagement Center to formally establish your course as a service learning course at Sacramento State. The CEC has set in place all approved procedures to meet CSU Chancellor's Office guidelines for service learning and is the primary venue to channel all courses designated as service learning. Further information is available at <http://www.csus.edu/cec/servicelearning.stm> .

Option 2: If you choose for pedagogical reasons to offer a service learning course outside the direct purview of the CEC, oversight responsibility rests with deans and department chairs to ensure that the specific course meets all CSU risk management guidelines for community engagement/service learning courses prior to placement of students in a service learning environment.

Irrespective of the option employed to offer service learning courses, the risk management procedures, at a minimum, require that sponsoring departments shall:

- Exercise due diligence to: (a) identify reasonably foreseeable hazards (legal, physical, environmental, technological), and (b) acquaint themselves to the extent possible with the applicable policies of the organization. In situations where site visits have not been conducted, the Department/Program must have evidence that demonstrates knowledge of and familiarity with the organization, location and environment of the service learning activity. In cases where site visits have been conducted, documentation should include evidence of the visit such as date and persons met.
- Provide student orientations prior to each service learning placement. Topics must include health/safety information, emergency contact information and emergency preparedness instructions, and student code of conduct. Participating students must also be notified in writing of identified hazards and steps taken to mitigate them or steps the students should take to mitigate known hazards.
- Obtain signed liability waivers from all prospective participating students.
- Retain evidence (see document retention policy below) that emergency contact information was made available to participants.
- Obtain fully executed placement agreements with community partners that specify minimum insurance requirements and appropriate hold-harmless provisions. Exceptions to the insurance provision may be permitted where the student is also in a valid employee-employer relationship in which the employer has provided the employee with the customary insurance and liability protections as is required of employers.

- Obtain fully documented placement agreements that, among other things, identify a contact within the organization whose duties will include supervision and evaluation of the student, and that specify the factors that will guide evaluation of the student's experience, including number of hours and types of duties.

The CEC has developed various guidelines and forms suitable for implementation of the above procedures when **Option 1** is utilized. Deans and Department Chairs may consult with the campus's Office of Risk Management if employing **Option 2** to ensure that the above procedures are in place for a specific service learning course not registered with the CEC. You may visit the website of the Office of Risk Management at <http://www.rms.csus.edu/riskmanagement/> for further information.

Please note that the CEC adheres to the campus document retention policy of three years. With Option 2, however, it is the responsibility of Department Chairs to retain all required documentation to support evidence of site visits, student orientations, student release of liability forms, and placement agreements for three years commencing with the start date for each specific student. Because this requirement for document retention may create space/storage issues, it is permissible for departments to send required documents for archiving after holding them for one calendar year. For further information about records management and the archiving process, please visit the following link: <http://www.csus.edu/aba/records-management/index.html>.

Finally, while these procedures will enable us to comply with the Chancellor's Audit requirements in the short term, we also recognize that there will soon be a need to further revise and clarify these policies for the longer term. Therefore, after a period of initial implementation, we will commence a process to review and update the policy on service learning consistent with any changes we anticipate from the Chancellor's Office and pedagogical realities on this campus.

If you need any further clarification for implementation of the service learning procedures, you may contact Dr. Donald Taylor, Office of Academic Affairs at 278-5933 or dtaylor@csus.edu.