Yolo County benefits from Sac State partnership

Sacramento State's partnerships with communities in the region continue to produce solid results.

One of the more innovative joint ventures is with Yolo County, where students from the University's Public Policy and Administration (PPA) program are getting hands-on experience providing analysis and developing programs in local government. Such work with government entities or nonprofits is part of the PPA requirement. The most recent Yolo County group included 32 students, three interns and four thesis students.

Students work in groups with county officials to propose solutions for various issues. “In return, the county gets usable recommendations and analysis they wouldn’t otherwise have the resources to produce,” says Yolo County Public Affairs Manager Beth Gabor.

The students get to analyze a problem, develop alternatives and present their ideas to decision makers, says PPA Professor Mary Kirlin. “The students really step up to the task in ways they wouldn’t necessarily do for an in-class assignment,” she says.

In the last two years, PPA students produced 10 class-based projects and five theses for the county.

One project involved the integration of the Health and Human Services units into a single agency. The students identified issues likely to arise, and interviewed participants to gauge their understanding of the merger. The presentation combined the students’ findings from the interviews with their newly developed expertise on organizational change.

Other projects included finding mechanisms for developing a dashboard and creating an employee manual regarding performance measures.

Several graduate students working with Yolo County have used their experiences for master’s theses. The titles of recent papers include:

- Analyzing the Organizational Culture of Yolo County Using Two Assessment Models, by Jason Fox
- Telling Your Story Using Performance Measurement: Presenting an Approach to Performance Measure Development, by Kristen Bennett
Social Media Use in Local Government Agencies: An Implementation Guide for Public Officials, by Katie Cardenas

“Yolo County benefits by infusing fresh and creative approaches to tackling current challenges (and) exposes students to the opportunities that exist in local government,” says Yolo County Administrator Patrick Blacklock.

For more information on the master’s program in PPA, visit www.csus.edu/ppa. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

– Craig Koscho
ckoscho@csus.edu

Sacramento State is making a difference in California’s Capital Region and beyond. We offer a life-changing opportunity for our 28,000 students, preparing them to be leaders in their professions and communities. Our professors are known for their dedication to great teaching. And our location in the capital of the nation’s most populous state allows students to pursue unique internships and research.

###

135-S13-CK