

WASC Educational Effectiveness Team Report: Case Study: Service Learning Institute

I. OVERVIEW

Service learning is one of the distinctive features of CSU Monterey Bay's educational program. CSUMB is one of the few universities in the country that requires every student to engage in community service work as part of its graduation requirements. Our outcomes-based academic program integrates outcomes related to service and civic engagement in both the general education program (See Appendix A: Community Participation University Learning Requirement Outcomes), and in the outcomes of each undergraduate major. As a result, students who progress through CSUMB's entire academic program have two opportunities to take "service learning courses" that require them to integrate knowledge about community, diversity, justice, compassion and social responsibility with their chosen field of study. On average, each academic year 45% of CSUMB students are enrolled in a service learning course, contributing a minimum of 30 hours of service to local schools, non-profit organizations and government agencies (See Appendix B: CSUMB's Service Learning Requirement).

CSUMB's service learning program is unique in both its scope (being required for all students) and its focus on social justice and diversity. At the university's inception, there was real concern about whether this "experiment in required service" would work to the benefit of both students and the local community. Would students resent being required to do community service? Would students learn anything from the experience? Would community organizations benefit from hundreds and ultimately thousands of college students descending on their work places for relatively short periods of time? Could these service learning courses effectively teach cross-cultural civic participation and help foster "multicultural community builders" as the Vision Statement implies?

Given these significant questions, it was imperative that the Service Learning Institute develop the capacity to gather and analyze data on the effectiveness of this program that is unique in public higher education.

II. DATA-GATHERING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

The Service Learning Institute has developed a number of data gathering and analysis processes that enable it to regularly review various dimensions of program effectiveness. Since Fall 1996, the Service Learning Institute has been able to employ a part-time Program Evaluation Specialist who has assisted the SLI staff in developing and implementing these evaluation tools. While some funds for this position have come from the SLI's general fund budget, the bulk of the funding for this position has been supported by external grants. As a result, the evaluation tools have focused both on general program effectiveness and on evaluating the achievement of specific grant-related goals.

Data on program effectiveness is collected and analyzed through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods and longitudinal design, including (1) pre- and post-experience self-assessments of students' attitudes related to the core service learning course *SL 200S: Introduction to Service in Multicultural Communities*; (2) student evaluations of the service learning process; (3) community partner evaluations of the service learning process and occasional focus group interviews; (4) faculty evaluations of the service learning process and their experience working with University Service Advocates (USAs); and, (5) USA program evaluations and focus group interviews. Each of these evaluation mechanisms has been implemented semesterly, and has provided vital information to improve program effectiveness and the evaluation process every year.

- (1) A pre- and post-course attitude self-assessment is administered to all students who take the course SL 200S¹. This instrument, developed by Furco and Yamada at UC Berkeley's Service Learning Research and Assessment Center, originally had three scales assessing students' commitment to civic participation, career preparedness, and ratings of academic relevance in community service. In Spring 1998, an additional scale was developed by the SLI to assess students' service self-efficacy, i.e., the extent to which students feel they can have a positive impact on local social problems and be an active member in the community. In addition to these scales, questions were added to the post-assessment relating specifically to the learning outcomes of the CP ULR.
- (2) The student evaluation of the service learning process is included in the Service Learning Handbook for all service learning courses each semester. This survey provides quantitative and qualitative data assessing students' attitudes toward service, the extent to which community participation enhanced their learning process, and their views of their community service placement, among other issues.
- (3) Community partners evaluate the service learning process by completing their own evaluation at the end of each semester. In addition, focus group interviews assessing the outcomes for their program, for the students, and the service-learning partnership have been held to provide in depth information on specific areas of programmatic emphasis (i.e, science and technology, pre-teacher education).
- (4) CSUMB faculty also complete an evaluation of the service learning process each semester, evaluating their overall experience of teaching a service learning course and the impact of service learning on students' learning and performance. Faculty also evaluate University Service Advocates, assessing their performance and learning experience, as well as the extent to which the USA enhanced their teaching and skills in service learning pedagogy.

¹ Until this year, only the various sections of SL 200S participated in this survey. Beginning 2000-01, all courses that meet the CP ULR (including GS 200S and HWI 361S) are administering this survey.

- (5) USAs participate in focus group interviews to provide insight into students' experience as participants in the Summer of Service Leadership Academy (SoSLA), their motivation for becoming USAs, the impact of the experience on their leadership development, the impact of service learning on their academic and career goals, and their ability to work in a multicultural settings. In addition, participants regularly complete evaluations of SoSLA and the USA program.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

User Satisfaction

Students, community partners, and faculty complete service learning process evaluations to provide the Service Learning Institute with indicators of their satisfaction with the CSUMB's service learning program. These forms also allow the various groups to offer suggestions and comments about how to improve the program.

Student Satisfaction with their Service Learning Experience

All students are asked to complete evaluations of their service learning experiences each semester. The rate of return on these surveys has grown steadily from 35% to 54% over the past four years. The following table summarizes student responses to some of the questions pertaining to student satisfaction with the service learning experience. The table indicates the percentage of students who answered the questions positively. (Note: numbers in parentheses represent the number of students completing questionnaire, and the rate of return for the year.)

Question	Fall/Spr 1996-97 (N=222)	Fall/Spr 1997-98 (N=270)	Fall/Spr 1998-99 (N=426)	Fall/Spr 1999- 2000 (N=489)	Fall/Spr 2000/01 (N=570)	Total (N=1977)
Would you recommend the site where you had worked to future service learning students? % stating "Yes."	N/A	N/A	94%	94%	94%	94%
Do you plan to continue serving with this community program after completing the course? % stating "Yes."	57%	49%	63%	56%	51%	56%
Would you enroll in another course with a service component beyond the CSUMB requirement? % of students who answered "Yes."	64%	77%	78%	64%	48% (spring only)	67%
As a result of this experience my attitude toward service has become: % stating "more positive."	67%	67%	71%	64%	84%	72%

The data suggest that over the past five years, the majority of students have had a very positive service learning experience. The majority of students rated their service placement experience as positive, with 94% stating they would recommend their site to future students. Over 67% of the students indicated that their attitudes toward service

became more positive as a result of their service learning experience. Of the remaining students, the overwhelming majority indicated that their attitudes going into the course were already positive. Rarely did students report that their attitudes toward service became more negative as a result of the service learning experience. In addition, over the past five years, 72% of the students said they would enroll in another course beyond CSUMB's service learning requirement. Finally, over half of the students indicated they would continue working with their community program after completing the course.²

These statistics are important, given the level of skepticism from the higher education community about CSUMB making service learning a graduation requirement. At the university's conception, there was concern that the requirement would have a negative impact on students' experience with service learning. This has clearly not been the case.

Community Partner Satisfaction

Community Partners complete written evaluations of the service learning process each semester, and have participated in periodic focus group interviews, discussing their experience having CSUMB service learners placed at their agency, organization, or school. The following table summarizes responses from community partner evaluations over the past five years (1996-97 and 1997-98 were analyzed and reported together).

Question	Fall/Spring 1996-97 1997-98 (N = 66)	Fall/Spring 1998-99 (N=72)	Fall/Spring 1999-2000 (N=66)	Fall/Spring 2000-2001 (n=44)	Total
Percentage rating the overall partnership as "effective" or "very effective"	88%	88%	100%	87%	92%
Would you recommend the service learning partnership to other organizations? % stating "Yes."	98%	98%	100%	91%	97%
Do you plan to continue serving as a placement site? % stating "Yes."	98%	97%	99%	N/A	98%

As indicated above, community partners' level of satisfaction with the service learning process has been outstanding. In addition, community partners report that the overall impact of having CSUMB service learners has been very positive. They indicate that the CSUMB service learners have been adequately prepared for their work, and that the time it has taken to supervise students has not outweighed the benefits that they received from the partnership.

Community partners were also asked to discuss barriers to the service learning process and to provide suggestions as to what CSUMB faculty could do to provide the

² While no consistent data exist to confirm this claim, a follow-up telephone survey conducted in summer 1997 indicated that 20% of the students were in fact still working with at their service site.

community partner's program with better support. Some of the drawbacks or barriers that community partners reported were low reliability of students, scheduling difficulties, amount of training required, too little time to complete projects, and a lack of planning by the professor and student. A few of the agency respondents indicated they experienced barriers to establishing or maintaining a cooperative working relationship with faculty due to lack of communication with the faculty teaching the course or a need for more information about service learning.

It must be noted that while there are significant issues that can be addressed to improve the service learning partnership, nearly all (98%) partners report the desire to continue the service learning partnership. It should also be noted that the number one comment reported on the evaluations is: send us more students!

Faculty Satisfaction

Faculty teaching service learning courses are asked to complete written evaluations of their service learning experiences each semester. The following table summarizes responses from faculty evaluations over the past three years, indicating their level of satisfaction as service learning instructors.

Question	Fall/Spring 1998-99 (N=36)	Fall/Spring 1999-2000 (N=20)	Fal/Spring 2000-2001 (N = 20)	Total
Do you plan to continue teaching this service learning course? % stating "Yes."	100%	75% ³	90%	91%
Would you encourage other faculty to use service learning pedagogy as an effective method for enhancing student understanding of course content? % stating "Yes."	97%	80%	85%	85%

As indicated above, the overwhelming majority of faculty are very satisfied with their service learning experiences. In addition, all faculty report that they received sufficient or very sufficient support from the SLI. Among the services that faculty cited as being particularly helpful were the support coming from specific SLI staff, USA's, the CP ULR Learning Community meetings, faculty council meetings, facilitation of community partner relationships, and support in curriculum development.

Faculty also identified a number of challenges that they experience as service learning faculty. These centered around the need to develop new skills in service learning pedagogy, the time commitment required to build community partnerships, and the increase in workload associated with service learning. Again, it is important to note that while these challenges are significant, the overwhelming majority of faculty plan to continue teaching service learning courses.

³ The reasons faculty provided for why they were not planning to continue teaching the course were: they were leaving CSUMB, they needed more flexibility in choosing the course readings, they did not have enough students enrolled, or they were going to teach the course the following year.

Goal Achievement

There are a number of evaluation processes that provide data on goal achievement. Questions on the evaluation of the service learning process by students, faculty and community partners provide insight on 1) whether students are learning and developing skills in community participation; 2) whether faculty are developing skills in service learning pedagogy and partnership development; and 3) whether students are having a positive impact at the community site. The pre- and post-assessment of student attitudes in the core lower division course, *SL 200S*, and the focus group interviews with USAs provide additional data related to goal achievement. Finally, the semester-by-semester review of community partnerships and service learning courses provides an important perspective on the overall continuity of the program, and the university's ability to build and sustain consistent relationships with the community.

Student Learning Goal Achievement

Through service learning, the SLI hopes to 1) enhance students' subject matter learning; 2) enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills; and, 3) develop students' commitment to service, social justice and community involvement. Both the student evaluation of the service learning process and the pre- and post-assessment of student attitudes in the core lower division course, *SL 200S*, provide insight into these areas of student learning.

The student evaluation of the service learning process includes items that provide insight into the impact of service learning on student's academic learning and on their attitudes toward community participation. As reported in the table below, students overwhelmingly state that their service learning courses had an impact on their learning, their attitudes toward service, and their skills and abilities to contribute to the community. On average, 88% of students felt that the service experience enhanced their learning, helped them to feel more comfortable in the community, and made a positive contribution to the community.

Question	Fall/Spr 1996-97 (N=222)	Fall/Spr 1997-98 (N=270)	Fall/Spr 1998-99 (N=426)	Fall/Spr 1999-00 (N = 489)	Fall/Spr 2000-01 (N = 570)	Total (N=1977)
To what extent did your service activities enhance your learning experience? % students who answered "A great deal" or "quite a lot"	89%	91%	93%	91%	78%	88%
I feel more comfortable participating in the community after this class. % Stating "Yes."	85%	94%	93%	94%	88%	91%
I feel that the service I did through this class was beneficial to the community. % Agree or Strongly agree	95%	96%	95%	95%	93%	95%

Students also provided qualitative responses indicating ways that service activities enhanced their understanding of the course content. Their responses can be grouped into

four overarching categories: 1) Issues, such as “social justice” discussed in class were made “real” in site experience; 2) Service provided an opportunity to apply skills and knowledge learned in the classroom; 3) Service provided an opportunity to both teach and learn from the community; and, 4) Students learned how organizations and agencies serve the community. These findings provide support that students are achieving the goals of enhancing their subject matter learning and increasing their commitment to service and community involvement.

Impact of *SL 200S* on Students’ Attitudes. Pre- and post self-assessments are administered to all students enrolled in the core service learning course, *SL 200S*. Four scales were created from 27 questions, assessing students’ **Civic Responsibility** (the value students place on participating in the community through service), **Career Preparedness** (students’ confidence in a work situation and understanding of job responsibilities in a career of interest), **Academic Relevance** (students’ motivation to enroll in courses that have “real life” applications), and **Service Self-Efficacy** (students’ belief that they have a positive impact on the community and their advocacy working in a multicultural community). The following table summarizes pre- and post-assessment changes, indicating the impact of *SL 200S* over the past 8 semesters on students’ civic participation, career preparedness, academic relevance, and service self-efficacy.

Scale	Pre-to-post change									
	Fall 96	Spr 97	Fall 97	Spr 98	Fall 98	Spr 99	Fall 99	Spr 00	Fall 00	Spr 01
Civic Participation Values	↑	↑	↑	n.c.	↑	n.c.	---	n.c.	↑	↑
Career Preparedness	n.c.	↑	n.c.	n.c.	n.c.	n.c.	---	n.c.	↑	n.c.
Academic Relevance	↑	n.c.	↑	↑	↑	n.c.	---	---	---	---
Service Self-Efficacy*	---	↑	---	↑	↑	↑	---	↑	↑	↑
Number of students completing questionnaire	64	46	60	58	30	22	0	56	33	78

↑ indicates a statistically significant increase in student positive attitudes regarding scale items over the semester.

n.c. indicates no change over the semester

--- indicates that the scale was not administered that semester

*Scale items varied slightly across semesters

On average, results from the pre- and post- assessments over the past five years indicate that after taking *SL 200S* students feel more committed to civic participation, are stronger advocates for courses that engage them in real-life issues, and feel that their ability to address community issues is strengthened. On the other hand, students did not feel more prepared for their future careers as a result of taking *SL 200S*. This finding is not surprising as the CP ULR is targeted to sophomore-level students, and despite the thematic focus, there is not direct link to career pathways.

Two other trends are important to note. Overall response rates were declining from the first semester that the pre- post-assessment was administered through Spring

1999. As a result, the SLI decided to rest the assessment during the Fall 1999 semester and reevaluate the process. The assessment was reintroduced more successfully in Spring 2000. Secondly, during the first three semesters that the assessment was administered the “civic participation scale” consistently showed statistically significant increases.

Faculty Goal Attainment

Faculty members’ evaluations of the service learning process provide some indication of the extent to which their skills in service learning pedagogy are developing. Faculty have reported that service learning has had an impact on their teaching by:

- ◆ giving them a unique opportunity for interaction and reciprocal learning with students;
- ◆ helping them to become more involved in the community;
- ◆ enhancing their collaboration with other instructors;
- ◆ enhancing their teaching by developing better connections between course content and the service experience;
- ◆ enhancing their own personal and professional development; and by
- ◆ developing mentoring relationships with service learning students.

Faculty also indicated in their evaluations that service learning has enhanced students’ learning of course content. Specific comments include:

- ◆ Students observed and experienced issues raised in class in real life contexts as concrete experiences;
- ◆ Students applied the skills they learned in class to their service;
- ◆ Students developed relationships with people in the community and experienced perspectives that differed from their own; and,
- ◆ Students developed a greater understanding of social justice, identity, and diversity.

Community Partner Goal Achievement

Community partner evaluations of the service learning process provide insight into the contributions that service learners make to community organizations. Responses consistently fall into the following four categories:

- ◆ **Increased Person-power**

"We were better able to give individual help especially during busy times."

"We were able to expand our services to reach more people."

- **New Services Provided**

"We were able to begin working with foster care providers."

"We were able to offer a service that would have otherwise been impossible to offer given our lack of adequate funding and resources."

Teacher Comments about Service Learners	
◆	"In my class are students who usually ‘fall through the cracks’ in education. At the beginning only four or five said they would attend college. Now, all say, ‘Yes!’"
◆	"My students see the service learners as ‘cool people’ who are going to school. This really strengthens their impact as role models."

- **Improved Quality of Service**

"We were able to increase the quality of service by making more sources of information readily available."

"They enabled or staff to do their jobs better and more efficiently."

- **New Approaches, Energy, and Enthusiasm.**

"The students brought new approaches and visions of our services."

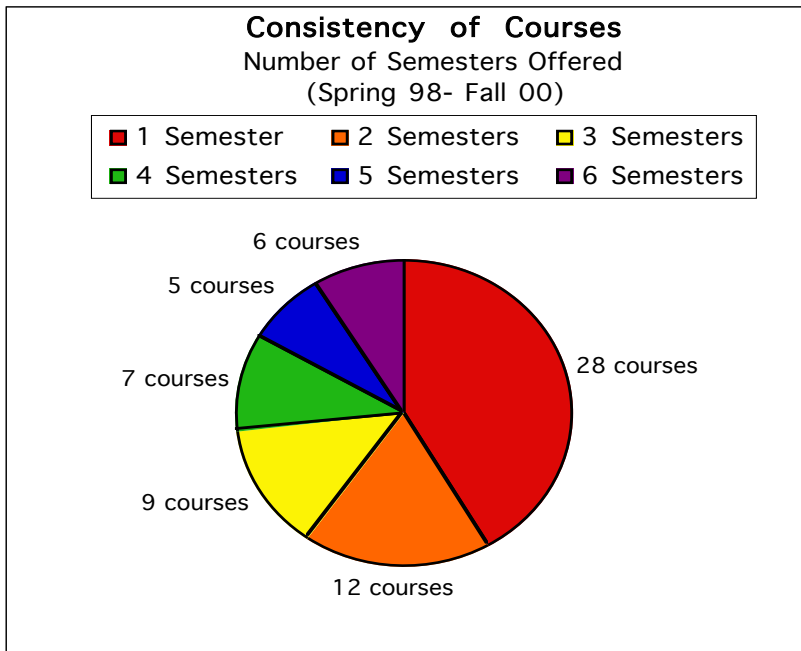
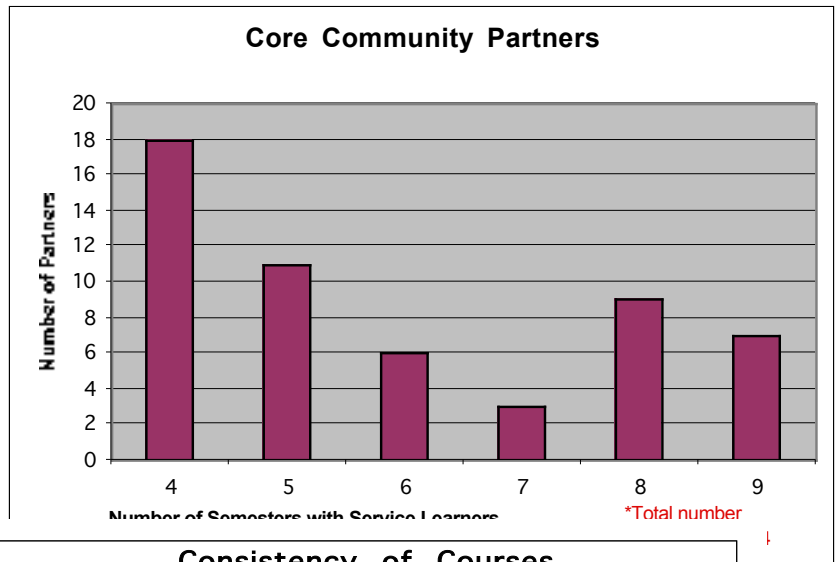
"We gained knowledge of the collaborative model."

The most important benefit of the partnership mentioned by teachers and school representatives was that CSUMB students served as great mentors for students in the community. Other benefits teachers and school representatives reported were: individualized attention for students; positive relationships between college student learners and elementary/high school student learners; enabled teachers to work individually with students; and that CSUMB students carried out special projects that school staff alone would not have been able to initiate or complete.

Continuity of Partnerships and Program.

Another goal of the Service Learning Institute is to develop stable, continuous partnerships between the campus and the community. A review of community partners by semester and service learning courses offered by semester gives some insight into the extent to which the partnerships and curriculum are becoming more stable over time.

Analysis of the community partnerships by semester shows that there have been 54 community partners who have worked with service learners for at least four semesters. This forms a significant "core community partner group" that have formed relatively stable relationships with



Graduating USA Comments

CSUMB's service learning program.

"I found my voice by being in service

learning" courses that have been offered over the past six semesters shows that there the curriculum has somewhat stabilized over the past three years. Of the 68 different service learning courses that have been offered since Spring 1998, 18 have been offered at least four semesters. This gain of perspective and three years!

"I wasn't able to speak out on

Student Leadership Goal Achievement controversial issues, especially those

that went against the USA and Now. Focus groups have been held with graduates of the USA program to assess the effectiveness of the USA training (Summer of Service Leadership Academy) and to gather insight into the overall effectiveness of the USA program. The transcripts of these focus groups show that SoSLA and the USA program had a significant affect on students' conceptualization of what it means to be a leader on their academic career at CSUMB. Students felt that their understanding of service learning was greatly enhanced, and that they developed leadership skills that served them well in their academic programs. The most remarkable of the identify academic and career goals they wanted to pursue. Many students stated that as a result of the USA program, their career plans changed to include a service project with a social justice significance, share it with the

students and feel a student's commitment to diversity and social justice. Students consistently stated that they developed an increased awareness and understanding of their own social identities and how these affected their thinking and interactions with others in a multicultural setting. They also stated that they gained practical experiences in facilitating teaching and learning about issues of diversity and social justice, and that their confidence level in addressing sensitive issues with their peers has greatly increased.

Finally, the focus groups have shown that the USAs have developed a strong bond and connection with each other, and are very willing to praise one another for their accomplishments and the impact they have had on the community and the campus. This bond has been very important in helping students continue with and be successful in their education. As one student reported, the "service learning family keeps me alive -I matter to these people."



Long-Term Impact: Career Decisions of USA Graduates. The Service Learning Institute has not developed a formal mechanism to evaluate the long-term impact of students' service learning involvement. While tracking all CSUMB graduates is a project that is beyond the scope of the SLI, plans are currently underway to gather information about graduates of the USA program. To date, anecdotal information has been collected on a number of USA graduates. Of the 33 USAs who have graduated, 17 have been engaged in service and social action related career fields or post-graduate internships.

USA Graduates
Service-Related Career Fields

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LA 1996

Anne Garliep, MA in Social Work
Dee Humphrey, Middle School Teacher
Debra Louie, State Assembly Aide
Dy Perry, Americorps Volunteer
Linda Quintero, Senior Fellow, Commission on Improving Life Through Service

LA 1997

Sha Blacker, Teacher
Lidia Castro, Youth Outreach Coordinator, Monterey County AIDS Project
Nelle Coughran, Service Learning Coordinator
Ron Leon, Boys & Girls Club
Lito Sanchez, Public interest law intern
Liz Warden, Volunteer Coordinator, Monterey County AIDS Project
Wong, Social Justice Education Coordinator, St. Anthony's Foundation.

LA 1998

Lin Crump, Monterey County Needle Exchange Program
Chene Garrison, Coro Fellow

LA 1999

Ali Arevalo (99), Educator, Head Start
Sha Lynn (99), VISTA Volunteer
Liz Smith (99), VISTA Volunteer

IV. CONCLUSION

The Service Learning Institute has developed and implemented an array of evaluation systems that have given it the capacity to answer many of the difficult questions that have been raised about the effectiveness of a campus-wide service learning requirement. The evaluation data shows that students have a very positive experience in their service learning courses, that they are developing skills and attitudes that facilitate being involved in community issues; and that the community partners see an overwhelming benefit in their interaction with CSUMB students.

The data have also provided significant insights into ways that the program could be improved: to further encourage faculty involvement and communication with the community partners; to lengthen the amount of time that students participate at their community service sites; and to streamline the paperwork required to facilitate service learning partnerships, among others. Many of these insights have led to programmatic changes that have been incorporated by the Service Learning Institute over the past years.

In addition, beginning in Fall 2001, the Service Learning Institute implemented an on-line placement and evaluation process that has enabled us to collect and analyze data with greater skill and efficiency. Whereas we were previously receiving evaluations from approximately 30% of service learning students each semester, with the on-line process we received evaluations from an average of 58% of students in Fall 2001 and Spring 2002 (See Appendix C: Service Learning Placement Summary: 2001-2002). In addition, we have greatly reduced the cost of analysis, as with the on-line system there are no longer any data entry costs involved. This increase in efficiency will be extremely important as the program expands, and the “grant-funding” wanes as the program matures.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Community Participation University Learning Requirement Outcomes

Appendix B: CSUMB's Service Learning Requirement

Appendix C: Service Learning Placement Summary: 2001-2002