

## COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

California State University, Center for Community Engagement  
*Service Learning: From Local to Global Engagement*

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### **Summary**

The influence of globalization is widely felt in world economies, social networks and our educational systems. The blurring of boundaries and borders between people affects many aspects of higher education including student learning, curriculum, faculty research and institutional missions. The wide-ranging community engagement efforts of California State University faculty, students and their community partners serve to bridge the interdependent connection among local efforts, national priorities, and ultimately, our global environment.

This evolution from local to global engagement is rooted in more than 50 years of history. During the 1960s and 1970s, a boom within the experiential education movement with many educators promoted the value of experience as an important addition to the traditional classroom lecture and theory format. The “university without walls” movement emerged and institutions across the country were invigorated by the ideas of John Dewey and the progressive education movement. In addition, this period was marked by an explosion of community service and volunteerism, with the establishment of national service programs such as VISTA and the PeaceCorps. The 1980s witnessed the merger of these two movements and the birth of service learning.

In the 1990s, the CSU recognized the power of service learning as a vehicle to meet the state’s changing educational needs while imparting vital civic skills and knowledge to California’s future workforce.

Since that time, the CSU's reputation as a leader in community service learning and community engagement has risen to national prominence due to unique systemwide coordination and a community service and service-learning resolution passed by the CSU Board of Trustees in March 2000. Nationally, organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) have identified service learning as a high-impact educational practice. Research validates the profound effect of service learning on students: promoting deep and integrative learning, academic relevance, personal and civic engagement, increased multicultural understanding, retention and persistence to graduation, and career development. Additionally, in 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching introduced the elective classification "Community Engagement" as part of its new system. Since 2006, 13 CSU campuses have received this distinctive honor, joining an elite group of only 308 colleges and universities nationwide.

At the core of this movement are CSU faculty who demonstrate that universities, through engagement (such as service learning, community-based research and professional service to non-profits), can become anchors in community rebirth. CSU faculty are working to address the local, regional, national, and international needs of communities, while educating our future workforce, leaders and community participants.

In 2010-2011, CSU faculty provided opportunities for more than 61,000 students to participate in service learning at 2,272 community sites. Of the more than 2,735 courses offered systemwide, 11.8 percent were in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines. Additionally, through the CSU's Learn and Serve America grant, *Service Learning Transforming Educational Models in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math*, more than 6,000 K-12 students participated in STEM activities facilitated by CSU students and faculty. More than 30 STEM service-learning courses were created and will be offered during 2011-2012. Finally, more than 60 CSU faculty, staff, students and alumni served as volunteers, judges, interpreters and facilitators at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in April 2011.

The impact of the California State University is transformative, and the work of CSU faculty to help facilitate that impact is commendable and critical to student success