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## **Discussion Paper on Community Service Graduation Requirement**

In a letter to the President Atkinson, Governor Gray Davis requested the University and the other public higher education segments in California, " to establish a community service requirement for undergraduate students." The Governor's rationale for a community service requirement is outlined in the attached letter and within the remarks of Education Secretary Hart to the Board of Regents. In his letter the Governor recognizes both the need for thoughtful discussion and the delegated responsibility of the Academic Senate for academic issues and graduation requirements.

While the Academic Council agrees that community service is a worthwhile experience for our students and an ethic that many of us share, many important issues and questions need to be raised and discussed. These can be divided into three broad categories. First, issues of the Senate's responsibility over all aspects of curriculum, including graduation requirements. Second, questions of what a potential requirement might look like – whether it is for unit credit, self reported, part of the major et cetera. Third are questions of logistics and implementation.

The Academic Council agreed that consideration of the governor's proposal should take place on the campuses. This paper has been prepared to help frame and facilitate that discussion.

In both the Governor's letter and Secretary Hart's remarks the definitions of community service and the form the requirement would take are left open. In a meeting with the chairs of three segmental (UC, CSU, CCC) Senates, Secretary Hart provided some additional information. The following points are not to be taken as prescriptive guidelines, but they do provide a view of the Governor's ideas for a service requirement.

- Community Service is broadly defined and includes experiences ranging from formal, credit bearing service learning courses through academic internship experiences and including purely non-academic community service such as volunteering to clean up a streambed or painting over graffiti . A requirement would therefore have multiple pathways to completion.
- The requirement should entail a minimum of 25 hours of service prior to graduation.
- Community service experiences could be paid and could include work-study funded positions.
- Campus based service could be included.
- Self reporting by students with some sort of post auditing would be acceptable.
- The Governor feels that there should be no exceptions to the requirement.
- No new state funding will be made available. ( Note added 11/99: In later discussions Secretary Hart communicated that the Governor would welcome proposals for funding for specific programs.)

Returning to the three categories above, we present some additional background information and potential questions. These comments and questions are in no way meant to be all inclusive, but are presented to help start the campus discussion.

### **Senate's responsibility over all aspects of curriculum, including graduation requirements**

The Standing Orders of the Regents unambiguously vest with the faculty the authority for graduation requirements. Given this authority, how should the faculty respond to requests for curricular changes from outside the university? While the governor may certainly request that the University and the faculty consider such a requirement. To what extent will the response of the faculty establish a precedent regarding future requests.

At present there are only three system wide requirements for graduation – residency (SR 630), Subject A (SR 636), and American History and Institutions (SR 638).

Should the undergraduate curriculum include non-academic or non-credit bearing requirements? By what criteria can such requirements be considered and approved?

Is a community service experience a legitimate academic activity?

Should the faculty agree that a community service requirement be added, how should we proceed? Should the requirement be made UC wide, or by Division, college, or major?

How will such a requirement impact the existing major and general education curricula?

### **Design of the Requirement**

The requirement could take many forms and there could be multiple pathways to satisfy a requirement. Any UC wide requirement would not preclude a department, program, college or division from instituting a more rigorous requirement.

Should the community service experience be:

For credit and part of a curriculum?

Academic, not credit bearing, but leading to a transcript notation?

Non-academic and unrelated to the student's course of study?

Paid or strictly volunteer?

On-campus as well as off?

Self reported with some post audit?

What is an appropriate amount of community service?

Who should determine whether or not a particular service is appropriate to meet the requirement? How will we assess the community service sites and duties and student performance?

What kinds of exemptions would be reasonable?

Should the requirement be specifically lower division, upper division or either? What issues should be considered for transfer students?

### **Logistical and Implementation Issues**

Many logistical and implementation questions will need to be answered by university staff. Of particular interest and concern to faculty are questions such as:

What resources (faculty, staff, space, funds) will be needed to implement any particular requirement?

Who will be responsible to provide sufficient appropriate experiences to our students? Do a sufficient number of appropriate sites exist within easy access by our students? Note that not only our students but also CSU and CCC students will be seeking sites.

Who on campus would monitor completion of the requirement?

What would be the effect on time to degree?

What is our (legal) liability both toward the students and community service agencies and their clients?  
Does our requiring service raise the level of our liability.