

EPIC

Educational Participation In Communities

Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good

2015-2016 Proposal for ASI Funding

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The EPIC Program Mission and Collaboration with ASI

ASI and EPIC share a common mission in supporting the educational enrichment and community service involvement of our students. In utilizing a student development model of leadership in all of our work, EPIC and ASI have collaborated to contribute significantly to our students' contributions to the community and the enhancement of our students' educational experience.

Program Abstract

Established in 1966 by the Associated Students Inc., and the Division of Student Affairs, the Educational Participation In Communities (E.P.I.C.) Program was created in the wake of the Watts Rebellion of 1965 to help address critical community needs by placing student volunteers in local non-profit organizations. EPIC is recognized as one of the longest sustained community service and engagement programs in the CSU. For over four decades, EPIC has engaged Cal State L.A. students in co-curricular public good service projects, placed students in a wide range of agencies serving a broad spectrum of communities throughout the Los Angeles area, and has supported service learning across academic disciplines. EPIC student leaders play a key role in the program planning and implementation process. They are at the forefront of volunteer recruitment, community partnership development, service learning course support, co-curricular service projects, and have sustained the EPIC tradition on the Cal State L.A. campus and in the community.

In 2014, EPIC came under the direction of the newly established Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good. The goal of the center is to transform the University into a hub of civic engagement and public service for our communities, our city, and our region. This change has put EPIC in a position to work collaboratively with other Center programs to support campus initiatives and to build capacity for the new general education civic and service learning engagement requirement.

EPIC PROGRAMS

Community Service Learning (CSL) Program Component

This is the primary vehicle that is utilized for the placement of university students in the community. When being processed through this component, students can choose to either: be solely a volunteer or enroll in a service learning course. **There are multiple objectives for this component and they are:** (1) to provide our **program student assistants** with training and opportunities to: (a) work together as a team implementing various community service learning strategies of the university; (b) coordinate the responsibilities of recruitment, placement, and the follow-up of student volunteers and service learners; (c) meet with community agencies and help assess their volunteer needs; (d) work with faculty in developing and implementing service learning courses and course projects; and, (2) to provide **Cal State L.A. student volunteers** with: (a) opportunities to utilize classroom theory in real life settings while serving the community; (b) opportunities to gain valuable experience in areas that can benefit their educational and career choices. **The expected outcomes** of the component are in alignment with and meeting the University Strategic Plan for Community Engagement. Service learning and community-based learning give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. Students have the opportunity to apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. Students gain valuable experience from using their education to serve the community while the community gains from the service provided by students. **To meet our objectives, EPIC conducts the following activities during the academic year:**

- Recruitment – Classroom presentations are coordinated every quarter across academic disciplines. Quarterly walkway recruitment activities- information tabling and campus event participation- are coordinated and lead by EPIC student leaders. Throughout the academic year, these separate efforts reach and encourage over 2,500 students to be of service to the community.
- Placement – We support the placement of hundreds of student volunteers in on- and off-campus service opportunities. Students engage in co-curricular service projects on campus, which support a variety of efforts to host community on campus. Off-campus, students are placed in the community at non-profit community based agencies. The community-based agencies represent a broad geographic and socioeconomic cross section of Los Angeles and include: Educational Services, Legal Services, Medical Services, and Social Services, in local community agencies.
- Academic Credit/Service Learning – Students who elect to enroll in Community Service Learning courses require special assistance in the areas of orientation, training, placement, documentation of service, evaluation, and reflection. We work with faculty and community partners to plan and coordinate service learning support. EPIC promotes and supports the creation of new service learning courses and service learning course project development.

EPIC plays a vital role in the community placement process, record keeping and follow-up of student volunteers and service learners.

- Community Agencies – EPIC works directly with the office of Risk Management and the Office of Contracts and Procurement to maintain active community partner agreements. Currently, our list of community partnerships includes 100 agencies. Sustaining these community partnerships requires regular contact with agencies for purposes of referral, updates, evaluation, and risk management. As our campus moves toward the new civic and service learning general education requirement, we are active in building new partnerships to build capacity for student placement. This process includes working directly with faculty and the Service Learning Faculty Director. As service learning moves toward a project-based model, assessing community needs and course learning outcomes are key in preparing community agencies for Cal State L.A. student placement. EPIC student coordinators are actively involved in the partnership development process. Working directly in the community and on campus, they play a vital role in build capacity for service placement.
- EPIC Community Service Learning Project, Introduction to Higher Education 101 Course – The Introduction to Higher Education Course objective focuses on the application of knowledge and skills for academic and social success, and understanding the myriad aspects of student life and the structure of Cal State, Los Angeles. The learning outcomes for the class project are explicitly applied through the service learning project with EPIC. Students brainstorm topics, themes and issues related to college preparation and literacy for elementary school students. The class selects the most relevant themes to structure 30 minute presentations for children. Cal State L.A. students work in groups to create a student success presentation by identifying research articles and activities relevant to the topic to develop their presentation points. Student groups select a grade level and each group presents to one class at EPIC elementary school partner sites. Over fall, winter and spring quarters an estimated 260 first-time freshman will present to an estimated 1000 elementary school children.

America Reads/Counts Program

Established on the Cal State L.A. campus in 1999, this national tutorial program targets elementary school students who are achieving below grade level in the subject of reading and math. The program begins in late September and ends mid-June, and Cal State L.A. students make a commitment to serve for the entire academic year. Cal State L.A. students provide academic support within the elementary school classroom setting, serving an average of 10 direct service hours per week. Annually, the program employs 30-35 students through the Federal Work Study program.

On average, through day-to-day academic support, the program serves roughly 400 elementary school students in grades K through 6th. Through service projects, over 1000 elementary school children are served.

The program serves five partner elementary school site, three of which are in the GO ELA initiative family of LAUSD schools. This program has help to establish important

community partnerships with elementary schools, which have served as fantastic service sites for service learning course projects, campus initiative implementation, and special co-curricular service projects.

The objective of the program is to promote careers in education through providing valuable opportunities for firsthand experience, relevant training, and engagement.

The program outcome will have provided Cal State L.A. students the opportunity to gain experience and contacts for potential career development, while assisting in improving the academic achievement of the elementary school children served.

There are two annual special events coordinated by this program:

- **“Read Across America” Winter Quarter** - Coordinated by the program tutors and coordinators, this nationwide literacy advocacy event celebrates Dr. Seuss’ birthday by exposing more than 500 elementary school children to positive college role models, while engaging them in educational activities that encourage the importance of higher education. This creative event provides for a quarter-long service learning course project, and a student organization team building project. It also serves as a one day service opportunity for student volunteers. Individual student volunteers and student organizations go out to the school site to assist with the implementation of event activities. On average, 300 Cal State L.A. students are engaged in service through participation in this event.
- **“Cal State L.A., Here We Come!” Spring Quarter** - This very special event gives elementary school children a unique opportunity to be a college students for a day. Engaging children in campus presentation (Biology, Anthropology, Athletics, Physics, Geology, Chemistry, and more..), which take place in labs and classroom setting gives children a sense of what a college class is like. Also, children have lunch in the food court area, and engage in a spirit rally held in the gym. For the 2014-15 academic year, we are hosting 400 children on May 29. This event is carried out on the Cal State L.A. campus and engages the volunteer service of an estimated 200 students, faculty, and staff. This event bridges the university community with the children from the surrounding communities we serve. Through coordinating special events, EPIC student program tutors and coordinators build capacity to engage members of the campus community in a day of service.

Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP)

For over 35 years EPIC has coordinated the Summer Youth Employment Program on the Cal State L.A. campus. Working with our community partner Para Los Ninos, a five week training, work, and college awareness program is coordinated for an estimated 100 community youth. Cal State L.A. fulltime staff working in various campus departments volunteer to host youth for the 120 hour, five week program. EPIC works directly with the Offices of Risk Management, Public Safety, and Human Resources to implement this opportunity for low income youth. For the summer of 2015, over 50 campus departments will host 100 community youth for five weeks, 120 hours each. This substantial campus service effort serves as a great contribution to the community.

At the end of the program, EPIC hosts a culmination event. This celebration recognizes the youths' program completion, the service contribution made by our Cal State L.A. staff, and our wonderful community partnership with Para Los Ninos. The 2014 culmination event hosted an estimated 180 guests.

Our partnership and Youth Work Source program model has been recognized by the City of Los Angeles as one of the best program placement sites. In April of 2015, the EPIC and Para Los Ninos Summer Youth Employment Program served to represent a Cal State L.A. partnership model at the annual WASC conference in Los Angeles (summary included with this proposal).

The **objective of the program** is to engage the campus community in service to the community, while specifically providing Cal State L.A. students serving as worksite aids with youth development experience, program coordination skills, and community partnership development skills. Through these efforts, **the program outcome** is the experience, leadership, and sense of team work gained by our EPIC student leaders. The fantastic contribution made by our Cal State L.A. staff reflects our campus commitment to educating and supporting community and prospective Cal State L.A. students.

Toy and Food Drive – Fall Quarter

The Toy and Food Drive is a campus-wide event that has taken place for the past 38 years. EPIC has coordinated this Drive centered on **two main objectives**. First, to provide food and toys to low-income families during the holiday season. Second, is to give students, and all members of the campus community, the opportunity to make a positive contribution in their community by participating in a campus-wide public good effort. These goals are achieved through collaborative efforts made by Cal State L.A. students, staff, and faculty, who come together to collect toys and food. After the collection is completed, the donations are distributed to families selected from the caseloads of EPIC community partner agencies. These agencies represent the Asian, African American, Latino, and Native American communities. The **expected outcome** of the event is to provide a much needed service to the community, as well as engage the Cal State L.A. campus community in a public good effort. The 2014 Drive served 175 low income families from 20 partner agencies, which comprised of 835 children and adults. This effort was carried out with the support of over 50 campus departments and an estimated 150 student volunteers.

Service Recognition Event- Spring Quarter

This annual event takes place on the Cal State L.A. campus. It is an opportunity to celebrate the community service contributions made by our students, faculty, and staff throughout the academic year. Community partners are invited to the celebration as well, and they join in the agenda of service project presentations, speeches, and partnership recognition at the event. For this year's event, we are extending invitations to 350 guests.

ASI Funding History

In 2015/16 we will enter our 50th year of working with ASI. ASI helped create the EPIC Program and has always financially supported the work and involvement of students in service to communities. For example, ASI funding: helps EPIC employ student assistants to support the Community Service Learning component; provides training support for the America Reads and America Counts tutorial program; supports the purchase of supplies and provision of workshops for the Summer Youth Employment Program; and has supported the purchase of food and toys for our Toy and Food Drive. Without the continuous support of ASI funding, we would not be able to provide students with the significant experiences that are gained through these programs and events.

2015/16 FUNDING REQUEST

	Other Source	ASI
Student Community Service Learning Component 10 Student Assistants @ \$9.00/hr @ 15 hrs/wk @ 50 weeks/year = \$67,500	\$47,500	\$20,000
Toy and Food Drive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Toys and Food • Supplies and Materials 	\$4,000	\$2,000
Summer Youth Employment and Training Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop supplies and materials \$1,500 • Program supplies and Culmination Event \$4,500 	\$4,000	\$2,000
America Reads and Counts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Training and Materials • Special Event and Project Supplies 	\$6,000	\$3,000
TOTAL REQUEST		\$27,000

Program Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation of all EPIC programs and activities is an integral part of our work. In the **Community Service Learning Program** students are asked to provide written evaluations of their volunteer placement experience, as well as the services provided by the EPIC program. Community partner agency supervisors evaluate the volunteers and service learners' performance, and students provide feedback during their reflection sessions. Recruitment and placement goals are reviewed on a quarterly basis. We also meet regularly with faculty and community agency representatives to assess our work with them.

Our **Toy and Food Drive** is evaluated upon conclusion by reviewing the number of agencies and families served, donations received, and the student volunteer participation. Participating agencies also provide feedback regarding Drive activities and family participation.

The **Summer Youth Employment Program** has ongoing and summative evaluations. Evaluations include: participant workshop surveys, participant worksite placement survey, supervisor evaluation of participant work progress and overall performance, Cal State L.A. student worksite aide review of participants progress, and written narrative of Cal State L.A. student worksite experience with the program.

Our **America Reads and America Counts Program** includes tutor program narratives of ongoing collaborative meetings with site teachers to monitor children's progress. Academic year-end program teacher overview of children's skill development. Ongoing planning and check-in meetings with school site teachers, coordinators, and principals. Program planning and training meetings to review program tutor work performance and elementary school children's progress. And, capacity building planning for engaging Cal State L.A. students in special projects and events. Program tutors go through a student program exit interview, which puts them in place for rehire in the upcoming academic year.

All of these activities are used to assess our work and plan for improvements and changes for the upcoming year.