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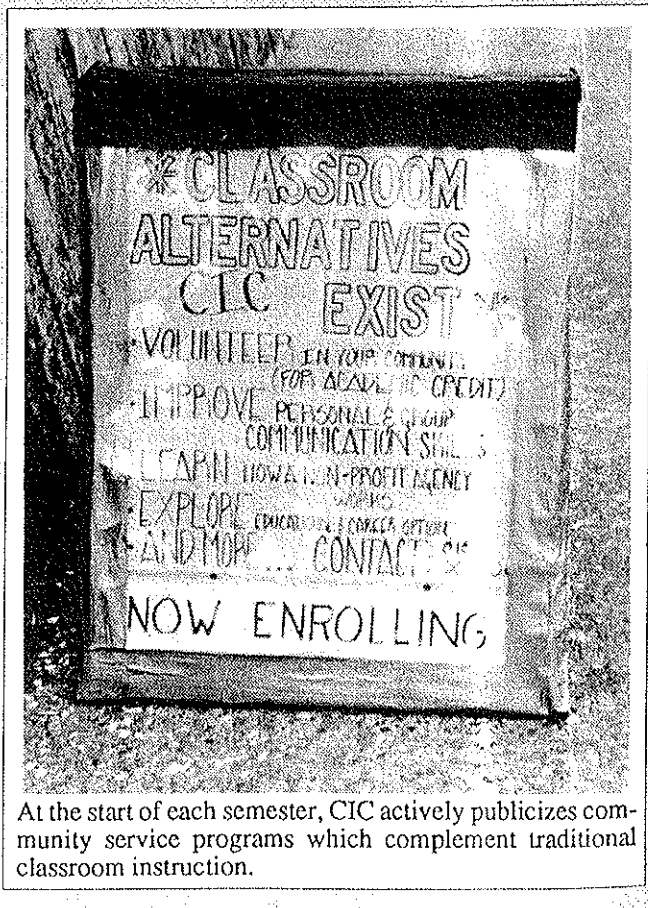


# San Francisco State University's Community Involvement Center: Attracting Students to Community Service

by Steve Cochrane

The Community Involvement Center (CIC) has been an integral part of both academic and student social life on the San Francisco State University campus since 1973 when a handful of students and one professor joined together to make college education relevant to life. In the ensuing 15 years, more than 5,000 SFSU students have participated in CIC's Volunteer Internship Program, earning academic credit, gaining personal growth and professional experience, and providing help to their community. The program is interdisciplinary, attracting students from all academic schools and an average of thirty-five different majors each semester. In the past four years, CIC has grown fourfold in terms of student participation and community agencies served. With the advent of the Human Corps in the state of California, CIC is stronger and more vital than ever.

The key to CIC's success is that the program is administered by some 50 students each semester who serve as interns working directly to recruit and provide support services for students in the field. These students, who already have experienced the rewards of volunteering, provide the publicity and



At the start of each semester, CIC actively publicizes community service programs which complement traditional classroom instruction.

National Information Center

for Service Learning  
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networking necessary to attract new students to community service learning.

Classroom speaking is the most effective recruitment activity; some 4,000 students each semester hear these short presentations on the value of volunteering. Student speakers emphasize service to people in need, career exploration and skill development, personal growth, earning units while taking a break from the classroom, and meeting new friends.

At the beginning of each semester, CIC sends letters to professors requesting that a CIC staff member be allowed to make a three-to-five minute presentation to their classes. Once a professor agrees, CIC students give a brief talk about the many volunteer opportunities open to them. Students are told that they can receive academic credit for the volunteer work they perform which can be used to meet elective requirements for graduation: four units for volunteering 8 hours per week, keeping a journal, and attending a weekly two-hour seminar.

Students also have the option of talking to their academic advisors to see if there is the possibility of obtaining units directly in their major. The ability to offer units for volunteer work greatly enhances CIC's attractiveness to students who have never volunteered or who are heavily focused on academic work. In addition to student speakers, some 30 presentations per semester are made by community agency representatives who are invited on campus by CIC. Class subject matter and agency emphasis are linked to provide the most effective outreach possible.

CIC also engages in a campus-wide publicity drive at the start of each semester. Eye catching stake signs and large A-frame signs are rotated about campus on a daily basis. These signs are used to publicize CIC as an academic program and

to draw attention to local human services agencies and their work. CIC also operates an information table on Class Reservation Day, at which time students can learn about the CIC program and about volunteer work in general. This gives new students a chance to look into CIC on their first day of school. Staff members also post fliers on bulletin boards in every campus building at the beginning of each semester, thus making CIC activities highly visible to students of every discipline. Finally, individual students receive brochures while they wait in lines which give them general information about the program.

On an even larger scale, CIC places a 10-foot banner over the parking garage and one at the main entrance of the campus. These two banners are seen by at least two-thirds of the campus population. Their effectiveness comes from the fact that they are visible 24 hours a day and are located in areas of heavy student traffic.

CIC, along with the Career Center, sponsors a Volunteer Opportunities Fair. This fair brings representatives from over 50 Bay Area agencies onto the campus over a two-day period to meet directly with students and give those students information about the work of the agencies and the volunteer possibilities. These fairs build good rapport between agency representatives and the CIC staff, and strengthen the network of communication to the benefit of everyone.

Finally, CIC offers students hundred of listings of agencies at which they may volunteer for units or for their own personal motives. CIC acts as a clearinghouse for almost all the volunteer information available on campus. Along with the Career Center and Human Corps Task Force, CIC is in the process of becoming the volunteer information center at SFSU.

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