



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Monterey Bay

SERVICE LEARNING INSTITUTE

DATE: July 18, 2011

TO: AASHE/STARS Report

FR: Dr. Seth Pollack, Professor
Director of Service Learning Institute
Principal Investigator, Chinatown Renewal Project

RE: Letter of Affirmation

It is my pleasure to submit this letter on behalf of the Salinas Chinatown Renewal Project, as one prime example of CSUMB's commitment to sustainability, particularly with respect to addressing issues of social justice and building more just relationships with our surrounding communities. California State University, Monterey Bay was created in 1995, and from its inception, service learning has been one of our core values and a required component of our academic program. Each academic year, nearly 50% of our students are enrolled in a service learning course. In 2010-2011, 1958 CSUMB student provided over 65,000 hours of service to nearly 250 different schools, community organizations and government agencies. The monetary value of this service to the community, calculated with the Independent Sector Value of Community and Volunteer Service is over \$1.4 million.

CSU Monterey Bay is recognized as a national leader in service learning and civic engagement. In May 2011, CSUMB received the **President's Award for Community Service in Higher Education** from the White House and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Out of 851 universities applicants, CSUMB was one of six to receive the top prize. Even more significantly, CSUMB is the only university to be a two-time winner, having won the President's Award in 2006, the program's inaugural year.

The Chinatown Renewal Project emerged after 10 years of trust-building and partnership work between CSUMB and the homeless services providers working in the Chinatown neighborhood of Salinas. It has grown into a multi-dimensional community revitalization effort, involving students and faculty from almost every department on our campus. CSUMB faculty and students have partnered with the Chinatown community to: create a community garden on an abandoned lot; open a Community Learning Center in the heart of the neighborhood; provide a "Green Corps" job training program; support a fledgling silk-screening T-shirt cooperative; conduct oral history interviews of the neighborhood's Chinese, Japanese and Filipino families; and plan for the conversion of the historic Republic Café into a new *Chinatown Cultural Center and Museum*. In fact, again with support from

CSUMB faculty and students, the historic Republic Café was just listed on the National Registry of Historic Places—only the seventh building in Salinas to receive this distinction. All together, over 900 students from more than 20 different service learning courses have participated in the project over the past five years. This is a real community-university partnership, and we are in it for the long term!

However, while the statistics are impressive, it is more important to hear about the impact of the university's involvement directly from the participants themselves, both students and community members. Here are a few quotes that capture the spirit of the collaboration and the impact that this work is having:

Community Members

"CSUMB has been the engine making this whole effort possible. Alone, as community volunteers, we would not have been able to accomplish nearly as much." –Larry Hirahara, former President of the Salinas Buddhist Temple; former Vice-Chair SDCB.

"The faculty and the students bring a dynamism that is really special. We get new energy and new ideas that is very valuable. It allows us to think outside the box, and try things that otherwise would have been impossible. Just look at the garden!" -Don Reynolds, Project Manager, Salinas Redevelopment Agency.

"CSUMB's partnership and leadership has been invaluable in helping to create a climate of understanding and mutual respect. When the project began, there was a lot of finger pointing and blame. However, we have come to understand and respect each other, our different needs and dreams. While we still have work to do, we have come along way from the "NIMBYism" [Not In My Back Yard] that was prevalent before." –Reverend Rick Slone, Franciscan Workers of Junipero Serra

Students

"The experience helped me realize how many people are just thrown away from society. I learned how to network and got over my fear of talking to people about programs or problems that I might need help with." –SL 200S: Hunger and Homelessness

"I learned a lot. My experience helped shatter the wall between me and the homeless, and got rid of all fears about doing community service in "bad" areas. Making a "bad" area look beautiful was very rewarding in itself." -KIN 471S: Kinesiology Service Learning

"The most valuable thing that came out of my service learning experience was me maturing as a person. I learned a lot about myself. I now do not judge others before I get to know them. Now I feel the need to help others not because I have to but because I want to." -HCOM 350S: Oral History and Community Memory

"The Community Unity Garden was a great site to work at. Even though it was a lot of physical work, I gained a lot of inside knowledge and learned something new every day from various people at the garden. Most importantly it taught me to be appreciative of everything I have, to be grateful, and to be aware of society's negative perception about the homeless and to help change that." -ENVS 384S: Social and Ecological Justice

“It was great hands on business experience and experience in the t-shirt screen printing industry. My perspective of business and business ethics has changed for the better since being at my site.” –BUS 303S: Community Economic Development

Over the past year, the **Chinatown Renewal Project** has been recognized in the state, nationally and internationally as an outstanding example of community-university partnership and university civic engagement. In Spring 2011, the California Commission for Higher Education Sustainability Conference awarded the project as the Best Practice Example for university – community partnerships around sustainability. In June 2011, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities recognized the project as “exemplary” in the national competition for the C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement Award. And finally, in April 2011, the project became a finalist for the MacJannett Prize for Global Citizenship, awarded by the Talloires Network for Civic Responsibility in Higher Education --one of only two American projects among the fifteen finalists in this international competition.

I want to thank the committee for its consideration of this nomination, and for the work that you do to bring attention to this most valuable and important work in higher education around sustainability, especially with regard to a university’s relationship to its surrounding communities. We are proud to include the Chinatown Renewal Project as one of our exemplary projects

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seth Pollack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Seth Pollack./.