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**California Performance Review Commission
University of California Testimony
for Volunteerism Panel**

Provost M.R.C. Greenwood

September 9, 2004
Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

Testimony Regarding CPR Recommendation ETV33, that all public college and university students be required to do 16 hours of community service

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the CPR Commission's recommendation that all students enrolled in California's public colleges and universities be required to perform a minimum of 16 hours of community service in order to receive their degree or certificate.

Public service is a critical component of the University of California's three-part mission, and we are proud that our faculty, students, and staff make important contributions to the state through various forms of public service, including volunteering in community service programs. While many of UC's students voluntarily perform community service at or above the 16 hours that would be required by the CPR recommendation, we are very concerned that making such service a graduation requirement would be extremely expensive, given the resources that would need to be spent both within UC and at the community organizations and agencies for identifying, setting up, and approving appropriate service opportunities and for tracking and supervising student participation for all 208,000 of our undergraduate and graduate students.

We agree with the CPR Commission that volunteerism is important, benefiting not only the communities served, but also enriching the lives of volunteers themselves. However, we do not favor the proposal to make community service a mandatory graduation requirement.

Several years ago, the University's Academic Senate examined a similar proposal from the Davis administration, and found a number of reasons it would be problematic to implement. The Senate concluded that making community service mandatory undermines student interest in participation. Existing research on collegiate community service suggests that a graduation requirement impedes, rather than promotes, the fostering of an ethic of service, particularly inasmuch as quantity (e.g., minimum hours requirements) is emphasized over quality.

In addition, there is concern that even a small public service requirement for graduation may be too burdensome for some students who have to work, who have family responsibilities, or who have other life circumstances that would make it a hardship.

Another concern is the significant faculty resources that would need to be spent on design, oversight and approval of community service opportunities that contain sufficient academic learning components. Graduation requirements are set by the faculty, and must be based upon sound academic grounds. When community service is a degree requirement, there must be a significant learning component (as there is with the University's existing service learning courses, which grant academic credit to participating students). We believe it is important to ensure quality, not just quantity, when designing graduation requirements. The faculty oversight necessary with this approach will involve significant time and resources.

We believe alternate methods of increasing community service should be considered, such as expanding efforts to promote service opportunities, and expanding efforts to integrate service activities with traditional academic course work. Efforts are underway at UC campuses to further promote and facilitate voluntary student community service, as agreed to under the terms of our latest compact with the Governor.

Let me highlight a few of UC's activities relating to student community service:

- Campuses across the UC system are developing improved volunteer outreach materials and resources, like searchable websites that help students connect with hundreds of meaningful service opportunities in community organizations.
- Many campuses are expanding their offerings of service-learning courses, in which students, faculty and community partners join together in programs that integrate teaching, research and service. Service learning allows students to participate in community service while participating in a for-credit course.
 - For example, at UCLA, the Center for Community Learning and Service works with departments and faculty to establish service learning courses for credit. In one course, offered by the Department of Social Welfare, students work at a private non-profit organization that focuses on gang-prevention by providing help to at-risk pupils. UCLA students commit to a two-quarter course involving direct mentoring and tutoring of teenagers. This has been an ongoing academic opportunity that enrolls 40 students each quarter.
 - Also at UCLA, students in art and performing arts can earn course credit through a "World Arts Program" that places them in K-12 schools for a one quarter class. The UCLA students foster participation of K-12 pupils in art, music, and theater. Such coursework assists our students in applying their knowledge in a setting outside their classroom learning, and also provides valuable exposure to the arts to K-12 pupils who may have limited arts offerings in their normal classroom settings.
 - At UC Berkeley, there are over 100 undergraduate courses in 40 departments that have service learning components. In addition, graduate students in fields like public health, law, and social welfare are encouraged and given assistance in developing internships with outside agencies that have a service learning focus.
 - Other examples of service learning classes include a gerontology class that includes a fieldwork component where students work with older adults; a Russian class where students interview and work with immigrants in the LA Russian community; an interdisciplinary class on homelessness, where students work with homeless individuals.
- UC campuses also offer a wide variety of service activities not connected to academic course work. Many volunteer opportunities are coordinated through campus volunteer centers, through student organizations (with some assistance from administration such as the office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs), and through fraternities and sororities. At UCLA, over 3,000 students participate in a student-initiated outreach program that places lower division undergraduates in local

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high schools with predominantly under-represented enrollment, where they both provide information about preparing for college and tutor pupils in their coursework. The program is managed by upper-division UCLA students, who train volunteers and provide peer counseling for high school pupils preparing to apply for college entrance.

- Campuses have dedicated staff within service learning and volunteer centers and within academic departments that help facilitate student service. E.g., UCSC has field study coordinators in 6 majors (including Community Studies, Environmental Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies) whose primary focus is to keep track of intern opportunities, place students, and evaluate the experience.
- Finally, of course, many UC students volunteer on their own, rather than through coordinated UC programs. Students volunteer in their children's schools; work in soup kitchens; participate in community service with their churches, synagogues, and temples, and are engaged in civic and community service in countless other ways. We believe such service is invaluable, and would not want to divert students away from such activities by mandating that they participate instead in service coordinated through UC.

In sum, while the University strongly endorses the report's premise that community service is important and should be encouraged, and is committed to exploring new ways to better promote and encourage civic participation, we are not in favor of making community service a mandatory graduation requirement.