Sabbatical Leave Request and Recommendation Form
BOT/AAUP Contract Article 13.7
BOT/ SUOAF-AFSCME Contract Article 24.8

Applicant: Laura Minor

Project Title: The Academic Minor in Community Engagement at Central Connecticut State University: Evaluation and Expansion

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Please Forward To Department Chair or Administrative Officer by **September 13, 2019**

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

9/9/19

Department ___ Dean, Liberal Arts and Social Sciences ___ AAUP ___ SUOAF-AFSCME ___ X ___

Preferred Time of AAUP Sabbatical: Fall 2020 ___ X ___ Spring 2021 ___ AY 2020-2021 ___ (please check one)
Start and End Date of SUOAF-AFSCME Sabbatical: __July 1-December 31, 2020________

Candidate Must Have Completed At Least Six Years Of Full-Time Service Since Initial Appointment Or Any Previous CCSU Sabbatical. (Candidates may apply in their sixth year of service; however only tenured members may take a sabbatical leave.)

Please Indicate Semester and Year of Appointment: _____Fall 2013___________

Semester and Year of Last Sabbatical: _____NA_________________________

_____Check here if your sabbatical leave is dependent on your receipt of a Fulbright or other fellowship. If, yes, please be sure to include information and explanation of the fellowship in the narrative below including the anticipated date of notification of award.

**ABSTRACT**

Ernest Boyer, author of *Scholarship Reconsidered*, asserted that “if the nation’s higher learning institutions are to meet today’s urgent academic and social mandates, their missions must be carefully redefined and the meaning of scholarship creatively reconsidered” (Boyer, 1990). The purpose of this sabbatical leave is to devote time and scholarly attention to the evaluating and expanding one of CCSU’s emerging gems: the academic minor in Community Engagement. The CE minor is poised to help bring CCSU to the next level of curricular engagement with the community, and this leave will provide the time and focus needed to bring the minor forward both in quality, content, and structure via a systematic evaluation of its outcomes, a review of current courses and community engagement programs at other universities, and development of a new course and immersive semester-long experience.
Plan of Study
In preparing the application, please be specific and detailed, while keeping in mind that not all members of the Sabbatic Leave Committee will share your exact background.

I. Title of Project: The Academic Minor in Community Engagement at Central Connecticut State University: Evaluation and Expansion

II. Statement of purpose (or hypothesis) and objective(s)

Purpose: The purpose of this sabbatical leave is to devote time and scholarly attention to the development of one of CCSU’s emerging gems: the academic minor in Community and Civic Engagement. Enrollment in the minor has increased tenfold over the past five years, and President Toro has stated that she would like to see the minor grow to 100 students in the near future. Since the minor is administered by faculty and staff on the Curriculum subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Committee on Community Engagement, there is limited time to make significant strides on the minor by individuals who already have other full-time posts at the university. The CE minor is poised to help bring CCSU to the next level of curricular engagement with the community, and this leave will provide the time and focus needed to bring the minor forward both in quality, content, and structure.

Objectives:
There are five main objectives to this sabbatical leave project. The first two involve an evaluation of our current minor in Community Engagement at CCSU. The second three target potential ways to grow the minor, and improve and expand its content:

- First, to collect and analyze data regarding civic outcomes of graduates of the community engagement minor at CCSU. Is the minor as it currently stands effective in producing students who are more likely to be engaged in their communities?
- Second, to complete a comprehensive literature and programmatic review of other academic community engagement programs and their challenges and outcomes, both in the U.S. and abroad. How does what CCSU is doing compare to other academic programs in community engagement? What are other universities doing to develop engagement in students, and is it working? What are the outcomes?
- Third, to investigate ways to more deeply integrate and clearly identify community-engaged courses at CCSU across departments and curriculums, beyond what is currently available; this will require a comprehensive review and cataloging of courses at the university, and potential organization of these courses for use by students, faculty, and advisors.
- Fourth, to develop an additional CEN (Community Engagement) International Community Development course for use in the minor, to provide global context to student participants.
- Fifth, to explore and develop possible intensive community engagement programs as alternative paths to completion of the minor, such as a community-engaged semester in Hartford, or a semester abroad that includes community-engaged courses and internships.

III. Description of your existing knowledge and/or work to date related to the project (include citations to the literature as appropriate).

In over 20 years of working with high school and college students, I have incorporated community engagement into every professional experience to date. While working with freshmen at Sacred Heart
University, I brought students on Habitat for Humanity trips and organized an annual university-wide day of service; while running a college transition program for high school students in New Haven, I required students to work with neighborhood revitalization projects. So, as an advisor here at CCSU, I was excited to join the Faculty Senate Committee on Community Engagement in the fall of 2014. At the very first meeting of the year, the group began talking about advertising the then-fledgling minor in Community Engagement, which at the time had no students - and only 2 students had completed it since its inception in 2012. As an academic advisor in the (then) School of Arts and Sciences, I was familiar with the minor, loved the idea of it, but knew very well why not many students had done it: it was nearly impossible to do. Many of the courses in the minor had not been offered in years, and several of the courses that were current had so many prerequisites, students had to take 3 or 4 courses not applicable to the minor just to be able to take the courses that were. At that meeting, I suggested that what was needed was not more advertisement, but a complete restructuring of the minor, to make it more useful and accessible to students. The Chair of the committee, Reginald Simmons, designated the revamping of the minor as a task for the Curriculum subcommittee, which I joined and subsequently became Chair. We set to work re-structuring the minor from the ground up, added two new courses (including a required community internship), and got the new minor curriculum approved by the Faculty Senate, effective in Fall 2015. I also began teaching the CEN 200 Introduction to Civic and Community Engagement course with the Chair of the Anthropology department, Dr. Abigail Adams, and have taught it four times since, along with the Internship course. Since that 2014 committee meeting, the number of active students in the minor has increased from 0 to 45 students; the CEN 200 course has gone from being taught sporadically, to once a year, to every semester; the number of students who have completed CEN 402 Community Engagement internships is approaching 60; and the Curriculum subcommittee has made significant strides in standardizing the course content, building community internship sites and procedures, and advertising the minor to students. Now, we are fortunate to have a President who sees and supports the potential of the minor, and I am excited to see it brought to the next level under her leadership.

My involvement with the minor and the Community Engagement courses has brought my professional interests and passions into focus, and in 2016, I began a PhD program in International Community Studies through Clemson University. This academic work has brought a sound theoretical framework to my understanding and practice of community engagement, and I am excited to bring it to bear on the work ahead. I am scheduled to complete my doctoral dissertation work (and receive continuing appointment) in December of 2019, so a sabbatical in Fall 2020 is perfect timing to address the topic with focus.

Work to date on evaluating the minor in Community Engagement:

Any evaluation that seeks to assess the impact on an academic program in community engagement must first wrestle with the salient question: what is community engagement? This first question is imperative, because it has become clear that outcome assessment in this area has suffered from a confusion of terms. When one embarks on a journey to research community engagement program outcomes in higher education, one becomes quickly mired in competing terms of "civic engagement", "community service", "engaged scholarship", and its monumental predecessor, "service-learning." Most literature regarding student outcomes in community-engaged programs is still rooted in "service-learning" terminology, so a brief look at what distinguishes community engagement from service-learning is in order.

Applegate and Morreale (1999) define service-learning as "what happens when students are afforded the opportunity to practice what they are learning in their disciplines, in community settings where their work benefits others" (p. x). Service-learning is distinct from other forms of experiential learning, such as volunteerism, community service, internships, and field education, by its "intention to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service equally, as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring" (Furco, 2003, p. 14). The use of service-learning by faculty is now widely
recognized as a high-impact educational practice, yielding significantly more results in terms of educational outcomes than traditional classroom learning (Kuh, 2008).

Over the past decade, the term “community engagement” has supplanted that of service-learning at many colleges and universities. The recently published Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement (2017) indicates that this evolution is due to the desire on the part of universities to provide a broader umbrella for all activities done in partnership with communities – of which service-learning courses are just one part of the larger whole. These other activities may include student volunteerism, faculty research, university policy centers and advocacy efforts, and social entrepreneurship (Dolgon, et al., 2017). Additionally, in contrast to service-learning, community engagement modes embrace a deeper reciprocity between universities and their community partners – “one that goes beyond the application of knowledge to passive recipients, that requires collaboration and respects the wisdom of practice” (Dolgon, et al., p. 73). Community engagement, in other words, “describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Driscoll, p. 6).

There is ongoing and robust literature on student outcomes in service-learning courses, which is often one component of community engaged programs. However, outcome assessment in the more broadly encompassing programs of “community engagement” is notably absent, and the lack of standardized measurement instruments for evaluation has been noted in the literature (Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Granner and Sharpe, 2004). Indeed, assessment in general continues to be an ongoing challenge for higher education, so it is not surprising that assessment of community engagement is in dire need of development. Driscoll (2009) highlighted this need in a discussion of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification:

> Few institutions could be specific about institution-wide student learning outcomes related to engagement, so most assessment of curricular engagement took the form of individual course assessments and occasional program assessment...few examples of consistent assessment of community engagement were found. As we expand community engagement across institutions of higher education, it is essential to develop the expertise and resources to assess and evaluate practices. Community engagement requires extensive resources, especially faculty time commitments, so it is imperative to assess well to articulate clarity of direction for these efforts and to ensure that this work is effectively achieving its intentions. (p. 10)

Hart (2011) confirmed the impression that the development of effective audit and evaluation tools for university community engagement was still at a formative stage, and cited lack of focus on outcomes, lack of standardized tools, and the variety of pedagogical approaches as reasons for the lack of progress. In 2012, the research group at Merrimack University found “no unanimity or uniformity to...expected outcomes, pedagogical methods, or normative standpoints” (p. 2); and in 2015, an exhaustive literature review by Reason and Hemmer could not identify any instrument that “fully assessed the entire construct of civic learning...There is not a single body of literature or set of easily identifiable instruments in higher education that are tied to the majority of civic learning assessment” (p. 6). For the purposes of this study, an exhaustive search for outcome assessments of other university minors in community engagement promises to shed some light on effective measures for CCSU’s CE minor.

Clearly, student outcomes assessment in community engagement represents a gap in the research that this sabbatical hopes to address. With well-established roots in service-learning and the emerging benchmarks being developed by the Carnegie Foundation and others, the field of community engagement holds promise in contributing to the development of civic-minded students. As Dan Butin writes in the prologue to the Merrimack study, the lack of assessment data “does not mean chaos rules. It simply means that there are frameworks within which contested notions of complex phenomenon can and should be analyzed, engaged, and appropriated” (Brammer, et al., p. 2).
IV. Description of proposed sabbatical activities and/or methodology (include as much detail as possible).

- **Methodology for the Outcome Evaluation:**

  In order to evaluate outcomes of CCSU’s Minor in Community Engagement, a survey regarding civic-mindedness will be sent to all CCSU graduates in the minor, as well as CCSU students who have completed the minor but have not yet graduated – together forming the treatment group. Additionally, the same survey will be sent to a comparison group of randomly selected graduates of CCSU who did not minor in community engagement, but who had majors and minors within CCSU’s College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences - restricting the comparison group to students graduating with roughly the same exposure to courses and majors.

  The survey will be administered online and sent to students via their campus email addresses, inviting them to participate in an online survey to understand the influence of community involvement on academic, personal, and civic development. For the comparison group, 200 students will be chosen using an online number generator and selected from an alphabetized list of College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences graduates.

  Data will be statistically analyzed to answer the research question, “Are graduates of CCSU’s minor in community engagement more likely to be civically oriented than those graduates without the minor?”

- **Methodology for the Comprehensive Review:**

  Research on other community engagement academic programs at other domestic and international universities will be web-based; phone calls and appointments will be made with promising leads. Investigation into other programs will seek to answer the following questions:
  - How is your minor promoted, staffed and structured?
  - How are your courses designated?
  - Is there a practicum experience incorporated?
  - Have you assessed outcomes? If so, how and with what results?

- **Identifying and Cataloging CCSU Community-Engaged Courses:**

  This will be an intensive process of going through courses in the CCSU catalog and contacting professors and chairs regarding course content, as well as collaborating with the work already done by Jessica Hernandez in the Office of Community Engagement. Collaboration with faculty on the Curriculum Committee will be pursued, to identify the best way to make the course information known to faculty and students, as the current system is not widely known or utilized.

- **Developing a New CEN Course:**

  The minor in Community Engagement is currently largely interdisciplinary, and has only 2 courses specifically designated as CEN (the Intro and Internship courses). Faculty have recommended expanding the CEN course variety and selection as a way of growing the minor in breadth and depth, so I will work on developing a course in Global Community Engagement, using material gained through my PhD work in International Community Studies. The course will be one that can be adapted to teaching abroad, adding to the scope of study and increasing the number of courses offered in partnership with CIE.

- **Exploring Intensive Semester Formats for the Minor:**

  Developing unique experiences for students minoring in CE is a way to attract new interest, and “put CCSU on the map” in terms of innovative program offerings in the field. I would like to explore ways the minor can be completed (or mostly completed) as a one-semester immersive experience, by either working with a non-profit organization in Hartford, or via an internship abroad. For example, Germany took in over one million refugees in 2016, and has been on the front lines of confronting the massive needs of this population;
students could spend a semester abroad (perhaps as a group) at a sister institution in Germany, taking a community engagement course, an international community development course, and doing an internship in the refugee community.

V. Statement of potential value of your project to the university, to your professional growth, and to your particular field of study or discipline

Ernest Boyer, author of Scholarship Reconsidered, asserted that "if the nation's higher learning institutions are to meet today's urgent academic and social mandates, their missions must be carefully redefined and the meaning of today's academic success creatively reconsidered" (Boyer, 1990). CCSU has recently redefined its mission to include an emphasis on academic excellence and community engagement, both of which are essential in preparing students to be "broadly educated, culturally and globally aware students who will contribute meaningfully to their communities as engaged professionals and citizens" (CCSU, 2018). We owe it to our students and our community to ensure that our academic efforts in community engagement are robust, current, and effective in equipping students to address those "social mandates" before us — and a comprehensive evaluation and expansion of the current minor in Community and Civic Engagement promises to deliver on that responsibility.

Additionally, in my role as an academic advisor, I meet with students on a daily basis who have no idea where to begin in choosing an academic major, or who struggle to see how their studies relate to the world around them. Community engagement is a powerful platform that helps students see how their disciplines can impact their own neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Once they begin putting their knowledge to use and learning from experts in their own communities, students develop a passion for their field and have something meaningful to say when their friends and family members ask them "what they plan to do" with their major in English, or Sociology, or Geography. This, in turn, helps them see their degree to completion (retention!), and most profoundly, produces graduates who invest their skills back into the community and are admirable representatives of the merits of a CCSU education. Some of the largest majors at CCSU — psychology, criminology, and sociology, for starters — are full of students who are looking for ways to make an impact on their world, and the minor in Community Engagement gives them the tools to do that.

Evaluating its effectiveness so it can be deeper, stronger, and accessible to more students will only benefit CCSU, its students, and our local area.

Personally, doing this sabbatical project would be a wonderful opportunity for me to develop in this area of a longtime passion and recent advanced degree. Seeing students make connections between their classrooms and their communities, and giving them new ways to do that, is a source of incredible joy and fulfillment for me.

VI. Statement of expected outcomes of your project: (Describe the outcomes and relationship, if any, of any previous sabbatical projects to the current one.)

Outcomes of this sabbatical project are expected to be:

- A report on the civic engagement outcomes of the graduates in the CE minor, with a possibility of publication
- A comprehensive review of other academic minors in community engagement at other universities, with an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, and recommendation for programmatic elements that could benefit the program at CCSU
- An exhaustive catalog of current community-engaged courses at CCSU, with recommendations made in consultation with faculty and Jessica Hernandez regarding the best way to employ the information
A newly developed course syllabus in Global Community Engagement, with a course proposal appropriate for submission to the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee
- A proposal for one (or more) immersive semester(s) appropriate for the minor in Community Engagement, with detailed outlines regarding content, location, program logistics, and potential start dates

REFERENCES


SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Over twenty years of experience and demonstrated ability in the field of teaching and training; academic advisement; community engagement and partnership; program design, development, and facilitation; extensive experience with college-aged students, as well as the secondary to post-secondary transition; exceptional written and oral communication.

EDUCATION

Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina
Anticipated December, 2019

Doctor of Philosophy, International Family and Community Studies (ABD)
Dissertation Title: "Examining the Civic Outcomes of an Academic Program in Community Engagement"

University of Texas
Austin, Texas
August, 1991

Master of Education in School Counseling
Thesis Title: "Loneliness as a Separate Psychological Construct from Depression"
- Royal B. Embree, Jr. Scholarship; GPA 4.0

Gordon College
Wenham, Massachusetts
May, 1988

Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education
- Summa Cum Laude, Dean's Scholar

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut
January 2019-present

Instructor, CEN 402 Community Engagement Internship Seminar
- Designed course content and requirements of the Minor in Community Engagement Community Internship with faculty senate subcommittee
- Collaborated with community partners to scaffold hands-on community experiences for students in the internship course
- Supervised individual internship experiences and instructed students on community-building, cultural humility, civic agency, and project evaluation

Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut
January 2015-present

Instructor, CEN 200 Introduction to Community and Civic Engagement, CEN 201 Practicum
- Designed and delivered undergraduate course content in community engagement, group dynamics, social movement theory and history
- Built and maintained community partnerships for on-site student instruction and small group practicum experience
- Chaired Faculty Senate Community Engagement Curriculum subcommittee and re-designed the minor in Community Engagement at CCSU
- Serve as faculty-designated point person and advisor for students minoring in Community Engagement
Central Connecticut State University  New Britain, Connecticut  January 2019–present

Instructor, Career Planning for the Liberal Arts
- Collaborated with the Assistant Dean of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences to design and implement comprehensive career exploration course for students in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
- Instructed students regarding interest exploration, resume and interviewing skills, informal interviewing, “elevator pitches”, and career research

Central Connecticut State University  New Britain, Connecticut  January 2012–present

Academic Advisor, Carol A. Ammon College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences Advising Center
- Manage all operations in “ASAP” (Arts and Sciences Advising Place), including advising current, incoming first-year and transfer students to CCSU
- Designed and launched Peer Advisor program; supervise all aspects of the program including recruitment and hiring, training, ongoing task assignment, and 1-credit Peer Advisor course in cooperation with the Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Train liberal arts and social science faculty in advising procedures and best practices
- Academically advise CCSU undergraduates regarding general education and degree requirements, degree evaluations and registration, course substitutions, and major and minor selection
- Promote ASAP services to current and incoming CCSU students and faculty via social media, website development, publications and mailings, and advising events


Creator and Director, C2C College Transition Program
- Designed format and delivery of grant-funded college transition pilot program for urban high school graduates
- Advised students, oversaw teaching and support staff, and facilitated all aspects of the program in partnership with Gateway Community College and stakeholders in the New Haven community
- Budgeted, planned, and executed all orientations, trainings, written materials and enrichment events
- Coordinated with State of Connecticut Department of Education to track student demographics, interventions, and academic benchmarks of success

Sacred Heart University  Fairfield, Connecticut  2004–2009

Assistant Director, Student Mentor Program
- Trained and managed staff of 4 student affairs professionals in cooperation with Director
- Managed a caseload of 230+ first year students, providing individual support and advisement in academic, personal and career choice areas
- Collaborated with professors, academic advisors, wellness counselors, residence hall staff and athletic coaches to address freshman adjustment issues
- Planned and executed programs and classes for first year students
- Designed Peer Mentor program and managed upper-class Peer Mentors to reach and support first year students
- Compiled and analyzed freshman retention data and intervened with students at risk socially and academically
- Taught First Year Experience course to academically at-risk freshmen

Map the Gap International  Seymour, Connecticut  2008–present

Co-Founder and Co-Director
- Design, implement, and market international service-based gap year programs abroad for high school graduates
Albertus Magnus College  New Haven, Connecticut  2003-2004

**Academic Advisor, Department of Student Services**
- Academically advised cohort of undergraduate and graduate adult learners in Business degree programs
- Supported the adult student in overcoming personal, interpersonal, and academic obstacles to completing educational goals


**Guidance Counselor, High School Credit Diploma Program**
- Managed caseload of high school credit diploma students from racially and economically diverse backgrounds, all at-risk educationally
- Supported the at-risk student via personal and academic counseling, college and career exploration, transcription of records and cooperation with teachers and administrators

**PROGRAM INITIATIVES**

- Liberal Arts Career Symposium – design and implement yearly career-related conference for students in the liberal arts and social sciences featuring community professional panels, keynote speakers, one-on-one mentorship, and networking opportunities for 100+ CCSU undergraduates
- Peer Advisors – initiated, designed, implemented and continue to administer program that employs upper-class undergraduates in CCSU Liberal Arts and Social Sciences to represent their majors and the Arts and Sciences Advising Place via events, peer-to-peer advising, newsletters, and social media
- Peer Mentoring – initiated, designed and implemented a program that employed upper-class undergraduates at Sacred Heart University in select majors and areas of interest to engage first-year students and increase student satisfaction
- “Straight from the Heart Day” – created, planned and executed an annual day of community service for the first-year class at Sacred Heart University, involving 25+ community service agencies, 35 staff and faculty, and 200 participants
- “House Calls” – created and implemented door-to-door welcome of freshmen by 35+ staff and faculty volunteers
- “Start with the Arts” – created, planned, and staffed a week of immersive arts-related activities for incoming freshmen to Sacred Heart University
- Habitat for Humanity Spring Break Service Trips – advised two groups of students on spring break service trips (Ft. Myers, FL, 2007; Wilmington, NC, 2009)
- Peer Educators – in collaboration with the college counseling center, developed Peer Educator student group to address high-risk behavior among college students
- Social Norming Campaign – in collaboration with fellow members of the Alcohol and Other Drug Coalition, developed the initial phase of the on-campus social norming campaign to reduce high-risk drinking among Sacred Heart students

**PRESENTATIONS/TEACHING AND TRAINING**

- Transfer Student Advising – present at numerous conferences on effective advising and support of transfer students
- Peer Advisor Training – plan and direct two days of advising training for upper-class Peer Advisors at Central Connecticut State University
- Peer Mentor Training – planned and facilitated two-day training for upper-class peer mentors at Sacred Heart University
- Taught First Year Experience course to academically at-risk freshmen
- Parent/Student Orientation Presentation – designed and presented to parent and student groups regarding first-year student transition and major selection
- Senior Retreat – in collaboration with Campus Ministry, planned one-day retreat for graduating seniors and presented on the post-college transition

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

ACT Spooner House
Shelton, Connecticut
Regular volunteer at shelter for the homeless and food bank

Habitat for Humanity (Coastal Fairfield County, Greater New Haven, and Greater Hartford chapters)
Regular volunteer since 2004

University of the Nations
Jerusalem, Israel
Lived independently among Palestinian Arabs, studied Arabic at Bethlehem University, studied and practiced cross-cultural relations in Muslim areas

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Campus Compact
New England Transfer Association
CAACE (Connecticut Adult and Continuing Education) Society
ACPA (American College Personnel Association)

REFERENCES

Available upon request
Department Sabbatical Leave Committee Appraisal:

Recommend: Yes ____  No ____

Departmental Sabbatical Leave Committee Signatures:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

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Reviewed By Dean or Administrative Officer: [Signature] 11 Sep 2019

Reviewed By Provost: ___________________________