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Dear Community Partner,

Thank you for your willingness to work closely with one or more of our student scholars as they engage in Community Research Learning (CRL). Through CRL, students gain valuable insights about “real world” issues and the inner dynamics of particular organizations. They gain experience practicing “soft skills,” such as communicating effectively, using time efficiently, solving complex problems, navigating new situations, and working under pressure. The organizations or agencies with which students collaborate gain as well by receiving fresh perspectives and forging new alliances within the community.

This introductory booklet is intended to help you help us as we work together to inspire the next generation of well-informed, effective, and civically-engaged leaders. We will do our best to prepare our students to work productively within your organization.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have questions or concerns.

With appreciation and respect,

Professors Rebecca Dobkins, Joyce Millen, and Peter Wogan, Willamette Anthropology Department Faculty

What we expect of our students:

- Each student must complete a Community Research Learning Agreement, to be signed by the student, Site Coordinator, and relevant faculty prior to beginning their research. This agreement will include: a description of the organization, name of Site Coordinator, general research theme, proposed work schedule, and preliminary research design.

- Each student is required to conduct a minimum of 60 hours of on-site fieldwork.

- Students are responsible for organizing all relevant logistics, including securing research authorizations, administering evaluations, and providing the research organization with copies of their final report and any other material requested.

- We expect students to conduct themselves respectfully and ethically, and to follow the professional protocol of their respective organization.
Logistics and Expectations

Site Coordinator’s Role:

While we recognize that collaboration of this sort requires some effort to set up and implement, we hope to minimize additional work for you and your colleagues. Ideally, the research collaboration will provide a net gain to your organization. To enhance the benefits, we suggest you follow these steps:

Prior to research semester (during preceding semester or summer):

- Choose a Site Coordinator at your organization who will act as the student’s point person.
- Work directly with the student to identify a suitable and realistic research topic that can be accomplished in the course of the semester.
- Inform student of any requirements that must be fulfilled prior to beginning research. These may include a mandatory orientation or a set procedure for securing research authorization. (Please note that if a student is delayed too long awaiting research authorization, we will need to switch their research site.)

During the research semester:

- Provide student researcher an orientation to the site and the overarching mission(s) of your organization.
- Introduce student to colleagues and staff.
- Help coordinate the initial phase of the research, including the preparation of a realistic research schedule.
- Complete one mid-term “progress report” intended for both the student and their faculty. This may be via telephone, email or a visit.
- Communicate with relevant faculty if questions or problems arise.

What kind of research will students conduct?

Anthropology students involved in CRL conduct ethnographic research. This form of research provides detailed description and in-depth analysis of the ideas and practices of a particular group of people. It is designed to explore cultural phenomena and social interactions from the point of view of the people being studied.

Ethnographic research requires extensive fieldwork in which researchers collect data by participating in day-to-day activities, and by conducting interviews with individuals and groups. While conducting their research, students consider the historical antecedents of particular policies or processes, and they explore their research group, organization, or institution from multiple and diverse vantage points.

To date our students have contributed their time and research energy in myriad ways, including in collaboration with:

- city, county, or state departments to understand public perceptions regarding specific policies or public services, for example, vaccine safety or emergency preparedness
- local museums to gain insights regarding what visitors to the museums take away from their experience or how the museum interfaces with the public
- nongovernmental organizations to determine if their efforts with particular constituents meet intended goals, or to examine new ways of acquiring needed resources
- faith communities to understand how people find meaning through shared values, worship, and outreach
- clubs, hobby groups, and arts organizations to learn how members express identity and cultivate creativity
- retail businesses to study such topics as how new employees acquire skills or how customers and staff utilize space
What is Anthropology?

Anthropology is the study of human beings, past and present. Anthropologists ask how humans have come to inhabit the earth and they endeavor to examine paradoxes of humanity. How is it, for example, that human beings are so similar to one another while at the same time extraordinarily different? From a biochemical perspective, all human beings are 99.5% similar. Yet culturally, socially, linguistically, and psychologically we differ in impressive ways, both within and among populations.

Anthropology examines these similarities and differences and the implications they have for the day-to-day lives of people throughout the world. Anthropologists analyze how people who adhere to different beliefs or who hail from different parts of the world categorize their kin, structure their economies and organize their political systems. Such efforts to understand the diversity of humanity bring unique insights and help anthropologists attain skills that are highly sought after in international education, diplomacy, law, business, journalism, medicine, the arts, and other sectors.

At Willamette, we specialize in cultural anthropology. While students examine the great diversity of cultures in the world, they also learn reflectively about themselves and about what they most take for granted or assume to be “right” or “correct” ways of being and living. Anthropological insights help identify people’s deeply held beliefs as well as any assumptions and biases they may hold—as individuals or collectively.

Willamette’s anthropology faculty conduct research in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States, including with indigenous peoples, migrants, and others. They specialize in cross-cultural and comparative analysis of health and healing, migration, music and performance, peace and war, religion, language and communication, and art and material culture.

About Our Students:

Willamette’s Anthropology Department attracts dynamic, globally minded and highly engaged student-scholars who come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including first-generation college students. They hail from tiny towns in eastern Oregon to large urban centers such as Seattle, San Francisco and Portland.

The majority of the anthropology students involved in community-based research will be 21 or 22 years of age and in the last year of their undergraduate studies. Most will be full-time students, juggling both course work and part-time employment. Many, though not all, have experienced some form of service learning, internship or volunteer experience. Some have been community mentors or tutors and almost all have developed leadership skills through experiences with campus clubs and organizations. All students at Willamette are required to have foreign language proficiency, either through two years of university-level study or as native speakers. Most commonly, this is proficiency in Spanish, but some Willamette students study other languages relevant to the region, including Russian, Japanese, and French.

Our students tend to be hard-working, dependable, honest, and just plain nice to be around. As part of their studies in anthropology, they learn basic qualitative research methods, content analysis, ethics of conducting social scientific research, and the vital importance of maintaining an open-mindedness throughout their research. Most of our students have good—and ever improving—communication skills, both as writers and speakers.

After they complete their college careers, our students work in all conceivable realms, including social services, advocacy, law, business, healthcare, education, museums, and the arts.
Willamette University is a nationally renowned private liberal arts university with over 2000 undergraduate students and graduate students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts, College of Law and Atkinson School of Management.

Founded in 1842, Willamette is considered the first university established in the western United States. Whereas in the past Willamette was very much a regional institution, with students hailing mostly from the Northwest, today the university boasts a more national and international student body. Willamette University is also home to Tokyo International University of America.

In recent years Willamette has distinguished itself as a national leader in sustainability and civic engagement.

Willamette is committed to preserving small class sizes, close student-faculty relationships, and programs that enable students to achieve their academic aspirations. The university values collaborative research, experiential learning, and civic engagement.

Willamette University’s core commitments include:

- Pursuing academic excellence in teaching, research, and student learning
- Fostering a diverse, vibrant, and intellectually stimulating learning community
- Preparing globally-minded students for meaningful lives of professional achievement and civic contribution

Additional Information and Contacts

Willamette Anthropology Department website: www.willamette.edu/cla/anthro/faculty/index.html

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