Proposal # \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Instructionally Related Activities* Report Form**

Sponsor: IRA

Department: ESRM

Activity Title: Service Learning In New Orleans

Date (s) of activity: March 14-24, 2013

E-mail to the IRA Coordinator with supporting documentation at lisa.ayre-smith@csuci.edu within 30 days after the activity.

*Thank you for your commitment to engaging our students!!*

**A. address the following questions:**

(1) provide a description of the activity;

(2) how did the activity relate to a course(s) and/or learning objectives?

(3) what do you see as the strengths of the activity?

(4) What would you say are/were the activity’s weaknesses?

(5) how would you improve this activity for next time?

(6) what did you learn from the process?

(7) what are student responses to the activity? attach student evaluations or assessments (in accordance with ferpa restrictions you must remove all personally identifiable student information)

8) give a summary of expenses for the activity.

**B. ATTENDEE LIST- supporting document:**

In addition to the report form, *in a separate document,* attach to your email a list of attendees complete with each student major and grade level. This for IRA Committee reference only and will not be published on the IRA website. Include your name and the title of your IRA activity on the document.

**C.IMAGES FROM ACTIVITY:**

Finally, attach to your email up to 6 images demonstrating student participation (under 2 MB total) with captions/titles. (attach these photos in JPEG format directly to email). Thank you!

Course Description

Students from ESRM 492 participated in an intense 11-day field course in and around New Orleans, Louisiana. We will examined the management drivers that led to the man-made disasters that we know as Hurricane Katrina and the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill. This course was a mix of tours by local experts, discussions with survivors and residents, environmental impact assessment, restoration efforts to reverse Katrina-induced degradation and the rebuilding of communities. For the past three years we have de-emphasized the physical rebuilding of structures and turned towards installing community food gardens in impoverished neighborhoods, splitting most trip days roughly evenly between garden installations and wetland restoration work. At the time of this application, we are just preparing to leave for this year’s trip over Spring Break in March of 2014 (our eighth such IRA funded trip).

Students traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana to examine first hand the on-going disruptions to daily life and the lingering impacts of poor coastal resource management. We spent the first two days touring around the greater New Orleans region. Our travels initially focused on the drivers of wetland loss and historic mismanagement of the Mississippi River delta by the Army Corps of Engineers, local levee boards, *etc*. The rest of the week found us conducting environmental impact assessments and wetland restoration projects in Belle Chase’s Woodlands Trail and Park (one of the few remnant bottomland hardwood forests surrounding Greater New Orleans). Guest speakers and guides came from Tulane University, Louisiana State University, the United States Geological Survey, the New Orleans Mayor Office, Basin Street Records, *etc*. In the past our final days were devoted to helping construct affordable housing units for displaced residents (in St. Bernard’s Parish, the Lower 9th Ward of Orleans Parish) and building community food gardens (in conjunction with Common Grounds community center in Buras, LA and with New Orleans Food and Farm Network in greater New Orleans). This trip I we deepened relationships with a school in the Lower 9th Ward teaching children about gardening and sustainable food systems and with a just-beginning community farm in New Orleans’ City Park (Grow Dat Farms) which we partnered with very briefly last year.

Students enrolled in ESRM 492 for credit. Six pre-trip lectures/sessions (3 hours each) prepared students for our trip. After Spring Break we held our annual poster/video/gumbo presentation session wherein students documented some aspect of New Orleans culture and/or the recovery efforts with which they were engaged. A quite popular component to this campus event is a cooking demonstration by our students (who train with master Chefs at the New Orleans School of Cooking during our trip). In April of 2003 we had **113 people** (students, staff, etc.) attend this post-trip session.

Activity Relationship

Our course was the IRA activity. We met all of our targeted learning outcomes:

While this trip is organized around one particular region, many of the lessons and learning outcomes bear directly on life in the Coastal Zone of California and beyond. Some of these outcomes included:

* understanding the links between environmental quality and human well-being
* articulating ecosystem services
* understanding that incompetent and corrupt leadership kills
* appreciating the influence of New Orleans culture on American visual and musical arts
* empowerment through community service
* fostering active citizenship
* understanding the importance of access to affordable, healthy food for all peoples

Activity Strengths

This Course is unique in that our students conduct restoration and other service activities amongst a degraded and often ignored part of our country. There is no substitute for discussing failed coastal management (such as that by the federal government) when you are in an eroding coastline and talking to folks who are seeing their houses and livelihoods swept away.

Activity Weaknesses

This greatest limitation here is time. We are in Louisiana for such a short period of time I need to work the students tremendously hard and this often pushes many of them to their limits. It would be great if we could have even an additional week.

How would you improve for next time?

Hard to say xxxxxxxxx