

Program Manual

Peace Corps Master's International Program



STEVENSON CENTER
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Foreword

This program manual includes substantive changes from the Spring 2001 edition, such as updates regarding staff and procedures. It supplements the Master's International Student Handbook issued by Peace Corps. Students should carefully read both this manual and the Student Handbook and save them for future reference.

NOTE: The Stevenson Center may amend this manual at any time. If changes are made, the Center will provide students with an updated version and highlight those changes.

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The Center, which includes a conference/resource room, is located on the 4th floor and north end of Stevenson Hall.



In the Spirit of Adlai E. Stevenson II

Named for the Illinois Governor, Presidential candidate, and United Nations Ambassador, the Stevenson Center strives to embody Adlai E. Stevenson II's spirit of public service.

Introduction

This manual is written for Peace Corps Master's International students in the Applied Community Development (ACD) or Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) Sequence. The purpose is to outline the benefits and obligations of this program, to clarify program and academic policies, and to identify the persons responsible for administering these policies.

Since 1997, the Peace Corps Master's International Program at Illinois State University has recruited service-oriented individuals to participate in the interdisciplinary ACED and ACD graduate Sequences. The Sequences of the participating academic departments give professional practice credit for Peace Corps service. This Peace Corps Master's International Program is one of more than fifty programs nationwide that provide students the opportunity to combine graduate study and Peace Corps service. These programs exist through memoranda of cooperation between the Peace Corps and academic institutions. By law, the Peace Corps provides no direct financial support to these institutions. The Peace Corps mission is to help:

- The people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women,
- Promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and
- Promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Illinois State University also hosts a Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program (for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers) and an ACED Fellows Program (for those with other development experience). These students complete 11-month internships instead of Peace Corps service. Otherwise, the university and program policies for Fellows and Master's International students are nearly identical.

The Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development facilitates the Peace Corps Master's International Program, Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program, ACED Fellows Program, and faculty/staff applied research/service projects in community and economic development. The Center works with the departments, other university offices, and off-campus partners to coordinate the Center's processes and activities.

The three participating departments—Economics, Politics and Government, and Sociology and Anthropology—award master's degrees in Applied Economics, Political Science, and Sociology respectively, each with an ACED (or, for Political Science, ACD) Sequence. The Sequence in the respective departments includes completion of a specialized core curriculum designed to prepare students for their Peace Corps assignments and further service after graduation. The Sequence provides students an opportunity to learn the theoretical underpinnings of the disciplines, while providing an applied setting to explore and test these concepts.

Governance

The Chairs of the Departments of Economics, Politics and Government, and Sociology and Anthropology govern the Stevenson Center and related programs. The Chairs are advised by the campus Stevenson Center Board made up of themselves, the Graduate Coordinators for each Department, affiliated faculty, the Director and Assistant Director, and student representatives—usually one to three students chosen by their peers. The Stevenson Center Board advises the Chairs on policy and all other matters related to the Master's International Program. Due to state and federal privacy laws, student representatives cannot participate in Board discussions relating to individual students. The Board may allow some decisions, for example, those pertaining to individual students, to be handled solely by the Graduate Coordinator and Stevenson Center staff. Also, there is an external Stevenson Center Advisory Board, which focuses on emerging trends in the field, participates in strategic planning, and may be available for mentorship.

Curriculum and other academic matters are primarily guided by the respective Departments. Each Department's Graduate Studies Committee or Department Council makes recommendations that are channeled through the Dean and College Council, then Provost and Academic Senate. Some matters, such as overall Degree Programs and their Sequences, also require involvement of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

NOTE: In this Manual, "Degree Program" refers to the *academic* Degree/Sequence as approved by the IBHE; "Program" refers to the overall experience of the Master's International Program.

Mission Statement

The Stevenson Center at Illinois State University promotes community and economic development in the U.S. and abroad. The Center sets the pace for public service and scholarship through a unique combination of coursework, research, professional practice, and collaboration with communities.

Goals

- A Stevenson Center student will acquire theoretical and applied knowledge of community and economic development, as well as the tools for continued research and practical application leading to positive and lasting change.
- The Stevenson Center fosters mutually beneficial relationships with various local, national, and international entities to further their community and economic development efforts.
- The Stevenson Center continuously seeks, assesses, and embraces opportunities to serve students, communities, faculty, and Illinois State University.
- The Stevenson Center, with the support of Illinois State University, actively seeks and commits personnel and resources for the implementation of its programs.

Learning Goals for the Applied Community/Economic Development Sequence

The Departments of Economics, Politics and Government, and Sociology and Anthropology adopt the following as the learning goals for students in their respective Master's Degree Programs with an interdisciplinary Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) Sequence or Applied Community Development (ACD) Sequence. These goals support the mission of the Stevenson Center and promote the competencies required of community and economic development practitioners in both U.S. and overseas environments. We embrace these goals in light of values present at Illinois State University and articulated in *Educating Illinois*, the University's comprehensive plan to promote learning. Specifically, these learning goals emphasize the contribution students will make to society upon their graduation.

- I. ACED/ACD Sequence students will understand and will be able to apply the concepts, themes, and theories of process present in the community and economic development literature such that they are aware of both:
 - a. Forces affecting communities, including:
 1. The dimensions of power in communities and what role community and economic development professionals can have within those power dynamics.
 2. The relationships among public policy, economic context, and the needs and resources for community and economic development.
 3. Global, national, and local factors that impact communities and their economies.
 - b. The dynamic means by which communities change over time, including:
 1. What actions people can take, through activism and/or changes in public policy, to create desired changes in communities.
 2. The manner in which people can evaluate and communicate the impacts of development efforts in communities.
 3. How people can be mobilized for action within their communities.
 4. Social, cultural, and economic differences among people, organizations, and communities in the development process.
- II. ACED/ACD Sequence students will be equipped with applied skills and appropriate methods that will support their effectiveness in community-based internships, Peace Corps assignments, and careers in community and economic development. Students will be able to:
 - a. Use a variety of quantitative and qualitative research approaches and techniques to support community projects.
 - b. Produce reports, proposals, and presentations to support community projects.
 - c. Use community organizing skills to facilitate planning and implementation of community projects.

Academic Programs

The requirements for the Program are unique in each Department, and students should consult with their Graduate Coordinators about course selection, thesis preparation or capstone requirements, and registration. Each Department may provide a suggested list of electives that reflect not only past students' course choices but also courses that may be useful in an applied setting. Students should ultimately make course selections in consultation with their Graduate Coordinator. Academic requirements for students seeking Master's Degrees in Applied Economics, Political Science,

or Sociology, with the ACED or ACD Sequence, are available online, from Graduate Coordinators, and in the Stevenson Center office.

Staff Roles

Director

The Stevenson Center Director's duties include planning and directing community-economic development research. The Director submits external grant proposals; oversees the Stevenson Center core curriculum and coordination of classes; develops, in consultation with the Board, an annual financial planning document; creates and implements Center policies in consultation with the Board; and serves as chair of the Stevenson Center Board.

Assistant Director

The Stevenson Center Assistant Director's duties can be divided into six areas: 1) recruitment of students, 2) aid to the affiliated Graduate Coordinators and students with respect to student admission and student progress in meeting program criteria, 3) placement, mentorship, and evaluation of students in off-campus assistantship and internship positions, 4) management of relations between our students and other stakeholders (assistantship sites and internship sites), 5) maintenance of relations with Peace Corps and relevant offices on campus, and 6) grantwriting, fundraising, and aid to the Director in other tasks for Center operations.

Staff Clerk

The Stevenson Center Staff Clerk performs a variety of support tasks relating to management of student (current, former, and prospective), host organization, and other files; bookkeeping; publications and website maintenance; telephone reception; duplicating and correspondence; and other duties as needed.

Admissions

Department admissions and financial award decisions are made by the Graduate Coordinator and Chair. Master's International Program admissions—including eligibility for the Master's International Program or off-campus assistantship—are made jointly by the Department and the Assistant Director. Master's International students are required to sign a letter of commitment that outlines the minimum academic requirements and financial awards, as well as securing students' commitment to and affirming their nomination for Peace Corps service.

Graduate Assistantship Assignments

Assistantship duties, tuition awards, and stipends may vary for Master's International students, as they do for all graduate students in these Departments. Assistantships generally require 15 or 20 hours of work per week. The Stevenson Center strongly discourages outside/additional employment, as it is likely to interfere with academic progress and assistantship duties. On-campus Graduate Assistantship assignments and financial awards will be determined by the Department Chairs and Graduate Coordinators, in consultation with the Assistant Director and based on the individual Department's need and students' abilities.

Off-campus assistantships, which may be hosted and/or funded by non-profit agencies, units of government, or other community organizations, will be awarded on a competitive basis. Some may include AmeriCorps service. The Stevenson Center Assistant Director will make an announcement of any available off-campus assistantship opportunities to all eligible Peace Corps Master's International students and Fellows who have not already been

placed on-campus. The Assistant Director will distribute the résumés of any interested and eligible Peace Corps Master's International students or Fellows, including both new and returning students, to off-campus assistantship host agencies. Students not eligible for a departmental assistantship are also not eligible for an off-campus assistantship.

The host agency will interview their top choice(s), and if the interviews are satisfactory, will notify the Assistant Director of their preferred student. Final selections of students for these assistantships will be made by the Stevenson Center, in consultation with Department Chairs and Graduate Coordinators as necessary. The Assistant Director will then notify the student of the off-campus assistantship award. Students completing an off-campus assistantship remain Illinois State University graduate assistants. These off-campus assistantships may vary in pay and duties, depending upon the requirements of the funding source and host entity, but they generally carry monthly stipends equal to the on-campus assistantships.

While completing off-campus assistantships, students must adhere to the following requirements:

- a. Student will adhere to all policies, procedures, and standards established by the Host Organization.
- b. Student will be responsible for his/her own transportation to and from Host Organization during placement.
- c. Student is required to have adequate health/accident insurance coverage in force during the entire placement. Student must secure coverage through the University's Group Health Insurance plan or procure private coverage.
- d. Student will be responsible for adhering to established schedules and notifying Host Organization of any absences or necessary schedule changes.
- e. During the placement, the University will pay tuition costs for the student, who will be enrolled as a graduate student at Illinois State University.

Transportation

The Stevenson Center does not provide transportation for Master's International students to and from their local assistantship placements or for research or other purposes, unless this funding is specifically budgeted in a grant or award that supports a site placement.

Evaluations

Master's International students evaluate each of their core courses and workshops during their on-campus stay and evaluate the Master's International Program's training and support in reports during Peace Corps service. They may also take part in exit interviews prior to leaving campus for Peace Corps and surveys after completing their professional practice. The Stevenson Center also periodically solicits feedback on student performance from the community partners that host its students. Feedback from students and community partners is welcome at any time.

An external evaluation of the Program has been conducted in the past, funded by an external grant or by Peace Corps. Like all other academic programs, the Master's International Program is subject to periodic program review by the university. All of these methods of evaluation assist the Stevenson Center Board and staff in recommending to the Department Chairpersons changes in curricula, training, Program structure, and field support.

Peace Corps and Professional Practice Process

A critical experience of the Master's International Program is Peace Corps service. That students become effective Peace Corps Volunteers is critical for the success of the service and applied learning missions of the Stevenson Center. The purpose of Peace Corps service as an Illinois State University Master's International student is threefold. Such service furthers the mission of the Master's International Program to provide economic and community development services to communities, especially those most in need. It also provides students with a professional work experience relevant to their course of study. Lastly, it enhances opportunities for research, including the completion of thesis or capstone requirements and joint faculty research projects.

Peace Corps solely determines all placement decisions for Master's International students at Illinois State University; no faculty or staff member of the Stevenson Center or Illinois State University has a role in Peace Corps placement decisions. For more information about the process, see the Master's International Student Handbook issued by Peace Corps, visit <http://www.peacecorps.gov>, and/or call 1-800-424-8580.

Master's International students are responsible for responding to requests for information by Peace Corps as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Failure to do so may result in a substantial gap between the end of on-campus coursework and departure for Peace Corps. There may be financial consequences to such a gap: for example, if a student is not registered for a full Fall or Spring semester, the cost of health insurance may increase significantly in that semester.

Students who are not accepted by Peace Corps (at all, or in a timely manner) or who do not pursue Peace Corps, whether for medical or other reasons, may remain in their respective master's Degree Programs. In most cases, these students will be required to drop the ACED or ACD sequence. The timeframe for graduation may change as a result. Furthermore, the student would need to rely on personal financial resources, her/his academic department, and/or other financial aid. Students who will not be offered a Peace Corps assignment or who are reconsidering their commitment to Peace Corps service should discuss this matter with the Assistant Director and their department's Graduate Coordinator *as soon as possible* to explore options and adjust coursework accordingly.

Alternative internship placements to meet the ACED or ACD sequence requirements are generally not available, except in the following two cases:

1. Master's International students not serving with Peace Corps who meet the admissions requirements for the ACED Fellows Program (one year of full-time experience in community development and/or social services, or the equivalent, whether paid or volunteer, BEFORE beginning the ACED/ACD sequence or AFTER completing the year of on-campus coursework) may write a letter to the Stevenson Center Board requesting to switch and expressing commitment to the 11-month internship. These students must submit an updated one-page résumé and a letter from an organization substantiating and describing the qualifying experience. If accepted as an ACED Fellow, the student must submit other additional documentation and take part in the Fellows' placement process. (See the Fellows' Program Manual and/or Assistant Director for details.)
2. There are extreme or exceptional circumstances causing the Master's International student not to serve with Peace Corps. In these cases, the student *may* receive Board approval to become an ACED Intern and enter the internship placement process used for Fellows. While the Stevenson Center is committed to placing *all* students, including both Fellows and Interns, the first commitment is to the Fellows, since they generally enter the placement process sooner than the Interns do. For a Master's International student to become an ACED Intern and have an 11-month paid internship arranged through the Stevenson Center as an alternative to Peace Corps, 1) a host organization must be willing to accept the student, 2) the student must have the skills and education to complete the tasks outlined by the host organization, 3) the student must be in good standing in her/his academic work and have an excellent work record as a graduate assistant (whether on-

campus or off-campus), and 4) the match must be consistent with any existing grant agreements or contracts relating to the placement.

In either case, the student should be aware that, depending on the timing of the change of plans regarding Peace Corps, there might be delays in starting the internship. The process of contacting, negotiating, and finalizing placement sites *usually* takes three to six months but may take longer.

Prior to arrival on campus, Master's International students should be nominated for Peace Corps service. Ideally, other phases of the Peace Corps process (e.g., medical clearance, legal clearance) should be completed before the start of the semester before the date of availability for training and service (e.g., December for a late-June departure, May for an October departure, August for a January departure). Responding quickly to Peace Corps's requests for information is to students' advantage. The sooner students are cleared to serve and then placed, the more time they have to plan for departure and to incorporate the Country of Service into their academic work.

Master's International students are expected to maintain contact with Peace Corps about once every two months. They should notify Peace Corps regarding their interest in serving and their availability date. They should also keep the Stevenson Center Assistant Director informed about any changes or delays that occur in relation to Peace Corps. Please also keep contact information (mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses) updated with the Staff Clerk and with Peace Corps. If students have questions or concerns about how the Peace Corps process is going, the Assistant Director can assist them. Regular communication with students, both when they are on-campus and overseas, is the Assistant Director's goal.

Master's International students should notify the Assistant Director as soon as they receive their official assignment. The Assistant Director will then provide a checklist of items to complete before leaving campus. The purpose of this checklist is to try to ensure that everything goes smoothly on campus during overseas service.

In order to be eligible to earn professional practice credit during Peace Corps, students should maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better and be making satisfactory progress in the Degree Program. While Peace Corps Volunteers will have significant responsibilities during their training and service, they must also submit reports and work samples to the Stevenson Center. These items serve as the primary basis for internship grades. This manual includes an explanation of these requirements and guidelines for their completion. These reports will not only provide information to the Stevenson Center about your experience but also give you the raw material for a résumé and work portfolio to show to prospective employers. Finally, the reports and evaluations will help the Stevenson Center Director and the Stevenson Center Board make future decisions about Program curricula and policies.

Pre-Departure Tasks

It is the **responsibility of the students** to complete a **comprehensive checklist** available from the Assistant Director before they depart for Peace Corps. What follows are examples of the items to complete. As soon as you have your Peace Corps assignment, please request the checklist from the Assistant Director.

Registration

Master's International students register through Study Abroad and must submit a **Study Abroad Application**. Registration through Study Abroad fits with the Peace Corps experience and makes financial sense. The course number and number of credits for the professional practice experience vary by Department and by students' individual Plans of Study and financial aid status. Students may also need to register for capstone or thesis credits. Please consult the Assistant Director and Graduate Coordinator before putting your registration request in writing. For the professional practice, a letter grade will be assigned the Fall and Spring semesters of the student's first year of training and service, provided that the student enrolls in 5-8 hours of ECO 498, POS 498, or SOC 498 in total. (No more than 20% of a master's degree Plan of Study may be earned from professional practice hours.) You will need to submit **Applications for Tuition Waivers** for each semester you plan to be registered.

Health Insurance

You will continue to receive and be billed for Student Health Insurance during the semesters you are registered for professional practice unless you waive the insurance and submit documentation that you are covered under another insurance policy and/or Peace Corps. You *must* have health insurance or Peace Corps coverage during each *entire* semester that you are registered for professional practice. You also need to submit a **Professional Practice Health Insurance Certification form** to the Stevenson Center.

Graduation

You should complete your **Plan of Study** before departing. If you plan to graduate while serving, you need to submit the **Application for Completion of Degree** and related fee to the Graduate School.

It is the student's responsibility to complete all necessary paperwork, as outlined in the checklist, before departing for Peace Corps. Failure to do so may result in lack of registration, being billed for tuition and/or fees, or other administrative problems.

Professional Practice Tasks

Each of the following items and forms must be completed and submitted to the Stevenson Center Assistant Director during your Peace Corps service. Your grade will be based upon the timely and professional completion of these tasks. Any forms below are examples of materials currently in use, but they may change over time. The Assistant Director will provide updates of these materials to students as adjustments are made. *Also, if you have not already finished your required capstone project or thesis, the Stevenson Center strongly encourages you to maintain regular communication with your project advisor or committee chair with the goal of timely completion.*

Bi-Monthly Reports with Work Samples

Every two months you will be expected to complete a typed bi-monthly report and return it to the Stevenson Center Assistant Director. The format varies by report, as described below, but in each you should include a specific description of your work activities and any relevant feedback about the Master's International Program. You will submit four of these reports and a final report. For ALL reports, use the format below, *labeled with question numbers and/or subheadings*, so that it is clear that all questions have been addressed.

If applicable, you should submit work samples with each report. You should refer to these work samples in your bi-monthly report, explaining your role in their completion. Your work samples could include copies of reports, newsletters, manuals, grants, questionnaires, brochures, news clippings about your organization or work, printouts of web pages you have helped compose, etc. You should, of course, keep copies of work samples for yourself to include in your work portfolio.

In order to help you in compiling your bi-monthly reports, you may want to complete weekly log reports to help catalog your activities. Peace Corps Volunteers often have difficulty keeping track of the myriad of activities in which they are involved. In your weekly log, identify and describe your activities this week and note the percentage of your time spent on each. A brief weekly log report, for your own records, could help you in composing your bi-monthly reports and help with the separate reports that Peace Corps requires. Likewise, develop a system for tracking your work samples so that they will be easy to pull together every two months.

For each report, include the following information in a cover page:

Name: _____ Peace Corps Country: _____
Student's Mailing Address: _____ Host Organization: _____
Phone Work: _____
Home: _____
Report Number (1, 2, 3, 4, or FINAL): _____
Dates of Service Covered in This Report:
From: ____/____/____ to ____/____/____ (Month/Day/Year)

Reports 1-4 (ANSWER ALL FOUR QUESTIONS IN EACH OF THE FIRST FOUR REPORTS)

1. List and explain your major work activities for the past two months. Include specifics about what you did, when, with whom, for how long, etc. Attach any relevant work samples.
2. Thinking about your work activities, name and describe what you consider to be up to three major accomplishments for this period. Explain your selection.
3. Describe any aspects of your Peace Corps experience during this period that could be improved.
4. REPORT 1: Submit a one-paragraph profile that describes what you will be doing as a Peace Corps Volunteer, for use in press releases and/or other marketing materials. Include a sentence or two of biographical information, highlighting your previous education and experiences, and write in the third person. What follows is a sample, and the Assistant Director can provide additional examples as needed:

“NAME is serving with Peace Corps in COUNTRY. A graduate student in the Department of Politics and Government, he is building on his coursework at Illinois State University and his experiences as an off-campus graduate assistant with McLean County Community Compact to support a non-governmental organization called Youth Center in his country of service. He is also teaching “Country Studies” at the Kostanai Social and Technical University. Prior to Peace Corps, he spent two summers as a faculty advisor for the Global Young Leaders Conference in Washington, D.C., a non-profit organization seeking to inspire high school students from around the country to reach their full leadership potential. A member of Phi Beta Kappa, NAME has a bachelor’s degree in History and Political Science from Colorado State University.”

REPORT 2: Thinking about your answer to item number 3 above, what steps could you, your counterpart, and/or the Assistant Director take to make improvements?

REPORT 3: What skills/abilities have you acquired to date? Which skills/abilities might you need to enhance your future performance?

REPORT 4: Submit a brief (2-3 paragraphs) newsletter article about your Peace Corps experiences and accomplishments to date, for use in press releases and/or other marketing materials. Please write in the third person for a general audience. Also submit a photo of yourself in service, preferably an action shot, with a complete caption. Like the article, the photo may be used in Stevenson Center marketing materials.

Final Report

Section 1. Peace Corps Accomplishments

- A. List your major projects to date, and evaluate your progress and the community/agency’s progress toward achieving its objectives.
- B. What has been your major contribution to the community/agency? How is the community/agency different for you having been there?
- C. Which methods or approaches have been useful to you in achieving these successes?
- D. What were the main problems, “roadblocks,” that you faced? How did you deal with them?
- E. What would you do differently if you had your first months of Peace Corps training and service to do over again?
- F. What advice would you give to Master’s International students just starting their Peace Corps training and service? *Please note that this advice will be shared with or distributed to current/future Master’s International students.*

Section 2. Support during Peace Corps

- A. How did Peace Corps staff contribute to your fieldwork? Do you have recommendations for future support?
- B. Did Illinois State University faculty or staff assist you? If so, please describe briefly.
- C. Have you been receiving adequate support from your community/agency?
- D. What would have improved the support that you received at your site?

Section 3. Professional Development

- A. What are some of the important themes, lessons, policy questions, etc. suggested by your Peace Corps experience? What have you learned, about yourself and your host organization/community?
- B. What linkages do you see between your prior academic and professional background, and your Peace Corps experience?
- C. What was the most valuable part of your on-campus preparation for Peace Corps? What was least valuable?
- D. Did you attend a professional conference while in this program? If so, how valuable did you find the conference(s)?
- E. What didn't you get the opportunity to learn that you would like to know?
- F. How have your coursework and Peace Corps experience shaped your future career goals?
- G. Attach your revised résumé, incorporating your Peace Corps experience and tailored to the requirements for the position you are seeking after graduation and Peace Corps.
- H. If/when complete, submit a copy of your capstone project or thesis to the Stevenson Center. Also, if your capstone or thesis relates to your Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps Master's International Program requests that you share a copy with Peace Corps staff in your Country of Service.

Section 4. Program Improvements

- A. What suggestions do you have for improving the courses, workshops, and other learning opportunities in the program? What should be kept? What should be removed/changed? Should the time students spend on campus before Peace Corps remain one year or be lengthened by a semester? *Please note that feedback about specific courses may be compiled and shared with faculty, but your confidentiality will be maintained.*
- B. Complete the post-program Learning Inventory available at <http://www.stevensoncenter.org/current/>.
- C. Please provide any ideas that would improve the Master's International Program, including ideas relating to field support, course preparation, communications, or any other component. Thank you for your input.

Grading

This course is not a guaranteed A. To the contrary, students must complete the required reports in a professional and timely manner. These reports, along with the submitted work samples, will determine students' grades for the internship course. The Stevenson Center Assistant Director, in consultation with Department Graduate Coordinator and/or Department Chair as needed, will determine the grades. Any feedback on Stevenson Center programs that you do not feel comfortable including in your reports may be shared directly with the Director.