Community partners foster learning in a community setting by opening their doors to student service-learners. As such, community partners are integral parts of service-learning efforts. Partners can come from all parts of a community: non-profits, businesses, hospitals, schools, shelters, utility providers, tribes, government agencies and many more! Establishing and maintaining good relationships between faculty, students, and community partners is critical to success of all components and stages of service-learning.

**Establishing Relationships:**
There is no one-size-fits-all approach to establishing and maintaining partnerships between the community and the university.

- Either the faculty member or community organization can propose a service-learning project
- Each service-learning experience has its own goals, needs, and challenges, which should be reflected in the design and type of partnership arrangements
- General Tips:
  - brainstorm service-learning project ideas and potential partners early
  - be positive in how you approach organizations or faculty members:
    - let the organization define their needs and wants
    - remember that service-learning is a two-way link where both the student and organization benefit
  - keep expectations realistic for a one or two semester timeframes and student abilities

Partnerships fall on a spectrum between transactional and transformative. The more transformative the project is, the more resources, time, skills, and commitment it generally requires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited Awareness</th>
<th>Limited Expectations</th>
<th>Structured Involvement</th>
<th>Joint Project Development</th>
<th>Co-educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transformative</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Four Types of Service-Learning Courses:** The course’s purpose or the organization’s specific needs will determine the nature of the relationship between the faculty and community organization as well as the structure of the service-learning project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DisciplineBased</th>
<th>Project or Problem Based</th>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Community-Based Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• students are engaged with an organization for an entire semester</td>
<td>• students act as &quot;consultants&quot; for specific projects</td>
<td>• upper-level students use experience/education to create a project or provide service</td>
<td>• community partners, faculty, &amp; students create a research project to address community need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing the Relationship

✓ Clearly state student expectations and the needs and constraints of both the organization and the academic faculty
✓ Agree upon student roles and logistics like funding, transportation or student scheduling
✓ Establish ground rules for communication, feedback, and participation
✓ Create plans to manage and mitigate risk, deal with potential problems, and address concerns
  • Ensure these plans and documents are compliant with regulations of both the university and organization as well as any applicable local, state, or federal laws

Maintaining the Relationship

✓ Communicate often and provide periodic feedback and “status checks” to both the faculty partner and the organization’s representative(s)
✓ Support each other: allow faculty to participate in the organization’s events and involve representatives from the organization in classroom activities
✓ Monitor the overall service-learning activity’s progress and accomplishments
✓ Address problems early and take corrective action to ensure student progress and project success

After the Service-Learning Experience

✓ Communicate any successes, failures, or issues felt by faculty, students, or the partner during the service-learning experience
✓ Be positive and constructive in your review: think about take-away lessons and ways that good experiences can be repeated or improved upon and challenges better addressed

References and Further Resources


