What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a teaching strategy that integrates relevant community service with coursework. Service learning combines meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. This resource guide is designed to provide a very brief introduction to a variety of service learning principles and ideas. For more in-depth information visit our Service Learning Website for more resource guides, literature resources, and website links.

Service Learning Courses have 4 Basic Components:

• the service activity that meets a real community need
• service is integrated into coursework and enhances the curriculum
• courses include meaningful reflection activities
• encourages a sense of civic responsibility in students

Service Learning Concepts:

• Service learning is not volunteerism, internships, or practicums
• is on the spectrum of experiential education, where people learn by doing
• meets a community need, which is defined by the community
• balance between the service and the learning that results from the service
• connects university resources with local community needs and knowledge

Service Learning Foundational Ideas:

• has roots in pragmatism, progressive education, organizational development, and democratic theory
• draws on ideas promoted by thinkers like John Dewey, Karl Lewin, and David Kolb
• is built on the notion that universities have responsibilities to their local community
• gives students opportunities in experiential education and to make a difference in local communities

Benefits:

Students: gain job experience, connect with community issues, better engage in coursework

Faculty: engage with community, practice innovative pedagogy, increase student participation and awareness

Community Partners: connect with university resources, build relationships to find solutions to community needs,

Service Learning Positively Impacts Students’

✓ Sense of civic responsibility
✓ Career choice and direction
✓ Critical thinking and writing skills
✓ Classroom discussions
✓ GPA

Challenges: Service learning has challenges and unique needs. All service-learning requires a significant investment of time and resources by the faculty, students, and community partners; a sustained and positive relationship between the university and the community; and mature student involvement.

Not all service learning projects succeed. Be prepared to turn failures into positive learning experiences through the use of effective reflection and your framing of students’ experiences.
What Does Service Learning Look Like?

Models of Service Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline-Based</th>
<th>Project-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • student presence in organization  
  • Ex: tutoring students; involvement in mentoring program | • Students as “consultants for a project  
  • Ex: designing an informational brochure for a nature center |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Community-Based Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • upper-level students complete a project by drawing on years of education and experience  
  • Ex: creating a public relations campaign | • create research project to address community need  
  • Ex: design research project to find causes of poverty in the community |

10 Principles for Successful Service Learning:

1. Grades are assigned for classroom activities, not the service activity
2. Do not compromise academic rigor
3. Establish learning objectives
4. Establish criteria for service placements
5. Use educationally sound learning strategies
6. Prepare students for learning from the community
7. Minimize distinction between the community learning and classroom learning
8. Rethink the faculty instructional role
9. Prepare for variation in student learning outcomes
10. Maximize community responsibility of the course


Cognitive Understanding

As you think about service learning, it is important to remember how knowledge is attained, analyzed, and applied at different levels of cognitive understanding. There are many models illustrating this idea; a basic version of Bloom’s Taxonomy is provided to the right.

- Use Bloom’s Taxonomy to design curriculum, teaching tools, service activities, and reflection processes
- Contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning or visit their website for more resources and information about this topic.
References and Further Reading


These books and more can be found in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning lending library.