

## ***AN INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE-LEARNING***

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Facilitators

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### **AGENDA**

#### **DEFINING SERVICE-LEARNING**

1. Service-learning refers to community engagement that is part of a (1) for-credit course and (2) is mutually beneficial to the student and the community.
2. Three models: fully-integrated, subset of a course, extra 1-credit option

#### **GOALS AND IMPACTS:**

1. Five Major Service-Learning Goals (UNI American Democracy Project)
  - To help students learn from and about the community.
  - To help students enhance their academic learning by applying concepts from their classes.
  - To help students contribute to their community.
  - To help students learn they can make a difference.
  - To build interest in being an engaged and responsible citizen.
2. "Service-Learning Goals" (attachment #1)
3. "Impact of Service-Learning on Students" (attachment #2)

#### **MAJOR DECISIONS:**

1. Fully integrated project or subset of class or add-on.
2. You choose topic area or give a selected list to choose from or engage students in a decision-making process.
3. With fully-integrated option, entire class or groups.  
If groups, same topic or each with different area.

#### **ITEMS FOR A SYLLABUS**

"Exemplary Service-Learning Syllabi" (attachment #3)

#### **SELECTING ENGAGEMENT AREAS WITH STUDENTS:**

1. "Types of Organizations" (attachment 4)
2. "Roles to Take" (attachment 5)
3. "Some Helpful Steps" (attachment 6)

#### **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND PITFALLS**

"A Practical Road Map for Service Learning: Overcoming Obstacles to a Successful Service Learning Experience" (attachment #7)

#### **REFLECTION:**

1. Using Reflection for Service Learning and Community Engagement Activities
2. Some Resources for Exploring Service Learning
3. Some Resources for reflection (handout)

*"...we learned that service is the rent we paid for living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time." --Marian Wright Edelman, 1992*

## **FIVE MAJOR SERVICE-LEARNING GOALS**

(UNI American Democracy Project)

To help students learn from and about the community.

To help students enhance their academic learning by applying concepts from their classes.

To help students contribute to their community.

To help students learn they can make a difference.

To build interest in being an engaged and responsible citizen.

## **SERVICE-LEARNING GOALS**

Source: The Big Dummy's Guide to Service Learning <http://www.fiu.edu/~time4chg/Library/bigdummy.html>

- Enhance student learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action.
- To fill unmet needs in the community through direct service which is meaningful and necessary.
- To enable students to help others, give of themselves, and enter into caring relationships with others.
- To assist students to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world.
- To enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of your students.
- To develop an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty, and the community.
- To give students the opportunity to do important and necessary work.
- To increase the civic and citizenship skills of students.
- To assist agencies to better serve their clients and benefit from the infusion of enthusiastic volunteers.
- To expose students to societal inadequacies and injustices and empower students to remedy them.
- To develop a richer context for student learning.
- To provide cross-cultural experiences for students.
- To better prepare students for their careers / continuing education.
- To foster a re-affirmation of students' careers choices.
- To keep them in class and serve as a tool for retention.
- To give student greater responsibility for their learning.
- To help students know how to get things done!
- To impact local issues and local needs.
- To do something. Anything.

[http://www.sonoma.edu/cce/faculty/develop\\_community\\_partnerships.html](http://www.sonoma.edu/cce/faculty/develop_community_partnerships.html) Downloaded 3.31.15

## Impact of Service-Learning on Students

### Goals for students in service-learning classes may include:

- Students have the opportunity to do what they are learning in class through experiential education
- Students have deeper understanding of self and their involvement in the community
- Students are more aware of issues in the community and develop a sense of responsibility to address those issues
- Students are exposed to diverse communities therefore dispelling misconceptions
- Students have a shared experience and opportunity to develop classroom cohesiveness
- Students develop civic responsibility and plan for future involvement

### Research has shown that service-learning impacts students.

1. Learning Outcomes
  - Increases academic learning
  - Increases ability to apply what they've learned in real world
  - Some studies show a positive impact and some no impact on grades and GPA
  - Increases critical thinking and problem analysis skills
  - Some studies show a positive impact and some no impact on cognitive moral development
2. Personal Outcomes
  - Increases personal efficacy
  - Increases understanding of identity
  - Supports spiritual growth
  - Supports moral development
  - Supports interpersonal development such as team work, leadership, and communication skills
3. Social Outcomes
  - Reduces or supports stereotyping
  - Facilitates cultural and racial understanding
  - Increases social responsibility, activism and citizenship skills
  - Increases commitment to service
  - Service in college is associated with involvement in service after graduation
4. Career Development
5. Relationship with institution
  - Stronger faculty relationships
  - Improves student satisfaction with college
  - Increases graduation rates<sup>2</sup>
6. Impact of service-learning classes with a political focus
  - Both students with an interest in politics and those without experience significant gains in just about every dimension of every civic learning
  - Students with little prior interest in the political process have larger and more consistent gains in civic learning
  - No impact on political ideology
  - No impact on political party affiliation<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>From At a Glance: What We Know About the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities.

©Janet S. Eyler, Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Christine M. Stenson, and Charlene J. Gray. Contact the CCE to request a viewing.

<sup>2</sup>The Place of Political Learning in College Anne Colby. ©Spring/Summer 2008 Peer Review. Contact the CCE for a hard copy of the entire Peer Review issue.

<http://www.wm.edu/as/charlescenter/scholars/sharpe/faculty/faculty-involvement/coursedev/models/index.php>

From William and Mary, downloaded 3.331.15

### **Exemplary Service-Learning Syllabi:**

- Include service as an expressed goal
- Clearly describe how the service experience will be measured and what will be measured
- Describe the nature of the service placement and/or project
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the placement and/or service project, (e.g., transportation, time requirements, community contacts, etc.)
- Define the need(s) the service placement meets
- Specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned in the placement/project (journal, papers, presentations)
- Present course assignments that link the service placement and the course content
- Include a description of the reflective process
- Include a description of the expectations for the public dissemination of students' work

## TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

(These are just some examples.)

(Source: UNI Leadership Studies Program)

### BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL:

Examples of organizations:

Future Farmers of America, 4-H, Junior Achievement, Explorer Scouts, Rotary, Kiwanis, Jaycees, Student branch of \_\_\_\_\_.

Examples of things to do:

- o Become an active member.
- o Help with publicity and recruitment.
- o Ask what help the organization needs.
- o Help organize activities.
- o Propose a service or activity.
- o Organize group of students to attend conference.

### EDUCATION/YOUTH

Examples of organizations:

All levels and areas: pre-school, elementary, middle, high school, voc-tech, GED Center.

Examples of things to do:

- o Share material from LEAD UNI 1998.
- o Lead a bicycling club at a youth center.
- o Tutor a GED student in reading.
- o Write a column for the school newspaper.
- o Teach a skill you have (photography, swimming, etc.)
- o Coach a local team.
- o Assist your teacher in getting information on a topic.
- o Read to a student with vision problems.

### ENVIRONMENT

Examples of organizations:

Sierra Club, Practical Farmers of America, city recycling center.

Examples of things to do:

- o Assist your local Humane Society or zoo.
- o Present to students on topic of pet overpopulation or on endangered species.  
(Or provide information to your teacher on these or other topics.)
- o Keep your senator informed of environmental issues.
- o Participate in a cleanup project in your park or neighborhood. Or organize a cleanup.
- o Serve as a trail guide in a park.
- o Ask your school to participate in recycling and offer to help organize how to do it.

### HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Examples of organizations:

Boys and Girls Club, Hospice, YWCA, Food Bank, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Worker House, hospitals, public health agencies.

Examples of things to do:

- o Serve as ambulance aide.
- o Assist crime victims.
- o Deliver meals to a homebound person.
- o Transport homebound people to stores, etc., or run errands for them.
- o Check people in at a blood bank.
- o Visit children in a hospital.
- o Help guests at a homeless shelter.
- o Shovel snow or mow lawn for an elderly person.
- o Help supervise a game room for children in a day care center or hospital or . . . .

### POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL

Examples of organizations:

City, county, state, regional, or national government. Political parties. Neighborhood Watch and other neighborhood associations such as those coordinated by the Village Initiative (represented by one of our panel members). Activist or advocacy groups such as Amnesty International, NOW, a union, a civil rights group, child welfare organization, Practical Farmers of Iowa, etc.

Examples of things to do:

- o Any of the direct service tasks listed on previous page.
- o Write letter to editor of local newspaper on a topic you are concerned about.
- o Join a campaign for better bus service.
- o Write or call your legislator about an issue that concerns you.
- o Become active in your neighborhood association.
- o Participate in voter registration campaign.
- o Help an organization do a community survey by door-knocking or tabulating results.

## ROLES TO TAKE

(Source: UNI Leadership Studies Program)

### Engage in direct service to individuals. Examples:

- o Become a peer helper.
- o Tutor a student.

### Engage in direct service for an organization. Examples:

- o Answer phones.
- o Do mailings.
- o Write letters.
- o Work on a hotline.
- o Research issues.
- o Serve as a receptionist; greet visitors.

### Become an officer of a school group. Examples:

- o Choir leader
- o Captain of sports team
- o President of Spanish Club
- o Class officer
- o Director of lighting for a theatre group
- o (Or assist an officer.)

### Serve on a committee or task force. Examples:

- o Homecoming Committee
- o Church youth committee
- o DARE
- o Peer Helpers.

### Serve on a board. Examples:

- o Teen Trust
- o Leadership board
- o Student council
- o Board for a community group

### Initiate a project or committee. Be a catalyst! Lead Others. Examples:

(Note: This can be done also within the other roles listed above.)

- o Middle school students in Minnesota organized a half-day game and food fair for elementary students.
- o Students at Cedar Falls High School formed a dialogue group on racial issues.
- o UNI Student Leadership Association began a mentor program (Panther Pals) for new students.
- o Students from an inner-city neighborhood organized a panel on urban problems and made presentations to church groups and service clubs.
- o A group of high school students formed a committee to try to decrease the number of students smoking and littering the school grounds with cigarette butts.
- o (See also #5 on third page of this section.)

## **SOME HELPFUL STEPS**

(Source: UNI Leadership Studies Program)

### 1. CHOOSE AN AREA.

Identify a need or topic or cause that you care about. Examples:

The environment, teen-age smoking, racial discrimination, sex discrimination, AIDS, the homeless, poverty (and the income gap), illiteracy, violence, human rights, deforestation, unsafe products, air and water pollution, alcoholism and other drug problems, potholes.

### 2. SELECT A FOCUS.

Determine which aspect of the need, topic, or cause interests you the most.

### 3. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PROGRAMS.

Determine what programs already exist in your community to address this need:

- 1) Check with your counselors, career office, teachers, and peers.
- 2) Check with an information and referral agency.
- 3) Look it up in a community resources directory or telephone directory or newspaper.
- 4) Check with your local volunteer center, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- 5) Call UNI Leadership Studies Program or Program in Public Policy or other unit that may address your topic. UNI telephone information # 319-273-2311.

### 4. SELECT A PROGRAM OR ORGANIZATION.

- 1) Request information from the organization.
- 2) Do an interview.  
Be prepared with information about the organization. Ask what their volunteer needs are.
- 3) Determine if their need matches your skills and time available. In some cases, you could suggest something they have not thought of or haven't had time to do.

### 5. OR CREATE A PROGRAM.

You might identify a need or area which your community is not yet addressing.

Here are some useful steps to take.

- 1) First, be sure you have done your homework so you don't invent the wheel.  
Find out what is being done in other cities and states. Talk to professionals. Search the Internet.  
Ask your librarian for help. Contact national organizations for information.
- 2) Check sources on how to start a project or organization and talk with others who have done so.
- 3) Develop a planning group of people who share your concern.  
Look for a mix of people, for example, a mix of types from the Myers-Briggs Inventory.  
You need a mix of people who are innovative, good organizers, good at details, capable of follow-through, persistent, etc. One way to recruit is through a human interest story in the newspaper-radio/TV; tell about the need and the type of people you are trying to recruit.
- 4) Develop a clear mission statement or statement of purpose. This helps prevent confusion. Your mission may evolve as you go along but you need to start with one.  
The mission also helps in future recruitment of members or volunteers and with funding sources if you decide to raise money.
- 5) Find out if any organizations want to cooperate with you on your project.
- 6) Try a small-scale pilot program first.

NOTE: Be realistic about the time and energy it takes to start something new.

#### NOTE

Be sure to treat your volunteer work as a job. The organization and people for whom you volunteer are counting on you.

## A Practical Road Map for Service Learning Overcoming Obstacles to a Successful Service Learning Experience

Allen Hays  
Director of Graduate Program in Public Policy  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 2006

### Obstacle # 1 Student Attitudes

1. Some students do not welcome a service learning class eagerly.
2. Far too many UNI classes involve a limited student commitment – show up, take notes, do the readings (maybe) and take the exams.
3. Some students resent a structured time commitment outside of class. They perceive it as an "add on" that should result in less work in class. You may take a hit on student evaluations because of this, so make sure your department head understands this and supports you.
4. Student resistance is less in majors where service learning is a routine expectation as part of professional training; more in majors where few if any classes involve service learning.

#### Strategies

1. State service learning obligations clearly at the beginning. Encourage students who don't want to meet them to drop the class.
2. Spend some time discussing the value of service learning within the context of this specific class. Why is it important and how will it enhance their learning?
3. Spend some time putting the project in context, to get them excited about its importance to the community.
4. Don't have unrealistic expectations that all students will share your enthusiasm or value the extra work that you are putting out on their behalf.

### Obstacle # 2 Student Schedules

1. Extensive student work hours are the norm, not the exception, at UNI. Scheduling service learning around these work hours, as well as around their classes, is a constant challenge.
2. Often, the times most convenient for students don't correspond to the times that community agencies or groups really need them to work.

#### Strategies

1. Clear expectations are, once again, important. Students with large work burdens, or with employers who are not flexible, probably should consider another class. Students must be willing to adjust their schedules to accommodate class requirements. Where possible, give students choices of different times that they can serve. Don't make all service obligations on MWF or on T TH.
2. Having different projects that students can work on also enhances flexibility, although it complicates logistics and supervision.

### Obstacle # 3 Finding worthwhile student projects that can be done within the short time frame of a semester but which effectively utilize the total amount of person hours available.

1. A 15 week semester is a short calendar time within which to accomplish a project, especially if you spend 2-3 weeks at the beginning getting the project set up.
2. Each student should probably not be asked for more than a 25 hour commitment for the semester.
3. On the other hand, if you multiply 25 hours times 30 students in your class, it yields 750 hours, which is a *huge* number of person hours for any project to soak up in such a brief period.
4. Students have limited skills and expertise, so this limits the tasks and projects for which they will be useful to community entities.
5. Supervising students requires agency staff time, which may be in short supply.
6. Agency schedules rarely correspond with academic schedules – making the two mesh is a constant challenge.
7. Many faculty members have limited, if any, contacts in the community. This makes it difficult for them to locate worthwhile projects.

continued



## Strategies

1. Multiple projects may work better than single projects for a whole class. Of course, this requires more contacts and coordination on the part of the faculty member.
2. The faculty member must balance sensitivity to agency needs with her or his commitment to providing a worthwhile student experience.
3. The faculty member should start scanning the community for projects, and talking with the relevant community actors, well in advance of the semester in which the course is to be taught.
4. Finding projects gets easier with subsequent groups of students, because contacts have already been made and agencies are aware of what you are doing.

## **Obstacle # 4 Most faculty are accustomed to being managers of ideas, not managers of people.**

1. The faculty member who teaches a service learning course will spend a lot of time on the nuts and bolts of scheduling and project management. This is not something that PhD programs train one to do. Unless the faculty member has done work outside academia, these skills will have to be developed.
2. Considerable flexibility and patience are required. Numerous adjustments from original plans and expectations are inevitable.
3. Students often become impatient when you make changes mid-semester. They expect faculty to have everything planned out in advance and will rate you as "disorganized" on their evaluations if you don't follow your schedule.
4. The faculty member should be prepared to spend a lot of time outside normal work hours to supervise projects.

## Strategies

1. Try to anticipate organizational problems and have plans to deal with them.
2. Communicate to students that flexibility in adjusting to changed circumstances is a positive skill, not a deficit. Part of the service learning experience is learning how messy the real world is!
3. Faculty should view service learning as an opportunity to expand their own skills and broaden their horizons. You say you've never learned how to lay out a student service schedule on a spreadsheet? Well, maybe it is time that you did!

## **Obstacle # 5 Evaluating students**

1. In fulfilling their service obligations, students will range from very conscientious to very indifferent and irresponsible. Criteria for satisfactory performance must be developed and clearly communicated to students.
2. Some students will believe that participating in service learning entitles them to be casual about class attendance and readings. Evaluation must be designed to discourage such casual attitudes.
3. UNI students are pretty good at regurgitating materials from readings and lectures, and they are pretty good at writing up experiences that they have outside of class. What they are generally lousy at is integrating the course materials with their experiences, so that the learning from one reinforces the other. One of the great values of service learning is that it teaches them to do this, but it is a struggle to get them to be successful at this unfamiliar activity.

## Strategies

1. Evaluation should include *serious* sanctions for unexcused absences from service learning obligations. One of the things they should learn from this is responsibility.
2. Evaluation should create clear obligations to read the material and attend class.
3. Faculty should offer guidance in the process of relating course materials to the service learning experience. Grading of written assignments should be based on student success at integration and reflection.

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