FACULTY GUIDE

ACADEMIC

SERVICE-LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - ST. LOUIS

UMSL STUDENTS
of SERVICE
linking university and community

Center for Teaching and Learning

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WHAT IS ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING?

Definition:

"Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that intentionally incorporates community service into the curriculum to enhance instruction and reflection, to teach civic responsibility, and to strengthen communities. It's an increasingly effective component of the educational experiences offered to students at the University of Missouri – St. Louis, an increasingly important expression of the institution's commitment to improve our surrounding communities, and a focal point within our Strategic Plan."
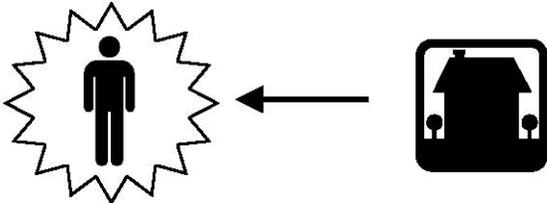
- Thomas F. George, Chancellor

**Differentiation:**

Volunteerism - Service objective with the intent that the activity benefits the community.
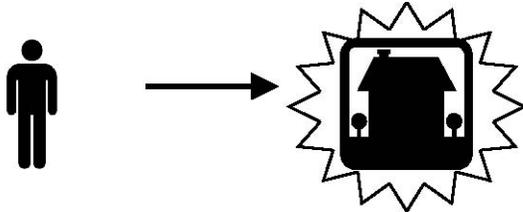
Internships - Learning objective with the intent that the activity benefits the individual.

Service-Learning – Combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity benefits and/or supports both the recipient and the provider of the service
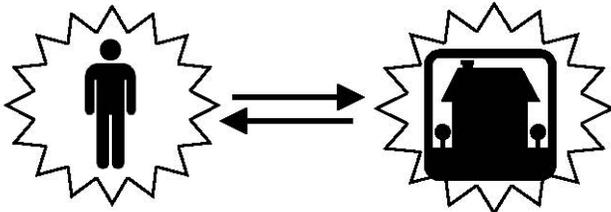
BENEFITS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Students:
- Engages students in active learning that demonstrates the relevance and importance of academic work
- Enhances academic achievement, critical thinking, tolerance of diversity, and civic responsibility
- Improves interpersonal skills that are vital in achieving success in professional spheres
- Increases awareness of current social issues as they relate to academic areas of interest

Faculty:
- Expands role of educator from giver of knowledge to facilitator of knowledge
- Inspires innovative teaching methods
- Broadens areas for research and publication related to current trends and issues
- Promotes democratic citizenship and leadership

Community:
- Provides human resources to address needs of local communities
- Involves community partners as co-educators in providing rich learning experiences for students
- Allows the energy and enthusiasm of college students to contribute to addressing community needs
- Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation in students who will be tomorrow's volunteers and civic leaders
- Creates potential for additional partnership and collaboration with the campus

Institution:
- Enriches and enlivens teaching as students are active participants in learning
- Builds mutually beneficial partnerships with the local community
- Creates new areas for research and scholarship and increases faculty opportunities for professional recognition and reward
- Extends and leverages campus and community resources for the common good
- Demonstrates the civic mission of higher education to local communities and reinforces the value of the scholarship of engagement

PREPARATION

(Time Frame: Pre and beginning of course)

Ultimately the community agency representative, faculty member, and students should enter into a written agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities of each party. Steps to reach t his goal may include...

Faculty:

1. Express your interest to the Center for Teaching and Learning to learn about UMSL Students of Service resources to connect with the surrounding community.

2. Add an academic service-learning component to your syllabus.

   a. Examples: http://www.compact.org/syllabi/

3. Survey your students to get ideas of projects they would like to do.

4. Research local nonprofit organizations independently or contact Holly Ingraham at the Community Partnership Project who can help find community needs compatible with course objectives.

5. Provide assistance and resources for student preparation.

6. Establish and develop a relationship with a community organization

   a. Step by step tips: http://www.crfusa.org/act/act.html

Students must understand what is expected of them, what they can expect to accomplish with the service activity, and how the service activity is related to the course objectives.

Student/Faculty Preparation:

1. Brainstorm ideas for project(s)
2. Conduct research
3. Create necessary materials
4. Fill out pre-experience survey
5. Attend orientation/training if required
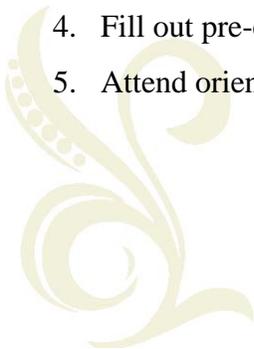
ACTION & ASSESSMENT

(Time Frame: Middle of course/ End of course)

Action

The service project itself. It should be meaningful, link to course objectives, and be monitored for the duration of the activity in order to…

- Maintain a relationship with the community partner
- Address successes, concerns, and needs as they develop
- Evaluate student progress

Assessment

Evaluation of project's value for student learning, meeting course objectives, and overall effectiveness.

Assessment Examples:

- UMSL Students of Service pre/post-survey to evaluate student's civic skills

- Interviews

- Focus groups

- Individual conferences

- Peer assessment

- Assessment Documents (Paper, portfolio, brochure, power point, etc…)

- Presentation of products to community partner

* Record of Hours: UMSL is working to inventory these activities, we are eager to maintain records of the hours that students devote to service activities.

REFLECTION

(Time Frame: Entire course)

Effective service-learning requires more than a report at the end of the semester. Learning is enhanced when students have a variety of opportunities for reflection before, during and after the experience. An ongoing process of reflection (1) examines critical issues related to their service-learning project, (2) connects the service experience to, (3) enhances the development of civic skills and values, and (4) assists students in finding personal relevance in the work.

Examples*:
- Journals
  - (*Personal , dialogue, highlighted, doubleentry, critical incident, threepart*)
- Writing Assignments
  - (*Quotes, reflective essays, directed writings, experimental research paper*)
- Service-Learning Contracts and Logs
- Readings
  - (*Directed readings, ethical case studies*)
- Class Discussions
  - (*Truth is Stranger than Fiction, "It's my bag", Small Group Week, Email discussion groups*)
- Student Portfolios
- Class Presentations
  - (*PowerPoint, theatrical performance, artwork*)

*For full descriptions visit: http://www.umsl.edu/services/cte/instr_support/reflectionstrat.html

Celebration: Appreciation, recognition, and celebration of service are an important part of the academic service-learning experience. Incorporating the community partner into parties, certificates, letters, or presentations to the organizations provides a valuable sense of closure and accomplishment for the student, the organization, and you.

WAYS TO INTEGRATE A SERVICE COMPONENT

There are multiple ways academic service-learning can be integrated into a course. Options in place on other university campuses are listed here.

- **Required Within a Course:** All students are involved in service as an integrated aspect of the course. This expectation is clearly expressed in the syllabus, discussed the first day of class, and supported with a clear rationale about why service is required. When all students are involved, it is simpler to design coursework (assignments, discussions, exam questions) that integrate the service experience. It is also easier to sustain a meaningful community partnership, incorporate site visits, and involve agency personnel as co-educators.

- **Option within a Course:** Students have an option to become involved. A portion of the traditional coursework is replaced by the servicelearning component (i.e. those who participate can write an experimental research paper to document their learning in lieu of a traditional research paper). Instructors identify how they will monitor and communicate with students who elect to participate.

- **Additional Course Credit:** Students earn an additional credit for the service-learning experience and documentation. Some departments create a 1-3 credit course designed explicitly for academic service-learning.

- **First-Year Seminars:** Because service-learning increases peer interaction among students as well as interaction between students and the instructor, it is a pedagogy that is consistent with many goals for first-year success. Even a onetime group service project can introduce students to the local community and to the ethic of service within higher education. Many service experiences, such as teaching study skills to middle school students or reading to youth, can reinforce learning outcomes for a first-year seminar.

- **Thematic Learning Communities:** Two or more courses that are clustered around a particular theme are well suited to service-learning. The experience can be interpreted through a variety of disciplines, and typically this type of learning community provides more flexibility to schedule a service component as an integrated part of coursework.

- **Disciplinary Capstone Projects:** Service-learning is a way to build upon cumulative knowledge in a specific discipline and to demonstrate the integration of that knowledge with real life issues. Experienced students can explore ways that their disciplinary expertise and competencies translate into addressing community needs. Typically, capstone courses are designed for intensive involvement of students in complex problem-solving projects.

- **Community-Based Research:** Involves students in research projects with a community organization. The results of the research are communicated to the agency so that they can be of use to address community needs. Action research and participatory action research take time to build relationships of trust in the community and identify common research agendas. Designing mechanisms to extend this type of research beyond the confines of a semester may be advantageous for both partners.

RESOURCES

Online:

- Campus Compact: http://www.compact.org/initiatives/servicelearning

- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: www.servicelearning.org

Print*:

- **Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction**
  - Kerrissa Heffernan

- **Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit: Reading and Resources for Faculty**
  - Campus Compact

- **Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines**
  - Christine M. Cress, Peter J. Collier, Vicki L. Reitenauer

- **Students as Colleagues: Expanding the Circle of Service-Learning Leadership**
  - Campus Compact

- **Quick Hits for Educating Citizens: Successful Strategies by Award-winning Teachers**
  - James L. Perry & Steven G. Jones

- **Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum: A Resource Book for Service-Learning Faculty in all Disciplines**
  - Richard M. Battistoni

*Print resources are available on loan from the Center for Teaching and Learning (426 Woods Hall).