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SERVICE LEARNING TOOL-KIT



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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Community – People and organizations coming together either through a common bond or stake in a given interest or set of interests. The term community can be self-defined or can be geographic. The term community also connotes a sustainable climate to be created.

Community Engagement- Service-learning engages students in community engagement through collaborative partnerships between the University of North Georgia and community members. Community partners are considered co-educators in the learning process of students. Community engagement is a vehicle for bringing about changes that will improve the health of the community and its members.

Partnership – A close mutual cooperation between parties having shared interests, responsibilities, privileges, and power.

Reflection- An essential component of service-learning that serves to connect the community engagement/service-learning experiences and course content. This process allows students to have better insight about their experience and connections to course materials while developing critical and creative learning skills, communication skills, and a sense of both civic responsibility and multicultural understanding.

Service-Learning - Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community work with course curriculum and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, provide real-work experiences, and strengthen communities.

Student – A student represents all levels of learning in a higher education context, including associate degree, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate level learner.

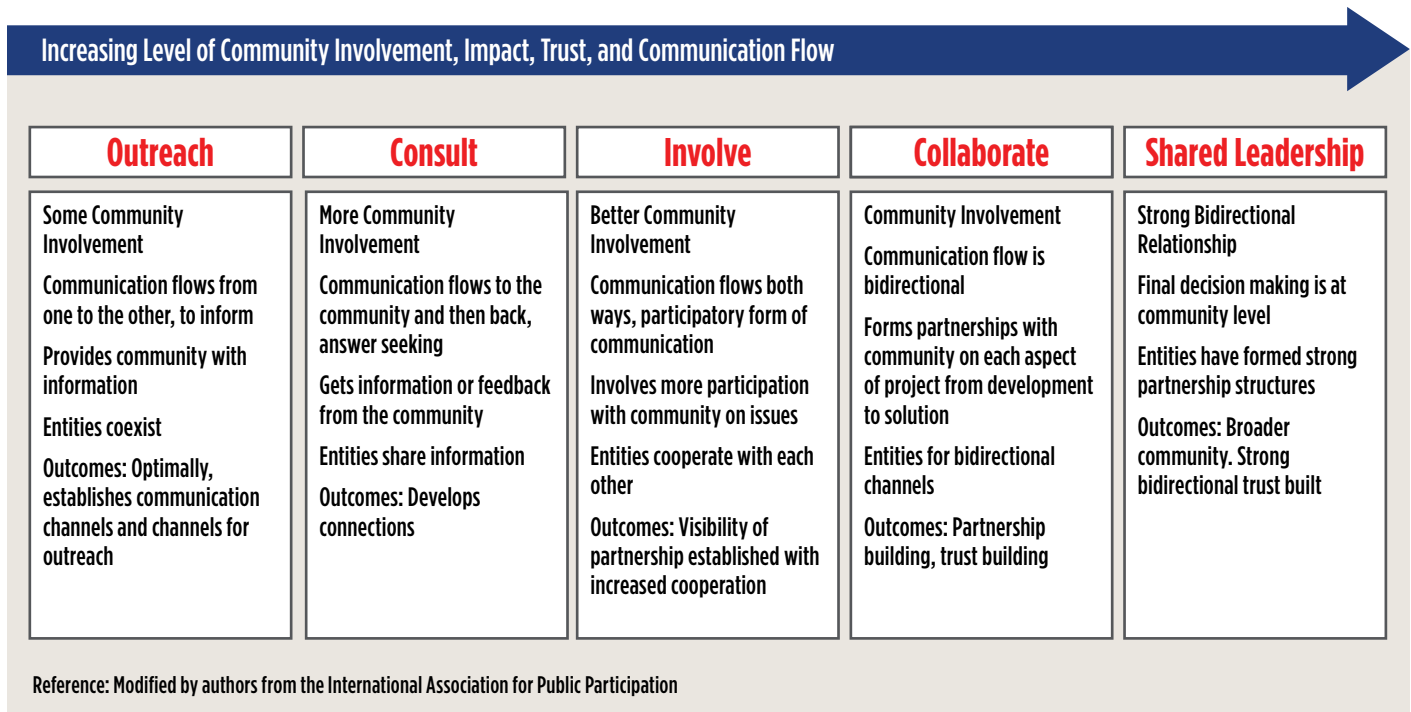


Figure 1.1. Community Engagement Continuum

EXAMPLES:



Vanderbilt University

<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/faculty-toolkit-for-service-learning.pdf>



University of North Carolina

<https://ccps.unc.edu/apples/service-learning-courses/service-learning-resources/>



University of South Florida

<https://www.usf.edu/engagement/faculty/service-learning-toolkit.aspx#anchor19>



Weber University

<https://www.usf.edu/engagement/documents/weber-state-u-toolkit.pdf> (interesting illustrations)



Campus Compact

<https://compact.org/initiatives/advanced-service-learning-toolkit-for-academic-leaders/>



University of South Florida

<https://www.usf.edu/engagement/faculty/service-learning-toolkit.aspx>

A. WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Service-learning is a structured learning experience that combines community work with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection. Students involved in service-learning are expected not only to provide direct service to the community, but also to learn about the context in which the service is provided, address challenges facing the community, the connection between the service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens. This pedagogy focuses on critical, creative and reflective thinking in order to develop students' academic skills, civic responsibility and commitment to the community.

Service-learning is a form of experiential education that:

- is developed, implemented, and evaluated in collaboration with the community;
- responds to community-identified concerns;
- attempts to balance the service that is provided and the learning that takes place to facilitate student learning and growth;
- enhances the curriculum by extending learning beyond the classroom and allowing students to apply what they've learned to real-world situations;
- provides opportunities for critical reflection.
- a means of passing on knowledge, skills and values of their discipline and,
- provides personal commitments to identify commitment to specific social issues, geographic locations, and community partner organizations.

Service-learning is significantly different from other forms of experiential education in that it:

- offers a balance between service and learning objectives;
- places an emphasis on reciprocal learning;
- increases an understanding of the context in which clinical and/or service work occurs;
- focuses on the development of civic skills;
- addresses community identified concerns; and
- involves community in the service-learning design and implementation
- requires collaboration
- promotes rigorous scholarship and active learning
- aids development of professional skills like problem solving, communication, and teamwork
- builds professional connections useful for future internships/field practicums or jobs.
- enables students to critically reflect on their own values and beliefs
- increases students' understanding of course material

HOW IS SERVICE-LEARNING A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE?

Service-learning is considered a “high-impact practice,” or an investment of time and energy over an extended period that has unusually positive effects on student engagement in educationally purposeful behavior. “High impact practices are effective because they:

- allows students to interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters;
- increase the likelihood that students will experience diversity;
- provide frequent feedback about student performance;
- offer opportunities for students to see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus;
- bring students’ values and beliefs into awareness, helping them to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world.



Components of service-learning

Common outcomes of service-learning are:

- higher grades;
- increased persistence rates and levels of academic engagement;
- academic gains (including application of course learning);
- increases in critical thinking and writing skills;
- greater interaction with faculty;
- greater levels of civic behavior and social responsibility;
- understanding of social justice, and sense of self-efficacy;
- gains in moral reasoning;
- greater tolerance and reduced stereotyping;
- greater commitment to a service-oriented career.

Best practices for implementing service-learning as a high-impact practice include:

- creation of opportunities for structured reflection;
- ensuring classroom material relates to the service experience and having established defined learning objectives that align with community goals;
- requirement of enough service hours (i.e., 20-25 hours) to make the experience significant;
- focus on the quality of the service, ensuring that students have direct contact with clients;
- Oversight of activities at the service location;
- Mindfulness of the needs of community partners.

B. FACULTY AND INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and learning: Utilize service-learning as a pedagogy, not simply a learning tool.

As a pedagogy, service-learning transforms both the teaching and learning experience. Service-learning should not be considered a separate course component, but rather integrated throughout the structure of the syllabus and class activities with identified learning objectives and assessment.

Partnerships: Create and maintain authentic partnerships with community organizations.

Meaningful partnerships develop through relationships, which begin with open and regular communication. This includes having conversations with community partners about how each of the course goals and partner needs can be aligned. In addition, course syllabi should be shared with to all community partners with ongoing contact maintained throughout the semester. A discussion between faculty and community partners should determine if and how partners will evaluate students at the end of the semester.

Preparing students: Cultivate the value of service-learning in the course.

Including and integrating information about service-learning in the syllabus helps frame the experience for students and provide a better understanding of what to expect. Sending an email to enrolled students prior to the beginning of the semester can also help clarify information and expectations about service-learning and the course. Time should be devoted during class to prepare students for serving and partnering with communities.

According to the Campus Compact*, exemplary service-learning syllabi should:

- include community service as an expressed goal;
- clearly describe how the community service experience will be measured and what will be measured;
- describe the nature of the community service or project;
- specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the service experience and/or project, (e.g., transportation, time requirements, community contacts, etc.);
- define the need(s) the service meets;
- specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned from the service/project (journal, papers, presentations);
- present course assignments that link the community service and the course content;
- include a description of the reflective process;

and include a description of the expectations for the public dissemination of students' work.

C. SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE COMPONENTS

Each service-learning course is unique and driven by the academic content and goals established for the course. However, there are several basic practices and approaches that are expected to be a part of every service-learning course, which are outlined below.

Relevance: The community experience relates to the academic content of the course and is specifically identified by the community partner as beneficial.

Purpose: The goals and objectives of the service-learning experience are articulated, describing anticipated outcomes for both students and community partners.

Partnership-building: Faculty and instructors are expected to communicate with community partners prior to the start of the semester and throughout the semester. Service should be in and with the community, responding to community identified needs and opportunities and offer an opportunity for recipients to be involved in the evaluation of the service.

Sustained service: Students in the class provide a service to individuals, organizations, schools or other entities in the community, based on the terms set forth by a community organization. Student's commitment to a community organization should be for a minimum of 15 hours in the semester, ideally two-three hours a week over the course of 6 or more weeks.

Preparation: Service-learning experiences for students are detailed. This includes information about the community organization, their role as volunteers, and best practices for working in collaboration with community members.

Integration: Academic content and service experiences are integrated in both the teaching and assessment of student learning. Integrated content and experiences provide students with opportunities for critical reflection, an essential component in deepening learning for students.

Discipline-centered: Knowledge from the discipline enhances the understanding of the service experience and the service experience enhances understanding of academic content.

Rigor and assessment: The integration of service-learning does not compromise the academic rigor of the course and it offers a method to assess the learning derived from the service. Students are evaluated based on the evidence they have provided of what they have learned through academic products and not for participation in the service alone.

D. SERVICES LEARNING COURSE RUBRIC

Service-learning	Weak	Moderate	Strong
Integrates with the academic curriculum	<p>Service-learning is part of the course with loose connections to course content.</p> <p>Student had difficulty connecting the service opportunity to the curriculum.</p>	<p>Service-learning is a teaching technique used in the course but is not fully integrated with all course concepts.</p> <p>Student remained open to the community during the service opportunity and demonstrated positive community awareness</p>	<p>Service-learning is an instructional strategy throughout the course.</p> <p>Student demonstrated substantial interest and awareness of the community's experience, reality and needs; and responded with appropriate behaviors to enhance a future career.</p>
Links to curricular content	Service indirectly and inconsistently links to the curriculum	Service has a clear and direct link to most of the curriculum	Service aligns with and enhances curricular content
Collaborates and partners with the community	Community members are informed of the course, but are minimally involved in the design	Community members act as consultants (rather than collaborators) as the service-learning course develops	Active and direct collaboration with the community by the instructor and student in the design of the course
Meets community identified needs and opportunities	<p>Community needs are not central to the course; the community has been minimally contacted to discuss needs and opportunities.</p> <p>Student showed little awareness of self or community.</p>	<p>Community needs are somewhat central to the course; the community is consulted to discuss needs and opportunities but no further communication is involved.</p> <p>Student identified insight into their perceptions of the community</p>	<p>Community needs are central to the course; the community is involved throughout the course to identify and assess community needs and opportunities.</p> <p>Student demonstrated substantial interest and awareness of the community's experience; and responded with appropriate behavior.</p>
Facilitates active and critical student reflection	Students do not engage in deeper or more critical learning throughout the course and expressed limited connection between themselves and the service opportunity.	Students engage in but do not demonstrate evidence of critical, reflective learning through products or assignments. Student identified basic emotions in explaining the service experience.	Students think, share and create reflective products as evidence of learning. Student demonstrated self-reflection, and personal/professional growth. Tied service-learning to future career and/or personal life.

At a minimum, service-learning courses must meet the following criteria:

- a. the course has a formal, academic curriculum that is rooted in the discipline in which the course is being offered;
- b. the course contains a set of organized community-based learning activities through which students directly serve a constituency as a means to address an identified community need; and
- c. the course provides structured opportunities for students to critically connect their service activities to the course curriculum.

A. COURSE PLANNING TIMELINE

Year before:

- Propose new course designation and title; identify course goals and objectives.
- Research possible community partners; begin developing relationships.

For assistance with course design, help with navigating administrative and structural challenges, funding ideas, or identification and introduction to potential partners, you may contact:

Director of Academic Engagement-Office of Research and Engagement

Semester before:

- Draft syllabus, course goals, assignments and assessments.
- Begin working with community partner(s).

Prior to start of semester (month before):

- Send introductory email to students about the course and service-learning requirements.
- Finalize assignments, include a service-learning definition and information in the syllabus.
- Agree on scheduled contact dates to check in with community partner(s). Share syllabus with community partner and meet face-to-face to finalize plans.

During Semester:

- Week 1: Begin preparing students for service-learning and share service-learning opportunities;
- Week 2: Student/community partner matching; confirm student placements with community partner(s).
- Weeks 3-4: Students begin service, submit the service-learning agreement (a written agreement between students and community partners).
- Weeks 4-5, 8, 12: Faculty and instructors check in with community partner(s), mid-semester student assessment of course/partner, if not performing more frequent assessments.

End of semester:

- Assessment/evaluation of student from community partner.
- End of semester faculty debriefing with community partner on the course/community partner relations.
- Send thank you note to partner(s).

B. SERVICE LEARNING SYLLABI

In order for students to fully understand the service-learning experience, the following information should be included in the syllabus. This helps students better prepare for their service experience and will assist in the integration of service into the course.

1. Definition - service-learning:
 - A method by which students learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service.
 - A reciprocal collaboration between campus and community organizations in partnership to address identified needs or opportunities.
 - A teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility.
2. Expectations of students
 - Students are expected to serve a minimum of 20-25 hours during the semester, ideally 2 to 4 hours a week for 10 weeks with a community partner listed with the course.
 - Service-learning will not compromise the academic rigor of the course, but rather enhance the learning.
 - Communicate any questions, concerns or challenges with site supervisor or your instructor.
3. Expectations of faculty
 - Provide ongoing opportunities for students to participate in critical reflection to explore issues relating to course content and community service.
 - Prepare students for serving in and partnering with communities during the service-learning experience.
 - Respond to students' questions, concerns or challenges.
4. Expectations of community partners
 - Create active service experiences that relate to the course material.
 - Promote personal and professional growth opportunities while providing constructive feedback for students.
 - Respond to students' questions, concerns or challenges relating to the service-learning experience.
5. Community Partner Information
 - Name of organization and primary contact information
 - Mission description or brief overview of organization
 - Volunteer job description or goals for project work

C. COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Course Goals

Course goals are broad, general outcomes that students should be able to perform as a result of experiences in the course (and should appear as part of the overall course description in the syllabus). Goals should be written in such a way that evaluation of the outcomes is implied or can be foreseen.

Examples:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Critically analyze a work of art.
2. Perform and interpret microscopic urinalysis.
3. Use principles of behavioral psychology to interpret real-life events.
4. Evaluate the impact of stereotypes of non-Western cultures on American society policies.
5. Develop an individualized nutrition plan and modify it if necessary.
6. Establish causal relationships between potential risk factors and disease in a community.

Objectives

Objectives are very specific outcomes that enable students to achieve the general course goals (and therefore are associated with particular units, lessons or class meetings in the syllabus). Objectives should be written in terms of particular student behaviors so that the evaluation methods are explicit.

Examples:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Recall the appropriate terminology used to describe and critique oil paintings.
2. Classify examples of political events that determined historical outcomes.
3. Identify the assumptions underlying community interactions.
4. Write a logically organized essay against or in favor of euthanasia.
5. Use a sphygmomanometer and stethoscope to measure blood pressure.
6. Describe the difference between a sodium atom and sodium ion.

D. BLOOM'S TAXONOMY VERB LIST

When developing course goals and objectives, it is important to consider appropriate language to convey the associated outcomes. Bloom's Taxonomy offers verbs which can be associated with various types of learning, which often can

build on one another. Consider this list as you move students from understanding knowledge, to learning how to apply and synthesize the information. NOTE: Depending on context, use and intent, some verbs may apply at different levels. This list is simply intended to provide some ideas for stating goals and objectives.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Arrange	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Arrange	Appraise
Define	Describe	Choose	Appraise	Assemble	Argue
Duplicate	Discuss	Demonstrate	Calculate	Collect	Assess
Identify	Explain	Dramatize	Categorize	Compose	Attach
Label	Express	Employ	Compare	Construct	Choose
List	Identify	Illustrate	Contrast	Create	Compare
Memorize	Indicate	Interpret	Criticize	Design	Defend
Name	Locate	Operate	Differentiate	Formulate	Estimate
Order	Recognize	Practice	Discriminate	Manage	Evaluate
Recognize	Report	Relate	Distinguish	Organize	Judge
Relate	Restate	Schedule	Examine	Plan	Predict
Recall	Review	Sketch	Experiment	Prepare	Rate
Repeat	Select	Solve	Question	Propose	Score
Reproduce	Translate	Use	Test	Set Up	Select
					Support
					Value

E. ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Assessment and evaluation are central to effective teaching and to service-learning pedagogy. Specifically, this refers to the process of checking in with students throughout the semester to determine if they are learning what they need to learn in order to meet the course goals and objectives. Assessment is usually ungraded and is most useful as a feedback mechanism for both instructor and students.

Assessment also offers students multiple low- and no-stakes checks on their own learning; they can see where they currently are in their learning process and where they need to improve. Regular assessments, like short homework problem sets, quizzes, paragraph-long or shorter writing assignments and in-class practices, allow both instructors and students to catch misconceptions and errors early and correct them.

Basics of assessment: All assessment and evaluation for the course should be directly tied to the course goals and objectives. You can't assess whether students are meeting course goals without clear goals to aim for. Assessment helps articulate your course goals very clearly; when planning assessments, you'll find it's difficult to create good, valid, helpful assessments for nebulous, broad or non-measurable course goals.

In order to maximize assessment's potential in the classroom, instructors should be:

- Committed to listening to students' input on their learning and your teaching.
- Flexible and ready change course in response to their feedback.
- Have clear, measurable course objectives and goals.

Basics of Evaluation and Grading:

Assessment is taking stock of where your students are performing relative to course goals and objectives. Grading, or evaluation, is meant to be a summary of a student's progress, learning and/or mastery over the course of a semester.

Basics of Evaluation:

- Be clear with your students about what you will and will not be grading them on. Rubrics are an excellent way to be explicit about your expectations for a given assignment.
- Give clear grading schemes in your syllabus and assignment prompts and think through grading philosophies carefully.
- Consider your grading method.
- Choose what types of evaluative mechanisms you will use.

A. SERVICE-LEARNING VS. VOLUNTEERING

Service-Learning differs from volunteering in two important ways:

1. Reciprocal benefit to students and community

In addition to serving the community, students learn from this experience. In volunteerism, the benefit to community is emphasized over benefit to learner.

2. Guided and structured reflection embedded in coursework

In service-learning, students use their experiences to test the theories and knowledge learned in class and to connect what is learned in the classroom to real world needs. In order to articulate this application, students complete assignments that ask them to reflect on what they have learned, not just how they feel. These assignments are part of the course plan and should be graded. They may take the form of journaling, essays, presentations, portfolios, etc.

B. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODELS

There are many ways to incorporate service-learning and community engagement into the classroom. Below are a variety of models and approaches to service-learning to consider in course development.

Direct Service:

Direct service activities are those that require personal contact with people in need. This type of service is generally the most rewarding for students because they receive immediate positive feedback during the process of helping others.

Indirect Service:

Indirect service activities channel resources to the problem rather than working directly with an individual who may need the service. Students do not frequently interact with the people they serve.

Note - Both direct and indirect service are important in working with communities. It may be interesting to explore different student experiences across these two approaches during course discussions and in small groups.

Project-Based Service:

Project-based service-learning involves students, often an entire class, working collectively on a particular project or issue in partnership with an organization.

Examples:

- *students in a journalism course produce a documentary film to be used as a marketing tool.*
- *students in a social work course organize a community forum around neighborhood economic development issues.*

In this model, faculty and students work closely with a community partner to design a specific service project related to the course concepts and skills. This model encourages teamwork and develops organizational skills. It also involves increased direct supervision on the part of course instructor.

Community-Based Research:

Community-based research (CBR) can be defined as a partnership of students, faculty and community partners who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or affecting social change. Typical CBR projects include faculty, students and community partners working together to focus local attention on pressing community needs, research and evaluation of new programs, evaluation and assessment of existing programs or collaborative development of qualitative and quantitative research tools.

C. UNG RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED

Connecting to Community Need:

Community groups and organizations contact the office with specific needs that are then connected to specific disciplines and courses across the university. The office can help faculty contact a new organization, attend an initial face-to-face partnership meeting (though this is not always necessary), and help develop partnership agreements.

Mediating Conflict: Though uncommon, there may be times when an organization, student or instructor does not feel the partnership is working well. Staff are available to facilitate any discussion necessary to correct the issue after attempts have been made to communicate directly with the parties involved.

Funding: The University of North Georgia Research Foundation offers a variety of funding opportunities to help build and support service-learning in the classroom.

D. BEST PRACTICES OF SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

Set specific purpose and agreed upon mission, values, goals, deliverables and accountability. The first step toward agreement in these areas is to discover the questions that the community partner and instructor have for each other. Instructors may have questions about the mission and strategies of the organization. The community partner may have questions regarding the course goals, syllabus and student skills. Once perspectives and agendas are understood, a negotiation and prioritization process should be used to distill the areas of mutual agreement that can be used to piece together the beginnings of a working relationship.

Assessment and Evaluation: Assessment can be productive, even at the beginning of partnerships. Establishing a history of assessment will also pave the way for rigorous and meaningful evaluation as the partnership evolves. Gathering feedback is an effective way to show respect for partners, but incorporating that feedback into evaluation outputs and program design reflects a true appreciation of each partner's perspective.

Balance power and share resources. Many institutions assume that community partners hold limited power and that it's necessary for the institution to "build them up." However, this is rarely the case. Power dynamics must be carefully assessed and then, if necessary, methods of power redistribution should be considered. Once a more equitable balance of power is in place, resources can be effectively shared. Partners should also be creative as to how resources are defined. Resources are not just financial, but can also include people, supplies, space or knowledge.

Clear, open and accessible communication:

The key to any successful partnership is open communication. Email and regular in-person meetings strengthen working relationships. In addition, visiting partners on-site and in community, as well as inviting partners to class, helps everyone to better understand the work of the organization and the course.

Agree upon roles, norms and procedures.

Many partnerships begin with discussing roles and procedures. However, if values and goals are not aligned, and if mutual trust and effective means of communication have not been established, the process design phase is unlikely to have successful, lasting results.

Partnerships evolve and can dissolve.

Effective partnerships must have the capacity and patience to consider and embrace change as they develop. Partnerships should be viewed as living organisms that must be nurtured over time. Not all partnerships are meant to last forever, which needs to be acknowledged and anticipated. However, you never want to “burn bridges” and should strive to end the relationship on a positive note.

E. DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

If you do not already have a partner in mind, refer to the “UNG Resources To Get You Started” for help in connecting with organizations that have expressed needs that could be met through service-learning or have missions that complement your course’s subject matter.

Once initial contact is made:

Meet partners face-to-face, preferably at their location. Provide the organization staff with a copy of the syllabus. Partners want to know how their work fits into the course, overall objectives and learning goals for students. Partners often have expertise to share both in the form of readings and discussion if an instructor is open to including them in the course.

Allow the organization staff to decide what service students can provide. It should not be assumed that instructors or students will know what a community organization needs. Rather than “pitch” a specific project, instructors should discuss the qualifications and skills that students possess and the assets of that community to be sure students are satisfying a true need in the community.

Determine the level of commitment that the organization is willing to give the service-learning partnership. Supervising service-learning volunteers requires time, oversight and feedback. It is important that the organization is able to provide students with the support they need.

Negotiate an agreement between the course and the organization that clearly articulates the expectations of all involved. This agreement can be formal or informal. However, there are many benefits to keeping a written account of expectations.

Communicate regularly with service-learning partners. In the past, community partners have expressed great disappointment with those relationships in which they were not contacted at regular intervals. Desired contact may mean calling or checking in by mid-semester and doing so periodically throughout the semester.

Invite community partners into the class process.

Continuously evaluate the success of the project. Include community partners, as well as students, as evaluators and solicit ideas for improvement.

Sustainable partnerships that last beyond the initial semester or project are encouraged.

F. MEETING WITH NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Basics:

What is Service-Learning?

- Provide a clear definition of service-learning, in particular, one that will help the community partner understand their role in service-learning.
- Provide examples of other courses that incorporate service-learning at UNG.
- Help the organization to understand the differences between service-learning and volunteering.
- Emphasize the intent of a collaborative relationship, where both the university's and community partners' needs are met.

What is the course?

- If this is an existing course that is being reworked to include a service-learning component, share a copy of a previous syllabus.
- If this is a new course, ideas about content, learning objectives and student skills will be important to share.

Questions to consider when meeting:

Readiness of the organization for a service-learning partnership and starter questions:

- What experience does the community partner have in working with college students?
- What makes becoming a community partner in service-learning appealing to the organization?
- What are the major challenges the organization faces in providing services to the community?
- Does the organization see college students as a valuable resource?
- How much supervision will the organization be able to provide students?
- How readily could students apply their service to what they are learning in the classroom?
- Does the organization have the capacity to host and supervise your students? How many? Under what timeframe?

Initial meeting to-do list:

- Explore community and university assets and needs.
- Brainstorm projects to address mutual needs and desired outcomes.
- Consider a short-term project to begin building a trusting relationship. For example, a community partner may agree to collaborate for a semester as a trial for ongoing work.

Project Development:

- Over time, determine scope of project based on mutually identified needs.
- Develop shared mission statement and goals for project.
- Establish effective on-going communication and evaluation plan.

Determine roles and responsibilities.

- Set next steps and a timeline.

Reflection is one of the most crucial pieces of the service-learning course, because it is the means by which students integrate the academic learning with the experiential learning. However, it is also one of the most difficult pieces of the course to get right. Students often struggle with reflecting in a meaningful, consistent way over the course of the semester. While learning can also be articulated orally, through a drawing, through the creation of a concept map, through physical imagery, etc., writing is generally the best way to facilitate critical thinking in your students.

Remember that learning is a process embedded in the act of reflection, not a prerequisite. Do not begin a reflection prompt by asking, “What did you learn?” The purpose of reflection is to generate learning and to help students to become aware of their learning. “What did you learn?” is a good last question for reflection, not a good first question. Students often mistake description for analysis and this holds true in reflection activities as well. Remind your students that, while the act of reflection often begins with description, they are not the same things. If you are going to use journals or other written reflections, give students specific prompt questions to follow. Students are generally not comfortable with, or skilled at, the activity of reflection in the early part of the course and will produce fairly shallow reflections. With continued instructor feedback, specific, probing prompt questions and successful models for students to learn from, students may find the reflection process more fruitful and generative.

Possible Reflection Prompts

The following are sample reflection questions. You will want to craft ones most appropriate for your learning goals and course content.

- What is your role at the community site?
- What were your initial expectations? Have these expectations changed? If so, how? Why?
- What about your community involvement has been an eye-opening experience?
- How has the course content informed your service with your community organization?
- Discuss any dissonance between the course content and your experience with the community.
- What specific skills did you use at your community site?
- Describe a person you’ve encountered in the community who made a strong impression of you, positive or negative.
- Do you see benefits of doing community work? Why or why not?
- Has your view of the population with whom you have been working changed? If so, how?
- How has the environment and social conditions affected the people at your site?
- What institutional structures are in place at your site or in the community? How do they affect the people you work with?
- Has the experience affected your worldview? If so, how?
- Have your career options been expanded by your service experience?
- Why does the organization you are working for exist?

- Did anything about your community involvement surprise you? If so, what?
- What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in the community?
- How does your understanding of the community change as a result of your participation in this project?
- How can you continue your involvement with this group or social issue?
- How can you educate others or raise awareness about this group or social issue?
- What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
- Talk about any disappointments or successes of your project. What did you learn from it?
- During your community work experience, have you dealt with being an “outsider” at your site? How does being an “outsider” differ from being an “insider”?
- How are your values expressed through your community work?
- What sorts of things make you feel uncomfortable when you are working in the community? Why?
- Complete this sentence: Because of my service-learning, I am...

Reflection through Writing Resources

The following is a list of possibilities for integrating and structuring reflective writing in a service-learning course. While any of these assignments work with traditional low-tech formats, they all also work in discussion forums, team site spaces or blogs. Choosing which higher tech option works best depends on the level of privacy deemed appropriate for the students’ writing and the purpose and audience for the assignment.

Directed journals: Ask students to respond to a specific question relating their community experiences and course work on a weekly basis. Questions should be designed to build upon one another. Specify an audience for these entries.

Class journal: Ask students to post entries about their community experiences, respond or comment on one another’s experiences, react to assigned readings, and connect ideas or threads in the discussion. This writing can be highly student-directed or highly instructor-moderated depending on your course goals. Orchestrating and shifting roles among students (some students write new posts, some students respond to others’ writing) can enrich the conversation. Clarifying the purpose and audience for the journal entries is important for success.

Reading/Service log: Assign students to summarize course readings and relate what they read to their community experience. You can assign this task to groups of students or half of the class at a time. (The whole class does not need to write every time.) Ask students to trade logs once a week and read others’ entries. Make sure everyone writes and reads an equal amount.

One-page weekly papers: Assign students to write and post about some aspect of their service in one page (250 words). You can leave the topic open-ended or give them a topic or issue to address. Regularly select writing to read out-loud at the opening or close of the class period as a point of further discussion or to provoke further thinking. You can distribute this assignment throughout the semester—one part of the class writes during the first third of the course, another group during the second third and so on.

SECTION 4: REFLECTION RESOURCES

Theory/Application writing: Like problem/solution writings described below, ask students to summarize a theory in the course and then discuss how it is or is not appearing in their service experience. Later in the semester, ask students to write again, either revising their initial thoughts (hopefully with more information or complex understanding from their experience) or ask them to apply a different theory to the same situation. Add rounds as described above.

Group writing: Create groups of three. Assign students to write a group report related to their community experiences using a team site space or email exchange. The topic of the report may be open-ended or focused as suits your course, but the students should be clear about the purpose and the audience to whom they are writing.

Five-minute in-class writings: At the beginning of class, ask students to respond to a question related to the day's topic and their community experiences. Let them write for five minutes, then conduct a class discussion addressing the question.

In-class presentation: Ask students to give a five-minute presentation about their placement and their contributions and course-related observations periodically throughout the semester or upon completion of their service-learning experience.

Problem/solution writing: Early in their community experiences, ask students to describe, in a paragraph or a page, a problem that they have observed at their placement (this problem might be practical, conceptual, logistical, ethical, etc.) Later in the semester, ask them to propose solutions (or if that isn't possible, further articulate the complexities of the problem) in another similar length assignment. You can add another round by asking students to share the original problem with another student and have the other student propose their solution to the problem. An additional exercise would ask the original writer to compare the two

solutions and explore why the problem has not been solved in the actual situation. Eventually, students might compile their pieces into a case study.

Portfolios: Ask each student to compile a service-learning portfolio throughout the semester to submit for a grade at the end of the semester. In addition to sharing their portfolio with you, students may want to think of this as material they may use in a job interview in the future or as a personal scrapbook of the experience.

Portfolios could include:

- Writing about the site (description of site, history of the organization, mission statements, journal entries, case studies, personal statements about this experience, volunteer service in general, role of organization in the community, etc.)
- Evidence of completed projects or nature of service (photos, flyers, memos, chart of progress on project, quotes from participants at the site)
- Evaluations by supervisors
- Case study drawn from the site
- List of skills gained at the site (initialed by supervisor, if appropriate)
- List of completed projects
- Book/article reviews of related readings
- Annotated bibliography of related readings

Note card questions: Ask students to submit questions on note cards once a week on the course material and their community experiences. Draw one or two out of the hat to add to class discussion each class period.

Observation paragraphs: Each class meeting, assign a few students to express something they have observed from their experience in one paragraph and make copies for the whole class (or distribute through a listserv). At some point in the semester, ask students to write another paragraph that responds to another person's observation and share their response with the original writer and with you. You might ask them to respond several times to a variety of people. For example, each student must write three observations during the semester and three responses during the semester.

Observation bullets (speaking variation on observation paragraphs above): Each class period, ask a few students to prepare three bullet points or talking points about their community experiences. At the beginning or end of class, ask these students to stand up and present their three observations to the class.

Critical incident journal: This focuses the student on analysis of a particular event that occurred during the week. By answering one of the following sets of prompts, students are asked to consider their thoughts and reactions and articulate the action they plan to take in the future: Describe a significant event that occurred as a part of the service-learning experience. Why was this significant to you? What underlying issues (societal, interpersonal) surfaced as a result of this experience? How will this incident influence your future behavior? Another set of questions for a critical incident journal includes the following prompts: Describe an incident or situation that created a dilemma for you in terms of what to say or do. What is the first thing thought of to say or do? List three other actions you might have taken. Which of the responses noted seems best to you now and why?

Book/article review: Mid-semester, ask students to research and review a book or article related to the community experiences. Copy the reviews and put them on reserve. Ask students to read one and then respond to the review in a one-page paper.

Site survey: Ask students to investigate the context in which they are serving. Ask them to collect the organization's mission statement, published materials, organizational chart of the staff and history. Requiring an interview with staff members may be helpful when practical.

Politics of site: Ask students to research and write about the larger context of the organization they serve. Where, why, how did the organization come into being? Where does it receive its funding? What challenges does it face in the community?

Self-assessment: Ask students to assess their roles, effectiveness and impact in the organization during the semester. What did they bring to the organization? In what ways were they able to serve?

A core element in developing service learning is ongoing maintenance and sustainability. Structural elements must be identified and incorporated into the courses offered. Relationships with community partners must be established through consistency, transparency, trust, and communication to sustain a service-learning course. Sustainable service learning courses will be built upon and bettered by rigorous evaluation. Sustainable courses also require commitment, organization and enthusiasm of every party involved.

Understand the Mission of Service Learning

How does service learning fit into the faculty's missions, visions, values, and strategic plans? The University's mission and goal of utilizing service learning should be reviewed and understood. Each faculty member participating in service learning courses should understand the basics of service learning and how it fits within the University. After understanding this, each faculty member should consider how service learning, and the mission and goals of service learning, may fit within their course(s).

Communicate with Community Partners

Partnerships with the community are required for a service-learning course and should be sustainable. Communication with community partners is crucial when developing and maintaining a service-learning course. Courses should be developed based on the values and perspectives of the community partners. Community partners offer a valuable perspective on the possibilities of service-learning in the community. Faculty should have continuous conversations with community partners to verify plans and further discussion. Throughout the course, faculty should check in with the partners periodically and understand and answer any question or concerns.

Communication with Students

Faculty should maintain clear communication with students. Students should understand what is expected of them and be alerted when they may not meet those expectations. Students should also understand any questions or concerns from both faculty and the community partners involved. If the community partners express any requested changes, the students should be alerted as soon as possible to create a smooth experience. The faculty may act as a connection between the community partners and students. If students have any questions, concerns or challenges, the faculty should address each one for clarification.

Express Service Learning through Syllabi

Integrating service learning into a course through the structure of the syllabus and class activities with identified learning objectives and assessments aids faculty in maintaining a long-term service-learning course. Each course utilizing service learning should key components through the course's syllabus. Each syllabus should include:

- An explanation of what service learning is and why it is important
- A statement about service learning explaining how it is integrated into the course.
- Information on the community partners being worked with
- Explanation of student expectations
- Description of how students will demonstrate what is being learned in relation to the service and course content

Preform Evaluations

Constructive feedback must be obtained by faculty from both students and partners to sustain the best available service learning course. In addition to periodically checking in with student and partners, at the end of each course, faculty should perform evaluations with both students and community partners. Faculty should make it clear to each student and partner that no consequences will come from the evaluations. This practice should encourage honest and efficient feedback. Any suggestion, questions, concerns, or challenges listed within these evaluations should be reviewed and considered. Faculty should commit to listening to students' and partners' input to better each course. To best sustain service-learning course, faculty should incorporate the evaluations into each course and take any recommendations into account.

Reference the Service Learning Kit

The Service Learning Kit provided by the University is meant to guide faculty through the processes of service learning courses. The Service Learning Kit is available for faculty teaching service learning and provides an overview of service-learning, resources of course development, approaches to community partnerships and strategies for incorporating reflection.

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