

The University of New Orleans Service-learning Guidebook:

A Resource for Faculty, Students, and Community Partners



The Office of Service-Learning
Community Engagement through Service-learning

Introduction

Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service projects with academic studies to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen the communities in which we live and work. Through fieldwork, applied research, and other academic activities, students engage in project-based service initiatives with community partners. Students, faculty, and partners work together to arrive at desired results, create innovative solutions to challenges, and achieve sustainable outcomes that benefit our partners as well as create a legacy of engagement with the communities we serve.

The mission of the Office of Service-Learning at the University of New Orleans is to serve the community by engaging our undergraduate and graduate students in academic work that intersects with the needs of community organizations. Service-learning at UNO will allow students and faculty to put to work the philosophies, skills, and theories learned in the classroom.

Students who enroll in service-learning courses commit to completing designated service work integrated into the classroom environment. UNO encourages socially conscious students already enrolled at UNO as well as incoming freshmen with service-learning experience to become service-learning leaders. Moreover, UNO invites students from universities throughout the country who seek unique experiences to fulfill their service-learning requirements in New Orleans, one of America's culturally and historically singular cities.

UNO provides an academic environment that cultivates and graduates leaders ready to continue their service in communities within Southeast Louisiana, throughout the United States, or across the world. Service-learning at the University of New Orleans is made possible through generous support from the Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation.

This guide was developed by staff of the Office of Service-Learning and the University of New Orleans Service-learning Council. It seeks to serve as a resource for faculty, staff, students and community partners. The Office of Service-Learning and the Service-learning Council look forward to providing additional resources to assist faculty, staff, and students in developing courses that integrate course content with engaged, meaningful service-learning projects.

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Service-learning Definitions

Service-learning is a growing movement in education and has an extensive history in the United States. Building from John Dewey's work on democratic and experiential education and William James's pragmatism, Service-learning has evolved and developed for the last hundred years. Its pedagogy is simple—to provide meaningful, engaged, and experiential opportunities for students to connect classroom theories to practice and to contribute to their communities. The following definitions may offer a perspective on the depth of possibilities and meaning of Service-learning in higher education.

Bringle and Hatcher define Service-learning as “a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”¹

Jacoby argues “Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning.”²



The University of Cincinnati shares this excellent definition: "Service-learning (SL) is a specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in academic community partnerships at the local, national, or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community."

Though typically based in courses, service-learning also occurs through specially designed internships and independent studies.

¹ Robert G. Bringle & Julie A. Hatcher, *A Service-learning Curriculum for Faculty*. Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning, Vol. 2, 1995, p. 112

² Barbara Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, p. 5

Service-learning Course Guidelines

Service-learning (SL) courses are credit-based educational experiences designated by a special section number. In order for a course to be designated as service-learning it should meet the following guidelines:

- **Fully integrated into the course content:** The service opportunity is intentionally designed to enhance the student's knowledge and is fully integrated into the course content.
- **Structured Reflection:** The course provides structured reflection activities that allow students to reflect throughout the course period on their experience. The activities engage students in deep, critical reflection about community issues and challenges and provide methods for drawing connections between course concepts and service experience.
- **Addresses a community need:** The community partner selected for the project or activity is contacted by the university; the SL project is designed in collaboration with the community partner. The faculty member works to build a relationship of trust and mutuality with the community partner. The service-learning project is designed to accomplish defined goals, using the university's best resources to produce desired benefits for the community partner.
- **The course assessment and evaluation criteria include a process for the student and the community partner to measure impact, successes, and challenges.** This process helps to include the community partner's voice and ensure that the service-learning experience is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.
- **Each semester-long course includes at least 25 hours of engaged learning per student with a community partner on a project approved and assigned by the course instructor.** Engaged service-learning includes any work that directly benefits the community partner and the approved project. It may include work on-site, as well as communication and relationship building with the community partner.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- **Civic knowledge and engagement:** Participation will develop skills and methods for successfully engaging and improving students' local and global communities as well as prepare students for a life-long commitment to community engagement.
- **Intercultural knowledge and competence:** By engaging in their community, "students gain understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions as well as society and culture in the United States and across the world"³; consequently, they develop skills for working in a complex, diverse, and multicultural society.
- **Foundations and skills for life-long learning:** Participation in a designated service-learning course will further enhance a student's leadership skills, critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills as well as assist in developing interpersonal skills.

³ The Ohio State University (2014), <http://ascas.osu.edu/curriculum/ge-goals-and-learning-outcomes>

Guideline One



Fully Integrated into the Course Content:

The service opportunity is intentionally designed to enhance the student's knowledge and is fully integrated into the course content.

Creating a Service-learning Course

Creating a service-learning course that maximizes community impact, student learning and student development must be carefully designed. Projects must be intentionally structured to encourage students to build connections between theory and practice. Community partners should be involved in helping to create a meaningful project for the student and for the organization. When planning a service-learning course and selecting a model, it may be helpful for faculty to consider a few questions. These questions have been adapted from Heffernan's *Service-Learning in Higher Education* and Avila-Linn, Rice and Akin's *Designing Community-Based Courses: A Guide for Instructors to Develop Community Partnerships and Create Engaged Public Scholarship Courses* (2012).

Theory and Pedagogy: How will you incorporate service-learning in your course? How will service-learning projects strengthen a student's knowledge and experience? What outcomes do you think service-learning could provide for students in your course?

Community Partnerships: What organizations, sites and potential community partnerships could help support the goals of your course(s) and student learning? How might your course goals intersect with the goals of the community organization? How will you incorporate community partners into the course as co-educators?

Reflection: How is reflection used in your discipline? How could you use reflection as an assessment tool for your course? Who would facilitate reflection and how? How can the community partner be involved in the reflection process?

Student Development: How will you prepare students for the experience? What skills would you like them to develop upon completion of their service-learning project?

Assessment: What assessment methods do you currently utilize in your courses? How will you assess and evaluate student outcomes in the service-learning projects you designed? What would be a successful outcome for a service-learning experience in your course?

Curriculum Development: How could your students apply course content in the community? What could a community experience offer your students? What model (or combination of models) would be the best match for your students, course content, and selected community partners?

Institutional Support: How can the University of New Orleans support your service-learning course? How does the institution currently support and encourage staff to design service-learning courses?

Service-learning Models

A Service-learning course can be designed using a variety of different models. Successful service-learning models described below have been designed to maximize community impact, student learning, and student development. Each one addresses a distinct type of service-learning project; each engages with the community partner in a unique way to enable students and university resources to address a defined community need in the most appropriate manner to produce high quality, sustainable results. These models can be applied in an intensive summer program, within a traditional semester, or as part of a student's capstone course and cumulative academic experience. Campus Compact, a national coalition of college and university presidents dedicated to campus-based civic engagement, has generated several of these models.

(1) Service-learning Course

In a service-learning course, community engagement is an integral part of the course work. In such courses, a student is required to complete at least 25 hours of engaged service with a community partner, in addition to other course work. The work that the student does with the community partner helps to enhance the student's knowledge of the course content. There are several different models for this type of course. Two common ways service-learning students are assigned to work with community partners are:

- Students often work in project teams with a designated community partner. The students share the responsibilities and project duties; each student works with the community partner project for up to 3 hours a week during the semester. Minimally, each student must complete at least 25 hours of engaged service with the organization upon completion of the semester.
- For limited scope projects, an individual student may be assigned to work with a community partner on a one-on-one basis. The student completes at least 25 hours of engaged community service.



(2) Service-learning Internship

In a service-learning internship, a student is expected to work on-site with a community partner on a regular weekly basis. Like a traditional internship, the student works with the community partner on a project that is useful to the community or the site. However, in a service-learning internship, emphasis is added to the reciprocal relationship of the internship; both the community partner and the student benefit equally from the experience. Service-learning internships also are distinguished by the addition of reflective assignments that allow the student to find connections between course content and their experience. An internship is often well-suited to an intensive summer session where a student intern or group of interns is working 20-40 hours per week to accomplish a sizeable task; an internship also may be appropriate for a senior student to gain additional skills or workplace experience prior to graduation.

(3) Problem-Based Service-learning

In Problem-Based service-learning courses, students work as “consultants” for a selected community partner, either individually, in teams, or as an entire class. To understand a community problem, students in these courses need to draw from a basic knowledge that is supported by the course content. With this knowledge they help to make recommendations and develop solutions with a community partner.

(4) Community-Based Action Research

This model is similar to an independent study. In a community-based action research course, a student works closely with faculty members to address a community need through an extensive research project. The student learns research methodology and works to formulate innovative research for a community partner or works to address a community need.

(5) Service-learning Abroad

In a service-learning abroad course, a student works with a faculty member, using the model that is most appropriate for the designated project. Throughout the study abroad experience, the student reflects on the service-learning experience and the connections made between course content and actual experience.

(6) Service-learning Exchange

Many universities and colleges encourage students to spend a service-learning semester at another university. UNO welcomes transfer students to spend that semester in New Orleans where they can engage with partners in unique cultural and physical environments. In a Service-learning Exchange course, students take part in the National Student Exchange program. Students from participating colleges and universities are invited to enroll in a summer or semester-long exchange program, focused particularly on service-learning. Students from the University of New Orleans may have the opportunity to spend a semester with a participating college or university and take service-learning courses.

(7) Capstone Course

A service-learning capstone course is generally made available to students in their final year, providing seniors with the opportunity to gain more insight and in-depth practical experience. By participating in a project that requires a more intensive period of direct engagement (in some combination of fieldwork, research, analysis, consulting) with an approved community partner, students gain valuable experience that helps them prepare for career and workplace life after college.

Capstone courses ask students to draw upon the knowledge they have gathered throughout their coursework and apply it to a significant service-learning project in the community. The goal of capstone courses is often designed to apply students’ skill sets in exploration of a new topic or to synthesize overall understanding of their academic field of study. These courses offer an excellent way to help students make the transition from the world of theory to the world of practice by helping them establish professional contacts and gather personal experience. Moreover, capstone experiences are typically designed to produce reciprocal benefits for the student, the community, and for the university itself.

Guideline Two



Structured Reflection:

A service-learning course provides structured reflection activities that allow students to reflect throughout the semester on their experience.

The activities engage students in deep, critical reflection about community issues and challenges and provide methods for drawing connections between course concepts and service experience.

Intentional Reflection

Reflection allows students to see connections between learning in the classroom and their work with community partners; it helps students to strengthen critical thinking skills. It encourages students to move beyond mere description and towards interpreting their community experiences, personal strengths and challenges, and cause-and-affect relationships. Meaningful reflection can be conducted in a group setting, in the classroom, at the community organization, or individually through course assignments. One approach Eyler and Giles (1996) suggest is described as the Four Cs:

- (1) Continuous reflection: Reflection that happens before, during and after an experience
- (2) Connected reflection: Link theory and structured classroom learning to the service experience and practice
- (3) Challenging reflection: Reflection topics should be challenging and even uncomfortable, but should be posed in a respectful learning environment, and
- (4) Contextualized reflection: Activities are meaningful and appropriate to the students experiences

Additionally, the Gibbs Reflective Cycle Model (1988) which can be viewed below, is helpful in understanding the role of reflection in experiential learning.



Reflection Techniques and Models

Individual and Group Reflective Assignments and Projects

- Keep a journal: the journal can be private, shared with other students or the professor, or used for dialogue; it can be used by students to re-read and highlight terms and concepts discussed in class that were also experienced during service-learning activities
- Write field notes, ethnographies, and case studies
- Make presentations to the community organization
- Write letters to the editor, attend public hearings, meet with elected officials
- Create an interactive blog
- Construct creative projects
- Develop Mind Maps
- Produce a video
- Write reflective essays that draw upon course content/concepts and the SL experience
- Make a portfolio of photos, write an analysis of issues, make an annotated bibliography of favorite resources, keep daily logs

Community and Group Discussions and Reflections

- Make presentations to the community organization
- Convene speakers or a panel
- Stand and declare at a public forum
- Host an issue night where individuals in the community and members of organizations with various perspectives on a topic discuss challenges and successes for the targeted populations
- Host a World Café event: specific topics are assigned to small groups that discuss a topic and then rotate to a different topic; individuals may rotate to other groups. More resources can be found at <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>
- Develop solutions: members in small groups identify a community issue or problem that their community partner is working to address or an issue discussed in class. Other members of the group offer ideas on how the issue may be solved. The facilitator can choose whether the group needs to reach a consensus or if they should continue to discuss other options for solutions.

Guideline Three



Addresses a Community Need:

The community partner approved and selected for the project or activity is contacted by the university. The project itself is designed in collaboration with the community partner and a relationship of trust and mutuality is cultivated. The service-learning project is designed to accomplish defined goals, using the university's best resources to produce desired benefits for the community partner, the student, and the university.

Community Collaboration

As Jacoby (1996) argues, service-learning courses are built on principles of reciprocity. Courses should be designed in collaboration with a community partner and address a community need. Building a relationship with a community partner built on trust, mutuality, and respect is essential. Before a Service-learning course is approved, the course designer should contact the community partner to discuss goals, objectives, potential projects and outcomes, and expectations. Community partners serve as co-educators and work with faculty to link community-based learning with classroom theory and course content. In a service-learning course, students, faculty, and community partners fulfill the role of teacher and learner throughout the entire service-learning process: engaged learning, reflection, and assessment. It is imperative that the service-learning project is designed to accomplish defined goals, using the university's best resources to produce desired benefits for the community partner.

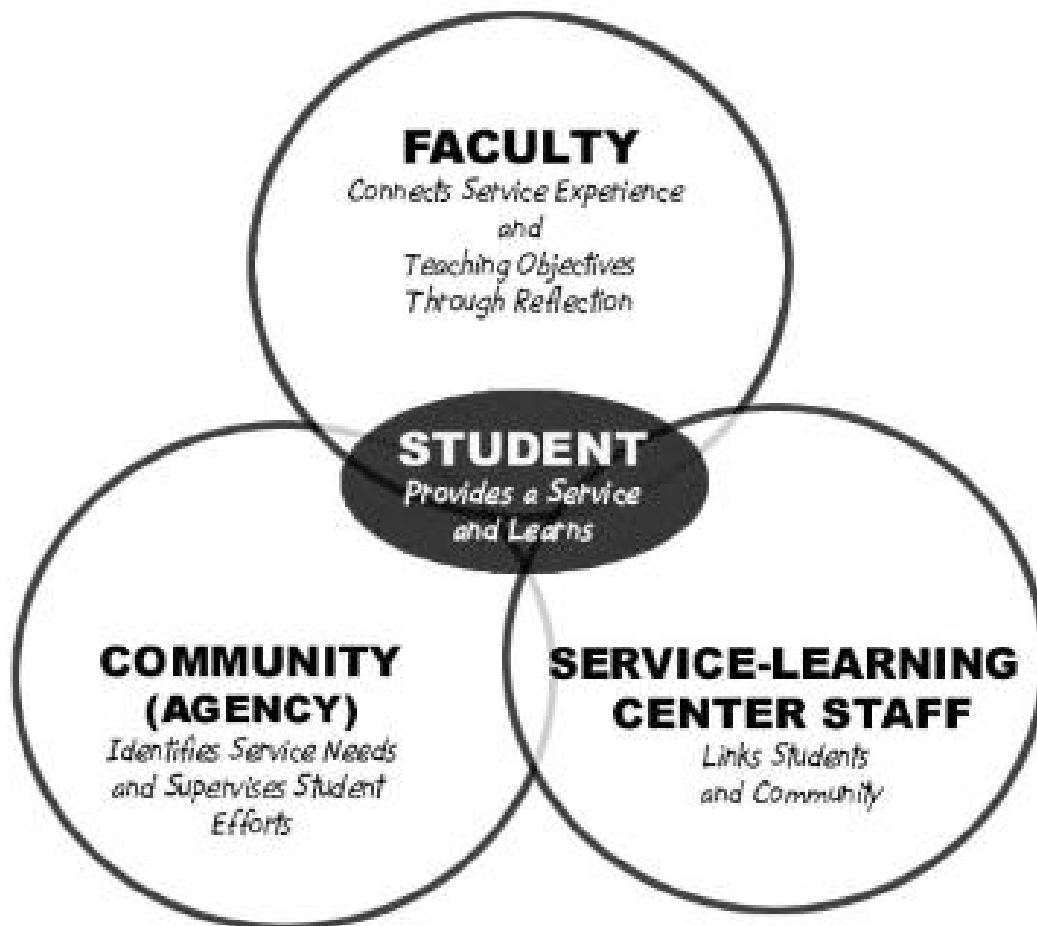


Image: Courtesy of El Paso Community College Service-learning Program

Working with Community Partners

The Office of Service-Learning seeks to work in collaboration with its partners to achieve results that having a lasting, positive impact on the community. The university recognizes that our community partners have skills and knowledge that allow them to serve as on-site co-educators and provide significant experiences for University of New Orleans students. Moreover, we know that working with a community partner requires building a mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationship. Strong partnerships enable us to share resources, skills, and expertise that significantly address a community need. The following are key principles of community partnerships adapted from Community- Campus Partnerships for Health, Principles of Partnership (Connors & Seifer, 2000)⁴:

- Partners share a common vision, mission, and goals
- There is a genuine interest and commitment to the community
- Each partnership member's strengths and experience are valued
- Leadership, decision-making power, resources, and credit are shared among the partners
- Each member is treated equally
- Members of the group understand that relationships take time to develop and strive to build sustainable relationships
- Members seek to foster an environment of safe, clear, and open communication among partners
- Partners value feedback from all members and from the community

The Office of Service-Learning at the University of New Orleans agrees to serve as a resource for community partners, faculty, and students participating in Service-learning courses and projects. The Office strives to provide information regarding best practices and risk management to ensure students have safe and meaningful service-learning opportunities.

Faculty members participating in service-learning courses agree to develop a meaningful SL project that meets the course and student learning objectives, provides students with a supervisor for the service-learning project, and ensures the safety of the work environment. Faculty also agree to build a sustainable relationship built on reciprocity, trust, and open communication. Faculty are encouraged to involve community partners in the assessment and reflection processes of the course.

Students agree to follow the policies, rules, and code of conduct of the University and the Community Partner while on site and work to complete the project and meet the agreed-upon objectives and goals. Students agree to communicate openly and honestly with their community partner and to build a relationship of trust, reciprocity, and respect.

Community Partners agree to provide a safe working environment for students that values physical safety, diversity, open and clear communication, and equality. Community partners recognize that they are co-educators and agree to provide meaningful projects for the student based on the agreed project criteria, goals, and expected outcomes.

⁴ Connors, K., & Seifer, S.D. (Eds.). 2000. Partnership Perspectives. (Issue II, Volume I). San Francisco, CA: Community-Campus Partnerships for Health.

Guideline Four



Inclusive Course Assessment and Evaluation Criteria:

The course assessment and evaluation criteria include a process for the student and the community partner to measure impact, successes, and challenges. This process helps to include the community partner's voice and ensure that the service-learning experience is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.

Inclusive Assessment and Evaluation Criteria

In Service-learning courses it is imperative that community partners, students and faculty are involved in the course assessment and evaluation process. This helps to measure impact, successes and challenges and ensures that the service-learning experience is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.

- Assessment is process-oriented, conducted throughout the course, and typically focuses on learning, teaching, and outcomes. Assessment is a "set of processes designed to *improve, demonstrate, and inquire* about student learning."⁵
- Evaluation focuses on calculating and appraising "the strengths and weaknesses of programs"⁶ and may include grades based on discussion, cooperation, and attendance."⁷ Evaluation is "the systematic process of determining the *merit, value, and worth* of someone...or something"⁸

A community partner may be asked to complete a summary evaluation based on the service learner's performance, including fulfillment of their goals and objectives, attendance, respect for confidentiality, ability to adapt to change, quality of performance of the service-learning activities and projects, the benefit of service provided to the agency, and their awareness of the partner's mission and role in the community.⁹

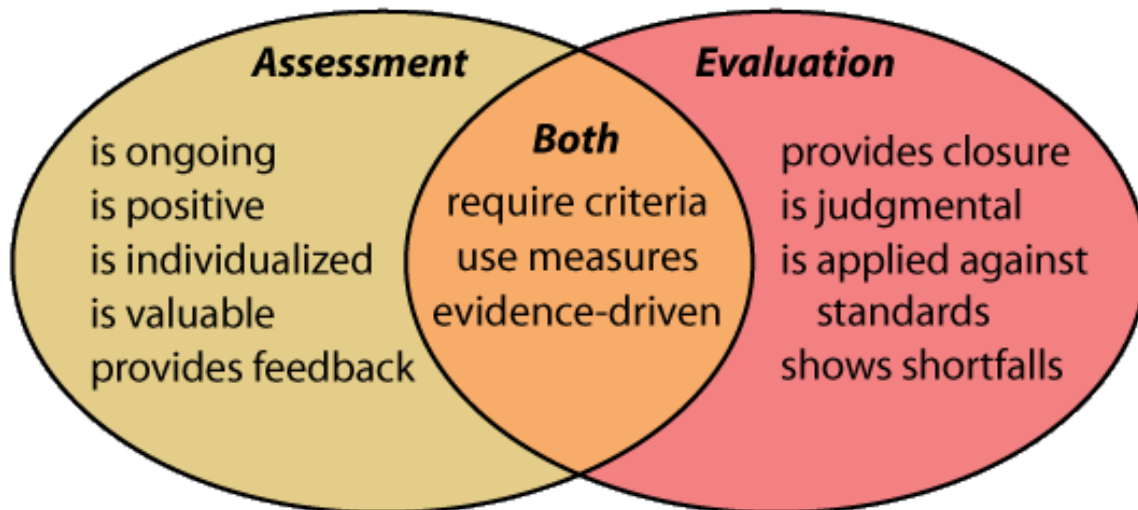


Image Courtesy of <http://www.pcrest3.com/fgb/efgb4/3/images/eavenn.gif>

⁵ Mentkowski, M. qtd. in Palomba, C. A., and Banta, T. W. 1999. *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, emphasis added

⁶ Longwood University, 2004. *Assessment and Evaluation*. <http://www.longwood.edu/studentunion/15157.htm>

⁷<http://duke.edu/arc/documents/The%20difference%20between%20assessment%20and%20evaluation.pdf>

⁸ *Evaluation Glossary* (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2014 from Purdue University Center for Structural Excellence, <http://www.purdue.edu/cie/teaching/assessment-evaluation.html>, originally cited from Western Michigan University, The Evaluation Center Web site, emphasis added.

⁹ The University of Northern Iowa Service-learning Rubrics. A great example of this rubric is available at http://service.csmb.edu/sites/default/files/101/igx_migrate/files/Eval%20of%20SL%20Stu%20Perf%20by%20Agency6_10.pdf, retrieved March 20, 2014.

Guideline Five



Complete At Least 25 Hours of Engaged Learning:

The course includes at least 25 hours of engaged learning per student each semester with a community partner on a project approved by the course instructor and Service-learning Office. Engaged service-learning includes work that directly benefits the community partner and can include hours worked on-site, communication and relationship building with the partner, and other assigned activities that benefit the approved project.

Engaged Learning

Engaged Learning is active and highly collaborative. Engaged Learning “combines civic involvement with academic coursework.”¹⁰ The expectations, projects, and outcomes of Service-learning courses will vary depending on the specific course; however, all service-learning courses must include a 25-hour engaged learning requirement. Engaged service-learning includes any hours worked that directly benefits the community partner and can include work on-site, communication and relationship building with the community partner, and other activities that benefit the approved project.

Engaged Learning may include the following:

- Meeting with the community partner on-site or virtually
- Discussing and corresponding with the partner about project plans and progress
- Researching and collecting data relevant to the project
- On-site activities
- Developing the final product or project
- Presenting the product or project results to the community partner and/or the community
- Gathering feedback, assessing results, and responding to commentary

Maximizing Impact

The University of New Orleans recognizes that each service-learning experience has the potential to produce significant and sustainable results that provide substantial benefits to community partners, to academic programs of study, and to students. Student engagement with their surrounding community enhances social consciousness, enables them to gain valuable skill sets, and develops leadership qualities.

To maximize those opportunities, the University seeks to engage its service-learning students with visible community partners in meaningful projects that are capable of transforming the community and creating a legacy that has a lasting impact on the quality of life for our partners, for our students, and for all those we serve. Consequently, we encourage our colleges and faculty to structure service-learning experiences that attract students and build engaged leaders who want to make a difference in the communities around us and in the world in which we live.

Creating a service-learning course that maximizes community impact, student learning, and student development requires following specific guidelines. Projects must be intentionally designed to encourage students to build connections between theory and practice. Community partners should be involved in helping to create a meaningful project for the student and for the organization.

¹⁰ The University of Maine at Presque Isle, retrieved on March 20, 2014 at <http://www.umpi.edu/academics/engaged-learning/definition>

Faculty Resources

Service-learning courses assist faculty in building connections between course content and practical, real-world application. Such courses can offer faculty an opportunity to establish partnerships within the community, conduct meaningful research, collaborate with community and campus leaders, and create significant teaching and learning opportunities for students. Additionally, designing service-learning courses and creating SL research projects can create opportunities for outside funding and assist in developing grant-writing skills.

The Service-learning Office has resources to assist faculty in developing courses, creating service-learning projects, and locating a potential community partner. The Service-learning Office also offers workshops and information regarding the competitive application process that supports faculty who develop an SL course proposal. If selected, a faculty member could receive a \$1,500 stipend and a \$250 allowance for course-related supplies.

Steps for Developing a Service-learning Course

- Consider course goals and how service-learning can be fully integrated into the course content. Service-learning projects should complement course work and help students to bridge theory with practice.
- Consider what type of service-learning course you wish to design and what project model might be most useful in your course, keeping in mind the nature of the project and the needs of the community partner.
- If you don't already have a community partner in mind, work with the SL office to locate a one whose needs closely align with the course content, the knowledge and abilities of your students, and the mission of service-learning at the university.
- Develop reflection assignments that help students to connect course content to their service-learning experience.
- Decide how the community partner can be involved in evaluating and measuring the impact, successes, and challenges as a result of the service-learning project.
- Develop a plan for building and sustaining a relationship with the community partner based on reciprocity and respect.
- Submit a **Service-learning Course Application Form**
- Visit the work site, complete a **Site Assessment Form**, then submit it to the Office of Service-Learning. If you are unable to complete a Site Assessment at least two weeks prior to the course start date, contact the Office of Service-Learning ASAP. Service-learning courses without Site Assessments on file will be deleted from the course schedule.
- In order to receive your stipend, you must submit your **Faculty Assessment** by the deadline communicated by the Office of Service-Learning. This very brief survey is integral to the continued growth of the Service-learning program

Template for Designing a Service-learning Course

This is only a resource for course design and is not a required part of the application process.

Goals, expectations and the responsibilities of students	Goals, expectations and the responsibilities of the faculty member	Goals, expectations and the responsibilities of partner
<p>Consider what type of service-learning course you wish to design and what project model might be most useful in your course, keeping in mind the nature of the project and the needs of the community partner</p>		
<p>Describe the service-learning activities, objectives and evaluation methods clearly (This will help to build your syllabus)</p>		

Locate a community partner whose needs closely align with your course's content, the knowledge and abilities of your students, and the mission of service-learning at the university (The Office of Service-Learning may be able to help you locate a partner)

Develop reflection assignments that help students to connect course content to their service-learning experience.

Decide how the community partner can be involved in evaluating and measuring impact, successes and challenges as a result of the service-learning project

Develop a plan for building and sustaining a relationship with the community partner based on reciprocity and respect

Student Resources

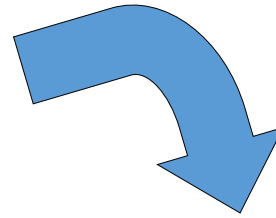
Students in any major or department may participate in a Service-learning course. Service-learning courses are excellent opportunities to apply course content and classroom learning in a meaningful environment. Participating in an SL course can help develop skills in leadership, team-building, critical thinking, problem-solving and conflict resolution. Service-learning experiences strengthen resumes, CVs, and applications as well as provide opportunities for networking and working with community leaders. The projects you complete in service-learning can be presented at conferences, such as Innovate UNO, and published in academic journals. Additionally, service-learning courses provide opportunities to learn more about a community's history, strengths, and challenges. Participation in service-learning courses will increase awareness of civic and social issues as well as provide opportunities to collaborate with community partners to address these issues and to advocate for the issues and those affected.

However, working with a community partner takes considerable preparation. Beyond developing course content knowledge, a student participating in a service-learning course should be prepared to encounter challenges. Before working with a community partner, students should meet with the course instructor to discuss community partner eligibility, the partner selection process, the nature of the project, and working with partners. Then, with the approval of the SL office and the faculty member, students may meet with the partner to discuss expectations, project goals, and outcomes. As soon as the project is approved, expectations have been clearly stated, and project goals and outcomes identified, a meeting with the partner may be set up. When working on-site, arrive on time and in appropriate clothing. Be prepared and focused. Communicate regularly with the community partner and invite them to participate in reflection and assessment activities throughout the project.



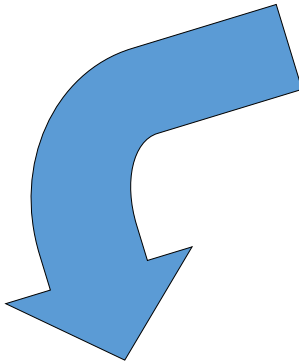
What is Service-learning?

Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service projects with academic studies to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen the communities in which we live and work.



Service-learning at UNO: *Community Engagement through Service-learning*

At the University of New Orleans, Service-learning courses are fully integrated into the course content and include structured reflection. SL course projects address community needs, provide course assessment and evaluation criteria that ensure maximum impact, and include at least 25 hours of engaged learning.



Benefits from Service-learning Courses

Participating in a service-learning course will allow students to apply course content to real-life situations. Service-learning courses develop leadership, communication, and critical thinking skills as well as increase awareness of social issues and civic responsibilities. Participation may result in opportunities to present at Innovate UNO, publish research or a journal article in a service-learning journal, provide additional experience on a resume or CV, and build connection with community partners and community members.

Community Partner Resources

Section 1: Introduction to Service-learning at UNO

The mission of the Office of Service-Learning at the University of New Orleans is to serve the community by engaging our undergraduate and graduate students in academic work that intersects with the needs of community organizations. At the University of New Orleans, service-learning courses are credit-based educational experiences that meet the following guidelines:

- **Fully integrated into the course content:** The service experience is intentionally designed to enhance the student's knowledge and is fully integrated into the course content.
- **Structured Reflection:** The course includes structured reflection activities that permit students to reflect on their experience throughout the length of the course. These reflection activities engage students in deep, critical reflection about related community issues and challenges as well as provide ways to draw connections between their experiences and the course concepts.
- **Addresses a community need:** The community partner selected for the project or activity is officially contacted by the university; then, the project is designed in collaboration with the community partner. The faculty member works to build a relationship of trust and mutuality with the community partner. The service-learning project is designed to accomplish defined goals, using the university's best resources to produce desired benefits for the community partner, the student, the university, and the community itself.
- **The course assessment and evaluation criteria include a process for the student and the community partner to measure impact, successes, and challenges:** This process helps to include the community partner's voice and ensure that the service-learning experience is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.
- **The course includes at least 25 hours of engaged learning per student each semester with or on behalf of a community partner on a project approved and assigned by the course instructor and the university:** Engaged service-learning includes work that directly benefits the community partner and the approved project. It may include work on-site, as well as communication and relationship building with the community partner.

The University of New Orleans recognizes that each service-learning experience has the potential to produce significant and sustainable results that provide substantial benefits to community partners, to academic programs of study, and to students. Student engagement with their surrounding community enhances social consciousness, enables them to gain valuable skill sets, and develops leadership qualities.

To maximize those opportunities, UNO seeks to engage its service-learning students with visible community partners in meaningful projects that are capable of transforming the community and creating a legacy that has a lasting impact on the quality of life for our partners, for our students, and for all those we serve. Consequently, we encourage our colleges and faculty to structure service-learning experiences that attract students and build engaged leaders who want to make a difference in the communities around us and in the world in which we live.

Section 2: Selection Criteria and Process for Community Projects and Partners

The Office of Service-Learning seeks to work in collaboration with community partners, recognizing the skills and knowledge that community partners possess. Community partners serve as co-educators and provide on-site, significant experiences for University of New Orleans students. We understand that working with a community partner requires building a reciprocal relationship. Partnerships are formed in an effort to share resources, including skills and expertise, in order to strengthen impact and address a community need. The following are key principles of community partnerships embraced by UNO [adapted from Community- Campus Partnerships for Health, Principles of Partnership (Connors & Seifer, 2000)¹¹]:

- Partners share a common vision, mission, and goals
- There is a genuine interest and commitment to the community
- Each member's strengths and experiences are valued
- Leadership and decision-making power as well as resource and credit are shared among the members
- Each partnership member is treated equally
- Members of the group understand that strong partnerships take time to develop and strive to build sustainable relationships
- Members seek to foster an environment characterized by safe, clear, and open communication among partners
- Partners solicit and value feedback from members and the community

The University of New Orleans seeks community partners who will provide meaningful service-learning opportunities for our students. Our community partners work with students as co-educators and offer opportunities to develop leadership skills, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning skills. Partners provide opportunities for students to develop diverse, multicultural knowledge as well as to gain skills in engaging local and global communities.

Before students begin work with a community partner, the instructor of the course will perform a site assessment to ensure the safety of the work space. Once the site assessment is complete, a member of the Office of Service Learning will contact the community partner to set a meeting to discuss and sign the Community Partner Agreement. Community partner feedback is highly important to the growth of the program; as such, at the end of the project, the Office of Service-Learning will send out a brief very survey on the partner experience.

Community partners should not provide opportunities that require students to drive a vehicle as part of their responsibilities; attempt to influence legislation; prophesy or promote a particular religious doctrine; support a political issue or candidate; organize or engage in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes; assist in promoting or deterring union activity; participate in activities that pose a significant

¹¹ Connors, K., & Seifer, S.D. (Eds.). 2000. Partnership Perspectives. (Issue II, Volume I). San Francisco, CA: Community-Campus Partnerships for Health.

safety risk to participants; or perform any paid service activities. (without permission of the UNO Office of Service-Learning).¹²

Section 3: Community Partner Roles and Expectations

Community Partners serve as co-educators for University of New Orleans service-learning students. As a partner, you have a unique opportunity to mentor UNO students about the larger social, cultural, and political issues that make up the world around them. The university expects that you also will provide students with a base of knowledge and understanding about the community and population with whom they are working (it will help the student to know the community's assets and challenges as well as the history between the community and your organization). We encourage you to help students understand the following: the mission and vision of your organization and how the student fits into it; the service your organization provides; who utilizes the services your organization provides; and the projects and tasks with which the student will be engaged.

It is also the community partner's responsibility to provide orientation, training, and supervision to UNO students. Communicating your expectations and discussing with the student(s) the goals, responsibilities, and potential risks involved in the service project will help you and the student(s) have a successful experience. Consider the following questions:¹³

- What is the community issue being addressed?
- What are the key service objectives for this project?
- What do I want students to learn about themselves? About my organization?
- How many students will the project require?
- Does this project entail using students from a particular discipline?
- What type of student preparation is needed? Who is responsible for this preparation?
- Will reflection activities be incorporated in this project? Who is responsible for these activities?
- How many total hours will the project require? What is the timeframe?
- Will the project be completed by the end of the semester (16 weeks)?
- Will the service project need to be long-term (more than one semester)?
- What will be my own time commitment to this project?
- Do I have an employee training and orientation prepared that can be adapted for students?
- What type of preparation does my staff need to be ready to work with students?
- Do I have a physical space for service learners to do their work?
- Are there any added project costs to the organization?
- Are there any risk factors involved with this project? If so, how will they be managed?

Service-learning projects are planned in collaboration with faculty, students, and the community partner. Through fieldwork, applied research, and other academic activities, students engage in project-based service initiatives with community partners. Students, faculty, and partners work together to arrive at desired results, create innovative solutions to challenges, and achieve sustainable outcomes that benefit our partners as well as create a legacy of engagement with the communities we serve.

¹² These are adapted from Channel Islands, California State University Center for Community Engagement, <http://www.csuci.edu/servicelearning/communitypartners.htm>

¹³ These are adapted from California State University Center for Community Engagement

Section 4: Benefits to Community Partners

As a community partner, you will have the opportunity to partner with the University of New Orleans and contribute to the education and preparation of future community leaders, non-profit employees, and public servants. Serving as a co-educator and partner in a UNO student's education provides an opportunity to educate students about current issues and challenges in the community and increases your volunteer resources. UNO students will combine their course knowledge and academic experiences to complete significant service-learning projects while working with a community partner.

Section 5: Project Evaluation and Assessment

In service-learning courses, it is imperative that community partners, students, and faculty are involved in the course assessment and evaluation process. This participation by all partners helps to measure impact, successes, and challenges, and ensures that the service-learning experience is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.

- Assessment is process-oriented, conducted throughout the course, and typically focuses on learning, teaching, and outcomes. Assessment is "a set of processes designed to *improve, demonstrate, and inquire* about student learning."¹⁴
- Evaluation focuses on calculating and appraising "the strengths and weaknesses of programs"¹⁵ and performance and may include grades based on discussion, cooperation, and attendance.¹⁶ Evaluation is "the systematic process of determining the *merit, value, and worth* of someone...or something"¹⁷

As a community partner, you may be asked to complete a summary evaluation of the service learner's performance, including their fulfillment of goals and objectives, attendance, respect for confidentiality, their ability to adapt to change, the quality of performance while engaged in service-learning activities and projects, the benefit of the service provided to the agency, and their awareness of the partner's mission and role in the community.¹⁸ Appropriate assessment and evaluation forms will be supplied by the course instructor..

¹⁴ Mentkowski, M. qtd. in Palomba, C. A., and Banta, T. W. 1999. *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, emphasis added

¹⁵ Longwood University, 2004. *Assessment and Evaluation*. <http://www.longwood.edu/studentunion/15157.htm>

¹⁶<http://duke.edu/arc/documents/The%20difference%20between%20assessment%20and%20evaluation.pdf>

¹⁷ *Evaluation Glossary* (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2014 from Purdue University Center for Structural Excellence, <http://www.purdue.edu/cie/teaching/assessment-evaluation.html>, originally cited from Western Michigan University, The Evaluation Center Web site, emphasis added.

¹⁸ The University of Northern Iowa Service-learning Rubrics. A great example of this rubric is available at http://service.csmb.edu/sites/default/files/101/igx_migrate/files/Eval%20of%20SL%20Stu%20Perf%20by%20Agency6_10.pdf, retrieved March 20, 2014.

Section 6: Risk Management for Community Partners

The University of New Orleans' Office of Service-Learning has adopted best practices in risk management to minimize risk for students, employees and visitors as well as to establish program resources that protect the property of the campus. The Office will do the following:

- Conduct a site visit before a student(s) visit the site using the **Site Assessment Form**. This is a tool for assessing the requirements, risks and basic safety factors of the site. The instructor or an Office of Service Learning representative will complete the form. Once complete, the site assessment status will be active for three (3) years (unless informal observations warrant completion of an interim site assessment); after three years, a new site assessment must be conducted.
- Sign a **Partner Agreement Form**. An Office of Service Learning representative will contact the partner to set a meeting time for discussing and signing the Partner Agreement Form.
- Students are required to document their hours of engaged learning and activities performed. The course instructor will discuss with the work site supervisor how work hours will be tracked. Each student is required to work a minimum of 25 hours over the duration of the project.

The following partnership guidelines have been adapted from California State University's Best Practices for Managing Risk in Service-learning:

- Review the **Partner Agreement Form** to understand the roles, expectations, and goals of the partnership and service-learning project
- Ensure that the service learners comply with legal requirements for background checks
- Assign a supervisor for the service learner(s) on site
- Orient the service learner(s) to the organization policies, procedures, clientele profile, and emergency procedures
- Community partners agree to communicate with university representatives at the university if or when experiencing any difficulty with the service learner(s)
- Community partners must ensure that have accurate contact information for the service learner(s) and a representative from the university
- Partners should ask for a copy of the syllabus for the course
- Agree to not share the results of the background check with university representatives
- Do not assume that any final products produced by students are the sole property of the community-based organization. The final products may be the sole property of the student or shared with the faculty member; more often than not, the student will agree to grant rights to use the product to the community-based organization and to the university
- Do not request that service learner(s) do tasks that are beyond their capabilities or beyond what is outlined in the **Partner Agreement Form**.

General Resources

- **The Corporation for National and Community Service** was formed to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet community needs. Each year, more than 1.5 million individuals of all ages and backgrounds help meet local needs through a wide array of service opportunities. These include projects in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other critical areas through the Corporation's three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.
- **Campus Compact** is a national coalition of more than 950 college and university presidents - representing some 5 million students - dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education.
- **The Learn and Serve America National Service-learning Clearinghouse** supports the service-learning community in higher education, kindergarten through grade twelve, community-based initiatives, and tribal programs, as well as all others interested in strengthening schools and communities using service-learning techniques and methodologies.

Further Reading

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