

*The process of integrating thoughtfully organized  
service experiences with guided reflection to  
enhance student learning of course materials.*

# **Faculty Guide to Service-Learning**



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## **PREFACE**

Since you are reading this, you probably already have an interest in service-learning. Perhaps you are presently a volunteer in your community or had a fulfilling experience with activism as a college student. Maybe you have already been incorporating community service in your teaching and are looking for some new ideas. Possibly you are searching for a new approach to bring more life to the classroom or just recharge your batteries. Whatever the motive, the proven pedagogical strategy of service-learning may be for you.

Service-learning is an effective teaching strategy which is now being widely utilized in higher education. It is used here at Parkland College by close to 20 faculty members in 15 different courses. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated by research and reports of faculty at this college and across the country. The strategy is endorsed by the American Association of University Professors, The American Association of Community Colleges, College Campus Compact, and many other learned societies and professional organizations.

It should be acknowledged, however, that service-learning is not for everyone. It is not intended to be the "new curriculum" which must be adopted by all "truly concerned and committed teachers." Hopefully, it will not be the latest in a series of fads promising to finally educate our students. It is just one powerful and proven teaching strategy which can enrich student learning, enhance your teaching, and revitalize the community. Our hope is that more of our students, faculty members, and neighbors can experience the revitalization and transformation that comes with service-learning.

This handbook is designed to provide you with the basics for integrating service-learning into your teaching. Reading this should give you a good understanding of what service-learning is and provide specific guidelines on how to utilize the strategy in your classes. This handbook is a work in progress, and we invite any suggestions for additions or improvements.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This handbook would not exist if not for the over twenty years of important research, writing, and lore in the field of service-learning and community engagement. Locally, this handbook is borne out of the trial-and-error work of those campus and community leaders whose work has sought to bring together "town" and "gown." These individuals are too numerous to mention here, but they know who they are. Thank You!

More globally, we would like to thank and formally acknowledge David Johnson and the Miami-Dade Community College Offices of Community Involvement, along with the Center for Service-Learning at Mesa Community College, whose work and words have been utilized, with permission, throughout Parkland College's Service-Learning Handbook.

## INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-learning is the process of integrating volunteer community service with active guided reflection and merging it into an academic curriculum. It is designed to enhance and enrich student learning of course material.

The academic parent of service-learning is experiential learning. As in all types of experiential learning, such as cooperative education, internships, and field placements, service-learning directly engages the learner in the phenomena being studied with the hope that richer learning will result.

The critical difference and distinguishing characteristic of service-learning is its two-fold emphasis on both enriching student learning and revitalizing the community. To accomplish this, effective service-learning initiatives involve students in course-relevant activities which address the human, safety, educational, and environmental needs of the community.

The pedagogy of service-learning represents a substantial change from the traditional lecture driven, content based, and faculty centered curriculum. Despite the fact that research has shown that we remember only 10% of what we hear, 15% of what we see, and a mere 20% of what we see and hear, these remain the basic sense modalities stimulated in most educational experiences. Service-learning strategies recognize that we retain 60% of what we do, 80% of what we do with active guided reflection, and 90% of what we teach to others.

In service-learning courses, real life tumbles into the classroom as service experiences and provides the content for purposeful and meaningful dialogue leading to real understanding of academic concepts. Service-learning can best be understood in the context of a continuous learning cycle where meaning is created through concrete experience, reflection or assimilation, abstract conceptualization theory building, and problem solving or active experimentation. Based on the belief that learning is the constant restructuring of experience, service-learning exemplifies the continuity that exists between experience and knowledge.

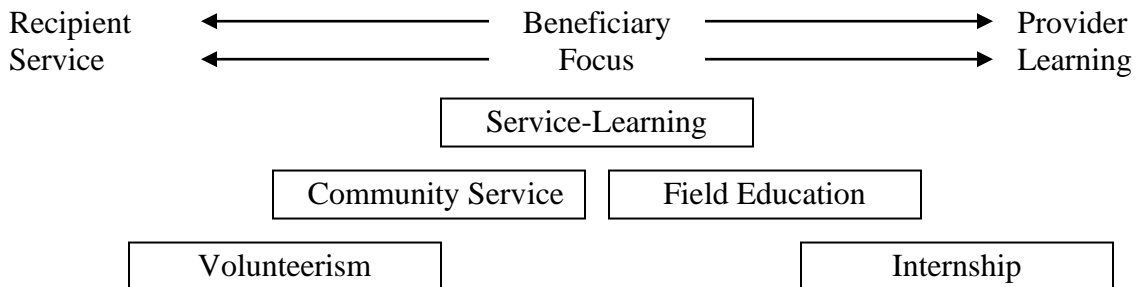
By providing students with an opportunity to have a concrete experience and then assisting in the intellectual processing of this experience, service-learning not only takes advantage of the natural learning cycle, but also allows students to provide a meaningful contribution to the community. This two-fold emphasis on both learning and civic responsibility is the overall objective of the strategy, and our success in meeting this objective leads to the fulfillment of the general mission of higher education.

## WHY DO SERVICE-LEARNING?

- ☑ Enhance Curriculum
- ☑ Hands on Learning
- ☑ Resume Enhancement
- ☑ Community Improvement
- ☑ Networking Opportunities
- ☑ Student Centered Learning
- ☑ Deepen Learning Experience
- ☑ Broadens Teaching Experience

## SERVICE-LEARNING - vs - VOLUNTEERISM: A Definition of Service-Learning

Service-Learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential learning in that they are intended to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service. They also involve an equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. There is a deliberate and explicit connection made between service and learning experiences with conscious and thoughtful preparation for, and reflection of the experience. The following is a Service-Learning model developed by Andrew Furco:



### Community Service

Community service is the engagement of students in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients (e.g., providing food to the homeless during the holidays). The students receive some benefits by learning more about how their service makes a difference in the lives of the service recipients.

### Volunteerism

Volunteerism is the engagement of students in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the recipient.

## **Field Education**

Field education programs provide students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related, but not fully integrated, with their academic studies. Students perform the service as part of a program that is designed primarily to enhance students' understanding of a field of study, while also providing substantial emphasis on the service being provided.

## **Internship**

Internship programs engage students in activities primarily for the purpose of providing hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study.

## ***PARKLAND'S DEFINITION OF SERVICE-LEARNING***

Service-Learning at Parkland College strives for a reciprocal relationship between the college and the community, with each benefiting from the other. Service-Learning activities involve learning experiences whereby students can enhance and enrich their knowledge, while gaining an awareness of personal and civic responsibility, through the application of learned skills and critical reflective thinking directed towards the common good.

## ***BENEFITS OF SERVICE-LEARNING***

### **For Students**

- Increases relevancy of education by bringing academic instruction to life
- Enhances learning of values, citizenship, and leadership skills
- Applies concepts from the classroom to their service
- Provides knowledge and expertise from the community
- Provides platforms to analyze and discuss civic values
- Prepares individuals for potential internships and field research
- Allows exploration of career options
- Develops a sense of community and civic responsibility
- Develops contacts within the community
- Teaches workforce skills
- Provides opportunities to accommodate different learning styles
- Develops connections with people of diverse cultures and lifestyles
- Increases a sense of self-efficacy, analytical skills, and social development
- Develops meaningful involvement with the local community

### **For the Community**

- Enhances positive relationships and opportunities with the college
- Provides awareness-building of community issues, agencies, and constituents
- Helps to develop a sense of citizenship

- Provides affordable access to professional development
- Develops short and long term solutions to pressing community needs
- Creates avenues for expansion of current services
- Increases human resources for problem solving
- Provides opportunities for participating in the educational process
- Enriches roles for supervisors
- Contributes to positive exposure in the community

### **For Parkland College**

- Furthers the goals of Parkland College's strategic plan
- Drives the college as an active, engaged partner in the community
- Facilitates teaching, research and program development
- Increases student retention
- Enriches the quality and relevancy of the education provided
- Allows for instructors and faculty to mentor students
- Increases college's awareness of societal issues as they relate to academic areas of interest
- Assists in the development of innovative approaches to instruction
- Provides opportunities for collaborative community research and project development
- Engages instructors, faculty, and students in local and state community issues
- Provides opportunities to extend the College's knowledge and resources
- Meets and expands on regional accreditation requirements
- Increases development and preparation of college graduates

***Making a Difference One Life at a Time!***

# DEVELOPING A SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE: HOW TO GET STARTED

## ***1. Consider the Courses You Teach***

Determine how community service might be helpful in enriching learning in your discipline. Service-Learning can be effectively used in every academic discipline. Some applications require a little more imagination than others, and often the best are not immediately obvious. Brainstorm about the application potential to your course. Think about how your course content connects with the community, and what kinds of volunteer opportunities might be available at that linkage point. Also, visit Parkland College's Service-Learning webpage (<http://www.parkland.edu/academics/service-learning/>), where there are various resources available to help instructors bridge academic knowledge with community engagement.

## ***2. Visit with Parkland's Service-Learning Coordinator***

Discuss and identify community placements that offer experiences that are relevant to your course. With many possible placements, you will be able to find ample sites appropriate for your course. There also may be faculty from your discipline with service-learning experience that can provide input and direction.

## ***3. Consider Your Goals and Motives***

With service sites or activities in mind, consider your goals and motives in using the application. What are you trying to accomplish for your students, yourself, and the community? Review your course objectives to determine those that can be linked to service. Then list two or three specific measurable service-learning goals and/or objectives for your initiative. Also available at the Parkland Service-Learning webpage is a Course Development Worksheet that can help focus your ideas in course development.

## ***4. Choose a Service-Learning Option***

Decide how you will incorporate community service into your course. Course service options can range from a one-time special project, to a 15 (or more) hour commitment to an agency or public school throughout the course of the semester. You can offer the option in various ways - as an alternative to a paper or other required project, or as requirement for course completion.

## ***5. Alter Your Course Description***

Once you have chosen how Service-Learning will be incorporated, review and redesign the syllabus. To be successfully integrated, the service experience must be more than just an "add on." Identify some readings that might tie the service to specific objectives. Allocate class time for discussion of the experience, even if all students do not participate.



By consciously committing to integrating service, up-front and in writing, you are on your way to a successful implementation.

## **6. Explain and Promote Service-Learning**

Explain the two-fold benefits to the student and the community. The Service-Learning coordinator and other member of the Parkland family are available to visit your classes to explain Service-Learning and the process of choosing a community site.

## **7. Help Students Learn**

By that we mean to, “Teach students how to harvest the service experience for knowledge.” Experiential learning requires that we learn where we are. We can learn a variety of things in many different situations, depending on the questions we are asking. Many of our students, however, are not skilled in this practice. Students must be guided in their development of these objectives so that they are clearly linked with the academic objectives of your course.

With their learning objectives in mind, students must be taught to focus on these objectives and related questions as they participate in the service setting. For example, while the math student is working on a Habitat for Humanity project, she thinks about the algebra or geometry used in developing the architectural plans. The business student may listen to worker’s communication patterns and draw conclusions about the managerial structure of the Rehabilitation Center. Because many students lack experience and confidence in learning in nontraditional, non-classroom environment, we must teach them these skills.

While we do want our students prepared and oriented to service, we must be careful not to over-prepare them for their service experience. If we tell them exactly what to expect, their experience becomes a comparison instead of an adventure. Give them a good overview and set them free.

## **8. Base Service Academically**

Link the service experience to your academic course content through deliberate and guided reflection. The practice of reflection is what combines the learning to the service. We cannot assume that learning will automatically result from experience. If it did, we’d all be a lot wiser. Like us, our students may not learn from their experience. They may even learn the wrong thing or reinforce existing prejudices. Reflection helps prevent this from occurring.

Reflection can be in the form of journals, essays, class presentations, analytic papers, art work, drama, dialogue, or any other expressive act. The key to effectiveness is structure and direction. The nature and type of reflection determines its own outcome. An unstructured personal journal or group discussion is a great way to elicit effective disclosure. More specific academic outcomes will result from structuring these exercises with specific curriculum related questions. For example, a biology student might be

directed to comment on ecological balance in her journal account of an exotic plant removal project at the local community gardens.

Written reflection is a productive approach that helps improve basic communication skills at the same time it leads to critical thinking about the academic focus of course objectives. It is the most common and the least intrusive in terms of taking up class time.

A more powerful, and in many ways more effective, approach is the purposeful dialogue or a class “Reflective Session.” This dialogue provides an opportunity for students to share experiences and exchange ideas and critical thoughts about the unique experiences they encountered.

To achieve academic outcomes, the dialogue, while spirited and free, should be bounded by the learning objectives of the course. The faculty member must serve both as a facilitator to maintain the flow of ideas and a commentator who jumps on the relevant items and develops it into teachable moment.

This is not an easy task, but with practice the rewards are great. When we seem to be losing control, the process can be threatening, but it is often at these critical moments at the real learning occurs.

The real advantage of the group based reflective sessions over the independently written forms is its power to develop a sense of community, which is one of the general goals of Service-Learning. Whatever form of reflection is chosen, it is important to do it early in the experience to assure that students understand the process. It should then be followed up regularly to monitor their progress.

This type of deliberate and guided reflection is what leads to academic learning, improved service, and personal development. From the description of the learning cycle, we know that reflection is the key element in creating meaning.

## **9. Assess Outcomes**

Evaluate Service-Learning results as you would any other academic product. Remember, students are being graded on their learning, not their hours of service. Many of us feel uncertain when it comes to evaluating or assessing the outcomes of experiences we did not completely structure or present.

By designing flexible measures, however, you can utilize the same standard used in evaluating any other written or oral presentation. Did the student master the course material? This is the only way to assure academic integrity of the strategy.

You may also wish to utilize formative and summative research techniques to measure your success in achieving your objectives. Formative assessment can be achieved through reading student journals with an eye toward answering your initial questions. Periodic quick surveys can provide specific answers to issues such as student satisfaction with the process, utility of experimental techniques, etc.

Summative techniques might be employed to compare learning outcomes for service learning sections with those from traditionally taught sections. For quantitative research, you could collect data on the number and type of people served by your students and the number of hours provided.

## **10. Paperwork**

All students who wish to participate in a college Service-Learning program must:

1. Serve at an appropriate community partner site.
2. Fill out a Service-Learning Student Data form.

## **COMMON FACULTY CONCERNS**

### **Is this just a feel-good excuse to water down academic standards?**

This is an important and legitimate concern for all who are concerned with quality higher education, and it is the focus of much of the past and current research on Service-Learning. Though incorrectly perceived, it may be viewed that unless real academic learning results, service-learning has no place in our college. Academic credit should never be given for service, only for learning.

If applied properly, service-learning pedagogy is actually more rigorous than the traditional teaching strategies. Students are not only required to master the standard text and lecture material, but they must also integrate their service experience into that context.

This is a high level skill requiring effective critical thinking and reflection techniques designed to accomplish academic as well as effective outcomes. It is important to emphasize that incorporating Service-Learning does not change what we teach, but how we teach it. With this change comes a new set of challenges for both the student and the teacher.

### **Will I be able to apply the strategy successfully?**

Trying anything new is a risk, and it challenges our competencies. Most practitioners report a steep learning curve with confidence developing fairly rapidly once the strategy is allowed to work. Relinquishing full control of the classroom is hard for many of us to do, but once we move from being the “sage on the stage to the guide on the side,” we find that students can, and will, play an active role in their learning if given the right structure.

The path to becoming effective in using the Service-Learning strategy is not always clearly marked. We often find ourselves “making the road by walking.” Fortunately, you are not alone on the road. There is considerable literature on the subject, and many people right here at Parkland can help you on your way. The guidelines presented in the “How To Get Started” sections should also help, as will conversing with some of your colleagues who are currently using the strategy. The service-learning coordinator has a

list of instructors and faculty by discipline that utilize Service-Learning, as well as sample syllabi that can guide your initial efforts.

### **How can my students who are taking remedial courses in reading, writing, or math help?**

Many faculty members are concerned that their students lack adequate preparation or skill to help others in a meaningful way. Research literature suggests that this is not a problem; in fact, several authors cite impressive contributions in a variety of roles made by previously underachieving or marginal students.

Obviously instructors and faculty, in concert with the service-learning coordinator and our community partners, must use judgment in choosing appropriate placements and establishing levels of responsibility. The community partners must also help orient and train our students to perform their specific service. But when it comes to meeting the unsuspected challenges that we worry about, we find that students will generally rise to the occasion.

When faced with the challenge of teaching a younger student to read or reading to the blind, students will exert extra effort to be able to succeed at the task because it means something to them and to someone else. This is the very beauty of the strategy—it motivates students to learn and gain higher levels of competence. They see that more knowledge is tied to higher effectiveness in the real world.

### **Instructors and Faculty: How can I fit service into an already cramped curriculum?**

Service-learning is not an add-on to your current course requirements. It does not change or add to what we teach; it only enhances how we teach it. Some of the traditional classroom content accumulation activity is replaced with more dynamic information processing activity. Some prior learning assignments are replaced with action and meaningful involvement of students in experiential learning.

### **Students: How can community service fit into their already busy schedule?**

Many teachers indicate that most students are willing and able to serve in the community. In fact, our research reveals that students feel that the workload in their service-learning course is manageable. Because of the variety of our volunteer placements, there are opportunities and needs for students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As faculty, we must be flexible in hour requirements, recognizing the demands placed on our students.

### **Liability: What can we do to protect our students and ourselves?**

Due care and judgment must always be exercised to assure that the college does not knowingly place students in situations fraught with danger or unreasonable risk. We must work together to use any information or knowledge we have to confirm that each student is appropriate for participation in service-learning and the specific agency that student selects.

## SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM SITES & REFERENCES

American Association for Community Colleges

[www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning)

Campus Compact (Parkland College is now a member of the Illinois Campus Compact, a terrific source of support for new and veteran service-learning practitioners)

[www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)

Chandler-Gilbert Community College Pecos Campus

[www.cgc.maricopa.edu/service\\_learning/](http://www.cgc.maricopa.edu/service_learning/)

Community College National Center for Community Engagement

<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement/>

Corporation for National and Community Service

[www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org)

Educators for Community Engagement

<http://www.e4ce.org/>

Furco, Andrew. Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit. Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education. The Corporation for National Service, 1996.

Howard University's Center for the Advancement of Service-Learning

<http://www.howard.edu/CenterUrbanProgress/CASL.html>

Humboldt State University Service-Learning & Experiential Education Page

[www.humboldt.edu/~slee/html/faculty.shtml](http://www.humboldt.edu/~slee/html/faculty.shtml)

MCC Center for Service-Learning

<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/services/servicelearning/>

Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning

[www.umich.edu/~mjcsl](http://www.umich.edu/~mjcsl)

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

[www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

National Service-Learning Exchange

[www.nslexchange.org](http://www.nslexchange.org)

Service-Learning at the Maricopa Community Colleges

[www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/sl/](http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/sl/)

## SERVICE-LEARNING SYLLABI LINKS

101 Ideas for Combining Service & Learning

<http://www.fiu.edu/~time4chg/Library/ideas.html>

American Educational Research Association - -Division J (AERA-J) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Syllabi website project

[www.higher-ed.org/syllabi](http://www.higher-ed.org/syllabi)

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Service Learning Clearinghouse

[www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning)

Campus Compact's Syllabus Project

[www.compact.org/syllabi](http://www.compact.org/syllabi)

Carlson Center at the University of Washington

[http://depts.washington.edu/leader/3\\_service/](http://depts.washington.edu/leader/3_service/)

MCC Center for Service-Learning

<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/services/servicelearning/>

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

[http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/lesson\\_plans/index.php?link\\_set\\_id=2&category\\_id=160](http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/lesson_plans/index.php?link_set_id=2&category_id=160)