

## SERVICE-LEARNING IS...

An experience-based form of pedagogy in which students, faculty, and community partners work together to integrate and apply empirically-grounded knowledge in authentic settings to address the needs of the community and meet instructional objectives using action and critical reflection to prepare students for careers and to become meaningful members of a just and democratic society.

## CRITERIA FOR OFFICIAL DESIGNATION

A faculty review committee assist faculty in designing service-learning courses that meet the following criteria to receive official designation on students' transcripts:

Students provide needed service to individuals, schools, or other community agencies.

Service experience relates to subject matter of the course.

The class provides method(s) to think about what they've learned through service and how it relates to the subject of the class

The course offers a method to assess learning derived from service – credit is given for learning...not service.

Service recognizes the needs of service recipients and offer an opportunity for them to involved in the evaluation of service.

Service is aimed at the development of the civic education of students even though they may be focused on career preparation.

Knowledge from the discipline informs the service experiences with which students are involved.

The class offers a way to learn from other class members as well as the instructor.

Course options ensure that no student is required to participate in service that creates a religious, political, and/or moral conflict for the student.

## WHAT SERVICE-LEARNING is *NOT*...

### Service-learning vs. voluntary service

It is important that faculty, students, and community partners clearly understand that students are not "volunteers" who merely carry out various tasks an agency needs accomplished. *The activity must be linked to course objectives.* Students often voice concern or objections about "paying tuition" to do volunteer service. The service is as much an integral part of the learning experience as traditional instructional tools and activities like textbooks, written papers, and exams.

### Service-learning vs. Internships

Service-learning is often confused with traditional internships or other forms of practicum experiences which students are required to complete in their pre-professional program preparation. This reflects a consumer approach in which students are "placed" in a setting and expected to observe and assimilate skills. The objective is often tied to meeting and demonstrating mastery of specific competencies specified by governmental or licensing agencies. It does not necessarily address community needs or promote students' sense of citizenry. Service-learning, on the other hand, stresses genuine reciprocity. Another difference from the traditional internship or practicum is the emphasis on reflection, a key component of service learning.

## MYTHS & MISPERCEPTIONS

### Service-learning is an “add-on”

Many instructors perceive service-learning as something to add to already busy and over-burdened students. Because it is a pedagogy, service itself is included within the course activities just as reading and written assignments are. For every credit hour, students have always been expected to do work outside of class time. Service-learning can be part of that out-of-class work. This MIGHT mean reducing other traditional kinds of assignments.

### Service-learning is “fluff”

On the contrary, service-learning is quite demanding, for both the student and faculty. Students are often out of their “comfort zone” and must face real-world issues while applying course content. It allows them to “test” theory presented in class. It forces them to use interpersonal, problem solving, and collaborative skills. In fact, many request for proposals (RFPs) from prestigious funding agencies such as National Science Foundation often include and require service-learning components. Many professional accreditation organizations in the disciplines require service-learning in pre-professional preparation programs.

### Service-learning is not theoretically-based

This form of pedagogy has a firm theoretical foundation based on the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, David Kolb, and L.S. Vygotsky. In essence, students use concrete learning experiences to help construct their understanding of knowledge.

### Service-learning is the best/only way to teach.

Any pedagogy such case studies, debates, labs, or lectures serve a variety of purposes and objectives. Service-learning is only one way to teach and learn...not *THE* way. Faculty should assess their instructional objectives and determine if service-learning is appropriate. Not all courses lend themselves to service-learning. Likewise, not all faculty need or should teach service-learning.

### Service-learning is an impediment to tenure

Like anything at a research institution, it is important for non-tenured faculty to carefully balance their research, teaching, and service. Service-learning can actually be used to *integrate* research, teaching, and service and therefore, be a catalyst to tenure if done so strategically. In fact, there is no record of any faculty member being “at-risk” for merely engaging in service-learning.

## SUPPORT FROM THE BENNION CENTER

Staff from the Bennion Center assist faculty in:

- conceptualizing and developing the course syllabus
- identifying and contacting community agency partners
- providing seed grants for new courses or departmental initiatives
- offering workshops and resources
- training and providing service-learning teaching assistants
- providing a faculty manual guide (available for downloading from the center website)
- considering research and evaluation projects
- preparing and articulating this work for retention and promotion reviews
- designing community-based research projects

## RESOURCES

A comprehensive faculty manual is available for downloading from our website at [www.bennioncenter.org](http://www.bennioncenter.org)

The Bennion Center has an extensive library of books, manuals, articles, and sample course syllabi available on loan. Center staff can also inform faculty of grants and conferences that may be of interest.

## NATIONAL REPUTATION

The Bennion Center is nationally recognized as a leader in service-learning. The center has consistently been ranked in the top 10 programs along with similar centers at Stanford University, University of Michigan, and University of Pennsylvania. The Bennion Center hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Advances in Service-learning Research in November of 2003.

## FAST FACTS AND TRENDS AT THE U

There are over 130 courses that have met the criteria and have been officially designated as service-learning classes

Nearly 1/3 of service-learning classes have an enrollment of 30+ students

Just over 3/4 of faculty teaching service-learning classes have tenure

Nearly 1/2 of the service-learning classes require 30 hours of service – averaging about 2 hours a week

60% of the classes only use 1 to 3 community agencies as partners

A recent study (2001) of 348 students who have taken service-learning courses revealed...

- 95% felt they learned something valuable from diverse populations through service-learning
- 87% agreed that service-learning should be offered on campus
- 88% indicated the service they provided addressed a need in the community
- 78% felt they developed a greater sense of responsibility toward the community
- 77.5% reported service-learning improved their understanding of the subject
- 74% reported they intended to continue to engage in some type of service after the class
- 66% reported service-learning made them study harder

## A SERVICE-LEARNING PRIMER FOR FACULTY

Everything you need to know  
But are afraid to ask

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