HOW TO DESIGNATE YOUR
Service Learning Course

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning (SL) is a thoughtfully organized service experience that addresses a need in the community by establishing a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between students and service partners. It integrates a reflective component that relates the service experience to academic course objectives to facilitate student learning. At least 3 service learning hours should be included per course credit hour.

Contact the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)

Learn more about service learning and how to integrate SL into your course(s). Decide how you can best implement effective pedagogy and assessment criteria into your course, without compromising your faculty autonomy.

Contact the Office of Engaged Scholarship & Learning (ES&L)

Connect with new or existing UTRGV community partners. Learn how Service Learning can be presented in your classroom. Obtain logistical support for faculty, students, and agencies in how to use Engagement Zone.

Apply for Service Learning Course Designation

click

- Complete form at utrgv.submittable.com
- Upload course syllabus
- Identify community partner(s)

Review of Application

ES&L and CTE will review applications based on established criteria. Notifications will be received within two weeks. If not approved, applicant may re-apply once modifcations have been made. Allow time for revisions in your application timeline.

Service Learning Designation

- Allows student to identify SL Courses in catalog
- Provides an experiential learning record
- Opens a course shell on Engagement Zone, a platform that connects community partners to UTRGV students and faculty

Designation will be approved for three years.

Deadline for Spring designation is October 31. Once designated, submit a continuation form for subsequent semesters to the Office of Engaged Scholarship & Learning. Complete a renewal after three years.

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Service Learning Faculty Resources Packet

Service learning is an institutional experiential learning pedagogy that:

- Involves thoughtfully organized **service** in the community that addresses a need
- Includes an integrated **reflection** of how that service relates to academic course objectives and the student's learning
- Involves a **reciprocal** and mutually beneficial relationship with the community partners

Helpful Questions to Consider

To be officially designated as a Service Learning course, a description and supporting syllabus should indicate how the course addresses the following criteria:

Service

- What types of service will students be expected to provide to a specific community organization, school, group, or other entity?
- What will be the time commitment expectation?
- How does the service activity relate to subject matter of the course?
- How will the actual service of the students be assessed?

Reflection

- What reflective assignments and strategies will be incorporated to encourage students to connect how their service activities relate to the subject matter and course goals?
- How will course credit assessment be distributed in terms of the learning of the course content through the service activities as demonstrated by reflection?

Reciprocity

- How will the community partner(s) be involved in *defining* the students' service and contribution?
- How will the community partner(s) be involved in *assessing* the students' service and/or contribution?
- Will the relationship with the community partner(s) involved be ongoing?

Principles of Good Service Learning Practice

Combining Service and Learning

An effective and sustained service learning program:

- Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
- Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
- Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
- Allows for those with needs to define those needs.
- Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
- Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
- Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
- Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
- Ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.
- Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

Jane Kendall & Associates (1990). *Combining Service and Learning*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (Now named: National Society for Experiential Education). *Retrieved from: http://www.compact.org/publications/detail2.php?id=5*

Service Learning Benefits

Service Learning benefits students by:

- Linking theory to practice
- Deepening understanding of course materials
- Enhancing the sense of civic responsibility through civic engagement
- Allowing students to explore possible career paths
- Stressing the importance of improving the human condition
- Developing relevant career-related skills
- Providing experience in group work and interpersonal communication
- Promoting interaction with people from diverse backgrounds
- Instilling a sense of empowerment that enhances self-esteem

Service Learning benefits faculty by:

- Providing exciting new ways to teach familiar material
- Offering professional development challenges
- Engaging faculty in meaningful interactions with the community at large
- Encouraging faculty to form close, interactive, mentoring relationships with students
- Reminding faculty of the direct consequences of their teaching for society
- Connecting faculty across academic disciplines through a shared approach to teaching

Service Learning benefits communities by:

- Forming partnerships that foster positive campus-community interactions
- Providing access to faculty experts and the next generation of experts
- Identifying, addressing, and solving local problems in effective, creative ways
- Cultivating future generations of engaged citizens
- Encouraging multi-generational and cross-cultural interactions
- Establishing cooperation and collaboration as values within the local culture

Service Learning Outcomes for Learners:

- Learning does not necessarily come from the experience of service alone, but from reflection on and creating meaning from that experience
- Service learning can help young people grow from the natural dependence and egocentrism of childhood into mature personal interdependence and engagement in community
- Young people who serve learn holistically. All functions of personality contribute to development of the self
- Students learn and grow as they feel and think about service experiences (i.e., through behavior, affect and cognition). Because learning begins with behavior, students gain efficacy and self-direction
- Service learning empowers youth to become service-oriented citizens and leaders
- Students who serve develop communication and leadership skills, which aid in their ability to apply what they learn to the "real world"
- Service learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development
- Service learning contributes to career development

Service Learning Outcomes for Education:

- Service learning addresses many key education reform objectives
- Benefits to schools include provision of valuable services and an enhanced school climate
- Partnerships between schools and communities, which result in citizen and community development, enhance public relations
- Service learning can improve student satisfaction with the college
- Students engaged in service learning are more likely to graduate

Service Learning Outcomes for the Community:

- Service learning contributes to community development and renewal
- Recipients of service benefit from direct aid, human involvement, and personal empowerment
- Agencies receive an infusion of creativity and enthusiasm from participating students
- Service learning helps students become invested in their communities as community-minded citizens
- As students contribute through service to meet a community need, they are seen to be one of the community's greatest resources

Social Outcomes of Service Learning:

- Service learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding
- Service learning may subvert as well as support course goals of reducing stereotyped thinking and facilitating cultural and racial understanding
- Service learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills
- Service learning during college has a positive effect on commitment to life-long service and volunteering

Retrieved and compiled from: Cairn, R. & J. Kielsmeier, eds. (1995). *Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum.* St Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council. Eyler, J., D. Giles, C. Stenson, and C. Gray. (2001). *At a Glance: What We Know about the Effects of Service- Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions, and Communities*. Vanderbilt University.

Checklist: Create an Outstanding Service Learning Class

Meet Your Potential Community Partner before Semester Starts

- ☐ Articulate the objectives of the service component
- ☐ Identify service activities or issues that relate to your learning objectives
- ☐ Contact potential community partner(s)
- ☐ Plan a site visit or attend agency/faculty luncheon
- ☐ Discuss mutual goals, expectations, and parameters for service projects (hours, product, timeline, and assessment), training requirements, onsite orientations, schedule flexibility, and method/frequency of exchanging feedback
- ☐ Consider inviting agency or community representatives to visit the class

Develop the Syllabus

- ☐ Explain the learning objective(s) of the service.
- ☐ Describe the nature of the service and the community need(s) it addresses.
- ☐ Link the service to course content: Use writing assignments, discussion topics, readings, presentations, and other activities listed in the syllabus as connections to the service.
- ☐ Specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned from the service (journals, papers, presentations).
- ☐ Describe how students will be assessed on the experience: Provide consequences for students who do/do not follow-through with their agency commitments
- ☐ Establish benchmarks or a timeline for contacting the agency, meeting with supervisor, signing contracts, beginning and completing the service.

Orient the Students

- ☐ Talk about the SL experience on the first day of class. Touch on each of the topics listed under "Developing the Syllabus" (above).
- ☐ Invite agency or community representatives to visit the class.
- ☐ Facilitate students connecting with agencies. Have students complete an agreement with their agency supervisor.

Provide Guidance/Monitoring

- □ Provide a timeline: Students need benchmarks for contacting the agency, meeting with supervisors, signing agreements, beginning and completing the service.
- □ Have a back-up plan for students with special needs. Consider providing an alternative for those students who are legitimately unable to participate, or for those who miss/ignore agency orientations and start dates.
- □ Contact the community partner(s) at least once mid-semester to exchange feedback and, if possible, visit the service site(s) to gain first-hand exposure to the experience: Attend mid semester agency/faculty luncheon to share feedback in person.
- □ Evaluate student service activities using frequent "five-minute papers" or other methods of formally assessing student progress. Recommended timeframe: Weeks five and ten.

Include Reflection

- □ Implement reflective assignments and activities throughout the semester.
- □ Discuss service in class even if you are using an optional SL model. Students who choose not to participate in the experience will still gain insights and knowledge from the comments of students who do participate.

Assessment/Evaluation

- □ Use reflective assignments to assess student learning and evaluate performance (class discussion, journals, analysis papers, or oral presentations).
- □ Have students submit an evaluation to be completed by the service supervisor.