DESIGNING SERVICE-LEARNING INTO YOUR COURSE

Ola Ahlqvist
Claire Sweigart

Office of Service-Learning

The Ohio State University
“The university’s engagement with the community – extending our knowledge and scholarship to improve lives and society – is really the heart of our founding purpose as a land-grant university.”

– Michael V. Drake
The Board of Trustees recently approved a new mission/vision statement highlighting Ohio State’s commitment to service:

The University is dedicated to:

- Creating and discovering knowledge to improve the well-being of our state, regional, national and global communities; ...
- Preparing a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens;
- Fostering a culture of engagement and service.
WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

“... a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

Seifer & Connors, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2007
What’s the Difference? Continuum of Experiential Education

**Service-Learning**
- Students engage in an organized service activity that is connected to specific learning outcomes.
- Meets identified community needs.
- Provides structured time to examine the service experience in the context of ongoing learning.
- Service is related to, but not fully integrated with, their academic studies.

**Community Service**
- Students engage in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided.
- Community service programs may be organized around a cause (e.g., MLK Day of Service) but are not necessarily connected to formal coursework.

**Volunteerism**
- Students engage in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary beneficiary is the service recipient.
- Volunteering may have little or no connection to formal coursework.

**Field Experience**
- Students perform service as part of a program designed primarily to enhance their understanding of a field of study.

**Internship**
- Students engage in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning of a field of study.
- Internships apply what has been learned earlier.

---

Service-learning offers many benefits, including:

- Improves student academic outcomes and student motivation
- Helps students see practical applications and impact of your topics
- Attract driven students who seek out service-learning courses
- Connect to your passion while improving town-gown relations
- Publish in new ways via service-learning and community-engaged research and diversify your CV

Why are you interested in service-learning? Thinking about the ‘why’ will help frame your broad course goals.
THE 6 R’S OF SERVICE-LEARNING:

- Reciprocity and Relationship-building
- Relevant and responsive service
- Rigorous learning
- Reflection
- Risk and Reality
- Recognition and celebration
What’s your idea for a service-learning course?
A good service-learning partnership is *mutually beneficial*

- An organization willing to host a service project
- Typically, but not always, non-profit agencies
- **True partnership takes time!**

Goal: Develop safe, trustworthy, collaborative, power-sharing learning communities
WHY DO COMMUNITY PARTNERS WORK WITH SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES?

In a series of interviews with 67 community agencies that host service-learners, the following answers were provided:

- To provide students with an educational opportunity
- To help students gain empathy and “put a face” on community problems
- They want students to understand community organizations and the non-profit field
- They hope that service-learning students will eventually become non-profit leaders or advocates for community solutions
- To help students develop career skills while also doing good work on behalf of their agency

*Stoecker and Tyron, Unheard Voices (2009)*
The service activity your students engage in can take many forms.

- Research-based
  - Examples: Oral history projects, Needs assessments, Organizational analysis
- One-on-one interaction
  - Pairing students with individuals from agencies for conversation, mentoring, and shadowing activities
- Project-based
  - Examples: Community garden development, Homeless shelter mural
- Resource development
  - Examples: Curriculum creation, Website development, Brochure design
- Direct service
  - Students assigned specific, daily tasks by on-site supervisors
- Teaching others
  - Examples: Tutoring, Music lessons, In-class workshops
There are a variety of ways to organize your service and partnership:

- **Short-term service-learning**
  - Single semester projects not tied together over time

- **Long-term service-learning**
  - Ongoing project with either same or different students
  - Ex: Girl’s Circle

- **Professional skill service-learning**
  - Ex: Clinical education, FEEP

- **Trip-based service-learning**
  - Service trip at the end of a course
  - Ex: Fall course, winter break trip OR
  - Spring course with spring break trip
THOUGHTS ON COURSE FORMAT

- Is your course:
  - short-term
  - long-term
  - professional
  - trip-based

- Is it just one, or a combination?

- Is there a sustained engagement?

- How does this impact your planning?
Course materials should be applied to the student service experience, and the service should be brought back to the classroom to enhance academic dialogue and comprehension.

The Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Students make connections between concepts and skills learned in an academic setting and community-based work.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.
- Students evaluate the impacts of the service learning activity.
Reflection brings together the service experience and academic learning.

Without guided reflection activities, service-learning may “reinforce stereotypes, decrease participants’ motivation to engage in future service activities, and exacerbate power differentials between social and cultural groups.” (Furco, 2011)

Example types of reflection:

- Journals
- Scrapbooks
- Essays or project reports
- Portfolios
- Video/Audio/Multimedia projects
- Small group discussions
- Presentations or public speaking
RISK AND REALITY

- Leaving the classroom environment involves risk
  - Be prepared and flexible

- Confronting reality may be stressful for your students, but ultimately rewarding
  - Develop critical thinking skills
  - Expanded worldview
  - Build career skills

- Know we can make a difference!
The Active Citizen Continuum

**EXPOSURE**
What?

**UNDERSTANDING**
So What?

**ACTION**
Now What?

**MEMBER**
Not concerned with her/his role social problems

**VOLUNTEER**
Well-intentioned but not well educated about social issues.

**CONSCIENTIOUS CITIZEN**
Concerned with discovering root causes; asks why?

**ACTIVE CITIZEN**
Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.
What do you want students to gain from your course?
How will they demonstrate that they have met these outcomes?
Don’t forget to share your students’ work with the community
WHAT CAN THE OSL DO FOR YOU?

- S-designation support
- Grants and resources
- Workshops and other events
- One-on-one consultation
- Course listing and promotion
- The Service-Learning Scholars Roundtable (SLSR) listserv
The S-designation (Course XXXX-S):
- Assigned via a committee appointed by the Office of Service-Learning as part of curriculum.osu.edu
- Appears on service-learning courses in the official course catalogue, searchable by students
- S-courses also can be General Education Open Option, fulfilling elective requirements for undergraduates

Goal for the Service-Learning Open Option:
“Students gain and apply academic knowledge through civic engagement with communities.”
Faculty grants of up to $4,000 for development or enrichment of service-learning courses

- Support for one-time costs to establish a course
- Course Design Institute together with UCAT

Applications due early February each year

Columbus Metro Libraries partnership
Columbus has one of the best public library systems in the nation.

They have an ambitious agenda to develop literacy and success among local youth.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5OsWkSKz9joUj0h1leQAT7Ipw8cSG-sh

Together we have piloted a model for OSU service-learning courses to support CML homework help centers.
Prior to First Class | Paperwork and link to the Volunteer Application are emailed prior to class; students complete the application  
Class Roster shared with CML Volunteer Manager

| Week 1 | Paperwork is reviewed and turned in  
Branch Snapshot shared with students  
Syllabus shared with HHC staff at CML library locations, preferably in meeting with faculty member to share expectations |
| Week 2 | Preliminary list of student placements from CML Volunteer Manager  
Streamlined Orientation 30-40 minutes + Q&A  
Cultural Competency training  
Potential field trip to Linden Branch as introduction to library environment |
| Week 3 | Students start in the Homework Help Centers  
Branch-specific orientation with Homework Help Center Specialist |
| Week 4 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 5 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 6 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 7 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 8 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 9 | Students serve at HHC |
| Week 10 | Students serve at HHC  
20 minute project discussion with host Homework Help Center Specialist and class group to determine implementation. |
| Week 11 | Students serve at HHC / Projects shared in the HHC |
| Week 12 | Students serve at HHC / Projects shared in the HHC |
| Week 13 | Students serve at HHC / Projects shared in the HHC |

- A service-learning opportunity for courses that primarily enroll juniors and seniors
- OSU Students complete a minimum of 15 hours of service
- Serving the Homework Help Center provides an experience helping k-12 students with homework; students will be assigned to one of our locations
- Opportunity to present a final project as a program/activity in the Homework Help Center
- Projects should be a natural extension of what the OSU student is learning in class that engages students in the Centers
- Transportation to and from location is the responsibility of the students