ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING

FACULTY HANDBOOK

Edited by Ben Goehring, Service-Learning Scholar—Spring 2015
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER ....................................................................................................................... 3
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE ............................................. 4
UNDERSTANDING SERVICE-LEARNING ...................................................................................................... 5-7
SERVICE-LEARNING AT GWU .................................................................................................................... 8-11
BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF SERVICE-LEARNING ........................................................................ 11-13
DEVELOPING A SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE ....................................................................................... 12-15
ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY-CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS ......................................................................... 15-19
RISK MANAGEMENT, WAIVERS, AND RELEASES ....................................................................................... 20
SERVICE-LEARNING MODELS ...................................................................................................................... 21-22
SETTING LEARNING OBJECTIVES ............................................................................................................ 23-25
ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES ................................................................................................. 25-26
DEVELOPING THE COURSE SYLLABUS ..................................................................................................... 26-29
REFLECTION ................................................................................................................................................ 30-37
EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS ................................................................ 38-39
DEMONSTRATION AND CELEBRATION .................................................................................................... 39-40
SUSTAINABILITY ......................................................................................................................................... 40-41
SERVICE-LEARNING RESOURCES ............................................................................................................ 41-42
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY FACULTY ....................................................................................... 42-45
SUGGESTED READINGS ............................................................................................................................... 46-48
CREDITS ..................................................................................................................................................... 48
RESOURCES CITED .................................................................................................................................... 49-50
APPENDIX A. ONLINE RESOURCES FOR GW FACULTY ......................................................................... 50
APPENDIX B. RISK MANAGEMENT EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS ............................................................ 51-53
A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER

Thank you for your interest in service-learning at The George Washington University. This Service-Learning Handbook offers insights into successfully incorporating community-based service-learning into undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses across a myriad of disciplines. We’ve tried to create a handbook accessible and useful for both novice and experienced practitioners of community-based service-learning and research. We’ve also covered many of the topics that can be troublesome to faculty trying to incorporate service-learning into their classroom activities. The theoretical pieces have been included to help you think about the importance of this work, while the practical tools should help with the actual facilitation of the projects. We hope they are useful to you.

This is the second published edition of the Service-Learning Handbook. We have updated many of the service-learning resources, course offerings, and staff members in order to ensure that you have access to the most up-to-date material. That being said, if you believe we have outdated or incorrect information, please reach out to us with your suggestions. Please also visit our online resources for Academic Service-Learning at serve.gwu.edu. We appreciate any feedback along with your recommendations and suggestions for future editions of this handbook.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Emily Morrison, Director of the Human Services Program, for starting this handbook several years ago. Much of the material here was originally compiled by her, and we attribute its current usefulness to her initial labor.

We dedicate this handbook to those at GW who worked for years through trial-and-error to implement service-learning. Thank you for helping build a network of faculty able and poised to train and support their peers. You are the original handbook for all who will join our important efforts.

Regards,
Amy Cohen
Executive Director
The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service

Maurice Smith
Academic Service-Learning Coordinator
The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service
The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service's mission is to integrate civic engagement into GW's curriculum. We undertake programs that meet community needs beyond the campus, promote active citizenship in a diverse democracy, and enhance teaching, learning and scholarship at GW.

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Service-learning is 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.

Corporation for National and Community Service

Service-learning is an important pedagogical tool which requires students to apply and adapt the knowledge taught in the classroom to address real world issues. By addressing a need identified by a community partner, service-learning creates the opportunity for reciprocal learning between the campus and community.

Learn and Serve America describes service-learning as a unique opportunity for students to get involved with their communities in a tangible way through the integration of service projects with classroom learning. Through this process, students become engaged in the educational process and are able to apply what they learn in the classroom to problems in the real world as actively contributing citizens.

Service-learning can be categorized as experiential based and/or problem based:

**Experiential Based Service:**

- Provides ongoing service to meet a community partner’s general needs
- Gives students authentic experiences
- Broadens perspectives and awareness of different issues
- Applies course content to real life situations
- Usually requires an hourly or weekly commitment with a community partner

**Examples:**

- Communication course in which students gain experience in interpersonal communication by conversing with ESL students
- Human development course in which students learn about the aging process by working with seniors
- Medical students in a community health course that work with homeless men to improve access to health information and care
- Business administration course that has students write grants for area non-profits

**Problem-Based Service:**

- Provides community partners specialized expertise or knowledge to meet a specific need
• Results in a product for a community partner (e.g., brochure, web page, resource manual, maps, etc.)
• Requires enough time and resources to finish a project or one stage of a project
• Has a clearly-defined, tangible outcome

Examples:
• English course in which students create written materials for a community partner’s annual report
• Marketing course in which students develop brochures or marketing plans
• Graphic/web design course in which students help community partners enhance their online presence
• Engineering course in which students design and construct a playground structure
• Geography class in which students create maps for a community partner

Finally, please note that service-learning may engage students in indirect service or direct service. Indirect service includes tax preparation, food service, grant-writing, community-based research, program evaluations, and producing assets, such as maps for policy makers and community organizations. Direct service, on the other hand, brings students in direct contact with people in an agency or community. Ultimately, selecting the type of service-learning depends on the learning objectives for the course and the goals identified by the community partners.

**HOW IS SERVICE-LEARNING DIFFERENT FROM VOLUNTEERING OR AN INTERNSHIP?**

The learning objectives and structure of service-learning is different from those of volunteerism, internships, or community service. In contrast to these other co-curricular activities, service-learning explicitly integrates service into the learning outcomes of a course. For example, while volunteering at a local food pantry for extra credit in a course is clearly beneficial, it is not service-learning because the service is not connected to the course’s curriculum. Similarly, interning for a non-profit for course credit is a great option for an undergraduate, but it is not service-learning because the student does not have the classroom setting to buttress the learning being done through the internship. In order for a course to be considered service-learning, there must be a reciprocal relationship between the material in the classroom and the learning outside of the classroom. The pedagogy should shed light on the service while, vice-versa, the service should increase students’ understanding of the academic material.

In order to facilitate the inherent reciprocity of service-learning, providing an opportunity for reflection must be a priority. Reflection involves personal introspection through examining the service experience and how students have interacted within it (Jacoby, 1996; Kendall, 1990). Reflection can take place through formal assignments, such as essays that challenge students to link
course readings with their service experiences, or informal assignments, such as group discussions on Blackboard. Faculty grade or assess the quality and rigor of service-learning through student reflection as well as from evaluations provided by community partners. Please refer to the “Reflection” section for more information.

Furthermore, service-learning is also focused on developing a more engaged civil sector that can affect real and lasting social change. Through their collaborative grounding in the community, service-learning courses are able to develop an integrated curriculum that includes community members as integral partners—a clear departure from other forms of experiential learning.

Research shows that service-learning provides positive outcomes for students when:

- The service experience is integral to the activities of the course
- The service immerses students in meaningful, challenging, and relevant activities
- Assignments are carefully crafted to require analytical connections between the service and course material
- Students have frequent opportunities for reflection that goes beyond simply sharing feelings and experiences. Students should have opportunities to analyze, dissect, and connect their service activities in ways that clarify course concepts, elaborate text-based information, and integrate and process knowledge in the context of their service.
The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service is committed to service-learning because it enhances student learning by integrating academic and co-curricular experiences. Moreover, through active engagement with community organizations, students become aware of Washington’s diverse, multi-faceted nature and learn to appreciate the importance of being civically engaged. GW’s unique location grants students access to federal and global policymakers as well as unique community leaders and area non-profits. This distinctive advantage can and has been used to forge important and innovative connections within the realm of service-learning. GW faculty have generated novel connections that foster faculty and student research, student learning, community development, the use of new technologies, and policy development.

More than 103 faculty in 25 departments have integrated service-learning into one or more courses. Faculty in the following departments and schools have included service-learning in their course offerings:

- Architecture and Design
- Biostatistics
- Communications
- Computer Science
- Counseling
- Disabilities Studies
- Education
- English
- English for Academic Purposes
- Engineering
- Exercise Science
- Geography
- Human Services
- Law
- International Business
- Management
- Medicine and Health Sciences (graduate programs)
- Music
- Peace Studies
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Public Health and Health Services (undergraduate and graduate programs)
- Public Policy & Public Administration
- Religion
- Sociology
- Spanish
- Women’s Studies and the Women’s Leadership Program
- University Writing

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT GW:

**Advanced Spanish Voices of our Poets ~ Diálogo con los Poetas. Dr. Dolores Perillan. (Spanish)**
This Advanced Spanish Service-learning course was developed to link poetry with social change and citizenship. Students engage with the community through various service-learning projects that challenge students to advance their language learning process, cement this learning in a historical and social context, explore and become aware of our community, and reflect about the meaning of
civic engagement and service. Students work with community partners providing language translation in various settings and contexts.

**Contemporary Immigration and the Changing American City. Dr. Hiromi Ishizawa. (Sociology)**
This course provides an introduction to the field of immigration studies with a strong emphasis on cities that receive immigrants. The aim is for students to understand theoretical and policy debates surrounding immigration in contemporary America. This course begins with an overview of patterns of immigration, especially changes in the demographics of immigration and immigration policy, how contemporary immigrants impact cities in the United States, such as patterns of residential settlement, and then examine how contemporary immigrants impact urban planning and public policies. This course also gives students an opportunity to explore sociological research set in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

**Writing for Social Change. Dr. Phyllis Ryder. (University Writing)**
In this first-year writing seminar, students work with DC community organizations to study how they create social change. Students consider how community-based writing carries over into academic communities, where scholars likewise must convince their community of the usefulness of their work. Students volunteer in more than ten community organizations across DC that focus on homelessness, education, environmental sustainability, and promoting peace techniques. Students then analyze the community organizations use of rhetoric, research an issue facing the organization, and prepare a document commissioned by the organization.

**Urban Sustainability. Dr. Melissa Keeley. (Geography)**
Students work with two non-profit community partners, the Urban Land Institute and The American Institute of Architects, that provide planning and policy guidance to US municipalities. These partners ask students to gather information about a current trend in sustainability policy-making. Each of the students is assigned a different topic that they study throughout the semester and compose white paper briefings on. At the end of the semester the students write a term paper that synthesizes the material, and create comparative posters and present these findings to our project partners. Students' presentations have been featured on the Planet Forward website and video festival.

**America Dreaming: Composing Consciousness and Service-Learning. Dr. Pamela Presser. (University Writing)**
To what extent is your sense of self shaped by your culture, circumstances and location? How does where you are living and working influence what you dream? Does performing service, and writing about your experiences, change your ideas about who you are? Such questions fall within the domain of consciousness studies, an interdisciplinary field which will be the subject of this class. Because consciousness studies in its present incarnation is a new and largely uncharted field, most
questions its scholars are asking remain unanswered. This course, then, will be best suited for curious students eager to explore inner and outer space. Indeed, the course requires a willingness to leave the GWU bubble, since students will be required to perform 20 hours of community service off campus, with a non-profit organization.

Assignments may include, but will not be limited to, collaborative projects, an annotated bibliography, a journal in which you engage in meta-cognitive writing, and a final paper combining research on service and consciousness.

**Introduction to Human Development. Dr. Sara Pula. (Sociology and Human Services)**
The course explores adult development from young adulthood to old age and examines dominant psychosocial, cognitive, physical competencies, motivational changes, coping styles, and normative and non-normative behaviors. Students are required to serve three hours weekly in an appropriate agency setting. Students reflect in several essays on how their service has informed their understanding of course material.

**Foundations in School Counseling (K-12). Dr. Sam Steen. (Graduate School of Education and Human Development)**
The course empowers school counseling students to understand the role and function of the contemporary professional school counselor by integrating theory and practice in mentorship settings at schools. This course is a primer of the knowledge base and practices required to be a school counselor.

**BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF SERVICE-LEARNING**

**BENEFITS**

**For GW faculty, service-learning can:**

- Enrich and enliven teaching through increased student engagement
- Foster new ways of interacting with students and community partners
- Develop additional awareness of current societal issues that relate to academic areas of interest
- Identify or be integrated with research and publication opportunities, furthering professional goals

**For GW students, service-learning can:**

- Enhance cognitive skills through problem-solving and social interaction dynamics
• Develop citizenship and political participation skills such as leadership, conflict resolution, self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of efficacy, appreciation for diversity, and interpersonal communication

• Develop enriching ideas about citizenship such as an ethic of civic responsibility, commitment to service, and a sense of personal and social responsibility

• Advance career skills by exploring career interests, gaining a realistic understanding of the world of work, and learning the professional skills and ethics necessary to succeed after college

For the community, service-learning can:

• Provide substantial human resources to meet self-identified needs

• Attract engaged and knowledgeable future volunteers

• Create a spirit of civic responsibility in future professionals and citizens

For GW, service-learning can:

• Fulfill our civic mission

• Build stronger ties to our Washington, D.C. community

• Foster the identification and accessibility of community resources

• Promote a positive, responsible public image

• Attract and retain a larger, more diverse student population

• Cultivate new partnerships and opportunities for collaboration

CHALLENGES

For GW, challenges may include:

• Identifying administrative and academic resources

• Potentially increased risk management concerns

• Prioritizing finances and employee time to promote intentional development of service-learning

• Creating institutional recognition for service-learning in tenure and promotion decisions

• Adapting to more diffuse power structures
For GW faculty, challenges may include:

- Finding time to fully integrate service-learning into curriculum and build relationships with community partners
- Acclimating to a less controlled learning structure
- The current lack of recognition of service-learning in tenure and promotion and the few reward systems in place to acknowledge the additional effort required by service-learning
- Finding time for additional collaboration and coordination with the various stakeholders
- Entrusting students with additional initiative and responsibility

For students, challenges may include:

- Having to spend more time and effort to truly demonstrate mastery of material
- Learning to self-reflect on their service
- Leaving the “Foggy Bottom Bubble”
- Commuting to and from sites
- Performing work that affects large numbers of community members

For the community, challenges may include:

- Providing the staff resources necessary to collaborate with campus partners
- Providing the training, feedback, evaluation, and supervision that service-learners often need
- Balancing their organizational goals with those of service-learning students and faculty
- Scheduling service-learning students around the academic semester schedule

DEVELOPING A SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE

This section presents a methodology for developing a new service-learning course or redeveloping an existing course to include service-learning.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SERVICE-LEARNING INTEGRATION

Reward academic credit for learning, not just service:
Academic learning is the goal of any course, and service is a tool to enhance the learning experience. Thus, credit should be based on the quality of academic work, level of understanding of
the material, and quality of service, not the amount of service performed. Therefore, you may wish to assess and track student attendance, attitude, and work ethic with the community partner.

**Maintain academic rigor:**
Academic expectations should not be lowered for service-learning. On the contrary, the application of community experience to academic learning should be challenging and enhance the overall academic expectations.

**Establish course learning objectives as they relate to your expected service-learning project:**
Service without clear objectives and links to course learning objectives can be confusing, so it is important to set clear course goals and regularly check with the students to see if the objectives are being met. It is vital to work with community partners as you develop your learning objectives, as this will also assist them in determining which service opportunities are most effective for your students.

**Develop relationships carefully with service partners:**
Faculty should know their community partner(s). They can work with the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service to identify a community partner. It is crucial for the instructor to work with community partners to determine what constitutes acceptable service. Ideally, students should not be asked to find their own service-learning opportunities without a vetted list.

Here are three guidelines regarding placement criteria:

1. Faculty have the responsibility for insuring that their chosen partners will enable the most effective and meaningful student learning.

2. The learning goals established for the course should guide the placement or project criteria.

3. Community partners should be consulted throughout the selection process in order to insure that the service project will meet an identified community need.

**Use educationally sound learning strategies to realize student learning and course objectives:**
Academic material should support service-learning with critical thinking and analysis. Course objectives can be better realized when the service and academic material are allowed to interact with one another in a cohesive, contextualized fashion.

**Prepare students for learning from the community:**
Many students are not accustomed to turning community-based work and research into academic products, and faculty should assist directly in this process.

**Rethink the faculty instructional role and learning approaches:**
Students are doing a great deal of independent learning and face new challenges through their
community work. Thus, they benefit most from a classroom model that steers away from the traditional lecture format and allows for more learning facilitation and guidance on the part of the instructor. This could mean more classroom discussion and reflection.

**Be prepared for variation in student learning outcomes:**
Even if students have the same readings and assignments and are placed at the same community site, there will be considerable variation in service experiences. This can be challenging at times but can also lead to fascinating discussion and reflection.

**Maximize cooperative learning in the class:**
A communal learning orientation within the class encourages group responsibility. Therefore, create multiple opportunities for written reflection or in class discussion. Also, make sure you provide students with the space to air any concerns, confusion, or joy they are experiencing through their community partner. Group projects and peer editing can be utilized to create group responsibility and encourage students to be resources for one another.

**Final Best Practices:**
Below are three essential criteria for service-learning criteria that are based on research on effective service-learning practice:

1. Service must be connected to course content. The range of service placements or projects ought to be circumscribed by the content of the course.
2. The duration of the service must be sufficient to enable the fulfillment of learning goals; a one-time, 2-hour shift at a hospital will do little to facilitate learning for a course on institutional health care. Moreover, it may not be sufficient to meet community needs. Typically, 20-30 hours, with guided preparation and ongoing reflection, is needed to create meaningful engagement and a tangible community benefit.
3. The service must stimulate course-relevant learning: filing records in a warehouse may be of service to a school district, but it would offer little to stimulate learning in a course on elementary school education.

**GETTING STARTED**

The first step in creating a service-learning course is deciding how the service should be integrated into the academic content. There are many curricular options that allow service-learning to fit your course goals. Contact the Academic Service-learning Coordinator at the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service for ideas.

**Questions to Consider for Your Service-learning Course:**

- What organizations and agencies are potential partners for the service-learning course?
• What learning objectives can be achieved through working with the community?
• What service-learning model works best with your course?
• Are your potential community partners appropriate for carrying out course content, as well as service and learning activities? What are the limitations, if any, for addressing course content and competencies?
• What resources and information do you want from your community partners?
• How much service will you expect your students to complete?
• How will you prepare your students for the experience?
• How can service-learning enhance the goals of your course?
• What will students gain from participating in service-learning and how will the experience help them understand your course goals?
• How will you incorporate reflection and time for class dialogue?
• How will you assess student learning?
• How will you evaluate community impact?

Consult University Resources:

• Consult the Academic Service-learning Coordinator at the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service, Maurice Smith, who can be reached at smithml@gwu.edu
• Consult resources on-line at serve.gwu.edu
• Visit the service-learning library available in the Colonial Crossroads on the fifth floor of the Marvin Center (801 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC 20052) to borrow resources, such as articles, texts, and example syllabi. View available titles in the CCEPS service-learning library: http://www.librarything.com/catalog/CCEPS
• Sign up for the service-learning faculty listserv by sending an email to gwsl@gwu.edu

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY-CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

Of all the concerns we heard from community workers, the one we heard the most is that they wanted the faculty, not just the students, to be involved in the community. And then they wanted the curriculum to serve the work that the students were doing. Minimally, they wanted to see a syllabus before they saw a student. Maximally, they wanted to be involved in constructing the actual syllabus.

Randy Stoecker, The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning

Community partners can be identified through many sources. Do you already work with community-based organizations through your research? Do you serve on the board of a local non-
profit? Does your department have a Memorandum of Understanding with a local agency or institution? If so, you might want to approach them first, as these already-existing partnerships may offer exciting opportunities for additional collaboration.

If you don’t have a partner in mind, the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service maintains relationships with over 60 partners within metropolitan Washington, DC. Reach out to the Academic Service-Learning Coordinator to help identify potential community partners. You should also talk to other faculty members, students, and DC residents to see if they know of any potential community partners. If you make early contact with an organization to establish a relationship and set the parameters for a service-learning partnership, you will have more success in developing a successful service-learning course. Remember, it is imperative that the service students are asked to perform fits with a community-identified goal. Students should be serving the community; if they are not, then they aren’t performing service-learning.

Here are some questions to consider as you begin to establish relationships with community partners:

- How will you and your students establish a relationship with the community partner?
- How will you stay connected with your community partners? Periodic check-ins via phone, email, or visits can be useful in ensuring that the partnership is fulfilling its role for both the students and the partners.
- What role will community partners play in the evaluation of student service?

Determine how the partnership may facilitate student learning:

- Will the partners visit your class? Can they provide or suggest readings or other training material?
- What role will members of your partnership play in facilitating student learning? Some examples of the potential role community partners can play include, but are not limited to, facilitating reflection discussions, mentoring students in the community, presenting to students on issues related to course content, and guiding or participating in community-based research activities with students.

Depending on the structure of your class, you may opt to:

- Work with a single organization on a common project
- Work with a few organizations to devise several placement options for students
- Work with the Center to refer students to agencies, which you must approve (this should be rare and only when approved in advance from the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service)
These options have their strengths and drawbacks. You need to determine which model will help you and the class best achieve your learning objectives and the goals of the community partner.

Establishing a personal relationship with a representative at the community partner site is highly recommended, as it is helpful in understanding the extent of the work students will be completing and in having a channel for recourse should problems arise for either your partner or your students. It is also important that the instructor share a copy of the syllabus with each community partner in order to insure that learning objectives and course schedules are made clear. At a minimum, we recommend that faculty have each student work with the community partner site supervisor to complete and submit a Service-Learning Agreement Form (an example is found in Appendix A) to provide an initial understanding of the expectations among all parties. It can also be helpful to share a copy of the draft syllabus with each community partner before finalizing it in order to ensure that the student learning objectives, service opportunities, and community organizations’ expectations are agreeable to all parties.

It is imperative that faculty work with community partners to ensure that a community-identified need is being met with the service experience. Community partners frequently express that academic institutions “ask for a lot” from the community partners with whom they work. Thus, not surprisingly, faculty sometimes find it difficult to identify community organizations willing to commit to service-learning. It is key that academic institutions communicate the value that service-learning can provide to community partners. For example, service-learning provides an opportunity for community partners to have a voice in what they need and how these needs should be met. Service-learning also provides an opportunity for community partners to influence how the next generation of college graduates is trained and educated. Service-learning, when designed well, can help community partners forge links and create new networks with other associations, institutions, and individuals active in bringing change and improvement to the community. In addition, association with an academic institution can provide enhanced legitimacy and validation in a community partner’s fundraising efforts.

Even though students will be interacting with the community organization for a short period of time in the context of the class, community partners should view these students as potential future donors, volunteers, or even staff. Moreover, students provide short-term benefits to community partner. Students can be sources of third party evaluations and the academic work that students complete, such as journals, papers, and portfolios, can provide an outsider’s perspective on the community partner’s programs and mission. (Seifer and Conners, 2007). Also, students should be encouraged to continue to serve if they are interested—direct them to the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service for such opportunities.
The purpose of a partnership agreement or a memorandum is to begin the process of formalizing the partnership and to establish the foundation for the partnership’s activities. The agreement or memorandum will address the goals and objectives of the partnership as well as the roles and responsibilities of those involved. The members of the partnership must identify the appropriate terms and language to convey the guidelines for the partnership. It is important to shape the guidelines in a way that feels most comfortable to the members of the partnership.

The GW-SL-MOU template can be found in Appendix A and at serve.gwu.edu. You should consult any offices of partnerships, outreach, or extension in your department or college to determine any discipline or area-specific policies for partnerships.

Before creating an MOU, you should check with the Center and your department to be sure no MOU already exists with the desired organizations. You may be able to simply amend an earlier agreement to incorporate your course.

The Center is also willing, in some circumstances, to house the partnership so that multiple departments may collaborate with the same partner. We do this with all of our Engage DC sites, for instance. Ask the Academic Service-Learning Coordinator for more information.

**BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY/CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS**

One of the most rewarding aspects of service-learning for faculty are the relationships established with community members. In the interest of building a satisfying and rewarding partnership, we recommend keeping the following suggestions in mind.

These suggestions are adapted from those provided in the Youth Service America Semester of Service Strategy Guide:

- Community partners appreciate being included in the planning process. A face-to-face planning meeting is vital to developing trust.
- Before you approach a potential community partner, familiarize yourself with its mission, specific goals, policies, etc.
- Be explicit and clear about your goals and expectations for the partnership. What will you provide the organization? How will they benefit you?
- If you have specific elements that must be included in a project, explicitly mention them to the organization. Partners need to be aware of what the students are working on in the course.
- Look to your partner as a resource for your academic goals. Because community partners are familiar with service resources and communities, they might be able to connect you with important resources.
• Keep your community partner up to date with course deadlines and timelines. It is very difficult for students and partners to have a rewarding experience if either party is unaware of important logistics.

• If you are having students create a project for a community partner, make sure that all parties are aware of their respective roles.

• Not all community partners have a full-time volunteer coordinator – and most do not have staff dedicated to working with students. Do not assume that your community partner will understand how your school functions or be aware of the academic calendar. Make sure to note if students should not be performing certain kind of work.

• Communicate clearly to your students that they have to respect the community partner by following through with service commitments.

• It’s appreciated if students send copies of written student reflections or thank you notes to their partner organizations. Partners can use these to attract support from current and future donors, increasing their potential to provide you with future opportunities.

• Make a conscious effort to show how you will be willing to work with the community partner, and that you don’t expect them to do all of the work.

• Keep in mind that agencies are driven by their missions. Discuss how you can assist them in accomplishing their mission.

• Discuss what you, as the instructor, plan to do if student work is subpar. For example, will you assume responsibility for completing the project?

• Understand that many agency staff wear multiple hats and are often stretched to provide full-time support for their volunteer program. Therefore, be explicit with your community partners about your expectations of them and what they can expect from your students.

• Community partner staff often have active roles within their agencies that prevent them from spending large portions of their day at their desks. With this in mind, it may sometimes be necessary for you and your students to be persistent in your communication and try multiple channels (e.g., email and telephone).

• Don’t assume that community partners understand your course goals. Share learning objectives, as well as any details that might be relevant for the students’ experiences. Be clear about what students need to achieve through their service - personal growth, academic credit, direct contact with clients, etc. This can assist agencies in designing appropriate activities. Make sure you allow community partners to suggest revisions based on the needs of the partner and its clients.

• Invite community partner staff to visit the class to introduce their organization. You can also invite staff to reflections and class presentations and ask them to provide feedback.

• Community organizations and their clients are not a teaching or research laboratory. The notion of community partners as laboratories assumes a false hierarchy of power and perpetuates an attitude of institutional superiority. Faculty and community partners must be equal, collaborative partners. This must be clearly understood by all parties.
RISK MANAGEMENT

The George Washington University has worked with University Risk Management to develop policies, procedures, and best practices to ensure that our student’s off-campus service experiences are as safe as possible. All service-learning students should be fully informed about their assignment and knowingly consent to undertake any risks associated with their placement by reading and signing the Waiver and Release form.

The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service and University Risk Management staff members are also available to speak to you or your class before your students begin serving.

Community partners prioritize volunteer safety. Thus, many community organizations have volunteer orientations where they go over best practices, safety, their code of ethics, and behavioral expectations.

We also encourage faculty to read through and make available to students the Service Risk Management Tips guideline in Appendix A.

WAIVERS

All students engaged in service-learning at GW must sign a waiver and media release form either online at serve.gwu.edu, in the classroom with a paper form (available in Appendix A), or by speaking to the Academic Service-Learning Coordinator.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH

Some academic institutions have expanded institutional review board oversight to student as well as faculty research projects. Any applicable standards or restrictions set by such a body should be discussed and clearly understood by all parties involved. Moreover, encourage graduate and professional students to join professional associations, as those groups usually provide some form of liability protection for internship-like situations.
As you consider integrating service-learning, one way to think about the project is to consider the various service-learning models. No one model of service-learning is right for every course. The community need, the goals of the course, and the philosophy of the instructor should dictate what type of service-learning model is utilized.

The examples below are adapted from Barbara Jacoby’s Service-Learning Models for Inclusion into classrooms:

- **Service-learning course**: All students in the course are involved in service-learning, either in small groups, as a class, or as individuals. Reflection is integrated throughout the course and linked to learning outcomes.

- **Field work service-learning**: Students in professional programs, such as education, nursing, or human services fully integrate themselves with a community partner. For field education to be considered service-learning, reciprocal partnerships, reflection, and intentional integration with academic content are critical.

- **Community-based research**: Under the supervision of a faculty member, students engage in research with the community, designed to benefit all partners. Community members are involved in every stage of the research process.

- **Service-learning capstone**: A service-learning capstone course is a culminating experience that enables students to integrate their learning from throughout their college experience, to make meaning of it, and to think about how they will use it in the future. They often involve a research project or substantial service experience with critical analysis and a final written paper and/or presentation.

- **Dean’s seminars and first-year development courses**: Service-learning can often be integrated into these seminars or courses for an active, critical experience that introduces first-year students to the concept of service-learning and the community in which the university is located. Through service-learning, these courses help students build their skills in writing, critical thinking and a content area.

- **Service-learning internship or independent study**: Allows students in any major to work in the community for more substantial amounts of time, attend class (often a minimum of hours), and engage in on-going reflection and intentional application of academic learning.

- **International service-learning**: Takes many forms, including a course that involves an alternative spring break, a 3-week winter break, or a summer experience in an international setting. Often these courses also involve service in the local community that is related to the work the students will do abroad.

- **Course sequencing**: A series of courses are taken in order, each one building on the work of the previous, with the service and the reflection becoming deeper and more critical. Students may partner with the same or different community agencies throughout the sequence. This can involve a multidisciplinary approach.
• **Optional/4th credit:** Students in a course choose from 2 or more options for achieving course goals such as service-learning, case studies, research papers, or other projects. Reflection may be different for students engaged in the service option versus those who are not. Another option is for students to negotiate a learning contract with a faculty member in any course in which the faculty member is willing to work with the student to design a service-learning component to supplement the basic course. The service-learning component includes intentional reflection; the credit is awarded for demonstration of learning, not for the service alone.

Within these models of service-learning, courses can have different structures such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service Experience</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Projects</td>
<td>Students work collaboratively in one or more groups. Their service may be rendered to one or more agencies or to an entire community. It can be a project with a tangible end or a structured activity.</td>
<td>Students in a marketing course interview an agency and learn more about agency needs through visits with staff and research. Based on their experience, students design marketing materials for the agency’s use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Placement at organization</td>
<td>All students in the course are required to individually fulfill the service component for course completion. Students choose service sites from a menu of placements and meet the commitment as determined by the agency and instructor. Assignments are designed to facilitate learning skills or subjects.</td>
<td>Students in a death and dying course provide needed services at health care agencies, assisted living centers, Hospice, etc. The diverse range of experiences is brought back into the classroom for reflection and discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Research</td>
<td>Students learn research methodology while serving as advocates for communities. Community agencies play a critical role in identifying issues to be researched. Students research the issues identified by the community partner and submit a final report containing their findings.</td>
<td>Students in a biology class test pollution levels in the Anacostia River periodically throughout the term. Students work with community partners, such as the Anacostia Watershed Society, to gather data and compile results during class time. The resulting report is shared with the Society to help guide their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td>One or more students are involved in a service experience related to a specific academic discipline. The students meet regularly with a faculty member to discuss and reflect on their experience.</td>
<td>The bulk of the time in this model is not spent in class, but doing service. It is typical of a service-learning independent study for students to spend as much as 100 hours performing service. Students usually write a research paper at the conclusion of the term.</td>
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</table>
SETTING LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR COURSE

Once you have an initial project and community partner lined up, your next challenge is to determine what you expect your students to learn and how it fits with the course material and service. As has already been established, it is crucial that the service and academic material have a reciprocal connection. It is important that the course objectives reflect that relationship.

One method for creating service-learning course objectives is to create separate service and learning objectives that are linked to a common, broad intention. For example, a nutrition-focused service-learning course could have course objectives such as the following:

- Learning Objective: Students are able to define the benefits of life-long healthy eating.
- Service Objective: Students are able to utilize the course material to create a professional-quality, child-friendly menu for the community partner.

In order to create a more impactful experience for all parties, it is vital that community partners are involved in the creation of course objectives. Communication with the community partner will lead to the formation of course objectives beneficial to the community partner and connected to the academic material. Once course objectives are determined, they should be shared explicitly with community partners and with students in their syllabus and through in-class activities. The following bullet points will address the formation of learning objectives and the next section will address service objectives.

Some tips:

- Establish what content objectives or standards will be addressed and incorporate your service and learning objectives into lesson plans
- Devise ways to measure and assess whether goals are being met, including reflection and assessment activities
- Determine what aspects of the service-learning component will be required (e.g., hours, visits, reflections, reports, research) for completion of the course
- Assess student participation, effort, and mastery of the subject or skills

Examples:

- A career counseling course in which students conduct career development workshops with survivors of childhood cancer and young women at a DC public high school. Course objectives include:
  - Be able to apply a variety of career development theories and models to client populations.
  - Become familiar with models, methods, and principles of program development
• Apply knowledge about program planning and service delivery for career development to community populations
• Understand and apply the decision-making process and theoretical models to career intervention and programs
• Align career resources with the specific developmental levels and needs of students and clients
• Understand the impact of a multicultural society on career counseling and decision-making

➤ A community peace-building course in which students are introduced to the theoretical and practical underpinnings of dialogue as a central feature of conflict resolution and serve as facilitators in several DC community centers:
  • Develop facilitation skills, including active listening, re-framing, brainstorming, cultural and bias awareness, nonviolent communication, and other relational skills important to the practice of conflict resolution
  • Gain experience designing, convening, and facilitating dialogue
  • Engage in collaborative problem-solving and decision-making

➤ An urban planning and design geography course, in which students are introduced to the theoretical and practical concepts of urban walkability:
  • Develop proficiency in the material using the Minnesota-Irvine walkability index and apply the survey to select DC neighborhoods
  • Assess the walkability of selected DC neighborhoods based on surveys and observation
  • Present walkability data and provide recommendations to the community partner

The following checklist provides key components or “action” items for establishing student outcomes and competencies in your service-learning course.

As part of your course design, have you:

☐ Reviewed competencies for your discipline, profession, and department?
☐ Engaged community partners and students in discussions about their expectations of student learning outcomes?
☐ Established learning and service objectives for the course?
Identified the tasks or competencies that your students will be expected to perform in the course?

Identified opportunities for students to gain skills and competencies related to the community, population, and/or issue they will be working with?

Identified what the student must learn in order to complete the task?

Determined how student learning will be measured?

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES FOR YOUR SERVICE OBJECTIVES

All responsible faculty will consider the question of community outcomes to be a legitimate research topic [...]. The usual evaluation process, when one is used at all, is the superficial satisfaction survey. [...]. A number of us are now moving to a civic engagement model where we map out project goals—changing a public policy or growing an organization or refurbishing a playground—and then we evaluate the extent to which we achieved the goal and different strategies impacted that achievement.

Randy Stoecker, The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning

The two key elements of service objectives are relevance to academic material and impact on community partners. It is imperative that your service objectives reflect the impact the academic material has on the service. Your service objectives should also consider measurable community outcomes. Setting expectations and goals with your community partners and impacted community residents helps to ensure mutual, reciprocal objectives.

Consider the following when determining community outcomes:

- What are the goals of the service activities for the organization?
- Should these goals be accomplished by the end of the semester? Or will progress toward a long-term goal be measured?
- Did you determine these goals with your community partner and/or community residents?
- Will service activities have clear roles, responsibilities, and schedules?
- Will you check-in with a project or program supervisor on a regular basis?
- How will course materials and activities prepare students to work with the organization and/or its clients?
- How will you, your students, or your community partners set benchmarks?
- How will you, your students, or your community partners evaluate these benchmarks?
- How will you demonstrate community outcomes? Through reports? Presentations? Data analysis? Surveys?
What commitment will you, your course, your students, or GW have to this organization in the future?

The need to collaborate with the community in determining the goals of service-learning courses requires planning on the part of the faculty member. Through GW’s existing partnerships and the Center’s resources, faculty can work with organizations we have found to set clear expectations for service and have proven ways of measuring outcomes and evaluating effectiveness. We encourage faculty to work with the Center to support these existing partnerships.

The Center is also happy to facilitate meetings with faculty and potential partners. In order to best support our community partners and the people they serve, we ask that faculty request support at least two months in advance of the semester the course will be taught.

**DEVELOPING THE COURSE SYLLABUS**

A service-learning syllabus should include standard syllabi elements, like the course’s purpose, course directions, contact information, class schedule, etc. However, given the complex nature of most service-learning courses, even some of the standard components need additional explanation.

**At a minimum, be sure to:**

- Write an explanation of the service-learning component for the syllabus and explicitly review the activities and assignments with students
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the placement and/or service project
- Explain goals and expectations, how service-learning will be evaluated, and how service-learning is integrated into and enhances the learning of course content
- Discuss how the community partners and their missions relate to course objectives before, during, and after the service
- If applicable, include a statement about disability accommodations available at the service site

Be very clear about expectations and grading criteria for any service and reflection activities. Furthermore, given that service-learning classes may be a significant departure from standard course work, you are encouraged to reiterate the accreditation standards of the course, as well as normal institutional standards for work quality, honesty, etc.

You may also wish to tie the course to the objectives of the entire curriculum, as well as to larger goals of the institution or university. It can be helpful to supplement the syllabus with a discussion or writing project on the rationale behind service-learning as an educational methodology. The magic won’t just happen on its own—students need to understand the collaborative and symbiotic
model that drives service-learning as well the critical role that the students must fill in order for the model to function properly.

Need help or inspiration? Review the handout “Syllabus Analysis from Different Perspectives” on pp. 84-86 of *A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum*. Several copies are available in the Center’s service-learning library. This handout provides perspectives on syllabus design from faculty, students, service-learning coordinators, community partners, and university administration.

**Evaluating Student Service-Learning**

Grading must ultimately be guided by a professor’s own principles and philosophies. However, exposure to standard practices and examples of grading techniques across the service-learning community is beneficial.

Faculty often grade:

- Reflections, written assignments, end-of-term portfolios, reports, and presentations that demonstrate achievement of learning objectives
- Quality of products or outcomes of the service-learning activities (e.g., grants, brochures, and reports)
- Attendance or participation at the service site (similar to class attendance)

As you develop your syllabus, keep this checklist in mind:

- Does the syllabus define and describe service-learning?
- Is the service-learning experience clearly tied to one or more course objectives?
- Are there clear explanations of how the service-learning experience/project will be assessed?
- Is the syllabus clear on what the student is expected to do at the service placement site?
- Are deadlines or due dates clearly identified in the syllabus (e.g., waiver submission, placement confirmation, service completion, reflection assignments)?
- Does the syllabus specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned in the placement/project (e.g., through a journal, papers, or presentations)?
Planning and Policy in Contemporary Urban Communities:
Community-based Planning Research Studio
GEOG 198, George Washington University
Tuesdays, 3:30-6:00 PM
1957 E St., NW, Room 211
Instructor: Amanda Huron
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-3:00 PM, Old Main (1922 F St. NW), Room 218

Course Description

This is a service-learning course. Our service is in the form of research for Empower D.C., a membership-based community organizing group in D.C. that organizes principally around issues of public property, affordable housing, child care, and education issues. Empower D.C. has asked us to help conduct research to support their people’s property campaign. Currently, the city “disposes of” (that is, sells) the property it owns in an ad hoc fashion – without a plan, and without input from residents of the neighborhoods in which the property is located. In general, Empower D.C.’s membership believes that public property should be used for the benefit of residents, and should not be sold – because once sold, it is highly unlikely it will ever return to the public domain. Empower D.C. is particularly concerned with public school buildings that the city has closed, the future plans for which are unclear. The groups sees public school buildings as important resources that should remain in the public domain for community use, whether or not they continue to function as schools.

Our research will support Empower D.C.’s people’s property campaign around public school property in one part of the city, Ward 5. We will:

- Conduct research into public school property in Ward 5. This includes identifying all current and former school buildings in the ward; researching the history of the closed schools; and investigating the city’s plans, if any, for closed schools.

- Conduct a needs assessment of Ward 5 neighborhoods in order to determine appropriate uses for closed school buildings that keep the properties in the public domain. This assessment will be based both on identification of assets and needs via mapping and conversations with Ward 5 residents; and surveys distributed at community meetings.

- Prepare a report of our findings and recommendations for public school buildings in Ward 5, for presentation to Empower D.C. members for use in their campaign.

In this course, we will wrestle with the theoretical questions of community-based planning, service learning, public property and space, and civic participation; and we’ll also do hands-on work in terms of producing a piece of research for practical use. This course requires you both to read and think seriously, and to spend a lot of time out in the neighborhoods in which we’ll be working. Though we will be working on our research in individual pieces, this is ultimately a collaborative class project. Please note that due to the nature of the course, this syllabus may be revised over the semester. I will make sure to be very clear about any changes to the syllabus.
Reflection has been called the “hyphen” or connection that links service with learning in service-learning settings. It provides the time and opportunity for students and partners to grow and evolve as a result of their experiences within a service-learning course. Reflection is an effective forum for students to link what they learn in the classroom with what transpires in the community environment and vice versa. In other words, reflection is the intentional consideration of the experience in light of a particular learning objective. Reflection also provides the opportunity to practice and enhance one’s capacity for critical thinking.

Because reflection activities are essential to student learning and the full integration of service with the classroom experience, it is essential that faculty devote time and attention to their design. Effective reflection activities are explicitly related to the course objectives, occur regularly, and allow for feedback and assessment. Reflection provides students with the opportunity to document their achievements and the learning that has occurred from the service component and enables the faculty member to evaluate their learning.

Effective reflection should include both preparation and ongoing reflection throughout the semester. Preparatory reflection can also be used to help students explore issues that may occur in their service—especially pertinent in cross-cultural service—such as identity, privilege, and structural causes of inequality.

### THE FOUR “C’S” OF REFLECTION

According to Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996), critical reflection in service-learning consists of four parts:

- **Continuous**: Reflection activities are undertaken throughout the service-learning course, rather than intermittently, episodically, or irregularly.
- **Connected**: Reflection efforts are structured and directly related to the learning objectives.
- **Challenging**: Reflection efforts set high expectations, demand high quality student effort, and facilitate instructor feedback that stimulates further student learning.
- **Contextualized**: Reflection activities are appropriate for the course and are complimentary to the other course activities.
GUIDING REFLECTION: DAVID KOLB’S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY


![Diagram of the experiential learning cycle]

**What?**
- What are you doing at your placement site? Who are you serving?
- What’s the agency’s mission? Who are the clients?
- What does the experience feel like? What are you comfortable or uncomfortable with?

**So What?**
- So what have you been learning? Why is your work needed?
- Do you see a connection between your service and the coursework?
- Why do you think there is a need for the service?

**Now What?**
- What do you still need to learn?
- Now what should you do about it? What can others do?
- What do you want to change? What do you want to happen?
- How can you do it? What would you do next?

A variety of methods and tools can be used to foster reflection among students, including directed writing assignments, exams, dialogue, journaling, and photo-journaling. Reflection activities can be
conducted before, during, and after the service experience as well as alone, with classmates, or with the community partner. The instructor should select reflection activities that promote student learning, especially those that reinforce the competencies or learning outcomes of the particular course.

The following questions may be used for pre- or post-service reflection with students:

**What:**

- What do you know about the community you will be serving in? What assumptions do you have about the community and its residents? What assumptions do you think they may have about you?
- What can we learn from our service-learning activities? What impact can service have on your personal growth?

**So what:**

- What have you learned from the community that you served with?
- What effect did the service have on your preconceived notions about the community and its residents?
- Has your service positively impacted the community and its residents? What was left unchanged or unimproved? Why?
- Have you benefited from your service experience personally, academically, or occupationally? If so, how?

**Now what:**

- Do government agencies do the same kind of work as community agencies? Should the government be expected to provide these services?
- How does our involvement in service make you feel about yourself?
- To what extent did your service involve “outsiders” and “insiders”?
- Is service fulfilling for you? Why or why not?
- What can you do in your future academic or professional work to continue helping your community?
KINDS OF REFLECTION

Below are examples of reflection activities:

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Research Papers
An experiential research paper formally asks students to identify a particular aspect of their service-learning experience and analyze that experience within a broader context. Based on their experience, application of theory, analysis, and research students make arguments about a relevant topic or recommendations for future action. This reflection activity is especially useful in exploring inter-disciplinary connections or analyzing theory in the context of the service experiences. (From Julie Hatcher, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis)

Reflective essays
Reflective essays typically require students to consider a dominant theme or issue from class discussions and material and discuss how it relates to the student’s service. Essays can be assigned as homework or included in an exam.

Directed writing assignments
Instructors may structure questions around a section from class readings or the textbook. For example, students might be asked to connect their service experience to a competency requirement within their profession, such as improved communication skills or skills in interdisciplinary collaboration. Students can be encouraged to describe and provide examples of how their service has facilitated the development of a certain skill. Another approach for a directed writing assignment includes asking the students to create and respond to their own directed questions.

Case studies
Students write up a case study of an issue or dilemma they encountered at their service site and include a description of the context, the individuals involved, and the controversy or event that created the dilemma. Case studies can then be read in class and be a starting point for oral or written discussion.

Blogs
Students write posts for a class blog, individual blog, or an organization’s blog (like their community partner’s!) about their service experience. They can work in pairs, groups, or individually.

Exams
Faculty may design exams that include at least one essay question that asks students to connect their service experiences to the course material.
PORTFOLIOS

Portfolios can contain a diversity of components pertaining to a student’s service-learning experiences. Components can range from basic forms used to initiate and evaluate the service experience to comprehensive reflection essays or historical surveys. Portfolios may also include media coverage or artistic expressions related to a student’s service.

JOURNALS (INFORMAL OR FORMAL)

Critical incidents
Critical incident journals ask students to identify events or incidents within their experience which were seminal to their learning. The entries can focus on objective, subjective and/or analytical elements of the experience.

Three-part journal
Students complete a weekly journal entry divided into three elements: 1) description of the service experience; 2) analysis of how course content relates to the service experience and vice versa; and 3) application of how coursework and service-learning experience may be applicable in future studies, personal life, and professional life.

Double-entry journal
Students use a two-column format and describe personal thoughts and reaction to one side and write about key issues from class discussion or readings on the other. Arrows can then be drawn between experiences and course content to visually represent relationships.

GROUP DISCUSSION/PROJECTS:

Small group response
Students are divided into groups arbitrarily or based on their service site or topic. Discussion may be left open or structured around specific questions. The “What? So what? Now what?” model is a popular method for facilitating classroom discussion:

- What did I do, see, hear, or experience?
- So what? What does it mean? How does it relate to my classroom experience?

Electronic discussion boards
Have students use Blackboard or another electronic medium to describe experiences and critical incidents and respond to one another. Alternatively, you could assign each student a week where they are responsible for starting the discussion using an article, quote, statistic, or service experience. Participation in the discussion board may be factored into course participation grades.
**Exit cards**
At the conclusion of each class, ask students to write on an index card their response to the following question: “How does information from today’s class period relate to your service project or experience?” Cards are collected each class and may be used as the basis for further class discussion.

**Newsprint graffiti**
You can post quotes, statistics, and questions around the classroom and ask students to walk around and write a comment by each posting. Once everyone has had a chance to go around, discuss responses as a class.

**OTHER PROJECTS:**

**Community mapping**
Students develop community or asset maps characterizing their community partner’s neighborhood or community. Depending on the subject matter of the class and the needs of the community partner, maps can either focus on particular assets or be more general assessments of the area.

**Multimedia presentation or essay**
Ask students to use non-written media (e.g., photos, video, music) to capture their service experiences. For example, students could present a Powerpoint presentation highlighting their research findings at the end of the semester.

**Photo essay**
Students create a photo essay of their service and tie it to course themes. The essays could be posted to Blackboard for other students to read or critique.

**Interviews**
In agreement with the partner organization, students are assigned to interview staff from their community partner sites and record and synthesize their observations. Students should not interview community participants without following disciplinary standards or partner organization’s requirements for confidentiality or anonymity.
GW EXAMPLES OF REFLECTION ACTIVITIES:

EXAMPLE 1: This example comes from a graduate level course, “Foundations of School Counseling.” Students were given a set of reflections questions to prepare for class discussion:

“Foundations of School Counseling” Post-Service Questions for In-Class Discussion:

1. What are some of the things you enjoyed the most throughout this experience?
2. What are some of the challenges that you encountered?
3. After this experience, what is your greatest fear about working in a school setting?
4. What are you now most confident about in entering your field?
5. What lessons are you taking away from this experience?

EXAMPLE 2: This essay asked students to review a newspaper article in the context of course themes and service-learning and write a 500-700-word response:

Please read The Washington Post article “D.C., suburbs show disturbing increases in childhood poverty” (posted on Blackboard) and respond to the following prompt. You may reference the article in your response although it is not required. As with the first reflection, you do not need to respond to all parts of the prompt – the questions are designed to get you to think about the issues presented in the article. It may be helpful to read the prompt before you read the article.

How might the rate of uninsured children and adults, the number of people receiving food stamps, and the dearth of available affordable childcare affect the poverty rate?

Do you think you can solve any of the issues listed above without solving the other? In other words, can an effective solution to the overwhelming increase in people receiving food stamps (nationally: 32 million in January 2009 to 41.8 million in July 2010) be made without addressing other relevant factors?

Can a job training program for single mothers be effective if she can’t provide shelter and food for her children? Why or why not?

What issues (other than the ones listed in the article) might you want to consider when designing a program to combat poverty?

What role do you think an organization like the African American Women’s Resource Center plays in tackling issues of childhood poverty in Washington, D.C.?

How do you think the rate of childhood poverty cited in the article affects D.C. as a city and a community?
EXAMPLE 3: This reflection is an essay prompt for a 3-5-page reflection paper for a course on sustainable business.

QUESTION: What are the deeper causes of the conditions that your organization is working to address?

In “Community Service and Critical Thinking,” writing and service-learning professor Bruce Herzberg (1994) names one of his concerns:

If our students regard social problems as chiefly or only personal, then they will not search beyond the person for a systemic explanation. Why is homelessness a problem? Because, they answer, so many people are homeless. The economy is bad and these individuals lost their jobs. Why are so many people undereducated or illiterate? Because they didn’t study in school, just like so-and-so in my fifth grade class and he dropped out. Community service could, as my colleague Robert Crooks puts it, “work in a larger way as a kind of voluntary band-aiding of social problems that not only ignores the causes of problems but lets off the hook those responsible for the problems.”

Herzberg is looking for larger, more structural and systemic explanations for homelessness, illiteracy, and despair. While he recognizes the value in treating the symptoms of the problem, he thinks it’s vital that students develop a critical view that illustrates the root of the problem as well as what is broken within the current system.

Considering the issue that you are working on, does it suggest that the current system is broken? Is there something about the way that our society is structured that leads to the problems that your organization is working to address (e.g., political economic structure, individualism, history of discrimination)?

Additional examples of reflection activities are provided in the Appendix and here: http://serve.gwu.edu/academic-service-learning.
An important step in the partnership process is taking time to assess what the successes and challenges are within the community-partner relationship and, where appropriate, identifying ways to improve the partnership. We recommend that expectations for evaluations be established at the semester outset. Many faculty members have found benefit in conducting both a mid-semester evaluation to determine any short-term areas for improvement and a semester-end evaluation to assess students and determine the viability of the partnership for subsequent courses. Sample evaluation forms for both students and community partners are provided in the appendix and at the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service.

**Establish Community Impact**
Objectives related to community impact indicate positive changes expected in the community as a result of the service component of the course. The outcomes described in the objectives must reflect not just inputs or processes (i.e., students provided 100 hours of mentoring) but actual improvements in the community identified problem. Work with your community partners to establish ways to evaluate impact. One way to do this is to follow up several times with your community partners after the semester is completed. Find out if the students’ service or research has had long-term impacts on the organization.

**Assess and Evaluate the Service-Learning Program**
Ensure that your evaluation assesses the outcomes of the service project for the students, the community, and the organizations involved. Documentation and evaluation of the project will create a legacy for the individuals and organizations that participated in and benefited from your service activities. It will also point the way to the next project for your classroom and may foster activities in other classrooms. At the end of the semester you can submit copies of student, faculty, and community partner evaluations, along with your course syllabus, to the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service to encourage continued improvement of service-learning at GW.

**EVALUATING STUDENT LEARNING**

**Assess Reflection Activities**
Make sure students are critically thinking about their service experience on a regular basis (e.g., through journals or classroom assignments) and organize activities that allow students to analyze their service and see how their ideas, knowledge, and perceptions are changing. Use such reflections to help assess and improve the project. These can be evaluated according to a rubric, on a pass/fail basis, or as part of a participation/attendance policy.

**Assess Student Learning and Evaluate Service Products**
The more student evaluation can be tied to demonstrations of learning, the more real consequences and experiences will inform your assessment. If your students are producing research
or a report for a community partner, assess it. If they are taking a final exam, ask them to compare and contrast their service experiences with other course material through short-answer questions. If they are submitting a final research paper, require a section that compares their service experiences to the common literature. Or, have the research topics relate directly to a question emerging from their service.

**Review the Evidence Base on Service-Learning Outcomes**

When evaluating a service-learning course, it is important to stay informed about the latest service-learning research and evaluation methods and findings. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel in developing assessment instruments. Visit Learn and Serve America’s National Service-learning Clearinghouse for information related to Service-learning research, evaluation and outcomes at: https://gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse.

**DEMONSTRATION & CELEBRATION**

Everyone likes to be recognized for a job well done. Recognition of students can help build habits of service and lead to a lifetime of community involvement. Don’t forget to recognize key community partners as well.

Recognition can include:

- Press releases
- Stories in internal GW media, like GW Today or department newsletters
- Displays on campus or online
- Celebratory events such as ribbon cuttings or groundbreakings
- Visits by local officials
- Participation in national recognition programs, like the President’s Volunteer Service Award

**SERVICE-LEARNING SYMPOSIUM**

The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service’s Service-learning Symposium is held each semester as an opportunity for service-learning students to present the results of their service-learning work to the GW and larger DC community.

**SERVICE-LEARNING AWARENESS WEEK**

Students and faculty may also wish to participate in this week of workshops, events, and receptions (usually in the fall). These events are opportunities to share their experiences with colleagues, display student work, and to recognize faculty and student accomplishments in the community.
FACULTY ANNUAL REPORTS AND OTHER DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS

In your department newsletter make sure to include successful outcomes from your service-learning courses under the “Teaching,” “Research,” “Service,” or “Partnerships” sections. Did your student reviews explicitly mention the service-learning aspect of the course? Do you have strong evidence of greater learning? Did your research arise from a partnership or issue explored in a service-learning course? The more annual reports reflect the positive impact of service-learning, the greater the likelihood that they’ll be recognized in reviews for promotion, tenure, and rewards.

Consider highlighting student learning, community impact, and fruitful partnerships in other departmental communications as well, such as annual reports, alumni communications, and student recruitment materials. Service-learning has been proven to attract more students, supporters, and funders.

Learn more about the importance of institutional support for service-learning—and how other institutions have garnered it—through the following resources:


SUSTAINABILITY

Though it can be tempting to move on as soon as student grades for a course have been submitted, the key to a successful service-learning partnership is follow-up. Getting—and giving—feedback from your community partner can ensure that future projects succeed and that community partner expectations and community needs are being met. Ideally, you’ll be soliciting feedback throughout a project, but after a course ends is when you’ll really be able to step back and reflect for yourself on the service-learning’s impact. Moreover, interesting service-learning outcomes can be a great starting point for scholarship. Here a few methods for effective course reflection:

- Before and after surveys of students, faculty, and community partners provide insight into course impact
Exit interviews with community partners, even by phone, provide an opportunity to really assess partner perceptions of service-learning’s outcomes

Site visits and documentation throughout a project allow you to really track changes and developments

**SERVICE-LEARNING RESOURCES**

**THE CENTER’S RESOURCES**

The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service has many different resources to assist you with service-learning. There are resources to help you build your first service-learning course as well as resources to enhance already existing service-learning courses. The Center organizes service-learning workshops on specific topics, informal brown-bag lunches, community events, and semester symposiums and training sessions. In addition, the Center has many online and physical resources open to GW faculty.

Faculty are especially encouraged to contact the Academic Service-learning Coordinator, who can:

- Help you forge successful community-faculty partnerships
- Provide technical assistance with course development
- Suggest appropriate readings, reflection assignments, and other learning resources
- Notify you of local and statewide service-learning professional development trainings
- Assist in orientation and training of service-learning students

Other resources include:

An online academic service-learning site at http://serve.gwu.edu---> “Academic Service-Learning” includes the following resources:

- CCEPS service-learning placement, evaluation, and partnership forms
- Access to NobleHour, an online service hour tracking system
- Sample service-learning syllabi, reflections, activities, and readings
- An archive of faculty and student engaged scholarship, research, and presentations from past Service-Learning Symposiums
- A list of upcoming service-learning course offerings

**Service-Learning Website**

Find a myriad of service-learning resources on our website: http://serve.gwu.edu/academic-service-learning.

**Service-Learning Library**

The Center maintains a library of several service-learning resources, including two copies of every volume in the AAHE’s Series on Service-Learning in the Disciplines.
**Academic Service-Learning Development Funds**
The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service announces a funds competition to support the development of service-learning courses; community-based research, professional development and training, and engaged departments in service-learning and civic engagement at GW. The Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service defines service-learning as an educational experience based upon a collaborative partnership between the university and the community that enables students to apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to meet genuine community needs. The RFP happens each Fall Semester and reviews proposals up to $10,000.

**OTHER RESOURCES**
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
  www.servicelearning.org
- Service-Learning Examples in the Curriculum
  https://gsn.nylc.org/topics/all?filter=2
- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
  http://www.ccph.info/
- Developing and Sustaining Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships: A Skill-Building Curriculum
  http://www.cbprcurriculum.info/
- Campus Compact:
  http://www.compact.org/
- Maryland-DC Campus Compact
  https://www.mdccc.org/

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY FACULTY**

**What is the difference between service and service-learning?**

Service is the act of providing community support, while service-learning is integrating service into the learning outcomes of a course through organized reflection of the service in the context of the course materials. For example, service is tutoring a child while service-learning is analyzing the content and context of literacy learning and understanding why some children require additional reading support.
Is content or academic rigor sacrificed in a service-learning course?

This is an important and legitimate concern for all who are concerned with quality higher education, and it is the focus of much past and current research. If applied properly, service-learning pedagogy is actually more rigorous than 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 the academic context. This is a high level skill requiring serious reflection, which if performed correctly can lead to the full realization of course and service outcomes.

It is important to emphasize that incorporating service-learning does not change what you teach, but how you teach it. With this change comes a new set of challenges for both the student and the teacher. Research and professor evaluations have consistently demonstrated that the reciprocal learning provided by service-learning courses are directly responsible for the following academic benefits of participating students:

- **Enhanced cognitive mastery of academic concepts**: Service learning creates a strong integration between students and course content
- **Higher quality student work**: with the subsequent impact of deeper course integration, student essays, tests, and presentations demonstrate deeper understanding of academic material
- **Longer retention of course knowledge**: personal engagement with community issues in a real-life context enlivens learning process for a lasting educational experience
- **Improved ability to analyze real-world problems**: service-learning students are able to engage theory and real world experience at the same time, which not only leads to a greater comprehension of material, but a greater ability to understand and address community problems as well.
- **Increased critical thinking ability**: with genuine experiences of service to draw from, students develop wider perspectives with which to critically contemplate theory, readings, and discussions
- **Development of citizenship and leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities that reflect a broader, more inclusive worldview**

How can I fit something new into an already cramped curriculum?

Service-learning should be a method for how your students achieve your existing course objectives. Where you previously assigned a series of textbook readings, a research paper, a group presentation, or a group of lectures, you may now assign a project, evaluation, and report instead. Service-learning should not be an add-on to your current course requirements. A part of the traditional classroom content activity should be replaced with action and meaningful involvement of students in experiential learning.
What is the average number of hours recommended for service-learning?

Research in higher education indicates that 20 hours a semester of service is optimal for students’ cognitive development and for meeting community needs. At GW, faculty typically use a range of 10-40 hours in their classes, depending on their learning objectives and the way in which service-learning is integrated into their curriculum. A sound approach is to start with 20-30 hours of service with expectations based on mutually agreed terms between yourself, students, and community partners.

How can we expect students to fit service-learning into their already busy schedule?

Surprisingly, many students are willing and able to do service-learning. In Washington there are opportunities and needs for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As faculty, we must remain flexible in our hour requirements, recognizing the demands placed on our students and community partners. You may want to allocate a few class meetings for service outside of the class time. It is also helpful to look at service as a book that students would regularly read for the course. It takes time to read and analyze, but it contributes to the class course objectives or it would not have been assigned. It is necessary for full student learning.

Be explicit in your course’s service commitment ahead of time. You can request a service-learning notation from the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service to be placed on the course in the schedule of classes. You can also put a message in the “Welcome” section of your Blackboard shell so that students know immediately that your course involves service-learning. You may even want to require instructor approval if your course contains a significant amount of off-campus work so that students will be fully informed before registering for the class.

What do I do if a student doesn’t want to do the service-learning assignment—or can’t because of other commitments?

In general, student should know in advance what the course will be requiring of them. This is why courses have descriptions in the bulletin, comments on the schedule, and barriers to enrollment (e.g., department or instructor approval to register) if the course will require a great deal of preparation or advance knowledge. Generally, doing the following will minimize barriers to student participation in the course:

See the tips above for helping students know in advance about your course. In addition:

- Refer to all of the service as an assignment so that students see it as more integrated
- Have a clear syllabus with learning outcomes and a description of service-learning project
- Set aside time to let students voice their concerns in office hours or during class

Will I be able to apply this strategy successfully?
Trying anything new is a risk, and it challenges our competencies. Most practitioners report a learning curve with confidence developing as they work closely with the staff and resources at the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service.

Reading the materials in this handbook, conversing with other service-learning faculty, and consulting with the Academic Service-Learning Coordinator will help you become more comfortable using service-learning in your courses.

**COMMON CHALLENGES IN SERVICE-LEARNING**

Many faculty who embrace service-learning quickly discover to structure the assignments carefully, be explicit in expectations of students, and embrace the unexpected. We have listed some of the challenges that GW faculty have encountered to help you prepare:

**What do I do if a student doesn’t show up to service?**

Ideally, service assignments have built-in consequences for student absenteeism—in the attendance grade, for instance. In addition, you can prepare students to communicate with partners an absence ahead of time by instructing them to put site phone numbers into their cell phones and requiring them to communicate with you, as well as the partner, if they are going to miss a commitment.

If a student is repeatedly absent, we recommend a conference with the student where you can better understand the issue. You should be prepared to reduce a student’s grade if they do not complete an assignment, just as you would for other work.

**What do I do if the quality of the product is not sufficient for the community partner?**

It is best to discuss ahead of time with a partner what you will do if a project isn’t completed. Your partner may have suggestions; at minimum, you will know what they expect from you. Some faculty commit to a finished product no matter what—and provide it themselves if necessary. Usually, a community partner understands the risk of working with students and will be prepared as well.

**How do you handle uneven workloads in a group project?**

There are many opinions on what works best in structuring group assignments. We recommend that you carefully structure both group roles as well as evaluation (e.g., peer, faculty, or partner) ahead of time. Working in uneven groups, however, can be an important learning experience for students as well.
What do I do if a student cannot complete the service assignment due to previous commitments—and my course is required?

Consult with your department chair or program director. Reasonable accommodations are often provided to certain students (e.g., athletes) within existing policies; however, you may have to devise a policy as a department for those students unable to commit to a particular kind of service experience. Perhaps they can propose an alternative, appropriate assignment. Ideally, the solution is found through analogous situations. Make sure students understand that service-learning is an integral part of the course and any excuse must be reasonable and documented.

What do I do if my planned service-learning activity falls through?

Collaborating with outside organizations obviously increases the risk that a planned activity will encounter unexpected issues. In the case of a last-minute disruption, you may have to resort to a theoretical exploration of the experience you had planned for your students to have. You can use case studies, simulations, and multimedia resources to help students imagine the experience—and reflect using similar tools, with minor adjustments.

With enough notice, the Center may be able to help you locate a new partner. In any case, you are always able to contact the Service-Learning Coordinator for advice.

SUGGESTED READINGS


**CREDITS**

The information in the handbook has been drawn from many existing resources. However, we acknowledge that we relied on three main sources:

- The Faculty Handbook of Office of Community Service-learning at the University of Maryland – College Park.
REFERENCES CITED


APPENDIX A: SAMPLE DOCUMENTS FOR FACULTY

The following documents are also available online as PDF files at http://serve.gwu.edu/service-learning-resources:

- Service-Learning Memorandum of Understanding
- Service-Learning Waiver & Release Agreement & Emergency Contact Information Form
- Pre- and Post-Surveys for Students, Faculty, and Community Partners
- Individual Student Service-Learning Placement Form
- Student Group Service-Learning Placement Form
- Service Risk Management Tips For GW Students (to distribute to and discuss with students)
APPENDIX B: RISK MANAGEMENT EXERCISES

The following is an exercise in risk management that you can facilitate with your students to prepare them for possible scenarios.

**Scenario One**

You are on your way to XYZ Community Organization for the first time, and you want to be sure to make a good impression. Even though you looked at a map before you left your dorm, you realize once you get off the Metro that you are disoriented. You decide to start walking anyway, because you don’t want to be late on your first day, but after a few minutes it becomes clear that you are lost in an unfamiliar neighborhood. It is beginning to get dark, and there are very few people on the streets.

What should you do? Why?

**ANSWER:** Go back to the Metro. If you can’t find it, go into a store or restaurant. Call the organization to let them know that you are lost. Wait for someone from the organization to meet you. If you can’t reach your service site, call a taxi to take you to the Metro or home.

**This should be a hypothetical worse-case scenario, because there are many things that this student could do differently to avoid this situation**

What could you have done to prevent this situation from occurring?

**ANSWERS:**

Make sure that you have important numbers in your phone such as: contacts at your service site, instructor phone numbers, UPD, DCPD, taxi service

Print a map with directions so you know exactly where to go.

If you don’t know where to go, stop and call your service site or ask for directions.

Don’t walk alone at night in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Ask your service site how to travel safely from Metro or bus to their building.

Organize with a classmate to serve at the same time as someone else.

**Scenario Two**

You have been volunteering at ABC Community Organization for a few weeks now, and have formed a special connection with some of the clients there. One day, a client you have become very close to tells you that she is in a really bad situation at home, and needs some financial assistance. She asks you for $20, and promises to repay you when she has the money. What should you do? Why?
ANSWER: Tell your site supervisor about your conversation. There may be other resources that could help Jane with her situation. Either suggest them to Jane yourself, or ask your site supervisor do so.

**Scenario Three**

You have been volunteering at WG Community Organization for a few weeks now, and are starting to feel very comfortable. You have met wonderful people, and know that the organization you work with is well respected in the community. Usually, your site supervisor picks you up from the metro in a van, and drops you off again after your volunteer session. Today, though, your site supervisor is out sick. Another employee has offered to drive you, but she can’t leave for several minutes and you really want to get back to campus. The metro is only a ten minute walk away, and it is early evening. What should you do?

ANSWER: DO NOT WALK ALONE. Try to find another ride, call a cab, or wait. Tell her respectfully that you would like to get back to campus as soon as possible. If you need to walk, walk with an employee of the organization or a community member that they know/trust.

Read the following situation and identify what the GW volunteer did right and wrong in this situation:

**Scenario Three**

A GW volunteer is going to her community organization to volunteer. She takes the bus to her service site and while on the bus starts listening to her favorite music on her new iPod. When she arrives at her bus stop, she decides to keep listening to her iPod because her favorite song is playing. The GW volunteer is running late today, so the volunteers that she usually meets up with at the bus stop have already walked to the organization. The GW volunteer knows the way, so decides to walk alone. The GW volunteer thinks that by walking quickly, she can arrive only a few minutes late – the site supervisor will never notice! However, it is starting to get dark. The GW volunteer notices that the street is emptying, and starts to feel uncomfortable. When a taxi drives by, the GW volunteer hails the taxi and asks to be taken back to campus.

**Wrong:**

- iPod
- Walking alone
- Walking alone at night
- Not calling to inform anyone that she would be late/that she wasn’t coming
Right:
- Taxi
- Trusting gut instinct

Scenario Four

Read the following situation and identify what the GW volunteer did right and wrong in this situation:

A GW volunteer is tutoring high school students for a service-learning class. The GW volunteer really likes the students he tutors, and agrees to offer extra help to Mary outside of the regular tutoring hours. The GW volunteer gives Mary his cell phone number, so that Mary and the GW volunteer can arrange a meeting at a coffee shop for an extra tutoring session. At the extra tutoring session, Mary tells the GW volunteer about some problems in her personal life. The GW volunteer doesn’t know how to advise Mary, but gives advice based on what he thinks might work. Over the next few days, Mary calls the GW volunteer several times asking for help. The GW volunteer does not know what to do, so he asks his professor and his site supervisor for help.

Wrong:
- Arranging extra sessions outside of the tutoring site
- Giving cell phone number to a client
- Offering advice without training
- Waiting too long to ask for help from a professor or site contact

Right:
- Being excited about tutoring and mentoring
- Asking for help from his professor and site supervisor when the situation is out of control