

Service-learning Course Design Workbook

Section One: Clarifying the Concept

Four common misunderstandings about academic community-based service and learning.

1. “Academic service learning is the same as student community service and co-curricular service learning.” It’s not. Student community service rarely involves a learning agenda. Co-curricular service learning, illustrated by many alternative spring break programs, similarly lacks an academic learning component. Academic service learning uses the service experience as a course "text" for both academic learning and civic learning.
2. “Academic service learning is another name for internships.” Generally speaking, internships are not about service or civic learning. They socialize students for a profession or a career, and do not address student civic development. They also emphasize student benefits more than community benefits. Service learning is equally attentive to both.
3. “Community experience is synonymous with learning.” Although experience is a necessary condition of learning (Kolb, 1984), it's not sufficient. Because learning requires more than experience, one cannot assume that student involvement in the community automatically yields learning. Learning requires purposeful, intentional efforts. These efforts are often referred to collectively as "*reflection*" in the service learning literature.
4. “Academic service learning is the addition of community service to a traditional course.” Grafting a community service requirement or option onto an otherwise-unchanged academic course does not constitute academic service learning. Doing so marginalizes the learning in, from, and with the community, and precludes transforming students' community experiences and learning. To realize service learning's full potential as a pedagogy, community experiences must be considered in the context of, and integrated with, the other planned learning strategies and resources in the course.

Matrix 1. Distinguishing characteristics of common student community-based experiences

Characteristic:	<i>Community service</i>	<i>Enhanced academic learning</i>	<i>Purposeful civic learning</i>
Type of experience:			
Volunteering or community service	Yes	No	No
Co-curricular service learning	Yes	No	Yes
Academic service learning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internship	seldom	Yes	No

Section Two

Ten principles of good practice for service learning pedagogy¹

Principle 1: Academic credit is for learning, not for service. Student learning arises from a blend of traditional learning resources and community service. Credit is awarded for the student's demonstration of academic and civic *learning*.

Principle 2: Do not compromise academic rigor. Service-learning students must not only master academic material as in traditional courses, but also learn how to learn from unstructured and ill-structured community experiences and merge that learning with the learning from other course resources. Furthermore, in service learning courses students must satisfy both academic and civic learning objectives.

Principle 3: Establish learning objectives. It's not possible to develop a quality service learning course without first setting very explicit learning objectives. *This principle is foundational.* (See sections four and five.) Establishing priorities requires deliberate planning of academic and civic learning objectives.

Principle 4: Establish criteria for the selection of service placements. Requiring students to serve in any community-based setting is like requiring students to read *just any* book as part of a traditional course. Here are four criteria for selecting service placements:

1. Circumscribe the range of acceptable service placements so that they relate directly to the content of the course.
2. Limit service activities and contexts to those with the potential to meet course-relevant academic and civic learning objectives.
3. Link the required duration of service to its role in the realization of academic and civic learning objectives.
4. Assign community projects to meet real needs in the community as determined by the community.

Principle 5: Employ educationally-sound learning strategies. Learning in any course is achieved through an appropriate mix of learning strategies and assignments that correspond with the learning objectives for the course. In service learning courses we want to utilize students' service experiences in part to achieve academic and civic learning objectives. This means learning strategies must be employed that support learning from service experiences (see "Notes on reflection," p. 20). Learning interventions that promote critical reflection, analysis, and the application of service experiences promote learning. To make sure that service does not underachieve in its role as an instrument of learning, careful thought must be given to learning activities that encourage the integration of experiential and academic learning. These activities include classroom discussions, presentations, and

¹ Updated from the original: Howard, J. 1993. Community service learning in the curriculum. In J. Howard (ed.), *Praxis I: A faculty casebook in community service learning* (pages 3 - 12). Ann Arbor. OCSL Press.

journal and paper assignments that support analysis of service experiences in the context of academic and civic learning objectives.

Principle 6: Prepare students for learning from the community. Most students lack experience with both extracting and making meaning from experience and merging it with other academic and civic learning strategies. Faculty can provide: (1) learning support such as opportunities to acquire skills for glean learning from a service context (e.g., participant-observer skills), and/or (2) examples of how to complete assignments (e.g., making previous exemplary student papers and reflection journals available to current students). Menlo (1993) identifies four competencies that accentuate student learning in the community: reflective listening, seeking feedback, acuity and observation, and mindfulness and thinking.

Principle 7: Minimize the differences between the students' community learning role and classroom learning role. Shape learning environments so that students are both passive and active learners in both kinds of setting. Instructors should “re-norm” the traditional classroom so that it values students as active learners.

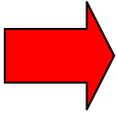
Principle 8: Rethink the faculty instructional role. Service learning teachers should rethink their roles. The role most compatible with an active student role shifts the instructor away from relying on transmitting knowledge (the “banking model”) and toward mixed pedagogical methods that include learning facilitation and guidance. Exclusive or even primary use of traditional instructional approaches interferes with the promise of learning in service learning courses.

Howard's (1998) model of "transforming the classroom is helpful. This four-stage model begins with the traditional classroom. In the second stage, the instructor moves toward a more facilitative role. In the third stage, students begin to develop and acquire the skills and propensities to be active in the classroom. (During this phase, faculty often become concerned that learning is not as rich and rigorous as when they control and direct the flow of information.) In the fourth stage, instructor and students achieve an environment in which mixed pedagogical methods lead to students who are active learners.

Principle 9: Be prepared for variation in, and some loss of control with, student learning outcomes. Learning strategies largely determine student outcomes. In traditional courses, the strategies are the same for all enrolled students. In service learning, variability in service experiences and their role in student learning lead to greater heterogeneity in student learning outcomes. Classroom discussions will be less predictable and content of student writing and projects less homogeneous than in courses without a service assignment.

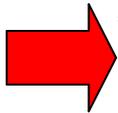
Principle 10: Emphasize the responsibility of the community. Purposeful civic learning requires designing classroom norms and learning strategies that not only enhance academic learning but also encourage civic learning. Most traditional courses are organized for *private* learning that advances the individual student. Service learning instructors should consider learning strategies that will complement and reinforce the civic lessons from the community experience, e.g., moving from individual to group assignments, and from instructor-only to instructor-and-student review of student assignments by re-norming the teaching-learning process to be consistent with the civic orientation of civic learning.

Notes on Reflection



Reflection is "the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives" (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997). Identify activities* that enable community service and academic and civic learning to reinforce each other so that "service, combined with learning, adds value to each and enhances both" (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989). Reflection is an essential ingredient in the pedagogy of academic service learning, and may be done in writing or orally, and by oneself or with others. Eyler, Giles, and Scheinmiede (1996) found that reflection is most effective in service learning courses when it conforms with the "4 C's":

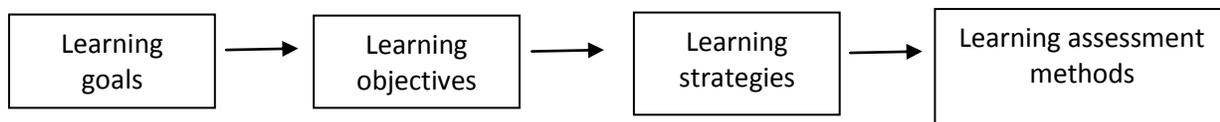
1. **Continuous:** Reflection activities are undertaken throughout the service learning course, rather than intermittently, episodically, or irregularly.
2. **Connected:** Reflection efforts are structured and directly related to the learning objectives.
3. **Challenging:** Reflection efforts set high expectations, demand high-quality student effort, and facilitate instructor feedback that stimulates further student learning.
4. **Contextualized:** Reflection activities are appropriate to the particular course, and commensurate with and complementary to the level and type of other course learning activities.



* Two recommended resources on reflection activities: *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service Learning* (Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, 1996). *Fundamentals of Service Learning Course Construction* (Heffernan, 2001) is an outstanding resource for service learning syllabi.

Aligning learning goals, objectives, strategies, and assessment methods

This workbook is informed by the alignment planning process described by Barry, 1997. The instructor begins with learning goals, then sets learning objectives, moves next to learning strategies, and finally determines methods of assessment for student learning.



A learning *goal* is general and provides direction for students and the instructor. [It is a desired outcome stated in value-terms that aren't readily quantified.]

A learning *objective* is an outcome that will be achieved; that is measurable; and that follows deductively from a learning goal.

A learning *strategy* is a "means to an end"—a method for achieving one or more learning objectives. These may come in the form of classroom strategies for assignments and must contribute to the achievement of learning objectives.

A learning *assessment method* is a means for measuring the achievement of one or more learning objectives. There are two general types: (1) formative assessment, which emphasizes feedback to students about the quality of their learning, and (2) summative assessment, which evaluates the quality of student learning. Use of learning assessment methods provides feedback to the instructor on the alignment between goals, objectives, strategies, and assessment methods.

Worksheet 1: Establishing academic learning objectives

Five general academic learning goal categories:

1. Course-specific academic learning
2. Generic academic learning
3. Learning how to learn
4. Community learning
5. Inter-and intra-personal learning

Your assignment is to set learning objectives that will enhance student academic learning in your course. Review the entire list and select ones that fit your particular course. If you have a syllabus already, refer to it as you work on this activity. At this point, read the guide, "[Writing SLOs.](#)"

1. Establishing *academic* learning objectives

A. **Course-specific** academic learning

Objectives include knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors particular to your course. Write your current course learning objectives in the numbered spaces below. Reflect on how service in the community might strengthen one or more of them or enable new ones. Then jot these revised or additional objectives in the unnumbered spaces below. (See section C to stimulate your thinking.)

Your current academic learning objectives for the course:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Revise your academic learning objectives.

B. Generic academic learning

These learning objectives include knowledge and skills that are learned in an art instrumental for all college courses. Which ones of these (or similar ones) are important in your service learning course? (Some of these may have been identified in the list above.)

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Problem solving skills
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

C. Learning how to learn

Learning objectives here include knowledge and skills that build learning capacity. Which ones of the following (or similar ones) are important in your course?

1. Learning to become an active learner
2. Learning to be an independent learner
3. Learning how to extract meaning from experience
4. Learning how to apply academic knowledge in the real world
5. Learning how to integrate theory and experience
6. Learning across disciplines
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

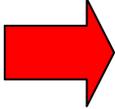
D. Community learning

Objectives here include knowledge and skills that can be learned only in the community. Which of the following (or similar ones) are important in your service-learning course?

1. Learning about a particular community or population in the community
2. Learning about a particular social issue
3. Learning about the provision of social services
4. Learning about a particular agency or grassroots effort
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

E. **Inter-and intra--personal learning** objectives are critical to the development of the whole learner and are valued in liberal arts education. Which of these are important to include these learning objectives?

1. Learning how to work collaboratively with others
2. Learning about other groups and cultures
3. Exploring personal values, ethics, and ideology
4. Learning about oneself
5. Strengthening personal skills (e.g., listening, assertiveness, etc.)
6. Developing a sense of appreciation, wonder, etc.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Section Five. Purposeful civic learning

How will you promote students' *civic* learning in your service learning course? The third, and most overlooked, necessary condition for academic service learning is **purposeful civic learning**. *This is the characteristic that distinguishes academic service learning from other community-based service and learning models.*

Civic learning is not widely understood.

A strict interpretation of civic learning: **Civic learning is any learning that contributes to student preparation for community or public involvement in a diverse democratic society.** Education in general contributes to this aim, but it is not sufficient. We need to foster the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values that make an explicitly direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation.

A robust interpretation of civic participation: Civic learning that goes beyond activities such as voting and obeying the law to include active participation essential for genuine democratic self-governance.

What categories of learning can strengthen students' civic learning?

Academic learning: Learnings that are academic in nature but help students understand and be prepared for life in the public worlds of their community and society.

Democratic citizenship learning: Learning related to being an active citizen.

Diversity learning: Learnings related to multiculturalism that prepare students for involvement in diverse public settings.

Political learning: Learnings related to the political arena that prepare students for public life.

Leadership learning: Learning is about leadership questions, issues, abilities, skills, strategies, purposes, etc.

Inter-and intra--personal learning: Learning s about oneself and others that prepare students for constructive, productive interaction with their fellow citizens.

Social responsibility learning: Learning to teach people about their personal and professional responsibilities to others.

Other types of learning?

Matrix 3. Purposeful civic learning objectives.

(This rubric is not exhaustive.) Recommendation: **Complete worksheets 3 A through 3D before completing this matrix.**

Examples for Matrix 3 of purposeful civic learning objectives:

	Learning objectives		
	Knowledge	Skills	Values
Academic learning	Understanding root causes of social problems	Developing active learning skills	There's important knowledge that's found only in the community.
Democratic citizenship learning	Becoming familiar with different conceptions of citizenship	Developing competency in identifying community assets	Communities depend on an active citizenry
Diversity learning	Understanding individual versus institutional "isms"	Developing cross-cultural communication skills	Voices of minorities are needed to make sound community decisions
Political learning	Learning about how citizen groups have effected change in their communities	Developing advocacy skills	Citizenship is about more than voting and paying taxes
Leadership learning	Understanding the social change model of leadership	Developing skills and facilitate the sharing of leadership roles	Understanding that leadership is a process, not a characteristic associated with an individual or a role
Inter-and intra-personal learning	Understanding one's multiple social identities	Developing problem-solving skills	Learning an ethic of care
Social responsibility learning	How individuals in a particular profession acting socially responsible ways	Determining how to apply one's professional skills to the betterment of society	Responsibility to other supplies to those pursuing all kinds of careers

Matrix 3: Purposeful civic learning objectives

	Knowledge	Skills	Values
Academic learning			
Democratic citizenship learning			
Diversity learning			

Political learning			
Leadership learning			
Inter-and intra-personal learning			
Social responsibility learning			

Learning strategies and assessment methods

What strategies will enable students to realize enhanced academic learning? How do you assess it? Matrix Two facilitates thinking about means to enable students to realize and demonstrate enhanced academic learning. The matrix reflects two equally important steps: (1) learning strategies, and (2) assessment methods.

1. Learning strategies. What learning strategies will achieve the enhanced academic learning objectives you've established?

Classroom strategies. What activities in the classroom will enable students to meet academic learning objectives examples: small group discussions, short reflection papers, simulations, etc. Apply principles 7, 8, and 10 (pages 4-5, above).

Student assignments. What assignments outside of class will enable students to meet academic learning objectives? Examples: integrated papers, structured journals, reflective interviews, etc. Apply principles 4, 5, 6 (page 3, above)

2. Assessment method. What methods will gauge enhanced academic learning. Assessment methods may or may not correspond with student assignments, and may be formative or summative. Examples: public policy papers, oral presentations, group journals, etc. Apply principles 1, 2, and 9.

Matrix 4. Learning strategies and assessment methods

	Objectives	Strategies		Assessment
	Specific objectives	Classroom strategies	Student assignments	Assessing learning
Academic learning				
Democratic citizenship learning				
Diversity learning				
Political learning				
Leadership learning				
Inter-and intra-personal learning				
Social responsibility learning				

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