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What is the Service-Learning Center?

The Service-Learning Center serves as a liaison between instructors, students, and placement site coordinators who provide service opportunities for students. The Center is an on-campus resource for information about faculty development and training opportunities related to service-learning teaching methods.

In addition to curriculum-based service, the Service-Learning Center sponsors, supports, and coordinates additional service opportunities for students outside the classroom. The programs include Alternative Spring Break, Service in Action!, tutoring programs in local schools and efforts to address hunger and homelessness.

The Service-Learning Center Mission

The Service-Learning Center initiates and supports curricular and co-curricular activities that enhance student learning, promote civic responsibility, and respond to critical needs in our community through collaborative campus and community partnerships.

How Can the Service-Learning Center Serve You?

The Service-Learning Center offers the following services to faculty interested in incorporating service-learning into their curriculum:

- Schedule and structure student orientation sessions where students will receive materials and online resources that include the following: an overview of the process, placement site information, forms to be completed, and student expectations.
- Recommend organizations based upon course learning objectives. Staff will consult with faculty on site selection, student orientation, reflection activities, the development of individual service opportunities and assessment/evaluation of the program.
- Ensure students complete the necessary paperwork to be enrolled in the Service-Learning program, help the student find the proper placement (within the course objectives) and contact the organization.
- Manage and maintain a database of participating students and provide periodic reports including hours completed and current placement sites.
- Develop and support co-curricular service activities.
- Maintain a collection of articles, books, resources, syllabi and pamphlets pertaining to service-learning and related topics. Items may be borrowed via campus mail or pick-up. Contact the Service-Learning Center for availability.
Notable Service-Learning Center Events

**Service in Action!**— (Fall & Spring) series of one day service events available to all CPCC students, faculty, and staff. Projects begin two or three weeks after classes begin and occur once per week, focusing on a wide range of topics (homelessness, poverty, hunger, education, etc.)

**Alternative Spring Break**— (Spring) Students participate in a week-long service trip with a focus on hunger/homelessness in a regional location. Past destinations include Wilmington, Charleston, Atlanta, and Washington, DC. One day projects in Charlotte are also offered.

**MLK Challenge**— (January 19th) full day of service to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. CPCC students work in groups to tackle service projects that are posed as “challenges.” With limited resources and funds, students must work together and rely on problem-solving skills to complete their assigned tasks on time.

**Poverty Simulations**— held at CPCC in within the CharMeck community. Participants are asked to spend a month (four 15-minute weeks) living in poverty with a family group. Last about 2 hours and dates and times vary from PS to PS.

Service-Learning Definitions

Service-learning is a process of involving students in community service activities combined with a facilitated means for applying the experience to their academic and personal development. It is a form of experiential education aimed at enhancing and enriching student learning in course material. When compared to other forms of experiential learning like internships and cooperative education, it is similar in that it is student-centered, hands-on and directly applicable to the curriculum. The critical difference and distinguishing characteristic of service-learning is its reciprocal and balanced emphasis on both student learning and addressing real needs in the community.

Course learning objectives are linked to meaningful human, safety, educational, and environmental needs that are co-determined with community partners and service recipients. Course materials such as lectures, readings, discussions, and reflection activities supplement the student service. In turn, the service experience is brought back to the classroom to supplement the academic dialogue and student comprehension. Students work on real problems that make academic learning relevant while simultaneously enhancing their social skills, analytical ability, civic and ethical responsibility, self-efficacy, and career development.

At Central Piedmont Community College, service-learning can be incorporated into courses by offering students individual service opportunities with community agencies, or by creating project-based service activities for a group of students or for the entire class. The most meaningful service-learning activities are developed through partnership and dialogue between the College and the agency “partners” with whom our students serve.
How Service-Learning is defined across the country:

● *Community College National Center for Community Engagement*: “Service-learning is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service-learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community.”

● *Corporation for National Service, 1990*: Service-learning is "a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in ...thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs, that are integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provide structured time for reflection and that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and the community."

● *The Research Agenda for Combining Service and Learning in the 1990s*: Service-learning has been defined as "both a program type and a philosophy of education. As a program type, service-learning includes a variety of ways that students can perform meaningful service to their communities and to society while engaging in some form of reflection or study that is related to the service. As a philosophy of education, service-learning reflects the beliefs that education must be linked to social responsibility and that the most effective learning is active and connected to experience in some way."

● *National Service-Learning Clearinghouse*: “Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.”

● *Jane Kendall, NSEE, 1990*: "Service-learning programs are explicitly structured to promote learning about the larger social issues behind the needs to which their service is responding. This learning includes a deeper understanding of the historical, sociological, cultural, economic and political contexts of the needs or issues being addressed."
Distinctions between Service-Learning and Co-Curricular Service

Service-Learning and volunteerism are two different concepts. At CPCC, the Service-Learning Center defines service-learning as service done in conjunction with class work to enhance a student’s educational experience. Volunteerism is done outside of a curriculum based course on the students’ own time.

Co-Curricular Service
- Does not carry academic credit
- Often done as a co-curricular activity for personal growth or group bonding
- Planning is often the responsibility of those providing the service
- Viewed as a project, program, or experience, rather than a pedagogy
- While “student learning” is likely to occur, it is not an intentional or primary focus for the program

Service-Learning
- Integrates academic study with community service in a way that makes “learning” more intentional (e.g., through reflective writing, group discussions, and other activities)
- Incorporates the concept of “mutuality” (i.e., faculty, students, and those being “served” are included in the planning of the program)
- Fosters participant learning about the larger social issues that are driving the need for service
- Frames “service” in term of social justice instead of in terms of charity
- Uses service as a text and often rewards academic credit to students who use this text in academically significant ways

Types of Service-Learning Projects:

Direct Service— Students provide service directly to the clients of a community-based organization. This may include tutoring children, assisting elderly residents in a nursing home, serving meals at a homeless shelter, etc.

Indirect Service— Students serve at an organization and/or on behalf of an issue/population by providing administrative assistance, developing fundraising programs, creating marketing plans, participating in painting/construction projects, etc.

Social Action Research— Students conduct research on a particular issue identified by a community organization. The research project is designed to address informational needs of the organization and to apply classroom theory/knowledge and enable them to integrate theory in practice.
Who Benefits from Service-Learning?

**Faculty benefit through:**
- Inspiration and innovation of teaching methods
- Increased student contact through greater emphasis on student-centered teaching
- A new perspective on learning and an increased understanding of how learning occurs
- Connecting the community with curriculum and becoming more aware of current societal issues as they relate to a specific academic area of interest
- A sense of professional and personal renewal

**Students benefit through:**
- Hands-on use of skills and knowledge that increases relevance of academic material
- Opportunities that accommodate different learning styles
- Interaction with people of diverse cultures and lifestyles
- Increased sense of self-efficacy, analytical skills and social development
- Valuable and competitive career guidance and experience
- Opportunities for meaningful involvement with the local community
- Increased civic responsibility

**Community Partners benefit through:**
- Access to College resources
- Positive relationship opportunities with the college
- Building awareness of community issues, agencies, and constituents
- Opportunities to contribute to the educational process

**CPCC benefits through:**
- Enhanced teaching and outreach activities
- Increases the number of students who are engaged with their education, which effects both retention and academic performance as well as student satisfaction
- Increased development and preparation of college graduates
- Faculty and student engagement in local and state community issues
  - Opportunities to extend College knowledge and resources
  - Positive community relationships
This set of guidelines for faculty has been developed to incorporate service into curriculum. They are used to establish criteria for effective service-learning courses and serve as a general outline for implementing high-quality service and learning.

- The syllabus is revised to incorporate the service experience into the teaching and learning objectives of the course; academic incentives are explained in the syllabus
- Community organizations define their needs and are included in developing appropriate activities for service-learners
- Students are introduced to the community organization before the service begins, including orientation to the issues being addressed
- Academic credit is awarded for the learning gained from the experience, not for the service itself
- The service experience is connected to the course through reflection activities

### Expectations of Faculty Members, Staff, Students and Community Partners

**Faculty are expected to:**

- Describe the service-learning activity and its relation to the course objectives in the course syllabus
- Provide reflection activities that help students connect the service experience with academic learning
- Serve as a liaison between students and the Service-Learning Center staff regarding the process of orientation, placement, tracking, and evaluation of service experience

**Service-Learning Center is expected to:**

- Provide student orientations
- Maintain a database of placement sites with position descriptions and contact information
- Build sustainable relationships with community organizations
- Resolve problems related to student placements as needed
- Maintain and share a current database of service-learning faculty and courses
- Respond with resources and consultations when requested

A Student pulls tires out of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway during the fall 2009 Big Sweep
Students are expected to:

- Be prompt, willing, respectful and positive at service placement site
- Arrange hours with placement site supervisor at the beginning of the semester (or as directed by the instructor)
- Fulfill all agreed upon duties and responsibilities at the placement site
- Provide feedback about the service experience and its relevancy to the course material and participate in course discussions
- Be open to learning about different cultures and lifestyles
- Speak with site supervisor if uncomfortable or uncertain about expectations/responsibilities
- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive situations, information and the persons involved
- Complete an evaluation of the Service-Learning program and experience

Community Partners are expected to:

- Orient students to the organization’s mission, goals, and structure so they may better understand their role within the organization
- Provide tasks that are significant and/or challenging to students
- Train, supervise, and provide feedback and resources for students to succeed in their service work
- Ensure a safe work environment and reasonable hours for students to perform service

Common Faculty Concerns and Service-Learning Myths

1. *Academic Rigor: Is this another feel-good excuse to water down academic standards?*

   This is an important and legitimate concern for all that are concerned with quality higher education, and it is the focus of much of the past and current research on service-learning. Unless real academic learning results, service-learning has no place in our college. Academic credit should never be given for service, only for learning.

   If applied properly, this pedagogy is actually more rigorous than the 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 that content. This is a high-level skill requiring effective reflection techniques designed to accomplish academic as well as effective outcomes. It is important to emphasize that incorporating service-learning does not change what we teach, but *how* we teach it. With this change comes a new set of challenges for both the student and the teacher.
2. Competence in application of the strategy: Will I be able to successfully apply the strategy?

Trying anything new is a risk and it challenges our competencies. Most instructors report a steep learning curve with confidence developing fairly rapidly once the strategy is allowed to work. Relinquishing full control of the classroom is hard for many of us to do, but once we do, we find that students can and will play an active role in their learning if given the right structure. The path to becoming effective in using the service-learning strategy is not always clearly marked. We often find ourselves "making the road by walking." Fortunately, you are not alone on the road. There is considerable literature on the subject and many people right here at CPCC can help you on your way. The guidelines presented in the "Ten Steps" section should help you begin.


3. Students' ability to contribute meaningful service: How can I involve my students taking remedial courses in reading or math?

Many faculty are concerned that their students lack adequate preparation or skills to help others in a meaningful way. Our experience and the research literature suggests that this is not a problem; in fact, several authors cite impressive contributions in a variety of roles made by previously underachieving, marginal students. Obviously we must use judgment in choosing appropriate placements and establishing levels of responsibility. The organizations must also orient and train our students to perform their specific service. When it comes to meeting the unexpected challenges we worry about, we find students will generally rise to the occasion. When faced with the challenge of teaching a younger student to read or reading to the blind, students will exert extra effort to be able to succeed at the task because meaning is attached to the project and they take ownership in it. This is the beauty of the pedagogy—it motivates students to learn and gain higher levels of competence.
4. Time Constraints: How can I fit something new into an already cramped curriculum?

Service-learning is not an add-on to your current course requirements. It does not change or add to what you teach; it only changes how you teach it.

Students: Most of our students work in addition to their school attendance. How can they fit service into their already busy schedule? Due to the variety and unique service-learning placement site options there are always opportunities and need for students.

5. Liability: What if something happens to my students or their actions result in damages to someone else?

There is an inherent risk in any out-of-classroom activity. All service-learning students should be fully informed about their placement and knowingly consent to undertaking any risk associated with that placement. Faculty can limit their liability to this risk by utilizing only those placement sites on the approved list. However, the Service-Learning Center will approve any placement site that you approve, so students are not limited to the Service-Learning Center’s approved list.

If a student proposes a placement with an agency you are unfamiliar with, please satisfy yourself that the placement site will be safe for your student.

In most cases, the organization providing the service-learning experience is responsible for the acts of students assigned to it and also assumes responsibility for the student. However, due care and judgment must always be exercised to assure that we do not place students in situations that might be risky or dangerous. We must also use any information or knowledge we have which might disqualify a student from engaging in certain activities to protect either the student or the public. Each student must sign an "Assumption of Risk" form. This form reduces the risk to the college if the service-learning student puts herself/himself into a situation where injury or damages might occur.
Ten Steps to Develop Service-Learning in the Classroom

1. Use your imagination
Consider the courses you teach and determine how service might be helpful in enriching learning in that discipline. Service-learning can be effectively used in every academic discipline. Some applications require a little more imagination than others, and often the best are not immediately obvious. Brainstorm about the application potential to your course.

2. Connect course objectives to appropriate service activities
Call or visit the Service-Learning Center to discuss and identify placement sites that offer experiences relevant to your course. Then, based on your own experience and the help of our staff, you can choose the best opportunities to present to your students.

3. Make a list of learning goals
What are you trying to accomplish for your students, yourself, and the community? Review your course objectives to determine those that can be linked to service. Before going further, list two or three specific and measurable learning and service goals and objectives for your initiative. Be clear on your desired outcome at this point.

4. Decide length, type and incentive for service
Based upon your motives, goals, and objectives, choose a service option. Decide how you will incorporate service-learning into your course. Service options can range from a one-time special group project to a twenty-plus hour commitment to an organization. Your academic incentive to the students could be to offer the option as extra-credit, an alternative to a library research paper or other requirement for course completion.

5. Purposefully integrate service-learning into course
Once you have chosen how service will be incorporated, review and alter your course description and syllabus to reflect the change. To be successfully integrated, the service experience must be more than just an add-on to an already full syllabus. Identify some readings that might tie the service to specific objectives. Allocate some class time for discussion of the experience even if all students do not participate. By consciously integrating service, up-front and in writing, you commit to the pedagogy.

6. Pitch it to the students
When reviewing your syllabus with students, explain and promote the ideas behind including service-learning in your class. Explain how the program benefits the student and the community. Make your commitment very clear and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunity for both the academic and personal growth that service affords.
7. Work closely with students to link service experience with classroom learning.
Develop specific learning and service objectives for students. Students must be guided in the development of these objectives so that they are clearly linked with the academic objectives of your course. Typically students will develop more affective goals (improve self-esteem, feel better about the community) or general non-course related goals (improve the community, learn about hospice care, learn how to build a house). In some cases you may wish to delay this step until after students have been oriented to their site placements so that they have some idea of what kinds of service they will be doing. In other cases, where you are familiar with the placement, you can have them do this prior to starting the service. Some faculty prescribe the learning and service objectives for the entire class. Establishing these student learning objectives up-front is a critical step in assuring the effectiveness of the service-learning in enriching student learning of course material. Clear learning objectives will allow students to see the link between learning and service.

8. Give overviews, but don’t over-prepare.
Teach students how to harvest the service experience for knowledge. Experiential learning requires that we learn where we are. This may be the first time students have encountered experiential learning. With learning objectives in mind, students must be taught to focus on these objectives and related questions as they participate while performing service. One word of caution here: while we want our students prepared and oriented to service, we must be careful not to over-prepare them for their service experience. We all enjoy the adventure of discovery, and we can destroy that for our students by telling them exactly what to expect. Otherwise, the experience becomes a comparison instead of an adventure. Give them a good overview and set them free.

The practice of reflection is what connects the learning to the service. We cannot assume that learning will automatically result from the experience. Like us, our students may not learn from the service activity. They may even learn the wrong thing or reinforce existing prejudices. Reflection helps prevent this from occurring.

Reflection can be in the form of journals, essays, class presentations, analytic papers, art work, drama, dialogue, or any other expressive act. The key to effectiveness is structure and direction. The nature and type of reflection determines its outcome. An unstructured personal journal or group discussion is a great way to elicit effective disclosure. Positive academic outcomes will result from structuring these exercises with specific course related questions.
• Written reflection is a productive approach which helps improve basic communication skills. At the same time, it leads to critical thinking about the course objectives. It is the most common and the least intrusive in terms of taking up class time.

• A more powerful, and in many ways more effective, approach is the purposeful dialogue or the reflective class session. This dialogue provides an opportunity for students to share experiences and exchange ideas and critical insights about the information being shared. To achieve academic outcomes, the dialogue—while spirited and free—should be bound by the learning objectives of the course. The faculty member must serve both as a facilitator to maintain the flow of ideas and a commentator who jumps on the relevant item and develops it into a teachable moment. When we seem to be losing control, the process can be threatening, but it is often at these critical moments that the real learning occurs. The real advantage of the reflective session is its power to develop a sense of community, which is one of the general goals of service-learning.

Whatever form of reflection is chosen, it is important to start it early in the experience to ensure students understand the process. It should then be followed up regularly to monitor their progress. This type of deliberate and guided reflection is what leads to academic learning, improved service, and personal development.

10. How to evaluate and grade student success
Evaluate your service-learning outcomes as you would any other project. Remember that students are being graded on the academic portion in the classroom, not their hours of service. Many of us feel uncertain when it comes to evaluating or assessing the outcomes of experiences we did not completely structure or present. By designing flexible measures you can use the same standard used in evaluating any other written or oral presentation: Did the student master the course material? This is the only way to assure academic integrity of the strategy. You may also wish to utilize formative and summative research techniques to measure your success in achieving your objectives. Formative assessment can be achieved through reading student journals with an eye toward answering your initial questions (Are they learning algebra? Is their writing more alive? Is the service setting appropriate?)
Additional Resources for Faculty

North Carolina Campus Compact: www.elon.edu/nccc

National Campus Compact: www.campuscompact.org

Community College National Center for Community Engagement: www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement

Points of Light Foundation: www.pointsoflight.org/resources

Civic Practices Network: www.cpn.org/index.html


Say What?!!

“This was my third time doing Service-Learning and it has meant so much that I could help people out in their time of need. I enjoyed my experiences.”

“My SL experience has meant a lot to me. I thoroughly have enjoyed volunteering at Crisis Assistance. I have recommended it to others and continue to volunteer there, even though I have completed my hours.”

“It made me feel blessed for what I have since so many people can’t even feed themselves or their families. It really touched my heart and I want...

“My service learning experience was very rewarding. I wish it was incorporated into more college courses.”

“Service-learning was one of the best and most rewarding experiences that I have had at CPCC.”

What students are saying about Service-Learning:

“I started my experience with a lot of mixed feelings but the experience has really opened my eyes and I have learned so much. It has helped me to grow as an individual.”

“This experience opened my mind and helped me ‘to step out of my box,’ to see others as they are and to help make a difference.”

“It was made me more aware of cultural/social differences. Also, it has strengthened my desire to help and work with the community and organizations.”

“It meant a lot in that I gained experience working with young children.

“I have always known the importance of volunteering and the effect it has on society. I really appreciate CPCC giving me this opportunity because it was such a fulfilling experience. If I take another psychology course or class that offers SL, I will participate.”

“I enjoyed my time and the agency and I felt that it was very worthwhile and self rewarding.”