



*The Center for*  
**Service-Learning &  
Civic Engagement**

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

# A MANUAL FOR DEVELOPING YOUR OWN SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT:

## ENHANCING YOUR TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING



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## Introduction

The staff of the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement is here to support you in your implementation of service-learning and your professional growth as well.

Here are some of the services we provide:

***Professional development:*** Conducting workshops, seminars, trainings, and providing mini-grants.

***New opportunities for collaboration:*** We assist in connecting service-learning faculty across disciplines for collaboration in teaching, research, and service projects.

***Grant opportunities:*** We often assist faculty in pursuing potential sources of funding related to service-learning and have available service-learning information and data if needed for grant proposals. Typically, we work with faculty across disciplines in developing projects for grant proposals.

***Provide options and inspiration for service-learning in your course:*** We assist in helping locate and approaching potential community partners; brainstorm ideas for service projects; and assist in building a service-learning course syllabus, design assignments, and reflection activities.

***Community representatives:*** If you do not already have contacts in the community, we assist in connecting you to relevant, knowledgeable community members to serve as guest speakers or for students to visit.

***Safety concerns:*** Minimizing safety risks is of foremost importance. We can help assess the safety of various service options and assist you in training your students on staying safe while serving.

***Publicity:*** If you, your students, and your community partners have a powerful service-learning story to tell, we can assist in “pitching” your story to the University’s Communication team. We can also provide a photographer to commemorate your project.

## **What is Service-Learning?**

Service-Learning (S-L) has been identified as one of the major high impact practices in higher education today. A form of experiential learning, S-L involves developing partnerships between faculty-led academic courses and community-based organizations. Through the community partnerships, students take part in hands-on service roles and projects through which they use their classroom learning and apply the course concepts while intentionally addressing the needs and/or interests identified by the community partners.

S-L experiences are deliberately organized in order for students to learn, apply skills and knowledge related to course learning objectives. An important piece of S-L, and one that differentiates it from community service, is that of reflection. Reflection allows for continued growth for the students and also provides a means for the instructor to evaluate the student based on measurable outcomes.

## **Why Do You and How Do You Assess Service-Learning?**

Assessment of S-L is a collaborative process involving student, faculty, and community partner. It is intended to demonstrate that course and community partnerships meet both goals of the course and community needs. In other words, assessment measures the achievement of the S-L. Assessment of S-L will also be dependent in some part on the type of S-L project: direct, indirect, research based, or advocacy based. Definitions of project types are:

Direct: Person to person, face to face service projects

Indirect: Working on broad issues, environmental projects

Advocacy: Educating others about topics of public interest

Research-based: Gathering and presenting information on areas of interest and need.

### **Evaluation of Student Learning: Reflection and Preflection**

Evaluation in S-L courses is the same as for any course. The focus of the evaluation is on the students' ability to meet course learning objectives. It is the same for service-learning as well. **Students should be graded for their learning, not for their service** (Howard, 2001). Community partners also participate in the evaluation of students' fulfillment of service objectives.

Reflection is one of the most importance parts of S-L. It is used to connect course assignments to academic content and service and provides a means of allowing faculty to grade students' fulfillment of learning objectives. In fact, John Dewey stated “We do not learn from experience...We learn from reflecting on experience.” Students should be able to think about their experience not only in the context of what they actually did, but also to how it relates to their lives and decisions they will make in the future. But – even before reflecting, another important aspect is for students to think about the project before ever engaging in it. The term for this is “preflection.”

All reflection activities should come back to the question of how the service is connected to learning and to the individual student's development (Facing the Future,

2005). On this basis, preflection and reflection activities/assignments should offer a variety of options such as:

- Keeping a journal in which the student responds to specific reflection questions;
- Writing a letter (e.g., to a political figure, to a recipient of service) or a poem of reflection;
- Compiling statistics on your project and comparing with other similar projects;
- Create a presentation for the class or larger audience;
- Create a website or marketing plan for a non-profit organization;
- Write an article for the school paper or local newspaper;
- Take part in large group discussions;
- Hold a debate with students around issues associated with your project;
- Develop an informational brochure to distribute to TSU students (e.g., safety issues)
- Research the easiest access routes for the wheelchair bound for each building on campus, draw a map, create handouts, provide for distribution.

There are numerous questions that you might ask students to answer for their projects.

Examples of preflection and reflection questions include:

### **Preflection**

- Very basic: What is service-learning?
- How can someone your age impact the world in a positive way?
- What about the S-L assignment makes you nervous?
- What about the S-L assignment are you most excited about?
- What are some things you think you can learn from this project?

### **Reflection**

“The deepest learning occurs when you create a reflective classroom, rather than just adding a reflective component that does not affect the other components of your class” (Eyler & Giles, 1997).

- How do you feel about your project?
- What have you learned that you didn't know at the beginning of the project?
- What was the most valuable thing you learned from this project and why was it valuable?
- What information did you find helpful?
- How do you think different about (developmental psychology, civics, geography, reading development) now that you have completed this project?

## Tools for Assessment

As with any assignment, a rubric makes for ease of faculty to evaluate the students' work as well as providing the student an outline of what is expected of them for the S-L assignment. Often instructors will have their students complete a self-evaluation using the rubric and discuss the similarities and/or differences between student and instructor evaluation. Another part of the assessment process is for the community partner to provide an evaluation of the student's work. This latter assessment need not be the same as the instructor's rubric.

Rubric categories will depend on the S-L assignments of the class. Usually S-L rubrics will include formal reflections (more than 1) as well as a final individual or group project. Examples of S-L rubrics are provided below. The first example is one developed specifically for a project focusing on restoring the environmental health of a local watershed. The assignment included a presentation, allowed for bonus points, and deducted "penalty" points. It also included segments for both instructor comments and student comments. Points for each category ranged from 1 for poor work up to 5 points for excellent work.



*Example of a Final Project which included a speech with PowerPoint or video:*

Presentation Rubric	5	3	1
Persuasive Argument	Student speaks for at least XX minutes, clearly presents opinion and facts	Student speaks for up to XX minutes, presents opinion but no facts	Students speaks for less than XX minutes, presentation doesn't include opinion or facts
Examples	At least three specific examples which clearly support the argument	Three examples are used but their connection to the argument is vague	Fewer than three examples are given
Speaking Presence	Student makes eye contact with audience, articulates argument, does not rely on notes	Student looks up at times, some difficulty articulating argument, occasionally uses notes	Student rarely makes eye contact, is unable to articulate argument, reads directly from notes
<b>Total/15</b>			
Visual Aid Rubric	2	1	0
Creativity- Unique and Colorful			
Neatness – Professional quality			
Connection to service – obvious reflection of service activities			
Use of class work time- Time used efficiently and effectively			
Group Participation – all members participated in creation of visual aid			
<b>Total/10</b>			
Project Rubric	5	3	1
Journal with at least 6 reflection activities			
Overall participation			
<b>Total/10</b>			
<b>Grand Total/35</b>			

## **Creating Your Own Rubric**

Service-learning projects will depend upon the specific discipline and curriculum of the course. But, generally by answering some basic questions, you should be able to create your own rubric for your course. To get started, ask yourself questions such as the following:

1. What are the different components of the project? (List below)
2. What practices or learning do you want to emphasize (related to learning objectives or standards)? (List)
3. Next, rank the elements of the project from most important to least. By doing so, you will be able to more quickly establish points for each component.

### **Examples of Service-Learning Syllabi**

The Campus Compact website provides examples of a number of course syllabi. Included are syllabi for courses such as Web Site Design and Management, Introduction to Software, Science and Technology in Contemporary Society, Oral History and Community, Communication in Organization, Communication: Tech Tutors, Communication Arts, Chemistry, Principles of Quality Management, and Management – Organizational Behavior. These syllabi provide examples of how service is incorporated and matched with learning objects. These can be located at:

<http://www.compact.org/category/syllabi/>

### **Examples of Service-Learning Projects by Major**

The following are found through Campus Compact at

<http://www.cpga.edu/ServiceLearning/files/ExamplesSLProjects.pdf>

#### **Art**

*Arts and Community Development:* Students are introduced to the theory and practice of the arts as a vehicle for community-cultural development. They undertake fieldwork and research in an arts-based community project through direct contact and collaboration with established community based organizations that have within each of their mission the explicit goal of community-cultural development. Readings and class discussions in community psychology, the role of the arts in community and cultural development,

methods of community research, creating arts and cultural policy support the fieldwork. Students complete a collaborative research project and create personal narratives in their chosen medium reflecting their fieldwork experience (<http://www.compact.org/syllabi/arts-and-community-development/6324/>)

*Invisible Populations:* The objective of this Service-Learning seminar-type class is to give students an opportunity to learn how visual artists from the Renaissance to the present day have used their powers to make populations living on the fringes of society (religious or racial minorities, the socially disadvantaged, individuals with disabilities, those who construct sexual identities different from the social mainstream, etc.) visible. Each student creates two exhibition displays summarizing “episodes” that explain how art can make invisible populations visible and how it can help cross social, ethnic, and religious boundaries that might exist in other fields of social interaction. Students closely collaborate with their community partner, the United Way, where part of the exhibition will be mounted. After the installation of the exhibition – one part on campus, the other in the United Way Offices– students serve at least two times as community docents for the exhibition while it is on display. Full syllabus at: [http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/\\$Content/Sample+Syllabi/\\$file/ART4420.pdf](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/$Content/Sample+Syllabi/$file/ART4420.pdf)].

## **Biology**

*Biology 4254: Principles of Ecology:* This course is about learning to conduct research with natural populations and communities. This lab is a practical but independent extension of the lecture (Biol 4253). It is a hands-on course in which students apply a number of field and analytical techniques to the study of ecological systems. The semester will be divided into two projects: spider ecology and land management of protected natural areas. For each project, students work in teams to develop and refine project proposals, and then implement your studies. The first project is basic research. Applied research, the focus of the second project, builds on basic research to address practical problems. For the second project, students develop and initiate a biological inventory program for a local public recreation department. This is applied research because it addresses a specific land management need of the recreation department. Students present study design proposals to the agency and then implement a single, refined protocol to gather baseline data, which will be delivered to the agency at the end of the semester. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/download/slice/Syllabus+Biol+4254+Summer+07.pdf>]

## **Business/Leadership**

*Business 212:* The emphasis in the course is on the application of generally acceptable accounting principles to the recording and reporting of financial information, the underlying theoretical foundations of accounting, and the analytical skills needed by business and accounting students. An optional service-learning group assignment involves preparing and presenting financial literacy information to people in transition from homelessness. The project will require keeping a journal on the experience, writing a reflection paper and making a presentation to the class at the end of the term. <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/business-212>

*Digital Storytelling Project:* In this SL course, the McDonough Center for Leadership and Business at Marietta College and the Marietta Family YMCA formed a partnership to create a unique opportunity for Marietta's youth: learning the technology of filmmaking and using it to tell the stories that define and shape their hometown. "Digital Storytelling" is a program where high-risk youth learn marketable skills in filmmaking. This program nationally has had a significant impact on the youths' pursuit of higher education and technology-related careers. Students from two leadership service-learning courses at the College work with youth from the YMCA to help them define the scope of their projects, to assist with the operation of the equipment, and to accompany them as they interview people and create films throughout the City. <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/digital-storytelling-project>

*Marketing 100S - Marketing Concepts :* Students learn how marketing activities such as pricing, promotion, packaging, and distributing goods and services in international, national, profit, not-for-profit, service, consumer, and industrial markets are used to facilitate satisfaction of consumer needs. The course requires students to volunteer for 15 hours at an approved non-profit organization. Students final group report highlights how marketing is being utilized by the agency, how they might utilize one or more of the strategies the groups locate, and offers reflection on your experience as a service-learner. In addition, students provide some Internet resources that might be helpful to the organization. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/marketing-100s-marketing-concepts>]

## **College Success**

*College Reading Strategies:* Community college students enrolled in a reading and comprehension improvement course will meet with residents in a senior living facility to record their life stories. Students will also research the pros and cons of living in a senior facility and report back to the class. Additionally, students will write pre- and post-visit reflections. From Metropolitan Community College. [full syllabus at: [http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/mcc\\_slice\\_5.pdf](http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/mcc_slice_5.pdf)]

## **Communication**

*Mass Communication – Public Relations Writing:* This course is an intensive laboratory workshop in public relations writing that encompasses a wide range of styles ranging from brief public service announcements to news releases to persuasive speeches and executive presentations. Writing is the foundation of professional public relations since most formal organizational communications begin or intersect with the written word. Thus, all future practitioners must be polished and capable writers, skilled in diverse forms and styles of writing and capable of working quickly. In addition, it is important to establish relationships and work within the community and for organizations that contribute to the community good. This course will be a combination of short lectures, in-class, and out-of-class writing assignments that will simulate the realities of the professional writing environment for future public relations professionals as well as understand how the local community affects the practice.

[full syllabus at: [http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/\\$Content/Sample+Syllabi/\\$file/Mass+comm+Shipka+08+syllabus.pdf](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/$Content/Sample+Syllabi/$file/Mass+comm+Shipka+08+syllabus.pdf)]

## **Chemistry**

*Chemistry 104:* The course is the first term of a one-year sequence in General Chemistry. The course is designed for nursing and allied health sciences as well as such disciplines as fire science, respiratory therapists, medical technology, biotechnology, and dental hygiene requirements. The class works in groups of 3–5 students to complete a chemistry related service project and follow up investigation. The main goals of the service-learning project are to illustrate the relevance and application of chemistry in everyday life and to underscore the importance of civic responsibility. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/chemistry-104>]

## **Food Science and Human Nutrition**

*Community Nutrition:* Students explore nutrition-related needs at local community agencies, participate in the agencies' work, and propose and/or implement strategies to improve clients' nutritional intake. Working in groups of five, students engage in projects ranging from hosting cooking classes for teens in a substance abuse program to packing boxes of well-balanced, non-perishable food items for homebound seniors. Partner organizations included the local food bank, Meals on Wheels, and The Boys and Girls Club.

## **Foreign languages**

*Spanish Service-Learning:* Students actively participate with community-based organizations that require the use of Spanish with clients. Students have the opportunity to encounter real-life experiences that afford them opportunities to expand their

knowledge and develop critical thinking and problem solving skills (full syllabus at: <http://www.compact.org/syllabi/foreign-language/spanish-service-learning/4193/>)

### **Education**

*Sociology of Education:* Sociologists use sociological imagination and a wide range of sociological theories to examine a variety of topics related to education, learning, schools, school processes, and educational systems. Students are asked to critically examine these theoretical perspectives, and relate them to their concrete service experiences in public schools. [full syllabus at: [http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/\\$Content/Sample+Syllabi/\\$file/Schafer+Sociology+Syllabus.07.pdf](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/facultyinfo.nsf/$Content/Sample+Syllabi/$file/Schafer+Sociology+Syllabus.07.pdf)]

### **English & Writing**

*Writing 123 - English Composition:* To further develop their substantial skills in writing, reading, critical thinking and creative problem-solving, students supplement their traditional library research with service time working directly with an organization—either on campus or off—providing service in the area that they are researching. The service work is designed to provide students with a number of practical reference points for their inquiry and to help them test the accuracy and legitimacy of the conclusions provided by the "experts" they encounter in their reading. The experience also gives them access to working professionals in these areas who are great interview sources. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/download/slice/Writing%20English%20Composition.pdf>]

*Writing 121 – “The Politics of Education”:* Students have the option of expanding their understanding of the issues in the course and gathering research for their essays by serving at a low-income elementary school or community educational program. This service option enhances students’ learning experience by helping them to (a) explain in greater depth the causes of the “education gap” that exists between poor children and more advantaged children (b) explain why such a high percentage of minority children fall into this “gap,” (c) contribute to community education by serving and (d) develop citizenship skills by serving in their community. Students keep a writers notebook, meet in writing response groups, write essays and create a final portfolio of their work. <http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/download/slice/Writing%20The%20Politics%20of%20Education.pdf>

*English 164 - Academic Communication:* Students participate in service-learning to support the course goals of strengthening their speaking and listening skills, improve their ability to present information clearly, support their opinion, and ask questions for

clarification and further discussion. The overall topic is the Environment and students participate in projects where they serve with a local organization that is addressing environmental issues in their community. Students who complete optional service learning component and successfully incorporate this experience into their speaking assignments will receive an additional 10% extra credit on one speaking assignment. [full syllabus found at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/download/slice/Academic-Communication.pdf>].

**Engineering:** Select by alphabetical listing

<http://www.uml.edu/Engineering/SLICE/Project-Examples/default.aspx>

### **Environmental Science**

*Environmental Science 100:* Freshman in Environmental Science 100 learn new techniques for testing soil and water quality, as well as determining forest and ecosystem characteristics. They applied these techniques to a comprehensive long-term project aimed at assisting economic revitalization and development in a depressed locality. Their research will pair with economic research and public policy research to provide adequate information to local municipalities. [full syllabus at: [http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/environmental\\_sci\\_syllabus.pdf](http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/environmental_sci_syllabus.pdf)]

### **Health**

*Community Health:* The course Inquires into the causes and potential solutions for current community health issues; overviews health care agencies; and explores career opportunities in community health. Includes service learning experience. Includes a service-learning component Complete 20 hours of service at a community health agency or organization, complete a final written report and share their experiences with the class. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/community-health>]

*PSYCH/Health and Wellness: Service-Learning in an Obesity Education Program:* Students engaged in service-learning by planning and developing a multiple-session family-based obesity prevention program, based on reviews of the obesity prevention literature. The course consists of primarily didactic instruction the 1st half of the semester and the facilitation of the prevention program during the 2nd half. Weekly reading assignments (journal articles, book chapters, special reports and popular writings) were required only during the initial 7 weeks of the class. During their organizing and implementing of the prevention program, students kept a weekly journal about their experiences [an academic article about the SL experience: Himelein, M., Passman, L., & Phillips, J. (2010). College Teaching and Community Outreach: Service Learning in an Obesity Prevention Program. American Journal of Health Education, 41(6), 368-378.

## **Math**

*Math 60 – Service-Learning Option:* Based on the premise that one of the best ways to learn is by teaching others, students have the option to tutor the elementary/middle school students in basic math or pre-algebra weekly throughout the term at the school of their choice. Students are required to tutor at least once a week, for a minimum of 8 visits. They keep a journal of their experience and meet with the instructor at least twice throughout the term. The goals of service-learning are to help students (a) review previously learned math concepts, (b) explain previously learned math concepts, (c) improve their own confidence in their ability to do math and (d) serve as a positive role model for younger students. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/sites/default/files/download/slice/Math%2060.pdf>].

## **Philosophy**

*Philosophy 209: Business Ethics:* The objective of this course is to provide the students with the opportunity to think about the moral problems and questions which they face as individuals, as well as the moral issues facing today's business world, in order to help them determine and express the reasons for their moral decisions. Students serve a total of 20 hours of time with a community agency. At the end of the term students submit a journal describing the work they have done, focusing on the ethical implications of the experience.

## **Sociology**

*Poverty in Alameda County:* This course introduces students to the issues of local poverty. The course examined the current state of poverty in Alameda County, systemic causes of poverty, local policy decisions and community responses. Students develop an understanding of their role in affecting change by volunteering at a local organization and participating in a day of action. Class sessions will include readings, group discussion, individual reflection, and interactive activities. Attendance at a student-led conference on poverty is required. [full syllabus at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/slice/resource/poverty-issues-alameda-county>].

## **Theater**

*Theatre 4029 - Special Topics in Stage Movement:* The goal is to inspire and instill in the emerging artist the necessity of community engagement as a way to contribute to the overall creation of meaningful and relevant physical theatre work. By having students work with a local Language Preschool, the goal is to provide a meaningful and useful service through their narrative, improvisational, and physical gifts while gaining valuable insight into human communication, cues, and body language. Exploring the limitations of our students' own communication through movement, voice, and body language provides

The basis for character and identity formation when they construct a theatrical narrative. Students work with special needs children at the Language Preschool for at least one half hour each week starting week 3 of the semester. They help with behavioral and communication skills necessary for effective social functioning. They take what they learn working with the Preschool and integrate it into character development, movement options and story ideas for the class goal. At the end of the semester, the children and the Language Preschool students are invited to view the final performance presentation in the classroom.

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