ENGAGING WITH THE WORLD: SERVICE LEARNING

GENERAL GUIDE

In this experience, students work with an organization relevant to the course to learn through a whole person experience while giving back to the organization and its people who provide this real-world learning experience. The experience should include a semester-long collaboration and reflection and learning should be two-way: students learn about current practices through immersing themselves in an organization and the organization learns from students who bring sustainability perspectives, frameworks, strategies, and ideas.

“Faculty who use service learning discover that it brings new life to the classroom, enhances performance on traditional measures of learning, increases students interest in the subject, teaches new problem solving skills, and makes teaching more enjoyable... [creating] a powerful learning environment and a greater sense of belonging [in students].” - Bringle and Hatcher (1996)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Level: 400; can accommodate group size: 4-50</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Students get hands on learning experience outside of the classroom and feel empowered to take action to create change. They also take pride in giving back to the people who help them learn, discover their preconceived ideas and rethink their assumptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Students experience circumstances and concepts that can be difficult to explain in a lecture, e.g., embodying empathy, working with established protocols and formal procedures. Enjoyment leads to engagement, which often enhances learning.</td>
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<td>Adjustments</td>
<td>Instructors need to identify an organization for students to volunteer with and work with leaders to design an experience that fits in with course curriculum and also meets the organization's needs. Additionally, instructors need to design pre- and post-service activities to help students prepare to engage professionally and respectfully as well as engage in reflections to explore</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze how organizations motivate sustainability through community engagement. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Analyze problem constellations through first hand service learning experience, by identifying actions, needs, motives, intentions, and mandates through organizational involvement. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Identify timescales relevant to the organization and explore long-term consequences of present action as part of your service learning activities. [FUTURE THINKING]
- Identify how the organization relates to sustainability and create a sustainability vision for the organization. [VALUES THINKING]
- Describe the organization’s actions of sustainability strategy building and implementation encountered through the experience – identify barriers, unintended consequences and successes. [STRATEGIC THINKING]
- Communicate and coordinate effectively in a team setting composed of a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. [INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES]

ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this experience is to give students a meaningful opportunity to apply knowledge and skills from your course and learn through experience while giving back to the people who provide the real-world learning experience. The experience should best include a longer-term commitment to engaged service learning. It provides a valuable opportunity for students to observe, for example how people in an organization frame problems, develop or identify visions, and plan, motivate, and facilitate change and subsequently compare their approach to concepts learned in class. Students take on the role of an active learner and also represent the school to their partner’s organization. Instructors can take on the role of a coordinator.

Service learning is defined as a "course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112). The difference between service learning and volunteering is the explicit educational component for both students and community partners designed into the experience.

Reflection is the key learning component and renders meaning to students’ experience (Bringle and Hatcher, 2000; Eyler, 2001). Eyler (2001, p.36) notes that reflection should be continuous and challenging, making students "confront their own assumptions and pursue hard questions, and it should take various forms integrated naturally into
projects and the course to explicitly link course content and the community experience.” The table below, adapted from Eyler (2001), shows a variety of activities that can help students reflect alone, with classmates, and with community partners before, during, and after their service learning experience.

Reflection Map

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<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Write a letter to Self</td>
<td>Keep a structured journal</td>
<td>Write a reflective essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>With Classmates</td>
<td>Exploring and discussing hopes and fears</td>
<td>Mixed team discussion</td>
<td>Team Presentation, Collage, Mural, Video</td>
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<td>(and facilitated by instructors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>With Community Partners</td>
<td>Planning the service learning with the community organization</td>
<td>Drawing lessons learned; Debriefing from the experience</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
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Adapted from Eyler (2001)

Timeline

Before
- Familiarize yourself with ASU’s Service Learning Program and decide if your course can be officially designated as a service-learning course. This designation helps the university monitor service learning hours and the need for resources. Link: https://communityengagement.education.asu.edu/programs/resources-links.
- Identify an organization interested in collaborating on a service-learning project as a partner.
- Meet with the community partner to establish a joint objective, structure, and output of the experience. Identify days for service that align with the course calendar. Make sure that the community partner organization is interested in and willing to engage in reflection with the students about lessons learned (by students and community partners) through the project.
- Identify transportation options (walking, biking, public bus, light rail, carpool) or arrange transportation (university vehicle).
- Introduce the experience and assign preparatory reflection to students one week in advance (see reflection map above).
- Have students sign Field Trip Release Form and Photo Release Form one week in advance
- Review Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines
During

- Facilitate reflective discussion with students in class during and after the experience (see reflection map above).
- Assign concluding reflective assignments.

After

- Meet with community partner (with or without students) to determine value of the service learning experience and potentially identify improvements for future engagements.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Below are possible assignments that can maximize learning outcomes of the experience and produce outputs that can be assessed to determine students learning outcomes. Use objectives above to formulate specific prompts and questions.

- **Google** about the organization to find out who they are, what they do, what they have accomplished, and how their mission and vision are relevant to sustainability. Output: integrate your findings into a concise one-page description of the organization.

- **Meet** with community partners ahead of the experience to discuss the established goal and potential impact of the upcoming service learning experience. Output: create a meeting memo that captures the essence of the discussion and agreements.

- **Write** a journal exploring your attitude and skill development over the course of the service learning experience. Output: write a journal entry for each day of the service learning experience.

- **Practice** “social empathy,” the “ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities (Segal, 2011). Analyze how the service learning experience exposes you to other life situations, how you experience them differently when stepping into somebody else’s shoes, and how you explain the situation now that you are more familiar with a range of perspectives.

- **Write** a reflection at the end of the service learning experience that explores your knowledge, attitudes, and skills developed over the course of the service learning experience and how they contribute to helping you develop sustainability competence. Output: Create a reflective essay covering 3-5 pages.

- **Discuss** your service learning experience with classmates and with your community partners. Consider in what ways the organization drives and / or provides solution options for sustainability. Consider the effectiveness of their strategies for change. Consider including these discussion at different stages of your service learning experience. Output: capture the insights in visual and/or written forms.

Use a Likert-scale to determine for each assignment if students achieved all, most, some, little, or none of the learning objective. Develop a rubric with examples of
answers that demonstrate students have achieved all (5), most (4), some (3), little (2), or none (1) of the objective.

**TAKE THIS EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!**
- *Engage the world* - involve students in framing the service-learning experience.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**
- ASU’s Service Learning Program webpage: [http://servicelearning.asu.edu/node/10167](http://servicelearning.asu.edu/node/10167)
- Example where to find opportunities: HandsOn Greater Phoenix (e.g., check out the Calendar of Opportunities): [http://www.handsonphoenix.org/](http://www.handsonphoenix.org/)


