

Service Learning as a High Impact Practice

The Office of Community Engagement

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What Is Service Learning?

Definition

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.

Through service learning, students—from kindergarteners to college students—use what they learn in the class to engage with real-life issues identified by community partners.

Students not only learn practical applications of their studies, but they also become citizens who actively contribute to their communities through the service they perform.

Key Elements of Quality Service Learning

- ❖ Integration of **academic content** with **community experience**
- ❖ Reflection
- ❖ Outcome: project, report, and/or presentation
- ❖ Assessment

Evidence

Research shows service learning yields:

- ❖ Improved retention, connection to peers, connection to faculty
- ❖ Greater satisfaction with educational experience
- ❖ Greater civic engagement post-graduation

Civic Engagement: the actions of informed individuals and collectives to respond to the needs created by systems of social injustice in the communities in which they live and work. . . [It] must be requested or approved by communities themselves, and executed in collaboration with community participants. (Jean Y. Yu, 160)

Service-Learning Pedagogy: like any test, paper, or research project, the service learning experience must be integral to the syllabus and advance the students' knowledge of the course content." (Jay 255)

What Do We Do to Facilitate Service Learning?

Who

❖ The Office of Community Engagement supports CSUN's mission to cultivate civic connections among students, faculty, staff, and community members by facilitating service-learning classes, promoting co-curricular engagement activities, implementing community-based research, and fostering sustainable community partnerships.

- ❖ Debi Cours, dcours@csun.edu
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What

- ❖ Promote, encourage, support, report, and assess Community Service Learning
 - ❖ *Course Development Grants* (\$1000-\$6000)
 - ❖ *Student Scholar Grants* (\$500-\$1000)
 - ❖ *Travel Support* (\$500-\$1000)
 - ❖ *Community Partner Database*
 - ❖ *Student Service Database*
- ❖ Promote, celebrate, report on other forms of community engagement
- ❖ Internships, community-based research, volunteerism, events and programs engaging the community

How

Steps to Incorporate S-L

- ❖ **Consider your course learning goals.**
What kind of community projects might help master these goals?
- ❖ **Identify community partner(s).**
Use CE Database or contact us for partnership agreement.
- ❖ **Develop service-learning assignment including reflection exercises.**

Don't forget to apply for support and guidance!

What Impact Does Service Learning Have on the Achievement Gap at CSUN?

Real Student Impact

"I often only thought about what I could gain from the discipline, and how the discipline fit within my own narrative, much like Emma and the poor family. However, once I began . . . working with [my service project], I started to realize that I had a larger, personal responsibility to fully engage with the academic community I wanted to belong to."

Culturally-Relevant Service

- ❖ Service learning provides an opportunity for students to bridge connections between their communities and college, building self esteem, confidence and leadership skills.
- ❖ Engaging in discussions in diverse communities leads to better student retention and success



Markers of Positive Impact

Service-learning pedagogy incorporates multiple HIP strategies:

- ❖ Writing-Intensive Courses (Reflection)
- ❖ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- ❖ Undergraduate Research
- ❖ Diversity/Global Learning
- ❖ Capstone Courses & Projects

Close the Gap

- ❖ Research shows that the achievement gap **CLOSED** for students who participated in two or more HIPs (NSSE)
- ❖ Involvement in service appears to contribute to lessening the achievement gap, with low- income students who serve doing better academically than students who do not serve. (Scales & Roehlkepartain 2005)

How Can Service Learning Impact More of the CSUN Community?

How Could This Be Scaled?

- ❖ Involve more faculty and programs
- ❖ Embed this practice in GE Core (*new minor for Civic and Community Engagement*)
- ❖ Projects can integrate more than one course or discipline, or continue across semesters.

Community Partners

- ❖ A list of approved community partners is available at the CE website, along with a list of "opportunities" from possible community partners who want to work with CSUN faculty and students
- ❖ New partners can be approved – and CE will help you with this process

Future Partners

- ❖ Who would be ideal to partner with? What new perspectives, skills, knowledge, resources would help your idea grow?
- ❖ A dream collaboration would look like what???

Service for Everyone

- ❖ There are service projects appropriate for every major, minor, and interest
- ❖ Service can be direct (serving the organization's clients) or indirect (e.g research, feasibility study, design work, business analysis, etc.)