# Information for Faculty

(credit: Jennah K. Jones & Amanda L. Mereau)

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## Rationale for Service-Learning

Stacey, Rice, and Langer (1997) identify three critical elements that give meaning to the purpose of service-learning in the atmosphere of higher education. These elements are: meaningful service to the community, connection between course objectives and service activities, and structured opportunities for students to make meaning of their experiences and relate it to the academic curriculum. By providing service to the community, service-learning assists in meeting societal needs. When students make the connection between the service they are providing for the community and academic curriculum it allows for a deeper, more intentional learning experience.

McEwen (1996) states "service-learning experiences can lead to profound learning and developmental outcomes for students, the primary reason that institutions of higher education engage in service-learning" (p. 53). McEwen (1996) describes the many benefits to student development that are provided through incorporating curricular and co-curricular service-learning. Knowledge and use of student development theories contributes to the foundational experience that promotes educational and developmental opportunities for students.

## What We Know About the Effects of Service-Learning

(Taken from: What We Know about the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000: Third Edition by Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray)

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students and faculty report that Service-Learning has a positive impact on students' academic learning

- Students and faculty report that Service-Learning improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in "the real world"

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- Studies have shown a positive impact of Service-Learning on academic learning as measured by course grades or GPA

- Service-Learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development

- Some studies find that Service-Learning contributes to students' moral development

**Personal Outcomes:**

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on student personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others, leadership and communication skills

**Social Outcomes:**

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on commitment to service

- Volunteer service in college is associated with involvement in community service after graduation

**Career Development:**

- Service-Learning contributes to career development

**Relationship with Institution:**

- Students who are involved with Service-Learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in Service-Learning

- Service-Learning improves student satisfaction with college

- Students engaged in Service-Learning are more likely to graduate

# Faculty Benefits

Stacey, Rice, and Langer (1997) outline benefits of service-learning that directly affect faculty. Included in these benefits are: civic and curricular engagement of students, the ability to target different learning styles, allows for a process-oriented pedagogy, assessment of student learning, and professional development and marketability. When students are actively engaged in their learning process they are more likely to have higher levels of understanding. Thus, faculty can have a more active classroom where students take their own learning initiative. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning

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Cycle shows that students learn in a variety of different ways and that service-learning provides an experiential environment to target a multitude of learning styles. A process-oriented pedagogy allows faculty to focus on providing a process rather than product of learning. Reflection, a key component of service-learning, enables faculty to assess the learning outcomes because of this method of continuous student feedback. Implementing new pedagogies, such as service-learning enables faculty to enhance their current facilitation skills and provide students with alternative learning environments.

Howard (1998) agrees with Stacey, Rice, and Langer (1997) and continues to argue the many benefits service-learning provides faculty. In his argument, he states the need to move from a traditional pedagogical model to a more synergistic pedagogy. A synergistic classroom incorporates an active student body versus a passive one, and a facilitative instructor verses a directive one found in a traditional classroom. Howard (1998) states:

Over time I have come to realize that to create a classroom that is consistent with the goals and values of service-learning, it is absolutely necessary to deprogram or desocialize students and instructors away from traditional classroom roles, relationships, and norms, and then resocialize them around a new set of classroom behaviors. (p. 75)

He sees the classroom as a learning partnership, and values the teaching style that embodies active learners. A service-learning instructor at SUNY-ESF agrees with Howard (1998), stating "active learning and problem based learning processes are a widely accepted pedagogy and acknowledged to yield improved learning over a longer period of time contrasted with traditional, passive lectures" (personal communication, February 25, 2004).

Another ESF Professor (personal communication, February 23, 2004) observed that, "students come to understand the difference between and idea and implementing that idea into a reality, career exploration, develops critical thinking and problem solving skills." Yet a different professor (personal communication, February 27, 2004) described advantages he has experienced while doing service-learning in his classroom. Some of which are:

It makes an assignment real with a definitive outcome as opposed to an academic exercise. It excites the students to perform better since their efforts have real consequences. It provides training for the students for their respective professional careers. It made things much more meaningful for me, as well as exciting me about the specific project. Many students working on the projects directly benefited from my efforts. It made an otherwise technical course become more realistic in terms of its real life outcomes.

## Service-Learning Barriers

Despite having many benefits, both directly to faculty and enhancing the educational opportunities for students, service-learning has some obstacles to overcome from the faculty standpoint. Holland (1999), discusses the many factors and strategies that influence a faculty member's participation in service-learning. Highlighted are obstacles that faculty face when attempting to incorporate service-learning into their curriculum, including time, the common understanding of what public service is and

how it relates in their evaluation and tenure process, as well as learning how to share the role of expert and educator with non-academic community partners.

Many of these obstacles were also cited by ESF service-learning faculty members. One such Faculty member (personal communication, February 23, 2004) agreed with Holland (1999) concerning the roles of the faculty and the community partner when he said "the biggest barrier we face is the need to balance the design needs of the clients with the educational goals of our coursework…and to get client groups to understand we aren't just free labor..." Another Professor (personal communication, February 23, 2004) states that money and time are obstacles that she faces. She says "We would like to produce professional quality products and this costs money, not to mention the money needed for transportation, lodging (if needed), and meals." She described the issue of time as "…it may take a while for a project to gel with a number of inexperienced players at the table. Communities don't always understand or appreciate this." The common obstacle of time is one faced by faculty members in all aspects of their roles.

One instructor (personal communication, February 27, 2004) describes the barrier of recognition when he said "my department colleagues do not appreciate the value of what service-learning is and the efforts are not totally understood, or appreciated." This professor also provided insight into the obstacle of time by stating, "the main barrier to continuing with service-learning is a lack of time on my part to line up projects and then coordinate them. I am significantly over-committed and would require additional help to continue and expand on such efforts." The main themes of time, financial support, resources, and understanding given by the ESF service-learning are consistent with and support the obstacles of service-learning stated in the literature.

## Overcoming the Barriers

Although these barriers can initially be discouraging, there are multitudes of ways to overcome these barriers to provide the beneficial outcomes of service-learning. One such way to overcome the financial barriers is to apply for a grant. The grant writing process can be done by faculty, students, and staff. The proposal may be a learning experience for a graduate student or a way of involving undergraduate students in the process. Writing a grant takes time and energy. However, the rewards can be beneficial to the long-term outcomes of service-learning.

One of the best ways to overcome the barrier of resources and understanding is to contact and form a network of faculty members that are currently doing service-learning. McGuiness (1996) argues for a formal implementation of a service-learning faculty network in order to assist faculty in the "logistical and theoretical aspects" of service-learning (p. 203). The formal service-learning initiative at SUNY-ESF began over three years ago. The process of learning how to implement service-learning into the curriculum and forming relationships with community partners, has been done by many faculty members at the institution already. Utilizing other faculty members for support and as sounding boards for new and creative pedagogies would be beneficial to both the experienced and in-experienced service-learning faculty members.

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**How much time does a service-learning class require?** (adapted from Indiana University's Office of Community Outreach and Partnerships in Service-Learning) Without a doubt, a service-learning class does require extra time to plan, meet with your community partner(s), work out logistics, orient students toward the service, visit the site(s), and structure regular reflection and evaluation. There are, however, ways to minimize the amount of time by building on community connections you already have, incorporating the service into your research agenda, condensing student projects into teams, and working with a single community- based organization. Many instructors report that, like any course, a service-learning course gets a bit easier each time they teach it. Involving students in the planning process is another tool to utilize to assist faculty in overcoming the barrier of time and resources. By having students within the course organize the site trips for extra credit options or as part of the curriculum, would give an additional learning experience to the students and assist faculty in the coordination process, alleviating a portion of the time barrier.

**What if it takes too much class time?** (adapted from Indiana University's Office of Community Outreach and Partnerships in Service-Learning) Instructors are still in charge of how class time is used. Students can reflect on the experience outside of class through journals, response papers, and more formal papers. However, it's most effective to discuss in class some experiences, problems, and patterns that emerge from the service. When service becomes another text for the class, students integrate what they're learning much faster.

# Principles of Good Community Campus Partnerships

(From "Principles of Good Community Campus Partnerships" developed by Community-campus Partnerships for Health, San Francisco, CA)

- Partnerships have agreed upon mission, values, goals, and measurable outcomes for the partnership.

- The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness and commitment.

- The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also addresses areas that need improvement.

- The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.

- There is a clear, open and accessible communication between partners, making it an on-going priority to listen to each need, develop a common language, and validate/clarify the meaning of terms.

- Roles, norms, and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners.

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- There is feedback to, among, and from all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.

- Partners share the credit for the partnership's accomplishments.

- Partnerships take time to develop and evolve over time.

## Curriculum Options

Enos and Trope (1996) understand that service-learning is not the best pedagogy for every course curriculum, however they note that it is possible to include service-learning in any course. They say you can include it by making it a course component noting that:

Courses at many institutions include a service component that is used as the basis of papers, class presentation, and other assignments. The focus of such courses is generally on student learning about an issue, reflecting on the cognitive and developmental aspects of the experience, and linking the experience with academic content. (p. 165)

Incorporating service-learning into curriculum enables professors to link course goals and objectives to service-learning outcomes. Enos and Trope (1996) acknowledge that the curriculum allows for students to do research focused projects and writing-focused projects as assignments, as well as intentional dialogues through classroom presentations and discussions.

Kennell (2000) addresses the concern of how to incorporate service-learning into science courses such as biology. He shares:

Laboratory courses are an integral component of biological science curricula, since they provide a hands-on approach to teaching science.  Laboratories not only expose students to the tools, organisms, and methods scientists use to test hypotheses but also help reinforce basic principles described in classroom lectures. In much the same manner, service-learning projects allow student to experience biology in real-world settings and offer insight into concepts that underlie biological phenomena faced by our society in ways that cannot be adequately provided in the classroom (p. 7).

Kennell (2000) furthers this statement by discussing how his service-learning components do not take time away from the curriculum, but rather enhance student learning. His first hand knowledge offers insight for the faculty at SUNY-ESF because of the specialized nature of the institution. It is possible and beneficial to include service-learning initiatives in science courses.

**Implementing Reflection**
Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) discuss how John Dewey's philosophies of experiential education paved the way for service-learning in the classroom. Dewey proposed that reflection is the key element of connecting experiential learning with human understanding. There are many ways that a faculty member can implement reflection in a service-learning curriculum. Faculty can have their students write journals, either after every community site visit or at the end of the semester to reflect on how their experiences relate back to theories from class. Students may also engage in seminar-

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style discussions in which they answer and discuss their thoughts on open-ended and intentional questions asked by faculty members. Another method of reflection is a research paper, in which students may report their findings from literature and from hands on experiences. Also, faculty can incorporate reflection by encouraging students to give in-class presentations.

Scheuermann (1996) supports Dewey's philosophy about reflection in commenting, "If a service-learning program is truly going to encourage students' learning and development, time must be set apart from the service itself to allow student to reflect on their own experiences" (p. 140). Reflection is the process by which a student is able to make meaning from an experiential situation. Thus, it must be incorporated into the curriculum. Professors concerned with time and structure may worry that they don't have the means to do reflection and service-learning. In these situations reflection can be a portion of an existing course requirement such as a research paper or final presentation.

## Frequently Asked Questions

(adapted from Indiana University's Office of Community Outreach and Partnerships in Service-Learning)

**How do I evaluate the students' performance?** Many instructors don't change their evaluation methods, but assume that the service heightens student learning on traditional measures, and that monitoring attendance is all that's necessary. On the other hand, you might assign specific papers that reflect on and incorporate the service experience. These could be graded for analysis, critical thinking, and other typical criteria.

**Isn't it an oxymoron to "require" community service?** When a certain pedagogical method serves the learning objectives of the class, instructors require it. "Students are rarely asked to volunteer" to write a paper or take a test. Once you determine how the service enhances what you teach, you can convey that connection to students, who are less likely to complain about the extra time required if they understand the relevance of service to course material.

**What happens if it's not a good fit between student and organization?** It's important that you keep in close contact with the community people and your students throughout the semester to find out what can facilitate a good fit. Students should get as much information as possible up front about the organization and what's expected. Organizations should have tasks and expectations clearly defined. Any work you do up front can really ease problems down the road.

**What qualifies me for this kind of teaching?** That's something only you can answer. If you're interested in students' intellectual development and personal growth, this kind of teaching is really wonderful. Because a sizable proportion of students learn best through experience, working with community-based education can enhance your teaching effectiveness.

**What are the risks involved?** When students serve in a community-based organization, they should be covered as volunteers for that agency. ESF's insurance does not cover service-learning off campus, so students need to be informed of potential risks before they volunteer. Have them sign an informed consent form indicating they are aware of risks and will not hold the College liable in the case of an

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accident. If you are working through Syracuse University Center for Public and Community Service for placement of your students, all of this will be covered in the orientation provided by that office.

## Service-Learning Resources

**Campus Compact**: A comprehensive site that includes resources for service-learning practitioners (faculty, presidents, administrators). This site also displays syllabi for many disciplines that are incorporating Service-Learning.

**The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse**
**National Society for Experiential Education**

## Essential Reading on Service-Learning

(source: Campus Compact)

AAHE's Series on Service-Learning in the Disciplines monograph series. Washington, DC: AAHE
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