Service Learning: From Classroom to Community

A Handbook for COD Faculty

Planting, growing and harvesting vegetables for a local food pantry. Providing a clean bed at a shelter for the homeless. Tutoring at-risk teens in an after-school program. Helping a child with cerebral palsy develop muscle tone and balance while horseback riding. Distributing food to families hit hard by the recession. Teaching kindergartners about money. Playing board games with elderly patients.

These are just a few of the projects College of DuPage students can undertake when they enroll in classes that include service learning. Also known as "civic engagement" or "community engagement," service learning is a way to get students more engaged with the academic curriculum and help them develop civic responsibility through hands-on community service. Virtually any course can be enhanced with service learning.

I've been using service learning in some of my English composition courses at College of DuPage since 2004. With the help of COD's Service Learning Program, my students have volunteered at a wide variety of organizations including day care centers, animal shelters, park districts, after-school programs, senior centers, the DuPage Children's Museum, the Morton Arboretum, and the People's Resource Center. They've assisted with church programs, the COD Community Education Farm, an AIDS awareness campaign, and many other projects. I'm very proud of the positive impact my students have had on their community as student ambassadors, so to speak, of COD.

If you have an interest in teaching service learning courses, I hope this handbook will serve as a practical introduction to this exciting teaching strategy. And if you currently teach service learning courses, I hope that you find some helpful resources and new ideas.

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COD's Service Learning Program

COD has one of the longest running and best known service learning programs at a community college in the state. As COD’s Service Learning website states, service-based learning has been a part of the curriculum at COD since at least the late 1970’s. It became more formalized in 1996 when a committee was formed to support service learning and “the college applied for and received a 'Bridges to Healthy Communities' grant from the American Association of Community Colleges and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention." In 1998, COD made service learning a part of the Career Services Center. After receiving a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2000, "The [Center for Service Learning] was established to introduce service learning teaching methodology to College of DuPage faculty and to serve as the focal point for providing classroom-based community service opportunities for students. Because of its success, the center became an official part of College of DuPage on Sept. 1, 2003." In 2004, Steve Gustis was hired as Director of Service Learning and is currently the Manager of Career Services. Today, the Service Learning Program exists within Career Services. In 2011, Sara Kirby was hired as Assistant Manager and continues the COD tradition of helping students find meaningful service placements.

The Service Learning office develops and maintains relationships with community organizations that have agreed to participate in COD’s service learning program. Since 2004, COD’s relationships with community organizations have increased, making it possible for students to choose from over 80 non-profit community partners covering a wide range of services that can match almost every student interest. Today, students can easily peruse service placement options on the
COD Service Learning website. In addition, students can meet representatives from various non-profit organizations at the Service Learning Fairs held at the beginning of each semester.

In 2010, 510 COD students completed the Service Learning Program with 24 faculty in 63 courses working with over 100 community partners. In a typical service learning course at COD, students are asked to complete 15 to 20 hours of service. Presidential Scholars are required to complete a service learning course or 20 hours of approved service—underscoring our institutional need to maintain and develop quality service learning opportunities for students.

Outside of the classroom, the COD Service Learning Program works with any students interested in service opportunities, and helps student groups organize and implement civic engagement projects. The Program has also organized COD Service Days for employees and students.

Faculty are lucky to have a mature Service Learning Program at COD. As a result, COD has a large collection of service learning-related resources available on the Service Learning website, in the Career Services office and at the COD Library.

**Getting Started**

At COD, inspiration can be found in the fact that many of our colleagues have developed terrific courses that are enhanced by meaningful service learning projects. As part of my research, I interviewed ten service learning faculty at COD. Many of them have been teaching service learning classes for five years or more.

COD faculty have integrated service learning in a variety of ways. In some classes, service learning is a requirement. In others, it is an alternate assignment that underscores course objectives. In some courses, the entire class serves at one placement site (such as the Community Education Farm or at a local organization). In other courses, students can choose from a list of sites that relate to the course.

Most of the service learning at COD has been integrated into traditional stand-alone face-to-face courses. Faculty have also offered service learning in Seminars that combine two disciplines and in Learning Communities that combine two or more disciplines. Some service learning courses have been developed for the Honors program, the Center for Independent Learning and the Field Studies Program.

The service learning faculty that I spoke with each had a clear idea of why they were asking students to participate in service learning. They spoke about service learning as a way to help students become more civically engaged while helping to develop positive relationships between the college and the community. They discussed how service learning enhanced their student learning objectives, and how they evaluated that learning.
Based on my discussions with COD faculty, I came up with some key questions that you need to ask yourself if you are interested in trying service learning for the first time:

1. How would a service learning experience enhance course objectives?

At COD, faculty have used service learning to reinforce course concepts. For example, in disciplines such as Early Childhood Education, Psychology or Anthropology, observing diverse populations and interacting with people from different socio-economic backgrounds help make the content of a textbook or lecture real. An Early Childhood Education student volunteering at the DuPage Children’s Museum can observe family dynamics while assisting patrons. A Psychology student volunteering at the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill has an opportunity to interact with other volunteers or clients who are dealing in some way with mental illness.

2. What would be an appropriate and meaningful service experience for students in the course?

Depending on the discipline and course content, service learning faculty often work with the Service Learning office to create a list of appropriate community organizations from which their students can choose. For example, in a Political Science course, students may need to choose an organization involved in the election process (such as The League of Women Voters) or volunteer to help with a political campaign of their choice.

Focus on Professional Associations

Illinois Campus Compact

According to its website, Illinois Campus Compact (ILCC) “is a coalition of colleges and universities that bond together to actively engage presidents, faculty, staff and students to promote a renewed vision of higher education – one that supports not only the civic development of students, but also the campus as an active and engaged member of its community.” ILCC membership includes 43 campuses.

ILCC informs members about workshops, trainings, conferences, and grant opportunities. With an office located at DePaul University’s downtown campus, ILCC also coordinates around 20 AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers. According to its website, “While the specific duties of ILCC VISTAs differ based on the specific needs of their host campus, they all work under the umbrella of increasing civic engagement on college and university campuses.”

The Executive Director of ILCC, Kathy Engelken, is an enthusiastic supporter of service learning in higher education. With Kathy’s help, ILCC co-sponsored the “Service Learning Symposium: Students Impacting Community Through Service Learning,” which was held at COD in spring 2011.

http://www.illinoiscampuscompact.org/
3. Are appropriate service experiences available? Are there organizations with whom the course might partner?

Looking through the placement sites listed on the Service Learning website would be a first step in determining what options are available. However, the Service Learning office can also help faculty develop relationships with other organizations. While most community partnerships are developed in conjunction with the Service Learning office, faculty sometimes initiate relationships with non-profit organizations that fit their curricular needs. Faculty might even be approached by an organization that needs help with a specific project. In these cases, the Service Learning Program can offer support by providing the logistical know-how and paperwork to help the course run smoothly. In addition, the faculty member might help facilitate a new community partnership that can be added to the list of placement options.

4. How will I evaluate what the students are learning?

Service Learning is more than volunteering 15-20 hours and getting the paperwork signed. Faculty that teach these courses develop assignments that ask students to connect their service experience to what they are learning in class. For example, a common assignment is to ask students to keep a journal in which they reflect on their experience and also relate course concepts, discussions and readings to what they are doing or observing at the site. Instructors often give students specific questions to think about for each journal post as well as deadlines and minimum length requirements. Journal posts are usually turned in as typed papers, but faculty can also set up a Journal in Blackboard that each student can access and share privately with the instructor. Other common assignments are essays, oral presentations, poster or brochure presentations, and email reports. In some courses, students actively try to solve a problem in the community, and their final project might be to write an advocacy letter or come up with recommendations. In these classes, students might plan and implement an activity to help raise awareness about an important issue, or they might organize a service project in response to what they have learned. In some cases, students present their ideas to their placement sites.

5. Am I an instructor who is comfortable with a student-centered teaching method that entails giving up some control of what is learned, allowing students to be experts on their experience, and adjusting to unexpected situations?

Integrating service learning into a course entails a willingness on the part of the instructor to try a non-traditional teaching strategy that shifts some of the authority to the student. Ask yourself if you are comfortable with the students learning on their own and bringing their experience into the classroom. To a large extent the course content gives the students a new vocabulary and broader context for understanding their experiences in the field, and the field experiences make the abstract concepts of the course real. This type of learning can be incredibly rewarding for both the student and the teacher.
Creating a Service Learning Syllabus

Once you decide to integrate service learning into your course, you will want to work closely with COD's Service Learning Program in order to line up important deadlines with your syllabus. If you are teaching a semester course, here are some general dates to include in your syllabus:

- Day 1: Welcome to a Service Learning Course
- Week 1 or 2: The Service Learning Orientation
- Week 3 or 4: The Service Learning Fair
- Week 4 or 5: The Service Learning Contract
- Week 14, 15 or 16: The Hours Log
- Final Class Period: Recognition of service.

Day 1: Welcome to a Service Learning Course

Although many students have participated in service projects in high school, most students are not familiar with service learning in college. On the first day of class, make sure that all the students know that a service project is required or offered as an option in the course. Include a rationale for assigning service learning in your syllabus. Explain how the service learning component matches or enhances course objectives. Assignments asking for student reflection on the experience and how it relates to course content should be built into your course throughout the term.

Week 1 or 2: The Service Learning Orientation

During the first two weeks, plan a Service Learning Orientation. You may want to ask the Service Learning staff to make a presentation to your class. If that isn't convenient, you should spend some class time explaining why you are assigning a service learning project, making your expectations clear, and showing your students the Service Learning website: http://home.cod.edu/studentservices/service/. The Service Learning website includes an impressive list of possible placement sites with contact information. The website also has all of the forms that the students will need to complete.
Week 3 or 4: The Service Learning Fair

In order to make the selection of a service site easier, COD hosts a Service Learning Fair usually during the third or fourth week of each semester. At the fair, students can meet representatives from many of the non-profit agencies with whom we partner. Students can also sign up for an orientation with their site and get the ball rolling on their contract.

Week 4 or 5: The Service Learning Contract

The contract is an important document that will need to be signed by the site supervisor and approved by you, the faculty member, by the fourth or fifth week of the semester. The contract asks students to articulate what they will be doing at the site. Once complete, the contract is turned in to the Service Learning staff.

Week 14, 15, or 16: The Hours Log

Once they begin volunteering, students will need to maintain an "Hours Log" that documents the dates and times of their service as well as their general activities. The Hours Log will need their site supervisor's signature no later than the last week of class. You might want to make the deadline for the Hours Log a week or two earlier in order to allow extra time for any difficulties some students may have getting the appropriate signature.

Final Class Period: Recognition

Once the paperwork is completed and turned into the Service Learning staff, each student can receive a certificate of completion. If you plan ahead and set the deadline for paperwork a week early, you can request that the Service Learning staff have the certificates printed and ready to present to the students for the last class period. This is a nice way to acknowledge the students' hard work and celebrate a job well done.

Best Practices

Based on my research, experience and discussions with faculty and students, I have developed a list of eight best practices that I believe are necessary for a successful service learning course:

1. Make the service learning expectations clear to the students.
2. Find the right types of service for the course.
3. Help students partner with organizations that fit their interests.
4. Create a syllabus that includes all deadlines.
5. Have students report and share their experiences with their peers.
6. Create assignments that require student reflection on the service experience in relation to course content.
7. Be flexible when dealing with unexpected situations.
8. Recognize and celebrate the students' completion of the service.

1. Make the service learning expectations clear to the students.

If you are teaching a course that requires service learning, it's important to advertise. Make sure that the course is given a service learning designation in both the hardcopy and online course schedule. Your associate dean should be able to request the designation for your class. Inform the Service Learning staff so they can include your course on their website. Let the counselors and advisors know about your course. This information can be especially helpful when advising Presidential Scholars, who are required to take a service learning course or complete 20 hours of service.

Even with all of the promotion you can muster, on the first day of class you will find that a number of students were unaware of the service learning requirement when they registered. Some students will be resistant to the idea of service, and it may not be for everyone. Therefore, it's important that you spend some time during the first day of class explaining why you have required service in your course, the sorts of projects that will be appropriate, how many hours of service you expect, and how it relates to your course content.

Show your students the Service Learning website, including the online list of service agencies and the necessary forms. You may want to invite the Service Learning staff to your class during the first or second week in order for students to become more comfortable with the entire process.

During the first or second class meeting, I have found that students warm up to the idea of service learning after we brainstorm on the question "Why service?" I find that students generate many good reasons, and many become converted. As the students brainstorm, I fill up the board with all of their ideas. The reasons students generally come up with are:

- It's a way to give back to the community.
- Looks good on a college or scholarship application.
- Looks good on a resume.
- It's a way to apply class concepts to the real world.
- It's a way to explore a possible career or major.
• Raises awareness of community issues and needs.
• Makes us aware of the resources that are available when people need help.
• We may need help one day, so this is good karma.
• Religious reasons.
• It's a course requirement.
• It gets us out of our comfort zone.
• Develops character and helps us grow as people.
• Develops time management skills.
• Develops interpersonal skills.
• Promotes good citizenship and civic responsibility.
• Lets us do something meaningful for a cause we care about.
• It's a way to network with others and could lead to an internship or job.
• It's a way to make new friends.
• Develops self-esteem, makes us feel good, and gives us a sense of accomplishment.

2. Find the right types of service for the course.

It's very important that the service projects are a good fit with the course content. Since I teach a "pure" service learning course in which we read about and discuss service as the theme, virtually any service project is appropriate for my course. However, most courses have more specific criteria. You should work with the Service Learning staff in order to find agencies that fit your course's needs. For example, a political science course might expect students to volunteer for a campaign of their choosing. A social work class might have a list of agencies where students can be exposed to different populations.

Some service agencies deal with vulnerable populations, and may require that students submit to a criminal background check and/or a TB test. If this is the case for your course, keep in mind that these things often take a couple of weeks to sort out.

3. Help students partner with organizations that fit their interests.

At the end of my last service learning class, I asked my students what their best advice would be for other students taking a service learning course. Their number one piece of advice was that students need to choose a project that matches their own interests. Students that choose a service site merely because it is conveniently located yet have no real interest in what the site is doing end up wishing they had searched a little harder and found something more connected to their professional or personal interests. For example, one of my students volunteered for a food pantry that was near her home. While she found the experience gratifying and wrote some profound insights about the socio-
economic reality of her community, hunger and food scarcity just was not her personal passion. She found herself wishing she was doing something related to education.

Encourage students to attend the Service Learning Fair in order to get a better handle on what the organizations do and with whom they will be working.

Explain to students that they need to demonstrate professional courtesy when contacting their agencies. Explain that any emails or phone messages must be polite, and that agencies may need a few days to get back to them.

If students go to an orientation or have a first day in which they find out that the actual service is not what they signed up for, it’s important to switch projects as quickly as possible. In these rare cases, the Service Learning staff is invaluable.

If students are having difficulties contacting a service site or setting up an orientation, encourage them to work with COD’s Service Learning staff. Sometimes the fix is something simple. I had a student who insisted that his agency was never calling him back. The Service Learning staff intervened and discovered that he must have been leaving messages at a wrong number!

4. Create a syllabus that includes all deadlines.

Creating a syllabus was discussed in detail earlier in this handbook, but it bears repeating. A well-organized syllabus will keep both you and the students on track.

5. Have students report and share their experiences with their peers.

As much as I’d like to think students do their best work to please the instructor, I have found that most students do their best work for each other. Oral reports and poster presentations are a popular way to have students report out on their projects.

In my service learning courses, I have the students present two oral reports and one brochure project to me and their classmates. The first oral report is due soon after the contracts are signed. During one class period the students informally take turns reporting on where they will be volunteering and why they chose the site. I usually ask them how things are going so far, whether they have had an
orientation, and how they will manage their schedule.

The second oral report is a formal presentation towards the end of the semester. This report needs to have some visual aids (students often put together a PowerPoint presentation, show digital photographs, or display the agency’s website or pamphlets). For this second report students must answer specific questions such as what the mission of the agency is and how the student's service fits within that mission. They are encouraged to share an interesting anecdote and discuss any problems they have had to overcome.

The third presentation in my course is similar to a poster session; however, I ask that students create a three-fold brochure. They can choose to advertise their service site to future volunteers or use their experience to advertise the COD Service Learning Program. I have students present the brochures at the final class.

6. Create assignments that require student reflection on the service experience in relation to course content.

For service learning courses, creating assignments that require student reflection on the service experience in relation to course content is widely considered a best practice. Usually this reflection is done through written assignments. Depending on your course, you might assign journals, essays or advocacy letters in which the students are required to use their experience as a source. Often students are also asked to give an oral presentation on their service experience.

Whatever assignments you choose, it is important that you make your expectations clear. Explain that the students must connect their experiences to course content. You might create specific prompts that encourage the students to make connections to course readings or concepts.

There are a number of books that offer ideas for creating meaningful reflection assignments. Community Service-Learning: A Guide to Including Service in the Public School Curriculum edited by Rahima C. Wade is geared towards K-12 teacher education but discusses many classroom strategies that can be applied to college-level classes. The sections by Wade are particularly well written, concise and clear. Wade's chapter on "Reflection" offers a good list of questions to prompt student reflection on service, and provides classroom strategies that could be applied to almost any course (94-112). For example, she lists 13 ways to facilitate discussion, including using the well-known "Talking Stick" method as well as asking the students to physically move in order to take on different positions ("Yes/No/Sometimes/Not Sure") or confront different opinions ("Opposing Views Lines"). She lists 11 writing activities and 6 student presentation ideas. She also offers ideas for artistic reflection on the service learning project through visual arts, theater, and video production.

In addition, An Asset Builder's Guide to Service-Learning by the Search Institute has a good
chapter on reflection that might offer some ideas for college-level students. It includes a one-page handout entitled "40 Ways to Reflect." In addition to the usual essay or journal project, they list some creative group assignments such as having students create a scrapbook, put on a talk show, or write and illustrate a children’s book. Within this chapter, the Search Institute also includes some helpful worksheets for students, instructors and community members to use as a way to reflect on and assess the service learning experience. All of these handouts are expressly available to be reproduced for educational use.

Inspired by my research on reflection, I developed a new online journal assignment using Blackboard for my fall 2011 service learning class. My students were required to compose ten thoughtful posts throughout the term by specific dates listed in the syllabus. Students needed to write a minimum of 250 words per post and organize their thoughts into paragraphs. I gave them a list of questions to reflect upon. The posts were to cover everything from their process of choosing a service site, their orientation at the site, their experiences, and their insights in relation to course readings and class discussions. I liked using the Blackboard journal because each journal could remain private, allowing access only by me and the student. It also allowed me a chance to converse online with students directly about their service experience. Most of the students did an excellent job, and I suggested that they keep a copy of their posts for possible use later in a college application essay.

7. Be flexible when dealing with unexpected situations.

Without fail, some students will not have their paperwork in by a set deadline. Usually this is because the student is having difficulties meeting with the supervisor in person. Perhaps the site supervisor went on vacation or they keep missing each other. Sometimes students are waiting for a criminal background check or TB test to be processed. Whatever the problem, try to be flexible. Because the COD Service Learning paperwork is available online, some of these issues can be resolved with a fax or scanned document sent to your email address. In general, I
set deadlines a bit early in order to allow some time to resolve these issues.

If a service site is just not going to work out for a student, it's important that the student change sites as soon as possible. In these situations, the student needs to talk to the Service Learning staff in order to find a site.

Some students may have a difficult time getting to service sites off campus. It's a good idea to talk to the Service Learning staff about possible on-campus service projects. In the past, some of my students have volunteered for the Community Education Farm or for an on-campus AIDS Awareness Campaign.

Some students may have a disability that makes doing a service project appear daunting. But keep in mind that service learning for students with disabilities is not impossible. In fact, it could be an incredibly positive experience for students that are often thought of as recipients of service by empowering them to use their skills to help others. If you have a student with a disability in your service learning course, you should discuss reasonable accommodations with the student, COD's Special Education experts and our Service Learning office. *An Asset Builder's Guide to Service-Learning* includes a brief section on "Young People with Disabilities" that was adapted from the Maryland Student Service Alliance's *Special Education Service-Learning Guide* (Search Institute 26-27). This section is geared towards K-12 students, but it provides some ideas of possible projects for students with various disabilities—from deafness to ADHD. Students with disabilities can have a service learning experience that is just as rewarding and meaningful as that of any other student.

8. Recognize and celebrate the students' completion of the service.

I mentioned this in the section on creating a service learning syllabus. I think it is important to acknowledge the time and effort students have given to their service project. The Service Learning office will print a certificate of completion which students can pick up at the Career Services office. In my classes, I ask students to turn in their paperwork a week early in order to give the Service Learning staff time to create certificates that I can hand out on the final day of class. On the last day, I read each student's name, how many hours they volunteered, and we applaud for each student. I give a prize—usually a COD mug or toy with the school logo—to the student with the most hours.
Service Learning as a College Success Strategy

Service learning is an important teaching strategy that can help community college students become more engaged in their education, resulting in a higher likelihood of college success.

According to Kay M. McClenny, Director of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), "An unequivocal finding of the research on undergraduate learning and success is that student engagement matters" (qtd. in Baratian et al vii). In her "Foreword" to Service-Learning Course Design for Community Colleges, McClenny states that "we have large issues to address if we're serious about improving student persistence and learning" (viii). She suggests that community colleges find effective ways to provide an "intentional redesign of students' educational experiences so they cannot escape engagement because it is so ingrained in college processes and programs." She considers service learning to be especially pertinent for community college students. She asks, "How often do we hear from these adult learners, these first-generation college-goers, these students so often alienated through their previous educational experiences, that they long for connections between what we ask them to learn and what is going on in their 'real' lives?" McClenny argues that "[a]n optimal solution to this challenge of intentional design is to incorporate service-learning across the community college curriculum."
In his keynote presentation at the 2011 Community College National Center for Community Engagement Conference, Andrew Furco provided an overview of the data linking service learning to college success. Furco is currently the Associate Vice President for Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota and prior to that was a founding director of the Service-Learning Research and Development Center of the University of California Berkeley. In his speech, Furco emphasized that service learning is a teaching strategy that promotes quality education. While more research needs to be done to trace the long-term completion rates of students who have participated in service learning, Furco stated that the evidence clearly indicates service learning’s positive impact on "retention and persistence, factors that promote student success [such as engagement and sense of belonging], [and] factors that prepare students for today’s workforce [such as improved critical thinking skills and problem solving skills]."

At COD, students who participate in service learning have shown positive results. According to research by COD’s Service Learning Program over a 3-year period, students who chose the Service Learning option in a class earned a higher grade on average than students who did not choose the option.

Perhaps some of the most tangible benefits of service learning occur after the class is over. Service learning can give a student a leg up in the college and scholarship application process, and it can look great on a resume or even lead to a job. In the current competitive economy, students need the real world experience that service learning offers more than ever.

Illinois Campus Compact Executive Director Kathy Engelken with Steve Gustis and Lisa Higgins at COD’s Service Learning Symposium in Spring 2011.
More on Designing Your Service Learning Course

One of the best books on integrating service learning into a course is Service-Learning Course Design for Community Colleges (Baratian et al.). The chapter by Amy Hendricks entitled "Best Practices for Creating Quality Service-Learning Courses" is a particularly concise and practical essay on course construction (17-48). Hendricks takes a faculty member through the thought process of incorporating service learning by separating the essay into two sections: "Preliminary Work," which entails thinking through your rationale for using service learning and how it relates to your course goals; and "Steps in Course Design," which asks faculty to think about whether the service will be required or not, what sites would be appropriate, the type and duration of service, and what assignments could be used for evaluating student learning. Hendricks also asks faculty to anticipate how they will deal with unexpected problems (such as an agency not giving a student adequate hours). She also emphasizes the great help faculty and students can get from dedicated support staff.

Another helpful book on integrating service learning into a course is Jeffrey Howard's Service-Learning Course Design Workbook. This slim volume carefully defines academic service learning as including "three necessary criteria":

1. Relevant and Meaningful Service With the Community....
2. Enhanced Academic Learning.... [and]
3. Purposeful Civic Learning.... (12)

Howard's book is interactive, with over 15 pages of worksheets. The first worksheet is meant to help an instructor determine whether or not service learning would enhance a given course. If it would, the subsequent worksheets ask the instructor to reflect on the academic and civic learning objectives of the proposed course, and then align those objectives with classroom strategies and a method for assessing the student learning taking place. Howard emphasizes the importance of academic rigor throughout the workbook. He reminds faculty that in a service learning course, we are assessing the learning not just the service. For example, in his list of ten "Principles of Good Practice for Service-Learning Pedagogy," he states, "Principle 1: Academic Credit is for Learning, Not for Service" (16).

Therefore, it's important that the service component in a class be relevant to the
course objectives. In his essay "Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative Pedagogy," Howard emphasizes that the service component of a service learning course should not be a "sidebar activity" (57). He states that "academic service learning is not merely the addition of a community service option or requirement to an academic course. A clause on the syllabus that directs students to complete community service hours as a course requirement or in lieu of another course assignment does not constitute academic service learning. Rather than serving as a parallel or sidebar activity, the students' community service experiences in academic service learning function as a critical learning complement to the academic goals of the course." As Howard says, "Serving in a soup kitchen is relevant for a course on social issues but probably not for a course on civil engineering" (58).

A good video on service learning is Education for What? Learning Social Responsibility. Produced in 2004 by Campus Compact, this 60-minute video offers an overview of service learning with an emphasis on community organizing and social responsibility. It includes interviews with faculty and students from schools such as Portland State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, San Jose State University, University of Massachusetts, and University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. The video shows and discusses many examples of service learning projects: a cafe for the homeless, a domestic violence shelter for children, a reforestation project, a mobile dental program, a music program for underserved schools, ESL and citizenship classes, computer classes, urban planning projects and others. As one student observes, "This capstone class has been the most rewarding class that I've taken...in my whole college career. I wish all of my classes could be like this. This class—or this experience—it's half classroom readings or instruction/learning/discussions and then half direct service with your community partners. And so this combination of action and learning and reflection has made this whole experience completely educational rather than just intellectual."

COD's Service Learning website has some useful resources for faculty, including some course descriptions and sample assignments. The website also has a copy of Edward Zlotkowski's "Service Learning Course Development Exercise," which is a helpful list of nine questions to ask yourself if you are converting an existing course into a service learning course.

**Six Basic Models of Service Learning and Sample Syllabi**

In 2001, Campus Compact published a helpful book full of sample syllabi called *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction* (Heffernan). Rather than list syllabi by discipline, this book organizes itself around the "Six Models for Service-Learning" defined by Richard E. Cone. Cone is considered one of the early gurus of service learning and is the man for whom the California Campus Compact named their annual "Richard E. Cone Award for Excellence and Leadership in Cultivating Community Partnerships in Higher Education."
According to Cone, the six basic models for service learning courses are:

1) "Pure" Service-Learning
2) Discipline-Based Service-Learning
3) Problem-Based Service-Learning (PBSL)
4) Capstone Courses
5) Service Internships
6) Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research.

"'Pure' Service-Learning" refers to courses in which "service-learning, volunteerism, or civic engagement" is the theme of the course (3). For example, the English 1101 service learning course that I teach is a "pure" service learning course. In my course we look at college student volunteerism, national trends, and post-graduate volunteer opportunities. We also read about and discuss ethical questions regarding civic engagement and philanthropy, and we debate whether service should be mandatory for a college degree.

"Discipline-Based" refers to courses in which the course content is directly related to a service project. Some examples might include social work students applying concepts at a drug treatment facility, healthcare students assisting a free clinic, education majors observing child development levels while assisting a day care, or political science students participating in the democratic process during an election year. However, the application of course content to volunteer service is not always so direct. For example, Cone discusses a 200-level history course in which students have the option to prepare lessons on medieval history for a local grade school in lieu of a paper.

In PBSL courses, students act like a "consultant" for a community "client" who can benefit from the students' analysis of a particular problem (4). Cone's example is a civil engineering course in which students study traffic flow problems in a specific area of town and then offer solutions.

"Capstone Courses," which tend to be more common at four-year colleges, are courses that are required towards the end of a degree program. In a service learning capstone course, students are asked to apply theory to practice as part of a service project.
"Service Internships" are similar to other experiential internships, but instead of work experience, the students would base their independent study on a service project.

"Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research" refers to classes engaged in what we would today call "civic engagement." In these courses, students conduct research on a specific community issue and present their findings to an appropriate community organization or agency. In order to do this, students work with the agency but don't necessarily engage in typical "service." For example, Cone describes an Economics class in which students analyzed whether there was a correlation between access to public transportation and the employment opportunities of a local population, ending with recommendations for improving public transportation that were presented to a local advocacy organization.

In *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction*, some of the model syllabi apply to upper level courses, and some of the course reading selections are outdated. But depending on the approach you are taking in your service learning course, the samples could still be useful to community college faculty. Many offer detailed writing and reading assignments, rationales, and class schedules.

If you are interested in teaching a so-called "Pure" service learning course, "Stand-Alone Service-Learning Courses and Models" by Marina Baratian in *Service-Learning Course Design for Community College* is useful (Baratian et al). Baratian's chapter specifically discusses "[s]tand-alone or 'pure' service-learning courses [that] are not rooted in a particular discipline but instead have service or civic engagement as their primary focus" (49).

There are numerous resources offering sample syllabi, but the quality and completeness of the syllabi varies greatly. If you want to see how other faculty have integrated service learning into their courses, a good place to start is Campus Compact. They have over 100 syllabi listed by discipline on their website: [http://www.compact.org/](http://www.compact.org/).

A more recent book that might also be helpful for developing syllabi is *Quick Hits for Service-Learning: Successful Strategies by Award-Winning Teachers* (Cooksey and Olivares, eds.). Although the title sounds as if this book is filled with short tips and teaching strategies, it’s actually a collection of service learning program and course descriptions from all over the country. The organization of this book is confusing, but the index can help you find examples related to your discipline or type of service project.

"The service learning project in my case was a life-changing event. As a consequence of this experience, I've decided to pursue a career in education."

Service Learning student, Education
Focus on Professional Associations

International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement

The IARSLCE is a non-profit organization that encourages the sharing of information and ideas about service learning through conferences and publications. They hold an annual conference that is hosted in a different city each year. In 2011, the IARSLCE held their 11th annual conference in Chicago, with the theme "Research for Impact: Scholarship Advancing Social Change." Their "Advances in Service-Learning Research" series is an annual publication of current research, theories and research methodology related to service learning in K-12, higher education and teacher education.

www.researchslce.org

Discipline-Specific Help

Whatever your discipline, it is likely that you have colleagues somewhere that have integrated service learning into their courses, and some of them have probably published articles or presented papers on the experience.

A good place to look for discipline-specific information is within your own professional associations. Some professional associations publish annotated bibliographies that can save you a lot of time. For example, for Composition instructors, the Council of Writing Program Administrators regularly publishes "Research Bibliographies" on various topics. In October 2010 they published "Service-Learning in First-Year Composition: Programmatic Approaches and Measurable Effect," which offers an overview of current research in the field including dissertations (Johnson).

An excellent online resource is the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse website, which offers an online fact sheet called "Discipline-Specific Service-Learning Resources for Higher Education." This fact sheet lists books, articles and internet links for 29 disciplines ranging from Accounting to Philosophy to Women's Studies.

Between 1997-2006, the American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation published the Service Learning in the Disciplines Series, edited by Edward Zlotkowski. Some of the articles are dated, but there are useful essays in this book series. Most, if not all, of the series is available at the COD Library and our Service Learning office. The series includes volumes on 21 areas of study:

Accounting
Biology
Communication Studies
Composition
Engineering
Environmental Studies
History
Lodging, Foodservice and Tourism
Management
Medical Education
Nursing
Peace Studies
Philosophy
Planning and Architecture
Political Science
Psychology
Religious Studies
Sociology
Spanish
Teacher Education
Women's Studies

**English Composition and Service Learning**

*Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* is part of the "AAHE's Series on Service-Learning in the Disciplines" (Adler-Kassner, Crooks and Watters, eds.). This was the first book in the series and is somewhat dated. Published in 1997, some of the contributing writers refer to service learning as a new trend of the past five years, and one writer even wonders if it will persist as a teaching method. (It did!) Still, this collection of essays raises some good questions for composition instructors to think about when incorporating service learning into a writing course. Some of the contributors argue that service learning provides composition courses with a real world context—as opposed to an artificial rhetorical context—that has more immediate meaning for the students and practical applications in the community.

There are two essays of particular interest in *Writing the Community*. "Systems Thinking, Symbiosis, and Service: The Road to Authority for Basic Writers" by Rosemary L. Arca is worth reading. Arca describes a basic writing class in which students—who are often feeling especially disheartened and disempowered by their need to take a remedial course—can gain confidence and develop analytical skills by writing about their service experience. In "On Reflection: The Role of Logs and Journals in Service-Learning..."
Courses,” Chris M. Anson suggests that instructors help students develop more sophisticated analysis in their journals. He points out that students' journal entries often become simply expressive, or contain repetitive observations of what they did or saw. He suggests assigning readings that help provide an intellectual framework and vocabulary within which students can develop their analysis. For example, if students are tutoring at-risk youth, they might read and reflect on an article about literacy in America in order to put their service in context. He also suggests that teachers respond to the journal entries with more than just a "Good job!" by asking questions that encourage students to dig deeper as to the reasons behind their observations.

In *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, Thomas Deans separates service learning writing assignments into three categories: writing for, about or with the community. In the appendix, Deans provides a detailed syllabus and student writing samples from his own Expository Writing III course at Kansas State University. Published in 2000, this book is dated in parts, but the examples he gives are still pertinent today.

**Texts for Service Learning Students**

Typically the readings for service learning students are discipline-specific and based on the course content. However, there are some texts available on the subject of service itself that faculty might use to supplement their course content in order to help students reflect more deeply on their volunteer service.

*The Civically Engaged Reader* is an anthology of short readings by a wide range of canonical and contemporary authors (Davis and Lynn, eds.). Writers include Aristotle; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; R. W. Emerson; Franz Kafka, Martin Luther King, Jr.; Gwendolyn Brooks; and Langston Hughes. This has some challenging readings that can help service learning students reflect on their personal experience as well as the larger issues of civic responsibility and citizenship. This book came out of the Project on Civic Reflection, which "develops and disseminates resources to help civic groups and organizations engage in reading and discussion about giving, serving, leading, and associating" (xix). They have a useful website ([www.civicreflection.org](http://www.civicreflection.org)) and conduct workshops on how to engage students and volunteers in meaningful discussion.

Paul Rogat Loeb’s *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times* was considered by many to be an instant classic about civic engagement when it was originally published in 1999. The revised 2010 version offers updated examples. Loeb writes philosophically about the need for citizens to become involved in their communities. He discusses the practical and psychological obstacles that individuals must overcome in order to maintain their involvement, such as the difficult and sometimes
slow task of coalition building or the pitfalls of apathy and cynicism. Loeb is clear that his own civic involvement stemmed from his work against the Vietnam war in the 1960s, and he is clearly liberal in his politics. However, in his "Introduction to the New Edition," Loeb states that he chose "examples from a variety of people who inspire me" regardless of their left or right politics. He states, "Whatever your political viewpoint, I suspect that Soul will offer significant parallels with your personal dilemmas and decisions.... I also believe you'll find yourself respecting—and, in some cases, admiring—many of the people whose stories I describe, even if their perspectives differ from yours. If you disagree with some of their arguments and causes (or mine), that's fine. You may even get involved on the other side. But I suspect you'll discover some unexpected common ground" (15).

*United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship* is an anthology of short essays by contemporary writers on the future of national service in post 9-11-01 America (Dionne, Drogosz and Litan, eds.). Authors range from former President William Clinton and Senator John McCain to the founders of various non-profit organizations and public policy experts. Although some readings are already dated, an instructor may find some essays here that are useful for eliciting discussion on the duties of citizens and the debate over mandatory service.

**Focus on Professional Journals**

**Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning**

Since 1994, the MJCSL has been a peer-reviewed journal that publishes scholarship on service learning in higher education. The journal is based out of the Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. It is edited by Jeffrey Howard, who is also Assistant Director for Faculty Development at DePaul University's Irwin W. Steans Center for community-based service learning and community service studies in Chicago. MJCSL also publishes the *Service-Learning Course Design Workbook* written by Howard. For submission guidelines, visit [http://ginsberg.umich.edu/mjcsl/about](http://ginsberg.umich.edu/mjcsl/about)

COD's library also has several handbooks geared towards students who are in service learning courses. These student handbooks offer some ideas and worksheets that instructors might want to incorporate into their class discussions and assignments.

*Service-Learning: From Classroom to Community to Career* by Marie Watkins and Linda Braun is the best of the student handbooks, and could most easily be used as a textbook in disciplines like social work or education. The questions are geared towards students doing social service projects with a population unlike themselves, such as assisting the poor at a food pantry or tutoring non-native speakers. The authors take a crack at defining "service-learning," explain the benefits for the students and community, and provide some guidance regarding the writing of reflection pieces. It is set up like a workbook and has many fill-in-the-blank worksheets that students can use to help them reflect on their service projects and assess their developing skills. It also includes information on developing resumes and cover letters.
Depending on your discipline and the types of service learning projects going on in your course, the worksheets might offer some ideas for enriching writing assignments or generating discussion. For example, in "Chapter 4 Recognizing Your Learning Style," Watkins and Braun encourage students to apply some well-known education theories to themselves in order to help them become more self-aware of how their skills and knowledge are developing during the service learning experience. The authors ask students to assess themselves and their service experience in relation to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of learning. "Chapter 5 Becoming Culturally Sensitive" includes worksheets that encourage students to articulate their own values and cultural assumptions, and analyze from where these values and assumptions come. Students are then asked to identify the cultural expectations and values of the population they are serving. And finally, students are asked to reflect on how best to respectfully interact with and assist a group that may be very different from themselves.

Students might also find the chapters on developing skills useful ("Chapter 6 Identifying and Developing Service-Learning Skills"; "Chapter 7 Building Interpersonal Skills through Service-Learning Relationships"). In addition, "Chapter 9 Getting the Most from a Service-Learning Assignment" discusses how to choose a good project that matches the student's personality and interests, helps dispel some of the anxieties students might feel about doing service, and offers tips for good reflective writing.

Doris M. Hamner's *Building Bridges: The Allyn and Bacon Student Guide to Service-Learning* has two chapters that could be helpful to students or faculty: "Chapter 6 Tips on Doing Field Research: A How-To Guide on Participant Observation" and "Chapter 7 Writing Service-Learning Papers: What is Reflection, Exactly?" These chapters pose some thought-provoking questions, emphasize the need to be a good observer, and give examples of some well-developed reflection pieces by students.

*A COD Service Learning student helping a resident at Senior Home Sharing.*
History of Service Learning as an Academic Movement

Scholars trace the origins of service learning as an academic movement to the mid-1960s and a group of professors who believed that community service could increase students’ civic engagement and transform communities for the better. In *Service-Learning: A Movement’s Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future*; Timothy K. Stanton; Dwight E. Giles, Jr.; and Nadinne I. Cruz trace the stories of many of these early innovators, including Bob Sigmon and Bill Ramsay, whom they credit with the first use of the term “service learning.”

As part of the Southern Regional Education Board in the mid-1960s, Sigmon and Ramsay matched up professors and students to community projects in the American South. Importantly, these efforts were not seen merely as charity work or good deeds, but as a way to broaden students’ education. As Stanton, Giles and Cruz explain: “Service Learning programs should not just recruit students to volunteer in soup kitchens. They should ask them to reflect on why people are hungry” (3).

In the 1980s, service learning moved further into the mainstream in higher education. In 1985, three prominent college presidents – Timothy Healy of Georgetown, Donald Kennedy of Stanford, and Howard Searer of Brown – decided to take action against what they saw as increasing student apathy and disengagement. The three presidents established Campus Compact, a national organization meant to support college student volunteerism.

Some service-learning advocates worried at the time that the Campus Compact initiative stressed volunteerism for its own sake at the expense of the learning component. But over time, Campus Compact has become one of the primary sources of information and support for service learning.

Philosophically, service learning is sometimes associated with the educational philosophy of John Dew-
ey, the Progressive Era and the evolution of Social Work. In Service-Learning: History, Theory, and Issues, Bruce W. Speck and Sherry L. Hoppe offer a collection of essays tracing service learning to these origins.

Politically speaking, U.S. presidents from both major parties have found reasons to support national volunteer initiatives, that often include campus service-learning initiatives. For example, in 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the National and Community Service Act, which "authorized grants for schools to support service-learning" among other initiatives ("History of Service-Learning in Higher Education").

In addition, service learning has been embraced by both state-funded schools and private religious colleges. At Dominican University in River Forest, Ill., for example, a common theme of service learning courses is civic engagement as a means to promote social justice (Thelen). Students are asked to reflect on how their service might relate to their faith.

Despite this seemingly broad base of support, academic service learning programs – like volunteer programs in general – are often subject to changing political winds and targeted for cutbacks in lean times. In some cases, service programs created or reorganized by one presidential administration can end up underfunded or ignored by the next.

For that reason, organizations like Campus Compact find they must continually advocate for service learning, stressing its benefits for students, communities and colleges.
Works Cited


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The sabbatical also afforded me the time to attend the Community College National Center for Community Engagement's 20th National Annual Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. The theme in 2011 was "Hand in Hand: Service Learning and College Completion." This was an excellent conference that I highly recommend—despite the 112 degree weather!
Questions?
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Service Learning

Service learning combines community service with academic instruction. In service learning courses, students are involved in organized service projects that address the needs of community organizations. This “win-win” method of instruction develops students’ academic skills in the classroom, as well as a sense of civic responsibility and commitment to their community.

A COD Service Learning student volunteering at the DuPage Children’s Museum.