Models of Service-Learning in the Curriculum

Barbara Jacoby, Ph.D.

Course where service-learning is optional: Students in a course choose from 2 or more options for achieving course goals, including service-learning, case studies, research papers, or other projects. Reflection may be different for students engaged in the service option and those who are not.

Service-learning/fourth-credit option: Students can negotiate a learning contract with a faculty member in any course in which the faculty member is willing to work with the student to design a service-learning component to supplement the basic course. The service-learning component includes intentional reflection; the credit is awarded for demonstration of learning, not for the service alone.

Service-learning course: All students in the course are involved in service-learning. Reflection is integrated throughout the course and linked to learning outcomes. This can occur in a general education or a discipline-based course.

First-year experience: Service-learning is often integrated into first-year seminars or courses to introduce students to the concept of service-learning, to the community in which the university is located, and to how students can build skills in writing, critical thinking and/or a content area through active learning.

Service-learning internship or independent study: Can allow students in any major to work in the community for more substantial amounts of time, attend class (often a minimum of hours), and engage in on-going reflection and intentional application of academic learning.

Field work service-learning: Students in professional programs, such as teacher education, nursing, or human services work in the community, often several times throughout their coursework generally for increasingly lengthy periods of time. For field education to be considered service-learning, reciprocal partnerships, reflection, and intentional integration with academic content are critical.

Community-based research: Under the supervision of a faculty member, students engage in research *with* the community, designed to benefit all partners. Community members are involved in every stage of the research process.

Service-learning capstone: A service-learning capstone course is a culminating experience that enables students to integrates their learning from throughout their college experience, to make meaning of it, and to think about how they will use it in the future. They often involve a research project or substantial service experience with critical analysis and a final written paper and/or presentation.

International service-learning: Takes many forms, including a course that involves an alternative spring break, a 3-week winter break, or a summer experience in an international setting. Often these courses involve service in a local community that is related to the work the students are doing abroad.

Course sequencing: A series of courses are taken in order, each one building on the work of the previous, with the service and the reflection becoming deeper and more critical. Students may partner with the same or different community agencies throughout the sequence. This can involve a multidisciplinary approach.

Engaged department or program: One or more courses may integrate service-learning, no matter which faculty member happens to teach it in a given semester. In some cases, an entire department will engage deeply and broadly with a community on a particular issue, such as health or education. Multiple courses may engage students in community-based research and service at various levels.

Engaged university: An institution as a whole makes a commitment to a genuine and sustained partnership with the local community. This is evidenced in every aspect of campus policy and programs, including faculty and student recruitment, curriculum, facility use, sustainability, shared resources, and community engagement in campus decision making.

--Adapted from K. Rice, Building Reciprocal Campus-Community Partnerships