



## Service-Learning at Millersville University

The mission of Experiential Learning and Career Management (ELCM) is to provide support to faculty as they strive to include Service-Learning as a part of their pedagogy and research. The Community Service Coordinator maintains partnerships with community organizations who seek to benefit from student and faculty participation. The primary goal is the enhancement of civic responsibility throughout the campus community and the strengthening of our ties to the community.

**The Corporation for National and Community Service, the sponsor of the President's Honor Roll, defines service learning as:**

**Service-learning** is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens communities. Students engaged in high quality service-learning meet the needs of their communities while increasing their academic achievement. Service-learning students also take part in structured time to investigate community needs, thoughtful planning of the service project, and guided reflection between their service experience and their more traditional in-class learning. Overall, the most important feature of effective service-learning programs is that students engage equally with learning and service and reflect on their intersections.

# Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning

## 1. What is structured reflection?

Effective service-learning programs provide opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience. Service-learning projects can be used to reinforce course content and to develop a variety of competencies including critical thinking, communication skills, leadership, a sense of civic responsibility and multicultural understanding. Structured reflection can help students make meaningful connections between their service experience and course content. The term structured reflection is used to refer to a thoughtfully constructed process that challenges and guides students in (1) examining critical issues related to their service-learning project, (2) connecting the service experience to coursework, (3) enhancing the development of civic skills and values, and (4) assisting students in finding personal relevance in the work.

## 2. What are the goals of reflection?

**Goal 1.** One critical goal for reflection is to help students make connections between the service activity and coursework. Reflection can be used to help students understand how to apply course knowledge to service-learning projects. By incorporating such reflection, students get a deeper understanding of course material.

**Goal 2.** Structured reflection is the development or refinement of critical thinking skills such as being able to identify issues, being receptive to new or different ideas, and foreseeing the consequences of one's actions. Structured reflection can reinforce and foster a range of competencies identified in service-learning, including communication and teamwork skills, self-understanding, leadership and public problem solving. These are skills and competencies critical to students' ethical development and civic responsibility.

## 3. When should reflection occur?

**Before the Project.** Reflection before the project can be used to prepare students for the service-learning experience. Reflective preparation is key to the effectiveness of service-learning. At this stage reflection can be used to teach students concepts/ theories required for the project, orient them towards the community organization and its needs, and offer them problem-solving skills to address the challenges that will arise in the community setting.

**During the Project.** Faculty can use reflection to encourage students to learn independently while providing feedback and support as needed to enhance student learning. Reflection not only offers faculty an opportunity to reinforce the connection of course content with the service experience but allows faculty an opportunity to seize the teachable moments that arise in service-learning.

**After the Project.** Reflection after the service experience has ended can help students evaluate the meaning of the experience, grasp their emotional responses to the experience, think about the integration of knowledge and new information, and begin to explore further applications/extensions.

#### **4. What are the different types of reflective activities that can be used in service-learning projects?**

A variety of activities can be used to facilitate student reflection. Faculty can require students to keep journals, organize presentations by community leaders, encourage students to publicly discuss their service experiences and the learning that ensued, and require students to prepare reports to demonstrate their learning. When constructing the reflection activities faculty should consider the following:

- Reflection activities should involve individual learners and address interactions with peers, community members and staff of community agencies.
- Students with different learning styles may prefer different types of activities. Faculty should select a range of reflective activities to meet the needs of different learners.
- Different types of reflection activities may be appropriate at different stages of the service experience. For example, case-studies and readings can help students prepare for the service experience.
- Reflection activities can involve reading, writing, doing and telling.

Compiled from . . . <http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/faq/activities.html>

## TYPES OF REFLECTION

Case studies	Assign case studies to help students think about what to expect from the service project and to plan for the service activity. Use published or instructor developed case studies based on past projects.
Journals	Ask students to record thoughts, observations, feelings, activities and questions in a journal throughout the project. The most common form of journals is free-form journals. The journal should be started early in the project and students should make frequent entries. Explain benefits of journals to students such as enhancing observational skills, exploring feelings, assessing progress and enhancing communication skills. Faculty should provide feedback by responding to journals, class discussions of issue/ questions raised in journals or further assignments.
Structured journals	Use structured journals to direct student attention to important issues/ questions and to connect the service experience to classwork. A structured journal provides prompts to guide the reflective process. Some parts of the journal may focus on affective dimensions while others relate to problem-solving activities.
Team journal	Use a team journal to promote interaction between team members on project related issues and to introduce students to different perspectives on the project. Students can take turns recording shared and individual experiences, reactions and observations, and responses to each other's entries.
Critical Incidents Journal	Ask students to record a critical incident for each week of the service project. The critical incident refers to events in which a decision was made, a conflict occurred, a problem resolved. The critical incident journal provides a systematic way for students to communicate problems and challenges involved in working with the community and with their teams and can thus help in dealing with the affective dimensions of the service experience.
Portfolios	Ask students to select and organize evidence related to accomplishments and specific learning outcomes in a portfolio. Portfolios can include drafts of documents, analysis of problems/ issues, project activities/plans, annotated bibliography. Ask students to organize evidence by learning objectives.
Papers	Ask students to write an integrative paper on the service project. Journals and other products can serve as the building blocks for developing the final paper.
Discussions	Encourage formal/informal discussions with teammates, other volunteers and staff to introduce students to different perspectives.
Presentations	Ask student(s) to present their service experience with class concepts/theories.
Interviews	Interview students on service and the learning that occurred in these experiences.

## BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING

<b>Students</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Institutional Benefits</b>
Enriches student learning of course material and "brings books to life and life to books."	Provides substantial human resources to meet educational, human, safety, and environmental needs of local communities.	Creates new areas for research and scholarship, and increases opportunities for professional recognition and reward.
Increases awareness of current societal issues as they relate to academic areas of interest	Allows the energy and enthusiasm of college students to contribute to meeting needs.	Builds reciprocal partnerships with local community.
Engages students in active learning that demonstrates the relevance and importance of academic work for their life experience and career choices.	Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation in students who will be tomorrow's volunteers and civic leaders.	Extends campus resources into the community and reinforces the value of scholarship of engagement.
Improves interpersonal skills that are increasingly viewed as important skills in achieving success in professional and personal spheres.	Creates potential for additional partnerships and collaboration with the campus.	Enriches and enlivens teaching and learning.
Broadens perspectives of diversity issues and enhances critical thinking skills.		Supports institutional mission.
Develops Civic Responsibility through active community involvement.		