Introduction to Service Learning

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Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” Benjamin Franklin
Service Learning: What Is It?

National Commission on Service-Learning

“...a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”
If students remove trash from a streambed: they are providing a service to the community as volunteers.
When students organize a community activity to remove trash from a streambed,

> analyze what they found,

> share the results and offer suggestions for the neighborhood to reduce pollution,

> and then reflect on their experience

THAT is service-learning!
Service Learning, What is it?

> Service Learning is an instructional method that utilizes community service as a resource for learning.

> It allows students to learn and develop through participation in thoughtfully organized service activities that:
  – integrate and enhance academic curriculum
  – provide “real-life” experiences that exercise academic skills and knowledge
  – meet actual community needs
  – partner the college with community agencies and/or schools.
According to the National Commission on Service learning, service-learning:

- Links to academic content and standards
- Involves young people in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs
- Is reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the service providers by combining a service experience with a learning experience
Service Learning is NOT

> An episodic volunteer program
> Logging a set number of community service hours in order to graduate
> Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators
> Only for high school or college students
> One-sided: benefiting only students or only the community
The distinctive element of service-learning is that it enhances the community through the service provided, but it also has powerful learning consequences for the students or others participating in providing a service.

Service-learning is growing so rapidly that we can see it is having a powerful impact on young people and their development.

Eyler & Giles, 1999
Reflection: A Key Component

The intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

> Develop self-understanding
> Consider challenges faced
> Encourage Insight
> Make meaning from experiences
Reflective Tools

> Journals
> Small or large group discussions
> Portfolios
> Photographic Journals
> In-class presentations
> Symposiums
> Writing reflective statements
Benefits to Students

> positively affects student personal development
> positively affects interpersonal development
> positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills
> positive effect on commitment to service
Students’ Academic Learning Increases

> Students' ability to apply what they have learned to “the real world”

> Complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development

> Service-learning contributes to career development
Students learn and practice skills valued by employers during Service Learning

- Leadership
- Ability to work well as part of a team
- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Awareness of the importance of diversity
- Demonstrated civic and community engagement
Students have a Positive Relationship with the Institution

> Students engaged in service-learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in service-learning.

> Service-learning improves student satisfaction with college.

> Service-learning positively affects student retention.

> Students engaged in service-learning are more likely to graduate.
Faculty Benefit

> Service-Learning provides experiential learning of classroom concepts within the local community reinforcing application of classroom knowledge.

> Students learn the core information that faculty want them to learn.

**Figure 3: Outcomes That Motivate Faculty to Offer Service Learning**

- **Faculty ability to communicate core competencies**: 7.2%
- **Student learning of core competencies**: 40.7%
- **Student understanding of social problems**: 19.6%
- **Student participation to affect social change**: 20.6%
- **Student volunteerism in community**: 7.2%
- **College-community partnerships**: 1.5%
- **Other**: 3.2%
Benefits of Service Learning for the Community

> Provides human resources to meet needs
> Harnesses the energy and enthusiasm of college students
> Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation in tomorrow’s leaders
> Creates potential for additional partnerships and collaboration with the campus
Online Resources

> Community-Based & Experiential Learning
  – http://programs.weber.edu/CCEL

> Applying STEM to Real-World Issues through Service-Learning

> National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
  – https://gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse