

# **Service-Learning**

Kennebec Valley Community College

## Faculty Handbook



1<sup>st</sup> Edition

Welcome to the Faculty Handbook for Service-Learning at Kennebec Valley Community College! By reading this you are joining a nationwide group of instructors like yourself who are interested in providing a dynamic, energizing, and valuable learning opportunity for your students! In addition, you are also among colleagues who view education as a process that simply occurs in the classroom, but one that extends into the wider community. Service-Learning not only provides your students with a valuable learning experience, it also provides a valuable service to our community.

This handbook has been developed by the Kennebec Valley Community College Center for Civic Engagement (CCE or “the Center”) to assist you in understanding what Service-Learning is, how to develop a Service-Learning course, and information on best practice and resources available both here on the KVCC campus and on the web.

Service-Learning has been a part of the KVCC community for quite some time. A few departments; Nursing, Physical Therapy Assistant, Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Social Sciences, have had Service-Learning as part of their curriculums and courses for many years. Indeed, service-based coursework is a part of the individual accrediting components of each of these programs.

In 2004 the college, a member of the Maine Campus Compact, applied for a grant geared toward institutionalizing Service-Learning and toward providing a structure to support developing and sustaining Service-Learning courses on campus.

### **The Center for Civic Engagement**

The CCE was created to provide an official structure for the institutionalization of Service-Learning at KVCC. The major goals of the CCE are as follows:

- promote the development of Service-Learning courses
- provide education and consultation to Faculty interested in developing Service-Learning courses
- promote and support a high degree of community involvement and civic engagement across all aspects of the campus community
- develop and maintain a library of reference materials on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement
- track the service and volunteer hours of the campus community
- develop and maintain a database and communication structure between the campus and community partners
- Assist student who are engaged in service to create “links” between academic and real-world learning
- Provide students with experiences to enhance knowledge of diversity within our community

The Center is still very new but it hopes to employ a full-time staff in the future so that we can best meet these very demanding goals.

## Introduction

Many of you may have heard the term “Service-Learning” at one time or another. (Maybe too many times!) As with many terms, however, our understanding of them does not come from simply hearing about them and speculating as to their meanings. We will start here with some basic definitions of Service-Learning that will hopefully shed some light on what it actually is.



Because Service-Learning can be different things, it needs a number of definitions.

## Definitions of Service-Learning

Service-learning means a method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully organized service that: is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience

*American Association for Higher Education (AAHE): Series On Service-Learning in the Disciplines (adapted from the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993)*

Service-learning seeks to engage individuals in activities that combine both community service and academic learning. Because service-learning programs are typically rooted in formal courses (core academic, elective, or vocational), the service activities are usually based on particular curricular concepts that are being taught.

*Andrew Furco, “Is Service-Learning Really Better than Community Service?” in Furco, Andrew and Shelly H. Billig, eds. Service-Learning: The Essence of the Pedagogy. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing Inc. 2002. p. 25*

Service-learning is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service-learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community.

*Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges*

As you can see there are a number of ways in which Service-Learning can be defined, but there are some common characteristics shared by all the definitions...

### **Placement Quality**

Refers to the establishment of community connections that will provide productive learning situations for students as well as genuine resources that are useful to the community.

### **Application**

Refers to the degree to which students can link what they are doing in the classroom to what they are experiencing in the community and vice versa.

### **Reflection**

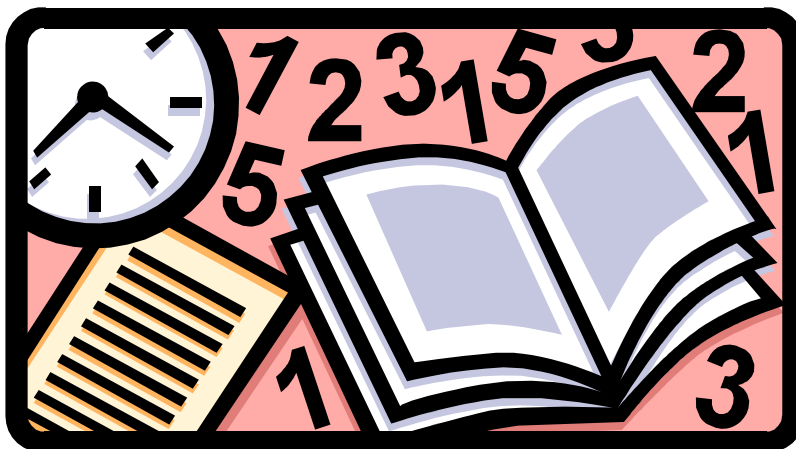
The quantity and quality of reflection associated with academic learning outcomes: deeper understanding and better application of subject matter and increased knowledge of social agencies, increased complexity of problem and solution analysis, an greater use of subject matter knowledge in analyzing a problem.

### **Community Voice**

Community voice is a predictor of tolerance, a cultural appreciation, reward in service, valuing a career in service, better understanding of the community, and identifying with community partners.

Each of these is an important part of any Service-Learning and any Service-Learning course.

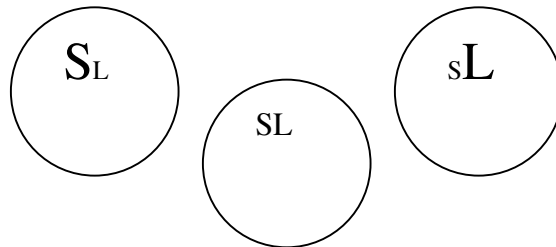
So what is a “Service-Learning Course at KVCC”? Read on...!



## What is a Service-Learning Course

As there are many definitions of Service-Learning, there are many different ways in which Faculty can develop a Service-Learning course.

Simply stated, a Service-Learning course is a course that has a Service-Learning component to it. Service-Learning can either be a very large component of the course required by all students or it can be an option for extra credit...or anything in-between...it depends on the instructor and the course.

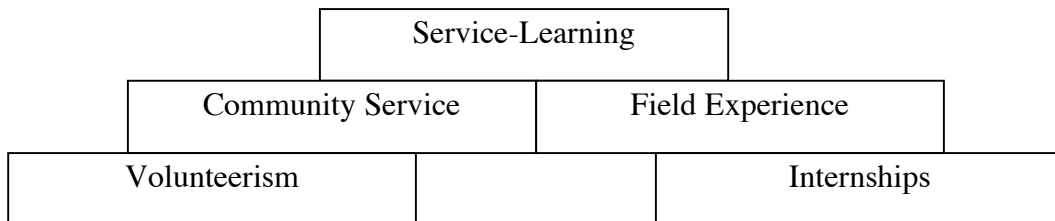


Exemplified by these circles...the “Service” component of the course can be large, small, or of equal size to the “Learning” component. Your course can emphasize any aspect of Service-Learning...the ones you feel meet the objectives of your course the best

## Distinctions among Service Programs

It might be important at this point to make a distinction among the various service programs that are out there. The following is a graph that shows where Service-Learning fits in with the other types of service activities that happen on a typical campus. Notice the distinctions as they relate to the beneficiary of the service and the focus.

*Recipient.....Beneficiary.....Provider*  
*Service.....Focus.....Learning*

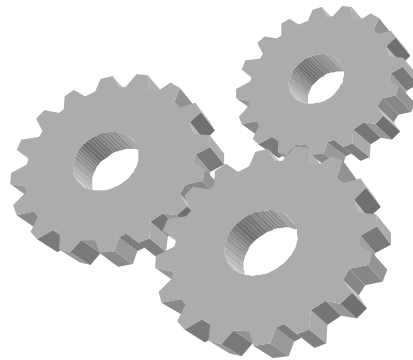


Before we go further as to what Service-Learning courses are...let's briefly define what Service-Learning courses ARE NOT...

Service-Learning Courses are not...

- add-on activities to the curricula
  - SL is an integrated aspect of the curriculum with specific objectives
- a community volunteerism program
  - SL incorporates an academic and reflective component that is not present in simple volunteerism
- internships, clinical instruction, or field studies
  - SL should be separate from these activities and should focus on reflection
- a process to log community service hours
  - SL is not only a process to clock hours of community service for resume-building or recognition
- one-sided
  - SL is reciprocal, the community benefits as much as the student does

### **Six Models for Service-Learning Courses**



(excerpted from Heffernan, Kerrissa. Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction. RI: Campus Compact, 2001, pp. 2-7, 9)

#### **“Pure” Service-Learning**

These are courses in which students go off campus to serve. These courses have as their intellectual core the idea of service to communities by students, volunteers, or engaged citizens. They are not typically lodged in any one discipline

### **Discipline-based Service-Learning**

In this model, students are expected to have a presence in the community throughout the semester and reflect on their experiences on a regular basis throughout the semester using course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding.

### **Problem-based Service-Learning**

According to this model, students (or teams of students) relate to the community much as “consultants” working for a “client”. Students work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This model presumes that the students will have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community of develop a solution to the problem.

### **Capstone Courses**

These courses are generally designed for majors and minors in a given discipline and are offered almost exclusively to students in their final year. Capstone courses ask students to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their coursework and combine it with relevant service work in the community. The goal of capstone courses is usually either to explore a new topic or to synthesize students’ understanding of their discipline. These courses offer an excellent way to help students make the transition from the world of theory to the world of practice by helping them establish professional contacts and gather personal experience.

### **Service Internships**

Like traditional internships, these experiences are more intense than typical service-learning courses, with students working as many as 10-20 hours a week in a community setting. As in traditional internships, students are generally charged with producing a body of work that is of value to the community or site. However, unlike traditional internships, service internships have regular and ongoing reflective opportunities that help students analyze their new experiences using discipline-based theories. These reflective opportunities can be done with small groups of peers, with one-on-one meetings with faculty advisors, or even electronically with a faculty member providing feedback. Service internships are further distinguished from traditional internships by their focus on reciprocity: the idea that the community and the student benefit equally from the experience.

### **Undergraduate Community-based Action Research**

A relatively new approach that is gaining popularity, community-based action research is similar to an independent study option for the rare student who is highly experienced in community work. Community-based action research can also be effective with small classes or groups of students. In this model, students work closely with faculty members to learn research methodology while serving as advocates for communities.

## Constructing a Service-Learning Course Syllabus



Although the Center has resources and will be conducting trainings on the construction of Service-Learning courses, the following represents what a Service-Learning course syllabus should contain:

- Include service as an expressed goal
- Clearly describe how the service experience will be measured and what will be measured
- Describe the nature of the service placement and/or project
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the placement and/or service project (ex: transportation, time requirements, community contacts, etc.)
- Define the need(s) the service placement meets
- Specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned in the placement/project (journal, papers, presentations, etc.)
- Present course assignments that link the service placement and the course content
- Include a description of the reflective process
- Include a description of the expectations for the public dissemination of students' work

The KVCC Curriculum Committee has accepted the responsibility to review course syllabi presented with Service-learning components to ensure that these guidelines are followed.

## The Reflection Component

You have probably noticed that the term “reflection” has come up a number of times! The reflection component of SL courses is what distinguishes them from other traditional courses...but what is it?

Reflection describes the process of deriving meaning and knowledge from experiences and occurs before, during and after a service-learning project. Effective reflection engages both teachers and students in a thoughtful and thought-provoking process that consciously connects learning with experience. It is the use of critical thinking skills to prepare for and learn from service experiences.

*National Service Learning Clearinghouse*



Faculty can construct reflection components for their Service-Learning courses in a number of ways:

- Planned (organized papers or discussions)
- Structured (specific guidelines as to what to reflect upon or what topics to cover)
- Guided (active participation by the instructor in the reflection process)
- Connected (linked to the course content and brought up as course content is covered)
- Continuous (reflection occurs throughout the process of the course whenever relevant)



Reflection can also occur under a number of different settings:

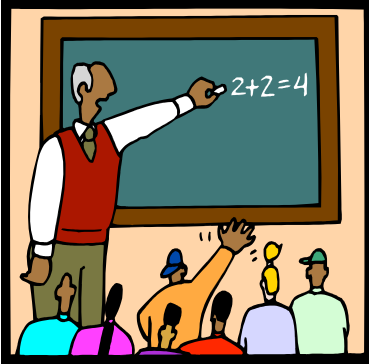
- Individual
- Small group
- Large group
- Mixed

These choices depend on the learning objectives of the service and the faculty’s construction of the course.

Additional resources and guides on reflection are available through the Center.

## **Principles of Good Practice for Service-Learning Pedagogy**

(excerpted from Howard, Jeffrey, ed., Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning's Service-learning Course Design Workbook, University of Michigan: OCSL Press, Summer 2001... [www.umich.edu/~mjcsl](http://www.umich.edu/~mjcsl))



### **Principle 1: Academic Credit is for Learning, Not for Service**

Academic credit is not awarded for doing service or for the quality of the service, but rather for the student's demonstration of academic and civic learning.

### **Principle 2: Do not Compromise Academic Rigor**

The perceived "soft" service component actually raises the learning challenge in a service-learning course. Students must not only master academic materials as in traditional courses, but also learn how to learn from unstructured and ill-structured community experiences, merge that learning with the learning from other course resources, and satisfy both academic and civic learning objectives.

### **Principle 3: Establish Learning Objectives**

It is a service-learning maxim that one cannot develop a quality service-learning course without first setting very explicit academic and civic learning objectives.

### **Principle 4: Establish Criteria for the Selection of Service Placements**

Requiring students to serve in any community-based organization as part of a service-learning course is tantamount to requiring students to read any book as part of a traditional course. Faculty who are deliberate about establishing criteria for selecting community service placements will find that students are able to extract more relevant learning from their respective service experiences, and are more likely to meet course learning objectives.

### **Principle 5: Provide Educationally Sound Learning Strategies to Harvest Community Learning and Realize Course Learning Objectives**

Requiring service-learning students to merely record their service activities and hours for their journal assignment is like requiring students in a biology course to log their activities and hours in the lab. Learning strategies must be employed that support learning from service experiences and enable its use toward meeting course learning objectives.

### **Principle 6: Prepare Students for Learning from the Community**

Most students lack experience with both extracting and making meaning from experience and in merging it with other academic and civic course learning strategies. Therefore, without sufficient supports, even an exemplary reflection journal assignment will yield inconsistent results.

**Principle 7: Minimize the Distinction Between the Students' Community Learning Role and Classroom Learning Role**

Classrooms and communities are very different learning contexts. Traditional classrooms encourage learner passivity, while community placements tend to require students to be active learners. Assuming different learner roles adds an unnecessary and counterproductive challenge to students. Since faculty wield more control over the classroom than over the community placement, service-learning faculty are advised to adjust the classroom so that the students assume a more active learning posture that then will be consistent with the role students must assume in the community.

**Principle 8: Rethink the Faculty Instructional Role**

If faculty encourages students' active learning in the classroom, what would be a corresponding change in the teacher's role? Service-learning faculty might rethink their role from transmitters to facilitator of learning.

**Principle 9: Be Prepared for Variations in, and Some Loss of Control with, Student Learning Outcomes**

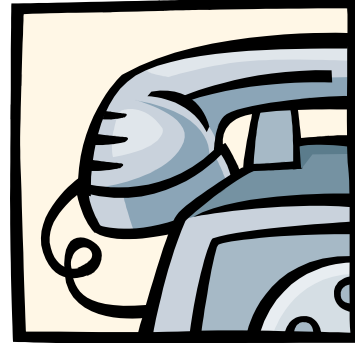
Given variability in service experiences and their influential role in student learning, one can anticipate greater heterogeneity in student learning outcomes and compromises to faculty control in service-learning courses.

**Principle 10: Maximize the Community Responsibility Orientation of the Course**

One of the purposes of a service-learning course is to develop students' civic capacities. Civic learning can occur in the classroom. Designing classroom norms and learning strategies that not only enhance academic learning but also encourage civic learning reflects powerful service-learning pedagogy.

## Contacts and Information

The Center is currently a small group of dedicated staff and faculty, a website, and set of resources. Please contact any of the following people if you have any questions about this manual or the programs of the Center.



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Mark Kavanaugh maintains a collection of resources on Service-Learning, Civic Engagement and various training and resource opportunities. Please contact him for more information on these.



It is hoped that a small resource library for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement will soon be established on reserve to faculty in the Library. Check with the Library staff for the status on this project.

There are many resources on Service-Learning on the web. A good place to start is the National Campus Compact website ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)).

- [www.compact.org/programmodels](http://www.compact.org/programmodels) for access to the program models database
- [www.compact.org/syllabi](http://www.compact.org/syllabi) for access to sample course syllabi
- [www.compact.org/newscc/highlights.html](http://www.compact.org/newscc/highlights.html) for statistics on service and service-learning