



A Guide for Community Partners



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Introduction to Service-Learning

What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning.

- General definition of service-learning used by Former President Caret's Service-Learning Task Force, 2005.

Three Components of a Service-Learning Course

Preparation

Students learn what to expect when working hands-on with a particular community partner through preparation. Students are given clear expectations for project participation, research the organization they will be working with and they will discuss the connection between the course subject matter and the service-learning project. Preparing students to work with diverse populations is also critical.

Participation (Service)

During participation students are actually engaged in and completing the service-learning project. The project is something that benefits the community partner in a sustainable way and enhances student learning.

Reflection

Reflection provides students with the opportunity to think and reflect on their service-learning experience and is a critical component of an effective service-learning course.



Why participate in service-learning?

Service-learning projects offer benefits for all parties involved: community partners, students, and faculty. Below are some of the benefits of service-learning².

Benefits for Community Partners

- Student participation provides useful service
- Enhanced organizational capacity to achieve mission
- Organizations expose students to their mission and purpose, possibly creating a lasting interest in volunteering with the organization
- Enhanced relationship with the university
- Foundation for continuing partnerships between the Community Partner and University

Benefits for Students

- Positive effect on interpersonal development, the ability to work well with others, leadership and communications skills
- Positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills
- Proven to enhance academic learning, when compared to similar courses that are not integrating service-learning
- Stronger relationships with faculty than those who are not involved in service-learning
- Improves satisfaction with college experience
- More likely to graduate (proven in research studies)
- Propensity to continue service and practice active citizenship following graduation

Benefits for Faculty

- Satisfaction with enhanced quality of student learning
- Able to create connections with community organizations and significantly impact the surrounding community
- Opportunities to develop scholarship related to community engagement
- Ability to demonstrate real world application of student learning
- Personal satisfaction
- Contribute to the University's 2010 Strategic Plan and Mission

²Eyler, Janet S., Dwight E. Giles, Christine M. Stenson, and Charlene J. Gray. At a Glance: What We Know about The Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000. Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. Vers. Third Edition. 31 Aug. 2001. Vanderbilt University. <<http://www.compact.org/resources/downloads/aag.pdf>>.

Service-Learning at Towson

In the 2007-2008 academic year, Towson University developed a 'Civic Engagement Advisory Board' which included a Service-Learning Subcommittee. The charge of the committee was to explore and implement various strategies to increase service-learning on Towson's campus. The committee began to identify faculty at Towson who were involved in service-learning, host workshops on campus to educate faculty about service-learning, as well as identify any obstacles to implementing or expanding service-learning on campus.



In 2008 the committee received funding from the President's Office to hire a service-learning graduate assistant and launch the Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program. The Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program provides support for TU faculty interested in creating a new service-learning course or incorporating a significant service-learning component into an existing course. Each year, faculty from a variety of disciplines participate in this program and incorporate new service-learning initiatives into their courses.

Beginning in August 2008, TU received a three-year grant to fund an AmeriCorps VISTA Service-Learning Coordinator whose role included developing resources for faculty and community partners, hosting Community Service Fairs, working with the Service-Learning Subcommittee and Faculty Fellows, and hosting service-learning workshops for TU faculty.



The long term vision of service-learning on Towson's campus is to have every student participate in at least one service-learning project and to have each department offer at least one service-learning course per term. Towson hopes that the impact our students have on our community through service-learning is profound and sustainable.

Creating a Successful Service-Learning Partnership

The goal of service-learning is reciprocity. Students involved in service-learning should achieve set learning objectives, and the community partner should receive services and/or materials that will expand their capacity and help them achieve their mission. The relationship between the faculty member and the community partner is central to achieving this goal.

Communication between faculty and community partners should occur before, during, and after students' service. Best practices in communication between faculty and community partners (CP) include:

- Giving equal voice to the CP during the design of the service-learning partnership
- Establishing and communicating clear expectations for all parties
- Maintaining open and continuous contact throughout the partnership

This guide provides tools that can be used to ensure adequate communication takes place and that reciprocity is achieved. These tools are divided into three categories based on when they should be used in the timeline of the service-learning partnership: before student service, during service, after service. The documents included here are meant to serve as models that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of your service-learning partnership.

Getting Started (Pre-Service)

Finding a Faculty Partner at Towson University

Community partners are encouraged to browse TU in the Community, Towson University's outreach website. TU in the Community includes a searchable database of community engagement initiatives and service-learning courses as well as a faculty directory. To view TU in the Community go to <http://www.towson.edu/tuinthecommunity/index.aspx>. Community partners may also contact the Coordinator of Community Service at (410)704-5764 to discuss volunteer opportunities.

To identify the best person to contact, you should determine if your need would be best served by student volunteers or a service-learning partnership. Service-learning is different from community service and offers different benefits to students and community partners. Service-learning work incorporates a higher level of formal learning for students and ongoing, potentially higher quality services to the community.

Service-Learning	Community Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrates academic study with service in a way that makes learning more intentional.• Incorporates the concept of reciprocity.• Fosters participant learning about the larger social issues that are driving the need for service.• Frames "service" in terms of social justice instead of in terms of charity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While student learning is likely to take place, it is not an intentional or primary impetus for the program.• Planning is often the responsibility of those providing the service.• Often viewed as a project, program, or experience, rather than a pedagogy.

From The Center for Leadership and Service, University of Florida

Collaborative Planning

Intentional inclusion of the community partner in planning the service-learning course is the best practice for a successful partnership. This allows faculty and partners to determine whether the desired learning objectives and the community needs and goals align.

Things to Consider

- Service should be meaningful to students and valuable to the partner. Identifying areas where the organization is strong can help to develop service opportunities that fill voids, and the quality/value of the service is likely to be greater. The 'Sample Community Partner Asset Survey' (pg. 14) can be used for this purpose.

Things to Consider (cont.)

- The number of students the organization can support.
- Whether students will need an onsite orientation or training before the service begins.
- If the organization has staff to provide the appropriate amount of supervision throughout the service experience. A single site supervisor at the community organization should coordinate service throughout the project and act as the 'point person' for communication with the faculty partner³.
- There is a turnover of students at the end of each term. Will the students' transient nature have a negative effect on the organization's clients?

A 'Sample Checklist for a Community-Based Onsite Visit' (pg. 18) includes additional factors to consider and can be used during planning to decide if the partnership will be successful or not.

Finalizing the Partnership

Establishing clear expectations between the community partner and the faculty member is essential to the success of the partnership. A list of expectations outlining roles and responsibilities should be tailored to the individual service-learning project. This should address communication mode and frequency, any onsite orientation and training the students might need, etc. Refer to the 'Sample List of Expectations' (pg. 20) for additional information that can be included.

This list may be included in a service-learning agreement or memo of understanding which all parties sign before service begins. A memo or understanding form can be used to highlight different areas that the parties feel are imperative to reaching the goal of reciprocity or any areas that may need further clarification. These documents are typically created by the faculty member.

Requesting a follow up with either a memo of understanding or a service-learning agreement helps to guarantee that everyone involved understands the content and details of the project before students begin service. Taking the time to build strong relationships with faculty is important for a successful service-learning project.

³Duncan, Dawn, and Joan Kopperud. *Service-Learning Companion*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008. 93-94. Print.

Student Preparation

Students should be fully prepared for the service-learning experience before starting their project work. The course instructor and the community partner should discuss the areas they feel are essential for students to understand before service begins, and they should decide together who is responsible for preparation.

Preparation should include:

- Background information about the organization's mission, history and clients.
- How the service project relates to course study and the expected community impact.
- Work expectations, such as "Arrive on time," "Dress appropriately," etc.
- Clear project description – make sure students understand the tasks and any deliverables for which they are responsible.

On-site orientations are useful if students are to work with various staff members or if there are particular policies students need to follow on site at the organization. The community partner should work with the course instructor to develop the student orientation. See 'Guidelines for Orientation at Community Site' (pg. 21) for what to include in an on-site orientation.

Maintaining the Partnership (During Service)

Maintaining continuous communication with the course instructor throughout students' service is important. The mode and frequency of communication should be determined prior to service and included in the service-learning agreement. Modes to consider are emails, phone calls and site visits. In addition to informal communication throughout the service experience, faculty may conduct a formal midpoint evaluation to help to address any issues or changes that need to be made before the end of the service project.

Clear communication resolves issues quickly and ensures that students receive the needed support while meeting the expectations of the community partner. If an issue arises with a student, the organization's supervisor should use his/her best judgment to determine if contacting the faculty member is necessary.

Student Supervision

Supervision of the students can ultimately affect the final outcome of the service-learning project. Starting the experience by giving the student a clear job description and outlining short term and long term expectations is important. Defining the organizational structure of the community partner and role of the student before the student begins serving is helpful for the student to understand available resources. It is important for the students' supervisor at the community organization to be accessible. Forms of appropriate communication should be discussed before the student begins serving. Additionally, the students' supervisor should be prompt when responding to students.

Faculty may provide students with a timesheet to track hours and daily tasks. The form will be given to each student before service begins and should be brought with the student each time they serve. The form may require the site supervisor's signature. The faculty member will notify the organization contact person if students will be using timesheets.

Factors Affecting Student Supervision

Supervising college students may be different from supervising other volunteers. Several factors may affect what the students are capable of achieving. Age differences amongst college students make a difference when deciding on realistic expectations. A first year college freshman will not have the advanced skill set of a fourth year college senior, for example. Differences in age may also affect the levels of stress a student is under. Typically, a college senior has a more demanding schedule than a college freshman. A college senior may be balancing a full academic course load, an internship and a part time job, while a freshman may only have classes to focus on. To determine the appropriate expectations for each student it is important for the faculty member and community partner to work together.

Evaluation and Sustainability (After Service)

Gathering feedback from the community organization is of the utmost importance for future improvement of service-learning partnerships and to ensure the expectations of the community partner are met. Methods to gather this information may be faculty site visits, interviews via phone or email and distribution of project evaluations. The 'Sample Service-Learning Community Partner Survey' (pg. 22) can be completed online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/89KN58H>.

Community partners should inquire during initial conversations about which methods the faculty member plans to use. The faculty member may also wish to gather information from the population being served or distribute an evaluation for feedback on individual student performance. The evaluation may include questions specific to student performance and therefore can be valuable in the grading process.

Community partner participation and feedback in these evaluation processes are vitally important and are greatly appreciated as the University strives to meet the needs of its community. We hope that each new relationship between a community partner and faculty member will result in long-term partnership between Towson University and the community.

Appendix

Sample Community Partner Asset Survey

Organization Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization Website: _____

Person completing this form: _____ Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Organization Mission: _____

Check the type of volunteer opportunities that are available with your organization:

One-time only Long-term only Both

Please check the populations that your agency serves:

Youth Senior Citizens People with Disabilities Women/Girls Men/Boys

Animals/Pets Families Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Alcohol and Drugs

Homeless Low Income English as a Second Language Veterans

Specific health condition: _____

Specific Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Group: _____

Other: _____

Supervision: The supervisor is required to be available to the students (collectively) face-to-face at least one hour per week to provide teams and on occasion, individual team members, with guidance and support relevant to their work. Is the supervisor listed above prepared to provide this level of support?

YES

NO Please explain _____

Supervisor Information:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Degree(s) and Certifications: _____

Years of Experience: _____

Past Supervisory Experience: _____

E-mail: _____ Direct Phone Number: _____

Best way for students to contact supervisor: e-mail phone both

Best time for students to contact supervisor: _____

Project Criteria: Please rate your organization’s ability to provide a project which meets the following criteria:

Project Criteria	4=Strongly Agree	3=Agree	2=Disagree	1=Strongly Disagree
Supervision: There is someone to provide consistent supervision and guidance to students for 1 hour per week.	4	3	2	1
Project Timeframe: The agency has a project that can be completed within the time frame of one semester.	4	3	2	1
Tangible and Concrete: The agency has a project that will lead to an identifiable and concrete product such as a handbook that is created or a fair or family/community event that is executed.	4	3	2	1
Support: The agency has the funds, staff, and resources necessary to support the project.	4	3	2	1
Relevance: The agency has a project relevant to the discipline and class.	4	3	2	1
Appropriateness: The agency has a project appropriate to the knowledge, skill, professionalism, and maturity of college students taking on their 1 st service-learning experience.	4	3	2	1
Learning Value: The agency has a project that enables students to develop their professional skills and knowledge while providing service to the agency.	4	3	2	1
Student Time Commitment: The agency has a project that would allow students at least 15 hours of experience during the semester (50% onsite, 50% for projects relevant to research/assignments to develop and implement the project).	4	3	2	1

Sample Community Partner Asset Survey (cont.)

Given these requirements, do you have a project that is suitable for Towson University students?

- YES
 NO Please explain _____

If yes, please **describe the project briefly in the space below**. Please include ways that the project incorporates the goals listed on the previous page. _____

Project Hours: Given the organization’s operating hours and the nature of the project that you have described, please circle the days and hours that would best meet your needs. Please cross out the days and times that would not work.

SUNDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
MONDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
TUESDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
WEDNESDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
THURSDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
FRIDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
SATURDAY	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING

Project Logistics

Primary address where students would provide service (if different from mailing address)

Is this location accessible by public transportation?

- YES Please provide details _____
 NO

Is transportation required for the project you have identified, other than getting to the primary service site (will the students need to travel to multiple locations)?

- YES Is this additional transportation possible via public transportation, and if so, provide details _____
 NO

Are there any safety issues relevant to the project and service sites that we should be aware of?

- YES Please describe _____
 NO

Are students allowed to attend Board Meetings and/or Staff Meetings?

- YES
- NO

Are there any special requirements for students? (i.e. must be 18 and older, have MD Driver's License, need background check)

- YES Please describe _____
- NO

Questions: Please use the space below to list any questions or concerns you have.

Sample Checklist for a Community-Based Onsite Visit

- Discuss the service-learning objectives of this placement
- Talk about the mission of this community based organization (CBO) and share the mission of the course and university

- Discuss the nature of the service-learning placement**
 - How many students will be placed?
 - How will their schedules be determined?
 - How will their work fit with the academic and civic learning objectives? What will students learn that will apply to their academic studies?
 - What role should faculty play in student orientation before they begin service? What orientation does the organization provide?
 - Who will supervise students? How can this person be contacted? Is there a back up supervisor? Who should students call if they will be absent or late?
 - Do students need finger printing or background checks? Any certification? Who will pay for this?

- Logistics**
 - What will students need to do to check in at the site?
 - How will students track their hours at the site?
 - What type of clothing should students wear?
 - Where should students park? Where is the closest bus or light rail stop?
 - What hours of the day can students volunteer?
 - What training would the organization like the students to have prior to service? Who can provide this, when, and where?
 - Will the students meet their site supervisor prior to their first day of service?
 - Will students be reimbursed for anything? Mileage, parking?
 - Will the students be driving a company car? Obtain a copy of organization's insurance.
 - Will the students be asked to become official volunteers for the organization? Will they be asked to sign a waiver or fill out any forms?
 - Who should the faculty member contact at the organization in case of emergencies? Who should they recommend at the University for the organization to contact?

- Risk Identification**
 - Does the organization provide a safety orientation?
 - Will students ever work unsupervised with clients?
 - Will the organization request emergency contact information? How will it be used? If requested, Faculty should have a copy. If the organization is not collecting the information, Faculty should.
 - Does the organization have any types of insurance for the volunteers? How will the students be covered?

☐ Risk Identification (cont.)

- Outline the specific risks involved in this placement. Are there any risks inherent to the community?
- Discuss how all this information will be included in the service-learning agreement.

☐ Tour of Site

- Organization should give the faculty member a tour of any sites the volunteers will be working.
- Organization should introduce faculty member to any staff the volunteers will be working with or will be supervising.
- Faculty should be looking for any risky situations and bring them to the attention of the organization.

☐ Evaluation

- What evaluations will be requested? By whom, to be filled out by whom?
- At what times throughout the service will evaluations be requested?
- How will the information from the evaluations be used in the future?
- Faculty should explain why these evaluations are taking place and ask the organization if there are any they would like specifically.

☐ Privacy Policies

- Are students allowed to take pictures or videos?
- What specific policies apply to the clients being served?
- Faculty should inform organization of any writing or assignments students will be required to perform pertaining to the clients

☐ Preparing all signed forms and agreements

- Service-Learning Agreement form that should include all aspects discussed and may or may not require the signature of the faculty, students or organization supervisor
- Learning Plan that includes learning and civic objectives as well as assignments outlining the scope of the students' service

Sample List of Expectations

Faculty are expected to:

- Identify community organizations early enough to ensure the service design will be mutually beneficial to the organization and to the students learning
- Inform the community site of the goals and objectives of the course
- Approximate the number of students involved
- Describe service-learning activity and its relation to the course objectives in the course syllabus on the first day of class
- Explain service component of the course to the students before service begins
- Inform students of the community site's needs
- Explain the evaluation methods employed in the course to the students before service begins
- Familiarize self with the service site and monitor student progress through reflection (i.e. discussions and journal assignments, progress reports, etc.)
- Act as a liaison between the students and community sites
- Be available to the community site regarding service projects
- Provide individual and group forums for students to reflect on what they are learning from the experience and how that learning connects to the course objectives
- If appropriate for specific service-learning project, collect and review Service-Learning Agreement form
- Distribute evaluations to the community partner at least two weeks before the end of the semester
- Assess students' learning outcomes
- Upload service-learning projects to TU in the Community Online Database
- Incorporate information gained through the service-learning evaluations into any re-designing of the course for subsequent semesters

Students are expected to:

- Have respect for the community site environment
- Be open to learn about the community and agency within that community
- Be prompt, respectful and positive at the community site
- Arrange hours with community site during the first two weeks of class (or as directed by professor)
- Fulfill all agreed upon duties and responsibilities at the community site
- Reflect on the service-learning experience and how it pertains to the course learning objectives
- Speak with their site contact person if uncomfortable or uncertain about what they are to do
- Respect confidentiality of people served
- Participate in the evaluation process

Community partners are expected to:

- Provide adequate training for assigned tasks
- Provide feedback to faculty about student's performance
- Orient students to the agency or project mission and goals so that they may better understand their role within the agency/project
- Provide work that is significant and/or challenging to the student
- Provide training, supervision, feedback and resources for the student to succeed in the service
- Reply to students in a timely manner
- Ensure a safe work environment and reasonable hours for the student to perform their service
- Complete an evaluation form at the end of the service period
- Sign student time log (provided by student)

Adapted from Bender, Susan. "Service Learning Faculty Manual." *Community College National Center for Engagement*. Monroe Community College, Web. 12 Oct 2009. <<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement/SAFEProject/ServiceLearningFacultyManual.pdf>>.

Guidelines for Student Orientation at Community Site

Community partner sites should be willing to provide on-site orientation for students. This is an opportunity to provide information and instruction to the student(s). Students need to become familiar with the agency and staff, understand their responsibilities, learn about policies and attend any necessary training. The more information that is covered during the on-site orientation, the more prepared student(s) will be to work at the agency. Please encourage students to ask questions and give them feedback about appropriate behavior at the site. The following are some suggestions for what may be included in an on-site orientation:

- **Organization Information:** Whom do you serve? What are the demographics? What programs/services do you provide? How are you funded? What is your mission? What is your philosophy? Provide on-site tour of organization.
- **Staff:** Who are some of the staff and what are their positions? Is there any jargon or language generally used by staff that students would want to know?
- **List of Contacts/Numbers:** Please list people/agencies that will be useful for students in doing their work.
- **Policies/Procedures:** Sign-in/out, dress code, privacy, grievance procedure, office rules, identification, safety, etc.
- **Training:** If any is needed, what kind and when? What skills are needed for the service?
- **Responsibilities:** What is expected of the student(s)? What are their specific duties (provide job description) Describe the role student(s) play in your agency. How will their performances be evaluated?
- **Final Product:** What is the final goal for your agency that is expected from the student(s) by end of service?
- **Scheduling:** What are your agency's hours of operation? When should students complete their service? When will you meet with students during the semester to review work they have done independently?
- **Supervision:** It is important that all service-learning students have a contact person at the community site who will supervise them. The amount of time each student will need supervision will depend on the project or service activity. Should students check in with the supervisor on arrival at the site? Who do the students call if they cannot make their scheduled service or will be late?
- **Time Logs:** Students may be required to have a sign-in time log completed every time they come to your agency. We ask students to have their site supervisor or someone from your agency initial their time log during each visit.

Adapted from Bender, Susan. "Service Learning Faculty Manual." *Community College National Center for Engagement*. Monroe Community College, Web. 12 Oct 2009. <<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement/SAFEProject/ServiceLearningFacultyManual.pdf>>.

Sample Service-Learning Community Partner Survey

Name of Community Partner Organization _____

Name of TU Faculty Partner _____

Date of Partnership (Fall 2012, Spring 2013, etc.) _____

Name of Evaluator _____

Evaluator E-mail _____ Evaluator Phone _____

1. Please describe your service-learning project/partnership in brief. What, specifically, did TU students do (tasks performed, services provided)? If the TU students created or prepared any resources to be used by your organization (ie. brochure, website), please describe here.

2. Approximately how many clients did TU students serve? _____

3. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding TU students' service to your organization.

The service performed by TU students...

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
was important to our organization.						
helped our organization to meet a need that would otherwise be unmet.						
helped to build our organizational capacity.						
will have a long-lasting effect on our organization.						
will have a long-lasting effect on our clients.						

Please provide any comments regarding the above statements. If you selected strongly or somewhat disagree for any statement, please explain. _____

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding TU students' performance and preparedness.

While serving at our organization, TU students...

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
produced high-quality work.					
met all of our organization's expectations.					
were well-prepared.					

Please provide any comments regarding the above statements. If you selected strongly or somewhat disagree for any statement, please explain. _____

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your organization's relationship with the TU faculty partner.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	N/A
Our organization felt included in planning the service-learning project.						
The service-learning project was designed to meet our organization's needs.						
There was enough communication with our faculty partner prior to students' service.						
There was enough communication with our faculty partner during students' service.						

Please provide any comments regarding the above statements. If you selected strongly or somewhat disagree for any statement, please explain. _____

Sample Service-Learning Community Partner Survey (cont.)

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your service-learning partnership with Towson.

In the future, our organization...

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
is interested in hosting another TU service-learning student.						
will continue the service-learning partnership with our faculty partner.						

If you selected strongly or somewhat disagree for either statement, please explain.

7. Please list any additional comments, questions, or concerns. If you have any recommendations for future service-learning projects or partnerships, please list them here.
