

How to Incorporate Service-Learning into a Syllabus

The syllabus is the student's first interaction with the service-learning experience. The project needs to be clearly explained in how it relates to the course work. Faculty should "provide the rationale behind service-learning as an educational methodology and as an integral piece of the process used to prepare students for graduation." Part of this process can be scheduled class time to present the service-learning/civic engagement presentation from the Department of Civic Engagement. The professor may familiarize themselves with the presentation or ask a representative from the department to present to the class.

The syllabus should explain how the service-learning component achieves the course goals. Therefore, defining the goals of the course is the best place to start.

Principles of Effective Goal Selection*:

1. Goals go hand-in-hand with the selection of the service activities themselves...
2. The objectives need to be explicit in showing students how to relate service experiences and academic course content. Without such direction, many students will not make the connection at all, some will see the connection vaguely, and only a few will see the connection clearly.
3. The goals and objectives need to be expressed *simply and clearly*...Use quantification whenever it helps clarity.
4. If an agency (or school) is involved in the service experience it should be informed of the goals and objectives; if the agency (or school) wishes to be, it should be involved in goal and objective selection as well.
5. Goals and objectives need to be selected with consideration of the well-being of the service client as well as the student.

It is recommended that the professor focuses on establishing academic and civic goals and objectives. To establish learner outcome and competencies refer to the worksheets "Linking Service-Learning with Academic Learning Objectives," "Service-Learning Activities," and "Identifying Service-Learning Goals" in the Service-Learning Faculty Handbook.**

* Adapted from Redesigning Curricula, Models of Service-Learning Syllabi, Katherine Jackson, ed., Campus Compact, (1994).

** Adapted from Developing Syllabi http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/HE_toolkit_with_worksheets.pdf. Faculty Tool-kit for S-L in Higher Education.

Steps of Best Practices for Developing a Service-Learning Syllabus

1. Identify the course academic and civic learning objectives
2. Identify how the service component will achieve course goals
 - a. Ensure the service is specific to the learning objectives
3. Select the appropriate type of service component
 - a. Review the types of service-learning models
4. Link the service to your course
 - a. Student writing, discussions, research projects, etc.
5. Ensure that time for preparation is included into class time
 - a. Service-Learning/Civic Engagement Classroom Presentation
 - b. Research mission of organization/population to be served
 - c. Service-learning expectations and requirements
6. Determine the appropriate workload for the course
 - a. What adjustments need to be made to integrate the service-learning?
7. Determine how students will be assessed on the experience
 - a. Define how students will be graded

i.e. service credit is based on completion of minimum hours, reflection is graded complete/incomplete based on quality of assignments or grade is based on end-of-term portfolio or project
 - b. Define frequency, quality, and content as explicit to students as possible
 - c. Consider the role of the community partner; Will they be asked to evaluate?
8. Inform students about minimum numbers of hours required
9. Inform students of the methods of reflection that will be used
10. Provide guidelines for contacting the agency
11. Include service-learning agreement form

Additional tips to include in your syllabus

Orientation/Training (when appropriate for the service-learning project):

- Talk about the service experience on the first day of class
- Address student concerns, fears, and expectations regarding the service experience
- Prepare students with the appropriate skills and brief them on their responsibilities regarding communication, follow-through and professionalism
- Include time for onsite orientation

Assignments: You can design a variety of assignments that incorporate service-learning. Writing assignments such as journals, critiques, short essays and research papers, group projects and class discussions/presentations based on the service experience.

Reflection: All students who are performing service are required to participate in some form of reflection activity. The options for your class should be described in the course syllabus.