A Recent History of Service-Learning at Towson
Getting Started

Prior to 2003, a Presidential Service-Learning Task Force was created. This group established the current campus definition of 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._

Towson also had a Service-Learning Coordinator through a grant administered by UMBC’s Shriver Center; the position ended when the grant period ended.
The Caret Administration

Under new leadership, a Civic Engagement Steering Committee was created to guide service-learning on campus. This committee was co-chaired by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Provost.

The Steering Committee recommended that a full-time staff person be hired to coordinator service-learning and other initiatives. In 2006, Student Affairs hired a Coordinator of Civic Engagement. The coordinator:

- Administered a civic engagement survey, including service-learning, to faculty and staff
- Hosted civic engagement workshops that promoted service-learning
- Developed a service-learning web site with resources
In 2007, the Civic Engagement Steering Committee was transformed into the Civic Engagement Advisory Board. This Advisory Board still exists and includes five subcommittees:

- Service-Learning
- Political Engagement
- Community Principles
- Environmental Initiatives
- Community Service

The Service-Learning Subcommittee was tasked with:

- Collecting information about current and former service-learning courses via a service-learning-focused survey
- Hiring a Service-Learning Graduate Assistant and launching the Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program
- Hosting a Service-Learning Workshop
AmeriCorps VISTA

In 2008, Towson University was awarded an AmeriCorps VISTA grant to hire a full-time Service-Learning Coordinator for three years. The goals of the grant were to:

• Develop resources for faculty and community partners engaged in service-learning projects
• Host bi-annual Service Fairs to connect students and faculty with community partners
• Work with the Service-Learning Subcommittee and the Faculty Fellows to expand service-learning on campus
• Host service-learning workshops for TU faculty
What’s next?

- To increase service-learning and provide an appropriate support system, we need to identify a critical mass of existing service-learning opportunities and interested faculty.
  - Once we have a critical mass, require students to participate in at least one service-learning course in order to graduate.

- Build support and acceptance of Service-Learning Course criteria (established by subcommittee).
  - Using criteria, designate service-learning classes in course catalog and within departments.
What’s next? (continued)

- Increase faculty buy-in
  - Develop an appropriate reward structure that includes recognition of service-learning in promotion and tenure

- Encourage faculty to identify their service-learning classes using the TU in the Community web database

- Provide more support for faculty
  - Workshops
  - Resources
  - Classroom and research assistance
  - Develop liability form for use with off campus activities
  - Connect with community partners
Our Long-Term Vision

• Every student participates in at least one service-learning course
• Every department offers at least one service-learning course per semester
• Continue to staff a full-time Service-Learning Coordinator who supervises team of classroom assistants for faculty
• Increase faculty support and rewards