



OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good

Definition and Service-Learning Course Criteria

Service-Learning is a pedagogical method that engages students in organized service activities and guided reflection; the service activities benefit the client or community and, in combination with reflection, enhance the academic curriculum of participating students.

In accordance with its Mission, service-learning at the University of San Francisco promotes interaction with diverse communities and organizations, in order to help students and faculty develop the knowledge, skills, and sensitivities to be effective agents of social change. Service-Learning is distinct from acts of charity because it is reciprocal; students, faculty, and community organizations teach and learn through their interactions. Teaching and learning are informed by the realities of the world, and service is informed by theoretical and conceptual understanding.

The integration of service-learning into an undergraduate* or graduate course has five key components:

1. Service activities are mandatory;
2. Clear connections exist between service activities and the academic discipline;
3. Service activities benefit the client or community in a meaningful way;
4. Students engage in a carefully articulated reflection process around the service, the discipline, and themselves; and,
5. Faculty assess the student learning outcomes of the service experience.

* Undergraduate Course Sections with an SL designation would meet the graduation requirement for a service-learning course experience as described in the New GEC Proposal. SL-designated courses are specifically directed to meet mission identity in curricular structure, as articulated in the GEC proposal.

Mandatory Participation

- ~ The service-learning experience is mandatory; all students enrolled in the section must complete a service-learning activity.
- ~ The number of required hours for service-learning activity may vary by course and discipline (usually 15 hours or more). However, in all cases, the student learning outcomes of the course determine the hours required.

Academic Connections

- ~ The service-learning connection to the academic discipline and/or content of the course is explicit: connections are clearly delineated in the course syllabus.
- ~ Integration of service-learning activity is outcome driven (i.e., service-learning is not an "add-on" to the course; rather it should be explicitly described in the syllabus as a methodology for achieving specified student learning outcomes).
- ~ The service-learning assignment is explained in detail in the course syllabus, including its relationship to USF Mission.

Value-Added Service

- ~ The service activity involves reciprocity between the community and the university. In other words, faculty and/or students collaborate with the client or community to clearly identify the mutual benefit of learning for the student and the “value-added” service to client or community.
- ~ An opportunity exists for the student to have meaningful exchanges with the client or community to explore the nature of a problem, issue, and/or challenge and its impact on the client or community.

Reflection

A systematic (e.g., ongoing and regular) process for reflection is clearly defined in the course syllabus. Reflection on service-learning experiences provides students with an opportunity to:

- ~ Link theory and experience (i.e., learn more about the course content as a result of the service activity);
- ~ Evaluate the impact of service on the client or community; and,
- ~ Experience some level of personal growth through participation in service-learning.

Assessment

A systematic (e.g., ongoing and regular) process for assessment is clearly defined in the course syllabus. Assessment of service-learning experience provides information on the following:

- ~ The degree to which student learning outcomes were met; and,
- ~ The degree to which the student’s service is valuable to the client or community.

Departmental Logistics

Department and curriculum committees:

- ~ Weigh the number of SL courses offered/required in a particular discipline against the total curricular burden that students carry (e.g., A student should not be taking more than two SL designated courses per semester).
- ~ Establish explicit criteria about internships within the SL designation (i.e. paid internships must meet all SL criteria and make a significant case for inclusion).
- ~ Encourage faculty to attend faculty development service-learning workshops.
- ~ Collaborate with the community partner to provide support for the service-learning experience.
- ~ Collaborate with Risk Management in Department of Human Resources to address issues of liability and risk management.
- ~ College Curriculum Committees, using the above criteria, determine whether a particular course receives a service-learning (SL) designation.

Mandatory Review

The University of San Francisco will continue to learn from its experience. To build upon that experience, the Service-Learning Committee is charged with the responsibility for reviewing the Service-Learning Definition and Criteria at least every two years for appropriate changes. Any proposed changes will be submitted to the Provost for consideration and approval.