

Integrating Service-Learning into Your Course

What is Service-Learning?

Barbara Jacoby defines service-learning as “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.” Jacoby also notes the critical nature of the hyphen in service-learning as it “symbolizes the symbiotic relationship between service and learning” (Service-Learning in Today’s Higher Education, 1996).

In addition to this definition, we also recognize the National Society for Experiential Education’s Eight Principles of Good Practice for Experiential Learning Activities:

1. Intention
2. Preparedness and Planning
3. Authenticity
4. Reflection
5. Orientation and Training
6. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement
7. Assessment and Evaluation
8. Acknowledgment

Service-Learning at CSB/SJU

Service-Learning is one program located in the XPD-Experience and Professional Development office. XPD - Experience & Professional Development empowers students to connect their aspirations with opportunities and translate their liberal arts education to achieve meaningful personal and professional lives.

We coach students to **explore, do, reflect, and connect**.

In the Fall of 2010, the Curriculum Committee approved service-learning projects that meet the expectations set forth for fulfilling the experiential learning requirement. As such, all service-learning courses must strive to meet the following two learning goals:

Learning Goal 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from this course (and possibly previous courses) through their service-learning projects.

Learning Goal 2: Students will demonstrate specific ways (including written reflection) in which the service-learning project deepens their understanding of the knowledge and skills gained through traditional course work.

As a part of these goals, the Service-Learning Program has outlined the following requirements for all service-learning courses:

1. Students must complete a minimum of 20 hours of service throughout the semester
2. Additional learning goals and objectives should be outlined by the faculty member that connect service-learning to course content
3. At least one piece of written reflection must be required of all students participating
4. Partnerships between students and community must be mutually beneficial and contribute to the greater good of the community
5. Service-Learning should be integrated into classroom learning through discussion, content, activities, etc. It should not be used as an “add on” component in a course.

The Experiential Learning Designation

Courses can receive the experiential learning (EL) designation in two ways:

1. Partnering with the Service-Learning Program and meeting the required expectations listed above. Students meeting these expectations have been pre-approved to earn the EL so long as they successfully pass the course in which they are enrolled.
2. Proposing the course to the curriculum committee and receiving approval. Faculty and instructors choosing this option may still partner with the service-learning program for assistance.

Faculty and instructors interested in partnering with the Service-Learning Program should submit their course to the registrar noting that they will be utilizing service-learning. Submitting courses to the registrar ensure that they will be noted as “Experiential Learning” courses in the course catalogue. Faculty and instructors will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding the integration of service-learning in their course to ensure it meets the requirements set forth by the Service-Learning Program. The Service-Learning Program welcomes questions and is happy to work with individuals to determine the best way to integrate service-learning into their courses.

The process for students receiving the EL designation is slightly different for courses with a required service-learning component and those with an optional requirement:

Required Courses: Students in required service-learning courses automatically receive the EL designation upon successful completion of the course. Because of this, we encourage you to structure courses in such a way that students must successfully complete this component in order to pass the course.

Optional Courses: Students who successfully complete the service-learning element of their course will have their names submitted to the registrar by the service-learning program and receive the EL designation. Students cannot receive this designation without passing the course. Optional courses should offer an alternate assignment for students to select from that is of equal weight and effort.

Optional vs Required Service-Learning

Faculty may choose to integrate service-learning as either an optional or a required component of their course. There are challenges and benefits to both of these options:

Required: Requiring service-learning ensures that all students participate. Often, students who are hesitant or challenged by a service-learning experience benefit the most and are pushed out of their comfort zone where the greatest learning can occur. It also provides a common intellectual experience for the entire class and can work well for courses utilizing project-based service-learning. Please see the section “The Experiential Learning Designation” to learn how the EL designation works in this type of course.

Optional: Optional Service-Learning requires students to “opt in” to the experience. This buy-in can mean that students are more invested in their experience and are not completing required service. Please see the section “The Experiential Learning Designation” to learn how the EL designation works in this type of course.

Reflection

Reflection is a critical component of the service-learning process. Reflection is essentially the “learning” in service-learning. The curriculum committee requires at least one written reflection component as a part of service-learning courses. Written reflections can include:

- Reflection journals
- Reflection posts submitted to the service-learning program
- Reflection Papers
- Reflection/Research combination papers

The Service-Learning program also encourages faculty to incorporate other forms of reflection into courses content these can include:

- Regular classroom check-ins, dialogue, and prompt questions regarding service-learning
- Art or creative works
- Reflection sessions
 - The Service-Learning program is happy to assist with the design and facilitation of in-class reflection sessions
 - Reflection sessions may include small and large group sharing, active work such as simulations and activities, guided journaling, etc

The Service-learning Program is happy to consult with you to determine the right reflection tools for your needs!

Community Partnerships

The Service-Learning program recognizes community partners as co-educators in the service-learning experience. Many of our partners have been hosting CSB/SJU students for decades and consistently provide high-quality learning experiences for students. The service-learning program has an extensive list of current and former partners from which we can search for appropriate partnerships. We also welcome the development of new partnerships as well. As a part of their role as co-educators, community partners are required to do the following:

- Provide appropriate guidance for students regarding application/volunteer paperwork and background checks
- Provide an orientation of the organization and site at which the student is serving
- Provide appropriate mentorship and guidance throughout the students experience including constructive feedback when appropriate
- Complete an end of the semester evaluation that is shared with the Service-Learning program, faculty and student

Many community partners require a background check before students are able to serve at their organization. Some of these background checks have a fee associated with them. This fee is typically the responsibility of the student. If a fee is involved, the Service-Learning program will make every effort to communicate this in advance. If a student is unable to pay a background check fee, they are encouraged to contact the Service-Learning program so we can assist them with exploring resources.

Transportation

Transportation is the greatest challenge and barrier faced by the Service-Learning Program. Currently, we have two options for transportation for students:

- The use of a personal vehicle or car pool with a friend or class mate
- The service-learning shuttle

The shuttle is available to all service-learning students at no cost and is run and operated by a student employee bus drivers. The bus runs three routes in the afternoon/evening on Monday-Thursday and is able to go to most service-learning sites in the St. Joseph, Waite Park, and St. Cloud areas. Students must sign up in advance to ride the mini-bus. The Service-Learning office is happy to provide more information regarding the bus route, times, and availability upon request and will do their best to ensure accessible options for every class.

As we continue to look at ways to ensure that experiential learning opportunities are available for all students, we encourage you to contact administration and Metro Transit to advocate for transportation for CSB/SJU students.

Mandated Reporting

Students completing service-learning are legally considered mandated reporters. Students are required to report suspicion of neglect/abuse to site supervisor immediately.

Students Working with Children: Student is required to contact Adia Zeman, Assistant Director of XPD and CSB/SJU member of the Child Protection Report Team at (320) 363-5237 or amzeman@csbsju.edu to report suspected child abuse/neglect within 72 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Adia will assist student in determining next steps. Student may contact Stearns County Human Services at (320) 656-6000, if Adia is unavailable within the 72 hour timeframe; however, student is still required to report incident to Adia as soon as possible. For additional information, please review the CSB/SJU policy on Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, available online at: <http://www.csbsju.edu/human-rights/child-protection/reporting-suspected-child-abuse>. Please contact Angie as soon as possible to follow proper protocol, in accordance with HIPAA.

Students Working with Vulnerable Adults: Student should report any suspected abuse or neglect to his/her site supervisor immediately. Please contact Adia as soon as possible to follow proper protocol, in accordance with HIPAA.

Communication

The Service-Learning Program is committed to frequent, effective communication with students, faculty/instructors, and community partners throughout the service-learning experience. To do this, we use the following communication strategies:

- Academic Coordinators-Each faculty member and course is assigned a Student Academic Coordinator from the ELCE office. This individual becomes the primary point of contact for students and faculty/instructors.
- Initial Presentations-Initial Presentations (IP's) are presentations given at the beginning of the semester to introduce students to their service-learning experience. This presentation is given by an ELCE student or staff member and covers required forms, procedures, expectations, and mandated reporting. We strive to tailor this presentation specifically to each course. This typically occurs on the second or third day of the course.
- Service-Learning Fair-This fair is held at the beginning of the semester and includes all service-learning partners. Students in service-learning courses are requested (or required) to attend this fair to meet with partners and learn about their organizations. At the fair, students can complete their service-learning contracts indicating their top three choices. Students will be notified this same night as to where they are partnered.
- Posting-The Service-Learning Program recommends Canvas as a primary tool for students to report their hours and service work. Instructions for a recommended set-up are available upon request.
- Email-The Service-Learning Program is available via email at any time. The best way to reach a member of the service-learning staff is by emailing servlearn@csbsju.edu. We strive to respond to all messages within 24 hours.

- XPD-We welcome visitors to the XPD office which is located in the upper level of the ASB. Students are encouraged to stop by to talk to a member of our staff with any questions they have or feedback they would like to provide.

Assessment

The Service-Learning program strives to provide adequate assessment for faculty and instructors as well as for our program as a whole. Best practice in assessing service-learning asks that grading be based on the quality of the students' reflection as opposed to their actual service work. With this in mind, we also expect that students meet the minimum requirements set out for them and value the feedback of our community partners.

We ask that faculty take assessment into consideration as they are constructing their course. Service-Learning should play an integral role the students' success within the course. Please see "The Experiential Learning Designation" section to learn more.

The Service-Learning program sends an electronic evaluation form to all community partners approximately two weeks before the end of the semester. This form asks site supervisors to rate students based on their initiative, effort, and commitment to the site and also provides an opportunity to share comments and feedback. This evaluation is shared with students as well as faculty/staff as a constructive learning tool.

In addition to the community partner evaluation, the Service-Learning Program also sends an electronic evaluation to all students participating in service-learning to provide general feedback on their experience to help us better develop our program.

Service-Learning Language and Terminology

Academic Coordinator-Student employees in the XPDoffice who are assigned to oversee specific service-learning courses.

Community Partner-Organizations and programs that host service-learning students and serve as co-educators in the service-learning experience

EL-Experiential Learning. Service-Learning is one form of experiential learning. This is also a graduation requirement for CSB/SJU students which is met through a successful service-learning experience.

Hyphen-The CSB/SJU Service-Learning program chooses to hyphenate the term "service-learning" to note the critical, symbiotic nature between service and learning.

IP-Initial Presentation. The in-class presentation given at the beginning of the semester introducing service-learning to students.

Partnership-The Service-Learning program uses this term to describe the relationship between the student and their site. We do not use the term “placement” as it does not indicate the active participation of the student in the process.

Reciprocal Partnership-The service-learning program strives to achieve partnership that are beneficial to the student and the community to ensure a mutually beneficial experience.

SL-Service-Learning

XPD-Experience and Professional Development

Contact

For more information about integrating service-learning into your course, please contact Adia Zeman, Assistant Director at amzeman@csbsju.edu or 320-363-5237.