# Faculty Handbook for Service Learning

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Suggested Web Resources

Three Rivers’ Service Learning Webpage
www.trcc.commnet.edu/Div_academics/LearningInitiatives/SL/ServiceLearning.shtml
List of local service sites, contact information for Service Learning Coordinator and Service Learning Committee members, electronic copy of this handbook, TRCC Service Learning forms, guidelines for students, & list of resources.

National Service-Learning Clearing House
www.servicelearning.org
Learn & Serve America’s Service Learning resource center. Find FAQ’s, a Faculty Tool-Kit, sample syllabi, bibliography, funding sources, the world’s largest collection of Service Learning resources, & more. The fact sheets are especially useful, covering such areas as reflection, risk management, and discipline specific information.

American Association of Community Colleges
www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Pages/default.aspx
Service Learning resources including grant opportunities, curricular tools, conferences, links, publications, etc.

Campus Compact
www.compact.org/initiatives/service-learning
Resources for faculty, students and staff, including sample syllabi, reflection guides, and program models.

Corporation for National and Community Service
www.nationalservice.gov
A variety of service & volunteer related resources, including information on funding opportunities, Service Learning & volunteer resources, etc.

University of Maryland Community Service-Learning
www.csl.umd.edu/resources/faculty.htm
See examples of Service Learning projects and resources from the University of Maryland, a leading institution in the Service Learning movement.

Suggested Readings

Check Three Rivers’ Donald R. Welter Library for a variety of books on Service Learning. In particular, the library has a number of books about Service Learning in specific disciplines including: Accounting, Biology, Communication, Composition, Education, Environmental Studies, History, Management, Mathematics, Medicine, Peace Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Social Work, Psychology, Sociology, Spanish, and Women’s Studies.

Academic Service-Learning:
A Pedagogy of Action & Reflection.
Robert A. Rhoads and Jeffrey P. F. Howard, eds.
A variety of essays offering a good introduction to the theory and practice of Service Learning.

Introduction to Service Learning Toolkit:
Readings and Resources for Faculty.
A guide to Service Learning designed for faculty, including readings on partnerships, assessment, reflection, promotion and tenure, etc.

How Service Learning Affects Students.

Learning Through Serving:
A Student Guidebook for Learning Across Disciplines.
What is Service Learning?
Service Learning has been defined in many ways by many people. Campus Compact, a coalition of more than 1,100 colleges and universities including TRCC, gives this definition:

“Service learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community.” (Compact.org)

The Corporation for National and Community Service offers the following:

“Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real life problems. Students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.” (Learn and Serve America)

Though varying definitions for Service Learning provide distinct nuances, there is fundamental agreement that Service Learning is precisely what the name implies: an equal combination of service to the community and enhanced learning for the student.

What Service Learning is Not
It is the balance between academics and service that makes Service Learning unique as a pedagogy. As Andrew Furco, Associate Vice President for Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota, notes, there are several models of service and learning which have value in their own right but are not Service Learning (11-12). Furco points out that Service Learning is not simply volunteerism or community service, where the focus is primarily on the service that is being done and the benefit that service will yield to its recipients. Nor is it field study or an internship, which focus primarily on the benefit to the student and what he/she can learn. Unlike these other experiential learning models, Service Learning must have a balanced benefit for and focus on the student who is learning and the community members who are receiving the service. The way this balance is met is through careful planning and structured reflection, an essential component of any Service Learning experience which will be covered in more depth later in this handbook.

Service Learning is not a “soft” alternative to academic work. It must be academically rigorous and focused on course learning objectives. If anything, it represents enhanced rigor because students must apply what they’ve learned in the context of the world outside the classroom with all its increased responsibilities and complexities.

A Brief History of Service Learning
Though the term Service Learning has gained currency within academia only in recent decades, the pedagogy is based on principles with deep historical and philosophical roots. As Ira Harkavy and Lee Benson of the University of Pennsylvania note, Service Learning can be viewed as an outgrowth of Francis Bacon’s assertion that the production of knowledge cannot be separated from its use if it is to be beneficial (12-13). Service Learning is, after all, the application of knowledge to real-world problems for the benefit of the community. The Baconian view of knowledge has since been applied to higher education by Benjamin Franklin, John Dewey and Kurt Lewin, all considered predecessors to the modern Service Learning movement. Dewey in particular has contributed greatly to the understanding of higher education as a means of fostering democracy and citizenship.

Service has been a component of American colleges from the very start. Since the development of the first land grant colleges after the Revolutionary War, institutions of higher learning have been active in service to the community, helping shape the young nation and develop active, informed citizens and leaders (Harkavy & Hartley 419, Hutchinson 1). Though the service mission of colleges and universities has often been overshadowed by research and teaching goals, recent trends and a national emphasis on community service have begun to bring service back to the forefront of the higher education agenda. Campus Compact was founded in 1985 to promote community service in higher education and has done much to encourage the spread of Service Learning. Since 1994, the American Association of Community Colleges has also helped advance Service Learning with nearly 60% of community colleges now offering Service Learning (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse). In two decades, Service Learning has grown from a relatively obscure pedagogy to a national movement and a focus for scholarly work within its own right. At Three Rivers, the college’s Campus Compact membership and the creation of a Service Learning committee are evidence of Service Learning’s increasing popularity and influence.
Why Choose Service Learning?

Service Learning supports Three Rivers’ mission in a number of ways. It is part of a well-rounded & rewarding educational experience which promotes critical thinking and effective communication, helps students achieve educational and career goals, and contributes to the welfare of the region. Service Learning fits into all three areas of the college’s Values Statement:

Teaching and Learning – As mentioned on the college website, Three Rivers supports this value through “active, innovative teaching strategies, including a commitment to learning through service.”

Integrity & Service – Service Learning empowers student to be active, conscientious citizens, fostering these characteristics through service to the community.

Community and Diversity – Not only does Service Learning encourage civic engagement & community connection; it also fosters an understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Just as there are many definitions for Service Learning, so too are there many reasons proponents of Service Learning give for choosing this pedagogy—reasons that range from philanthropic benefits or the development of responsible citizens to enhanced marketability of graduates and improved student engagement. The variety of justifications comes from the wide range of benefits that have been observed in Service Learning. Rather than look for an answer to the question “Why Service Learning?”, look at the benefits of Service Learning and the objectives you wish to achieve by adding a service component to your course. Develop your own answers to the question and build your course and assignments around those goals.

Benefits of Service Learning

Service Learning’s rapid growth can be accounted for by its many benefits. Not only is it an effective teaching strategy, Service Learning has benefits for the community, the college, and faculty. Here are just some of the positive outcomes of Service Learning noted in a 2001 review of the literature compiled by researchers at Vanderbilt University (Eyler, et al). For students, Service Learning provides a form of learning in which they must necessarily be active & engaged for success. It connects what they are learning to the “real world” outside of the classroom, making their lessons more obviously relevant and providing them with first hand, concrete examples and experience. Beyond this benefit, studies have shown that Service Learning can have a positive impact on student learning and GPA. It can also help students feel more connected to their college, have more contact with professors, and even be more likely to graduate. Many professors also appreciate the unique ability of Service Learning to help students develop as responsible, empowered & knowledgeable citizens. In particular, this pedagogy has been shown to reduce stereotypical thinking, promote cultural understanding, and increase students’ sense of efficacy and purpose.

At a community college, Service Learning can benefit students at every point of their academic career. For students new to college, Service Learning has been found to have a positive impact on student academic performance, including areas such as writing and critical thinking that are essential for college success (Astin, et al., 2000, pp. ii). It has also been seen to benefit developmental students and affect attrition (Prentice, 2009). For more advanced students, Service Learning offers a chance to apply in the field what they have learned in the classroom, helping with career exploration and resume building.

These benefits also extend to faculty & community organizations. Faculty get more engaged students, find new areas for research, and can even use Service Learning as a way to show community engagement in the tenure process. The community not only gains the energy, efforts, and ideas of student volunteers, but also gets more voice in local institutes of higher learning and the chance to develop a new generation of socially minded citizens.

Martin Luther King, Jr Day of Service 2011
Setting Up Your Service Learning Class

Presented here are suggestions to consider when developing a Service Learning assignment or course. Service Learning varies for every instructor, and there is no one right answer when deciding how it should look in your lesson plans, especially when determining how much time you expect students to put into the Service Learning assignment and the percent of their grade it will encompass. Though it may be helpful to look at sample syllabi & projects from other instructors and institutions (see “Selected Resources and Readings,”), you will ultimately have to decide what fits best in your course and what will offer the most educational value for your students. The only suggestion that will be offered here regarding time is that if students will be working at a community organization, you will most likely want them to spend enough time there to really learn about the organization and feel they have accomplished something.

Course Objectives

The first step when designing a Service Learning assignment is to decide on your course objectives and how Service Learning will enhance those goals. Not only does this help you plan an effective Service Learning project for your classroom, but it also helps your students be successful & active participants in their learning. For example, suppose an engineering professor asks her students to develop a hands-on engineering project to be shared with a local elementary school classroom. The elementary school students benefit by getting to think critically, exploring engineering as an interesting career possibility, and being encouraged by older students. The college students are likely to see these benefits. However, unless their own learning objectives have been explained to them, the college students may not realize that they are reinforcing their knowledge by teaching as well as learning about communicating with clients and designing products.

Tell your students not only how their service projects are enhancing their learning experience, but also what Service Learning is. For many students, Service Learning will be a new concept. If you want them to take their projects seriously, students will need to know that they are not simply volunteering.

Models of Service Learning

You’ll also need to decide whether Service Learning will be required or optional:

Optional: You can give students a choice between a project with or without a service component. This model benefits students who may have difficulty doing a service project due to transportation, childcare, or other constraints. However, your students will not all have the same experience and this may pose difficulties for class discussion. When a choice between Service Learning and a more traditional project is offered, an equal amount of time and effort should be expected for either option. Service Learning should not look like a “light” option. This perception could cheapen its academic value and cause students to not take their projects as seriously as other assignments. Nor should Service Learning look like so much extra work compared to the more traditional assignment that no one will choose the service option.

Required: If you require Service Learning, all students in a class share a common experience to discuss and you will not have the concern of trying to design two different but equal options. However, you may need to be flexible with students, particularly non-traditional ones, who have very realistic concerns about having to schedule time for out of class projects, especially ones requiring travel to an offsite location. Give plenty of notice and, if possible, consider having various options to fit different schedules. Some service projects, such as awareness campaigns, can even be done on campus to minimize the transportation issue.

Honors Option: At Three Rivers, students in the Honors program must complete four Honors contracts with a grade of B+ or higher. These contracts are agreements between the student and a faculty member for an individual course. Together they decide on an additional project or requirement for the student to bring the class up to Honors level. Often this involves doing additional reading or research and completing an additional paper or presentation. Service Learning can be a great Honors project option, especially for students looking to get academic credit for an internship.

Let your students know right away, in your syllabus and/or in one of the first classes, that Service Learning will be either required or an option. This will let them know what to expect and give them time to think about what they might want to do. You may also want to give your students specific deadlines for when various phases should be completed, especially if they are finding their own service site or designing their own project. Let them know when they need to submit proposals, when they should be contacting community organizations, when they should begin their projects, etc.
Choosing Community Partners

Once you have decided on the learning objectives you want the service to meet and whether you will require all students to participate, you will need to choose one or more community partners—the organizations students will be working with to complete their projects. Depending on your Service Learning project, you might choose the service site or you might have your students choose their own sites. Once again, there are benefits and drawbacks to each method, and your decision should be guided by the type of project you want your students to complete.

**When you choose the site:** Choosing one or more service site(s) for your students has a number of advantages. First, you know what your students will be doing & you consequently have more control over the quality and content of their learning experience. In addition, the Service Learning can be a partnership in the truest sense because you can approach the community partner to explain your learning objectives, find out what service the organization really needs, and work together to plan Service Learning opportunities that will most benefit everyone involved. If the community partner is part of the planning process, they may even be willing to help with student reflection on site.

If you wish to choose the site, you will need to find enough sites to accommodate your students. For some projects one site may be enough, for example: a biology class testing water samples in a local lake to track the aquatic ecosystem’s health; or an environmental sciences class cataloguing invasive species in a local park to recommend a plan for their removal or to educate elementary students about environmental issues. Other projects such as a computer science class checking the user friendliness of non-profit websites and recommending improvements, may require finding several sites. For these projects, you could have students find their own service sites, but you would lose the ability to screen the sites. Also, for more specialized projects, such as the website example, your students may not be able to find enough organizations to work with. By choosing the sites yourself, you can know going into the semester that you have enough of the correct type of placements to give your students a successful Service Learning experience.

**When students choose their site(s):** There can be benefits to students choosing their own sites. For one, it gives students more say in planning their projects, making them more fully a partner in the Service Learning. Consequently, they may feel more invested in their learning and interested in their project. Projects where it may be appropriate for students to choose their own sites are ones where the goal is a basic understanding of a community issue. For example, in an Early Childhood Education course, a student may only need a volunteer site where they can interact with children. In this instance, site requirements are general enough that students should have little problem finding appropriate volunteer placements.

The University of Maryland, a leading institution in Service Learning, recommends that instructors give students some guidance in selecting a service site ([Faculty Handbook for Service Learning](#), 28). Examples of criteria they suggest are:

- whether the service needs to be one-on-one;
- whether it must be direct service working with clients or if advocacy or other indirect service is okay; and
- whether the student must be able to practice a particular skill at their site — for example a project for a communications class might require that the student be able to complete specific business writing assignments for an agency.

If students are free to choose any site that fits within your guidelines, you may want to consider having them submit proposals once they have found a site so that you can be certain their site choice is appropriate. You might also consider giving students a list of possible agencies with the option of choosing an agency not on the list if they get prior approval from you, the instructor.
Journals:

Journals are one popular reflection tool, especially for students doing on-going service. Writing regular journals allows students to continuously reflect on their service and allows instructors to offer feedback on the service and how students are connecting it to the classroom. Offering guidelines for journals can encourage students to think critically about their service rather than simply narrating their experiences. Here are a few types of journals suggested by Towson University (Tips 8):

- **Critical Incident Journal** – Direct students to write about a “critical incident,” an event or challenge that happened during their service which they view as significant. Ask students to work through why the incident was significant, if it could have been handled differently, etc.

- **Double Entry Journal** – Have students write their journal in a notebook. On one page, they reflect on their personal experiences. On the opposite page, they write about concepts from classroom lectures and readings. Have them literally draw connections from one side to the other using arrows and words.

- **Highlighted Journal** – After writing a personal reflection, students highlight the sections that directly relate to course concepts. You could have them explain the connections by adding endnotes.

- **Key-phrase Journal** – Provide students with key terms and phrases from the classroom material and require them to use all or a certain number of the phrases in their journal entries in a way that demonstrates their understanding. You may want to have them highlight these terms/phrases to make grading easier.

- **Directed Writings** – Instead of open-ended reflections, have students respond to different questions each week.

Other types of reflection:

You can also have students incorporate their Service Learning into a final project, such as a research paper or presentation. For research papers, students could write on an issue related to the service they have done, using their experiences as one text among many to be analyzed. This model gives students a new way of viewing their experiences and helps them learn how to incorporate personal observations into a piece of academic writing. Presentations can also be a great way for students to learn from the service their classmates did, especially in courses where students worked at several different sites or where Service Learning was optional.
Currently the following forms are not required, but they are available as tools to help make Service Learning a positive experience for you, your students, and your community partners. All of these forms can be found on the Service Learning page of the college website:

www.trcc.commnet.edu/Div_academics/LearningInitiatives/SL/ServiceLearning.shtml

Also available on the Service Learning webpage:

- A Time Log to record student service hours
- A student waiver for off campus service projects
- The post-service surveys the college will be using to gather data from students and community partners on the effectiveness of Service Learning at the college
Contact Info and Behavior Guidelines

Contact Information & Behavior Guidelines

CONTACT INFORMATION

Student Name:
Student ID Number:
Address:
Primary Phone Number: This number calls my (circle one): Cell Home Work
Secondary Phone Number: This number calls my (circle one): Cell Home Work
Email Address:
Date of Birth:
Course Name: Section Number:
Instructor’s Name:
Primary Emergency Contact: Relation:
Primary Emergency Contact’s Phone Number:
Secondary Emergency Contact: Relation:
Secondary Emergency Contact’s Phone Number:

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND GUIDELINES

Student agrees to the following:

Confidentiality

I will comply with agency policies, standards and regulations and serve in a professional manner with respect for others, especially with regard to confidentiality. I understand that all activities, in which I am involved as a service-learner, are strictly confidential. I will not release any type of personal information concerning clients of the agency listed above without written authorization from appropriate persons. Disclosures by the individual can normally be discussed ONLY with my immediate agency supervisor.

When discussing the individual(s) as a part of class discussion or a written assignment centered around the service-learning experience, care must be taken to change the individual’s name, eliminate identifying characteristics (where parents work, identifiable physical characteristics, where the individual lives, etc.), suppress details about personal information that has been disclosed – for instance, I might state that the individual has a history of abuse by a family member, but details about who, when, and where should be kept confidential. IF I plan to use photography, I will speak to the site supervisor for permission.

Over Please...

Contact Info and Behavior Guidelines, cont.

Service Hours and Placement

I will complete the service assignment to which I have made a commitment and will be on time or call the agency if I anticipate lateness or cannot attend due to illness or emergency. I will contact my professor if I have concerns, difficulties and/or feedback about this agency or placement.

I will comply with student expectations at all times including:

• I will follow and comply with the Board of Trustees Policy on Student Conduct.
• I will follow all rules and/or guidelines of the agency I am serving.
• I will respect confidentiality
• I will use appropriate language at all times.
• I will dress appropriately at all times.
• I will not perform service under the influence of illegal substances.
• I will not have contact with agency clientele outside the service setting (with the exception of a scheduled visit to TRCC planned by your instructor).
• I will not carry a weapon or threaten another person with a weapon, bodily force or language.
• I will not have contact with anyone in the service setting in a harmful manner.
• I will inform the agency representative of problems that occur while I am performing service and also inform my professor.
• I will keep an honest and detailed record of service hours and activities completed.

Student Signature __________________________ Date __________
Parent or Guardian Signature __________________________ Date __________
(for students under the age of 18)

Adapted with permission from the University of New Haven
Evaluation of Student Volunteer


Work Cited


If you still have questions about Service Learning, review the sections “Suggested Resources” and “Suggested Readings,” or talk to the Service Learning Coordinator VISTA or another member of the Service Learning committee.

A list of committee members is available on the Service Learning webpage on the college website.

Written by Amelia Keller, AmeriCorps VISTA