

INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO YOUR MCC COURSE

Service Learning is a teaching method using community service to achieve learning goals. Service learning is an opportunity for students to learn and develop through active participation in organized service experiences that meet actual community needs. Service learning differs from volunteerism in that it places great emphasis on reflection and on generating educational outcomes from the service. Students who perform community service as part of an academic course will be able to make connections between their work and the underlying issues behind the social problems being addressed.

RESEARCH SHOWS

Service learning has a positive effect on:

- student personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development
- interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others
- reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding
- sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills
- students' academic learning
- student and faculty relationships
- persistence to graduation
- student satisfaction with college

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Developing learning objectives is the first step in thinking about service learning. Learning objectives may range from personal student development to learning and putting into action skills. Typical learning objectives for MCC may include second semester units and cultural understanding. The details and logistics of every component of service learning will come from this. Take this opportunity to think about your students' special needs and your goals for them as individuals and as a class for the second semester. Service learning may play a role in creative and unique ways.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO SERVE

Student placements offer the most variety in service learning. The key here is meaningful action. Once learning objectives have been created, the next step is to think about time commitments from students. From there staff from the Center will help you to think about the best way to place your students. Students may do mini-internships, create written products for community agencies or populations, or you and your class may want to design your own service projects.

REFLECTION

This is the most important component of service learning! This is where the learning comes in and where you as the instructor have the opportunity to assess that learning. You might choose one or a combination of the following:

- journals
- presentations
- reaction papers
- research papers
- group reflection sessions

There are many creative ways to utilize any of these reflection tools in your courses. This can become a meaningful and wonderful part of a student's academic experience. The Scott/Ross Center staff can suggest many fun and fulfilling reflection methods and tools and can also lead activities.

There are a number of resources available to you as you think about service learning. The staff of the Scott/Ross Center wishes to support and accommodate you and your students any way we can. We appreciate your patience and feedback as service learning grows at Simmons. Service learning is a very rewarding and challenging teaching method; there is much to consider in deciding whether service learning is right for you and your students. There are many wonderful books, journals and articles to help you in your research, a wealth of knowledge and experience to be found in colleagues, sample syllabi, tools, conferences, workshops and web sites that we would be delighted to lend, introduce or direct you to.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should service learning be required or optional?

We suggest that work in the community be optional, however, everyone can do a service learning project. We can provide you with suggestions for an alternative to working in the community with one of our community partner sites. For a variety of reasons some students cannot perform community service. These students can still have an enriching experience by researching a social issue or group in Boston and writing and reflecting about it.

What if one of my students wants to set up their own placement?

As long as the work fulfills the learning objectives of the course a student can set up his or her own placement. Faculty can approve or disapprove placements; the Center can provide guidance. We ask each student to give us the contact information of the agency they are volunteering with and a description of their activities.

What if a student is already volunteering or is working in a community service federal work-study program or an AmeriCorps program?

The Center recommends that these students use their on-going work as their service learning placement. Students can learn much more about the work that they are already doing in a service learning course.

What if a student is enrolled in more than one service learning course in the same semester?

We recommend that students be permitted to count one service learning placement for two service learning classes. Exceptions vary and include learning objectives that make the project inappropriate for one class, or a class project. Students cannot, however, turn in any of the same reflection materials for two classes.

How much of a time commitment should I require of my students?

We feel that 20 hours of community service over one semester is a reasonable commitment to make. We can provide you and your students with resources and ideas to create wonderful service learning projects that do not require the same amount of time, however we will not place students for a commitment of less than 20 hours.

SCOTT/ROSS CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE
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