Service-Learning Attribute in OASIS/BANNER

What is service-learning? According to the Florida Campus Compact’s Faculty Guide to Service-Learning, service-learning (also called “community-based” or “community-engaged” learning) is the process of integrating volunteer community service combined with guided reflection into the curriculum to enhance and enrich student learning of course material. Here at USF, we have adopted a working definition of service-learning: it is a method of teaching that includes experiential learning, classroom instruction, and reflection. Typically, service-learning courses work in collaboration with a community partner, and students engage in at least 15 hours of service during the semester.

Service-learning builds on a tradition of activism and volunteerism, which was popular in the sixties and saw a rebirth in the late eighties as cultural, educational, and civic leaders challenged higher education to fulfill its historic mission to promote civic responsibility. Many colleges have accepted this challenge and created a support network, the Campus Compact, to develop and promote service-learning as a pedagogical strategy. Service-learning is now a national movement and is utilized in the majority of colleges and universities in the United States.

Service-learning provides multiple benefits. Community stakeholders benefit from student service projects; students benefit from hands-on learning experiences. Case study and large-scale research show that students who participate in service-learning courses often have more successful college careers and become more engaged citizens after graduation. Here at USF, faculty and students are encouraged to participate in service-learning courses. The Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships (OCEP) offers workshops and mini-grants to faculty, and has many service-learning resources available on its website.

To help identify and track such courses, the OCEP has partnered with the Registrar to create a service-learning attribute. Courses designated as service-learning courses will be noted with this attribute, allowing students to search for service-learning courses through OASIS. With this attribute, students can find and get credit for enrolling in such courses. Moreover, the identification of service-learning courses allows Engagement staff to document and monitor the progress of engaged learning opportunities on campus, which is helpful when we seek recognition or accreditation through such institutions as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

At present, the service-learning attribute is added to a course when departmental schedulers notify the Registrar’s Office by emailing the CRNs of service-learning courses to Louis Gray (louis12@usf.edu), Academic Services Administrator.

Unfortunately, not all faculty and not all departmental schedulers are familiar with this new attribute, and many service-learning courses continue to go unreported. We therefore continue to reach out to faculty and academic departments to ensure that they help us properly identify service-learning courses as they are scheduled.

Below are the criteria that we use for identifying service-learning courses in the strictest sense of the term. However, we are a bit flexible, and we rely on departments to self-report.

- addresses an identified community need (campus, local, regional, global)
- service has a public purpose or results in a benefit to the community
- service activity meets one or more course objectives
- demonstrates a clear connection between the service activity and the course content
- involves reciprocity between course and community that results in students’ increased civic engagement
- involves structured student reflection
- involves collaboration with an appropriate agency or community representative
- involves at least 15 hours of student service to the community
- all students in the course are required to engage in S-L experiences, or a suitable alternative
- grade will be given for achievement of course objectives through the S-L activity, not just for completing a set number of hours work with the community partner
Service-Learning Course Development
and Partnership Building Action Plan Checklist

Planning (two months before semester)

☐ Consult the OCEP’s Service Learning Resources webpage and FAQ
☐ Review the service-learning course criteria
☐ Schedule a service-learning course consultation with the OCEP
☐ Meet with OCEP and community partner(s)
☐ Determine plan for ongoing communication
☐ Visit community partner project site, if possible
☐ Determine course goals and objectives
☐ Develop partnership agreements
☐ Determine appropriate service-learning course structure
☐ Plan reflection activities
☐ Plan evaluation/assessment strategies
☐ Determine course/project timeline
☐ Determine grading strategy
☐ Create syllabus
☐ Consider liability issues
☐ Prepare course materials (reflection activities, partnership agreements, liability waivers)

Implementation (beginning and during semester)

☐ Introduce service-learning project on first day of class
☐ Introduce community partner
☐ Conduct exposure and capacity building activities (if needed)
☐ Assign service-learning project
☐ Conduct student orientation and training with community partner
☐ Engage in ongoing evaluation and student accountability measures
☐ Engage in ongoing reflection activities
☐ Maintain ongoing communication with community partners
☐ Invite community partner to student presentations
☐ Final presentation/project
☐ Conduct student and community partner service-learning evaluations

Wrap Up (end of semester)

☐ Collect time logs/final products from students
☐ Meet with community partner and the OCEP for debriefing
☐ Complete faculty evaluations
☐ Discuss future partnerships opportunities with community partner, if appropriate
☐ Send community partner thank you letter/e-mail