



Understanding Service-Learning at Viterbo University

This document was created to help our faculty, staff and administration develop a shared language and understanding of service-learning. It will evolve as our service-learning program evolves and any comments, suggestions or questions are welcome.

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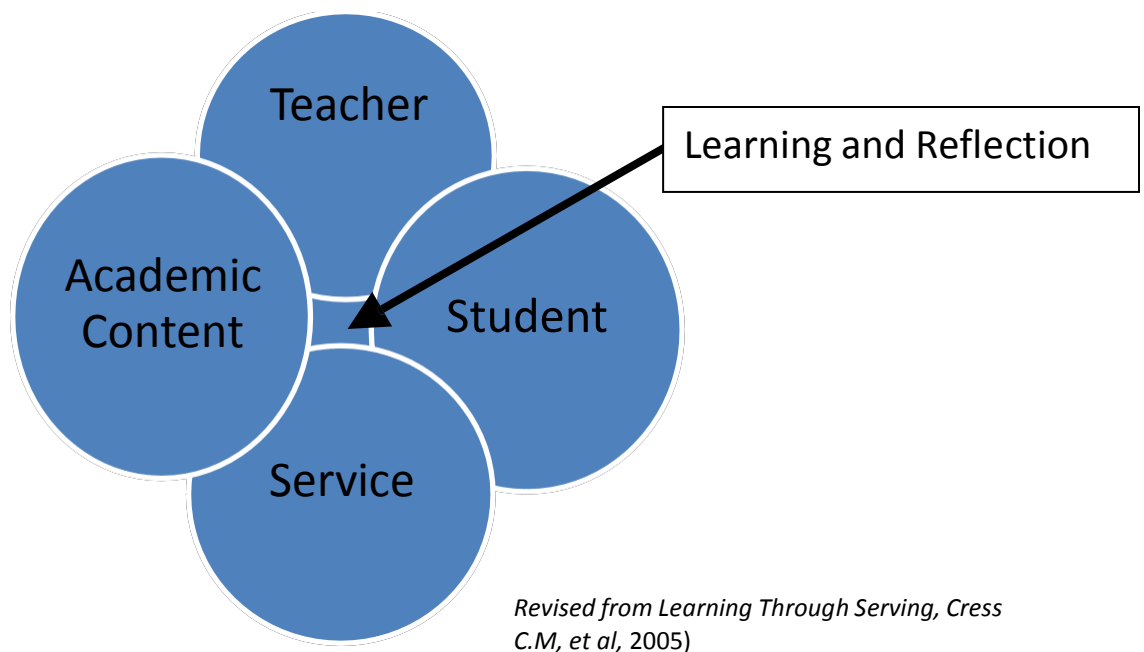
The History of Service-Learning

Although the term “service-learning”, sometimes also referred to as community-based learning, was first used in the late 1960’s but was not broadly linked to higher education until the 1980’s, the ideological roots of service-learning date back to the early 1900’s work of John Dewey and William James. John Dewey argued, in *Democracy and Education (1916)*, that students must be engaged not just in thought, but in action, and that this mode of education is crucial to the formation of responsible citizens.

Presidents of Brown, Georgetown and Stanford Universities started Compass Compact in 1985 in response to national criticism that college students were more interested in making money than helping their neighbors. Compass Compact now includes 1200 universities and colleges, representing over 6 million students.

What is Service-Learning?

Students tutoring at-risk middle-school students is volunteering. Students creating graphics for a small business as interns is great job experience. Service-learning is different in that students work with classmates and the instructor to use course content in understanding the underlying social, political, and economic issues that contribute to community difficulties. Through service-learning, students become educated community members and problem solvers through serving the community and reflecting on the meaning of that service.



- **Volunteering:** Service for the sake of the recipient
- **Internship:** Skill-based, may be paid, used to advance student career development
- **Practicum:** Learning in a work environment instead of a classroom
- **Field Study:** Gathering data through observation and/or interviews
- **Service-Learning:** Community service with intentional learning outcomes and reflection.

There is the Potential for Service-Learning to Do Harm

Service-learning, if not mindfully designed and carried-out, has the potential to do harm by perpetuating the very hierarchies of power and privilege that it espouses to address. An example of this would be a group of largely white college students serving food at a mixed-race homeless shelter. Successful and transformational service-learning is, instead, a mutual relationship between students and community partners in which stories are shared and the complexity and interrelatedness of political and social dynamics that create and sustain

plaguing issues are inquired into and addressed. In this model of service-learning, students and community partners join together as change agents and both walk away from the experience having given to one another and with a sense of the difference they can make.

In the example of students serving at a homeless shelter, the experience can be shifted from volunteerism to service-learning through intentional, mutual and genuine exchanges with the individuals who are clients of the shelter.

Service-Learning is Embedded in Viterbo's History, Mission, and Values

- Viterbo has a long-standing foundation of service; it is core to our mission of developing “faithful servants and ethical leaders” and one of our core values.
 - Faculty have worked diligently and successfully to engage students in the community through:
 - Class projects
 - Practicum
 - Volunteering
 - Field Studies
 - Internships
- The purpose of the third-year Mission Seminar: Serving the Common Good (VUSM 300) is to *formalize and deepen* the ways in which faculty have long engaged students in the community *during all four years* of college.

Why Service-Learning in Higher Education?: A Student-Focused Perspective

- John Dewey – Universities have a responsibility to not only educate but to develop engaged citizens.
- Research heralds service-learning for their transformative nature, producing students who are more (Mitchell T.D., 2008):
 - Tolerant
 - Altruistic
 - Culturally Aware

And who have:

- Stronger leadership and communication skills
- Higher grade point averages
- Stronger critical thinking skills

Why Service-Learning in Higher Education?: A University- and Faculty-Focused Perspective

- “The New American College (is) an institution that celebrates teaching...while also taking special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice. The New American College would organize cross-disciplinary institutes around pressing social issues.” (*Ernest Boyer's New Model of Excellence, 1994, Chronicle of Higher Learning*)

- On the one hand, (service-learning) represents a pedagogy that extends our range of pedagogical resources beyond even such promising active learning strategies as cases, role playing, and simulations, and it does so by addressing directly those “problems of greatest human concern” that are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution.” (*Edward Zlotkowski, 1998, Successful Service-Learning Programs*)
- Service-learning is receiving increasing attention at American Association for Higher Education’s Forum and Faculty Roles and Rewards.
- Service-learning promotes increased communication among faculty and it fosters a sense of community on campus.
- Service-learning provides opportunities for practicing the scholarships of application, integration and teaching.
- Plethora of publishing outlets.
- *Service-learning commonly reinvigorates a passion and enthusiasm for teaching!*

Serving the Common Good (SCG) Mission Seminar

Every Viterbo undergraduate student is required to take an SCG course. Most of the opportunities are provided through VUSM 300 level courses but seminars may also be offered with department or special topics prefixes. Mission seminars can qualify as a Way of Thinking course but must be designed to benefit students in all major fields.

The service requirement for students in full semester (15-week) sections is 25 hours OR 10 visits. Compressed format sections which last 7 to 8 weeks require 20 hours of service OR 8 visits.

Quality Practices of Service-Learning in Higher Education

Although specific standards of service-learning have yet to be established, there is a strong body of knowledge in the field about what supports and sustains successful service-learning.

Best Practice Factors:

- Joint planning and Multi-level support
- A genuine sense of reciprocity
- Clear definitions of roles, activities, mission and goals
- A comprehensive student orientation and preparation process
- Consistent communication with a primary point of contact on each side
- Investment in faculty development
- Long-term community partnerships
- Integration of service-learning into the administrative structures and policies.

For service-learning to work for community partners:

- Service-learning must closely aligned with community partner organizational goals and should complementary overall mission.
- Community partners needed to develop internal structures to support their involvement in service-learning

- Community partners need to adopt the perspective that the students involved in service-learning had valuable skills and expertise to contribute.
(www.servicelearning.org, *National Service-Learning Clearinghouse*)

The Role of the Service-Learning Coordinator

- Preserve and protect the relationships that faculty and staff have worked to establish with community partners for class projects, volunteerism, field studies, internships and practicum
- Serve as a liaison between community agencies and faculty by establishing and maintaining contact with directors and appropriate staff at these agencies.
- Develop and manage the service-learning infrastructure (documentation, agreements, etc)
- Meet with faculty and the Mission Seminar committees to discuss course objectives and course content related to service learning.
- Support faculty in developing VUSM 300 courses and in selecting community sites that align with course learning outcomes. *The service-learning coordinator does not work directly with students, but rather supports the instructors in supporting students.*
- Serve as a resource person on campus for schools and departments
- Track and report student service in the community

How to Develop a Serving the Common Good Course

There are two important things for faculty to consider when considering developing a SCG course, or converting an existing course to qualify as a SCG seminar.

THE FIRST IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW:

There is a great deal of support available! This support is available in many forms:

- A detailed Blackboard course site
- A syllabus template
- Reading resources
- Pre-developed, common assignments
- Rubrics
- A learning community of faculty members who are new to this course and those whom have taught it
- A Service-Learning Coordinator who is at your beck and call!

THE SECOND IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW:

We are all continually learning about service-learning courses. It is perfectly wonderful and acceptable to jump in and learn as you go along. In fact, that's how faculty members have been teaching these courses up to now. We are all learning together. Your experiences will be a valuable addition to the learning community. If you are interested in developing a Serving the Common Good seminar please contact the Core Curriculum Director or the faculty Community Leader for SCG. There are also additional ideas and resources available at www.servicelearning.org.