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Supporting Service-Learning in an Existing Curriculum

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Carson-Newman University

Carson-Newman University Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Learning achieved in a for credit educational experience, during which students are:

- 1) involved in organized service opportunities designed to meet community identified needs; and
- 2) encouraged to reflect critically upon their service experience in a way that enhances the connection between concepts encountered in coursework and the students' service experience and that fosters intercultural knowledge and competence.





Goals

- **Goal 1** – 70% of students graduating from CN (undergraduate degrees) will have had a developmental service-learning experience within their academic discipline.
- **Goal 2** – Among the students who have participated in a service-learning program, 80% will show improvement in the SLOs.



What is Service-Learning?



- Service learning is an increasingly popular approach to higher education in which students learn through service experiences designed to meet the needs of their communities (Buchanan, Baldwin, & Rudisill, 2002).
- In 1969, the Southern Regional Education Board advanced one of the earliest definitions of SL: “The accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999, p.2).

More Specifically, What is NOT Considered Service-Learning?



- Service-learning is not the same as an internship, volunteer service, or field experience.
- An internship, by definition, is practical work experience whereby a student gains professional experience in his or her chosen field. This primarily benefits the student, provides a valuable learning experience but is not considered service.
- Community service is another form of learning that differs from service-learning. While community service does provide a benefit to the community, it does not provide the necessary reflective and focused classroom learning activities that reinforce the service. It is more volunteerism. For example, picking up trash along a river bank is a service to the community, but does not provide any focused learning.
- Faculty often require field education assignments of students within their major area of study. Field education programs focus primarily on the learning, and the student is the primary beneficiary of the program (Furco, 1996).



Successful Service-Learning is Characterized by the Following:



- Students learn course content as a result of their service.
- Students apply course content in a community setting.
- Students are provided time and opportunity for reflection on the experience.
- The relationship between participants is collaborative, and the benefits are reciprocal.
- The service is with, rather than for, the community partner.
- Community partners reap benefits from the program, while students gain valuable knowledge and skills; and
- Service-learning is done in the area of one's expertise.

Buchanan, Baldwin, & Rudisill, 2002

Types of Service-Learning

- **Direct Service-Learning:** students engage in direct, on site, face-to-face community service projects that directly impact the people who receive the service. Examples include:
- Peer tutoring for at risk youth
- Developing and implementing art, music and foreign language lessons in a community center
- Researching and conducting a community forum on dangers of prescription drug dependency
- Students in an engineering course build and design a project for a not-for-profit organization



Example of Direct Service-Learning

In a biology course on animal behavior, students go to the Jefferson County Animal Shelter and work to train and socialize dogs. Students gain practical knowledge about operant conditioning and handling animals, and they learn about the ethical issues of dealing with homeless pets. The pets improve their adoptability and get attention that improves their daily lives.



Example of Direct Service-Learning

A chemistry class went to Jefferson Elementary School on two occasions to interact with students in their STEM program. CNU students did demonstrations and short lessons to teach the students grade-appropriate science concepts. CNU students also talked about careers in science and why they choose their majors. The goal was to generate interest and inform the young kids about science and career possibilities. Another goal was to teach basic science topics.



Types of Service-Learning



- **Indirect Service-Learning:** students engage in equally meaningful service projects, but not necessarily with the groups or individuals who will immediately benefit from the service. Direct communication with a defined community partner is still valuable, but that communication may occur with an individual or group representing the beneficiaries of the service. Examples include:
 - Researching and documenting an important, historic community event
 - Exploring new energy efficient building strategies for low-income housing
 - Conducting water testing to determine the ecological impact of waste run-off
 - Creating a visual identity for a not-for-profit or government agency

Example of Indirect Service-Learning



The Journey Program serves at-risk youth in Jefferson County, TN through a near-peer mentorship program. Students who have completed the program express a new-found focus on what they want from their lives and the confidence to achieve it due to the bonds they develop with mentors as well as the program's curriculum. An advanced Graphic Design class worked with the director and several peer mentors to develop a meaningful visual identity for the program.

Example of Indirect Service-Learning



The Jefferson County Public Library System consists of four branches, in four areas of the county, North, South, East and West. They did not have an existing visual identity. An advanced Graphic Design class created logo designs and collaborated with all four branch librarians and the library board to design a system wide logo that is also customizable by color for each branch.

Types of Service-Learning



- **Research-Based Service-Learning:** students research, collect and present detailed information on community based projects that either contribute to an existing on-going study, or jump start a defined need. Examples include:
 - Creating Spanish translations of important community forms and documents
 - Mapping and documenting cemetery markers to help restore a historically significant cemetery
 - Documenting indigenous trees and the impact of invasive parasites
 - Bookkeeping strategies and start-up implementation for not-for-profit agencies

Example of Research-Based Service-Learning

In a quantitative analysis chemistry course, students learned analytical techniques throughout the semester that allowed them to apply those techniques to studying the quality of the water in two local water sources. They went to Mossy Creek and Cherokee Lake to collect samples, which enabled them to see where the samples came from and how to correctly collect water samples. The results, which are part of an on-going research project, are shared with local authorities.



Types of Service-Learning



- **Advocacy Service-Learning:** students actively educate others on public interest projects that promote awareness and/or facilitate action plans to positively impact the community. Examples include:
 - Organizing and leading a public forum on voting rights and regulations
 - Conducting public information campaigns on topics of interest or local needs
 - Researching and organizing information to include on a public service website

Both **Indirect service** and **direct service** are valuable. Direct service-learning is hands-on interaction with the actual people who benefit from the service. Indirect service-learning supports community partners by fulfilling a need that indirectly impacts the community by providing supplemental resources that support an organization.

Example of Advocacy Service-Learning

In a Family and Consumer Science course, students worked in assigned multi-disciplinary teams to complete a needs assessment and develop needed training for adults and children residing at a local homeless shelter. Each group presented two training sessions for adults and children. Additionally they created and prepared meals that did not require special tools.



Lessons Learned



In Summary: What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning includes teaching and learning in which students use discipline specific knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.

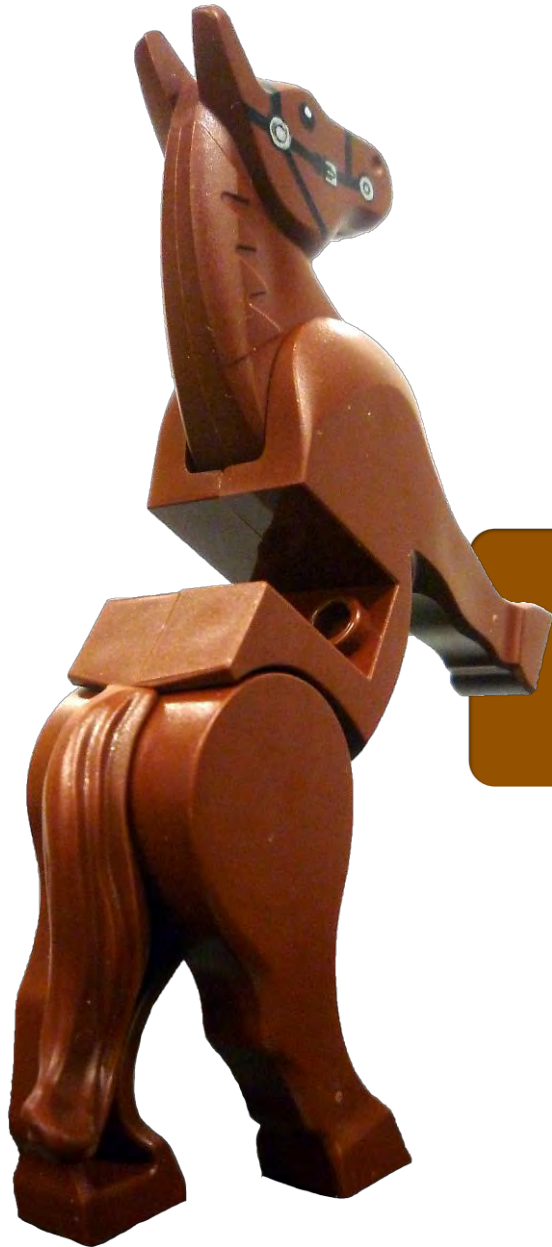
- Picking up trash along a river bank is *service*.
- Studying water samples is *learning*.
- When students collect and analyze water samples, document their results, and present findings to a local agency conducting an ecological impact study – that is **service-learning**.



Process at Carson-Newman University

1. Voluntary – plans are by department
2. Brainstorm ideal situation
3. Find community partners
4. Discuss, collaborate, improve
5. Assessment of student progress
6. Reflection of success & methods to improve





Assessment

of student learning

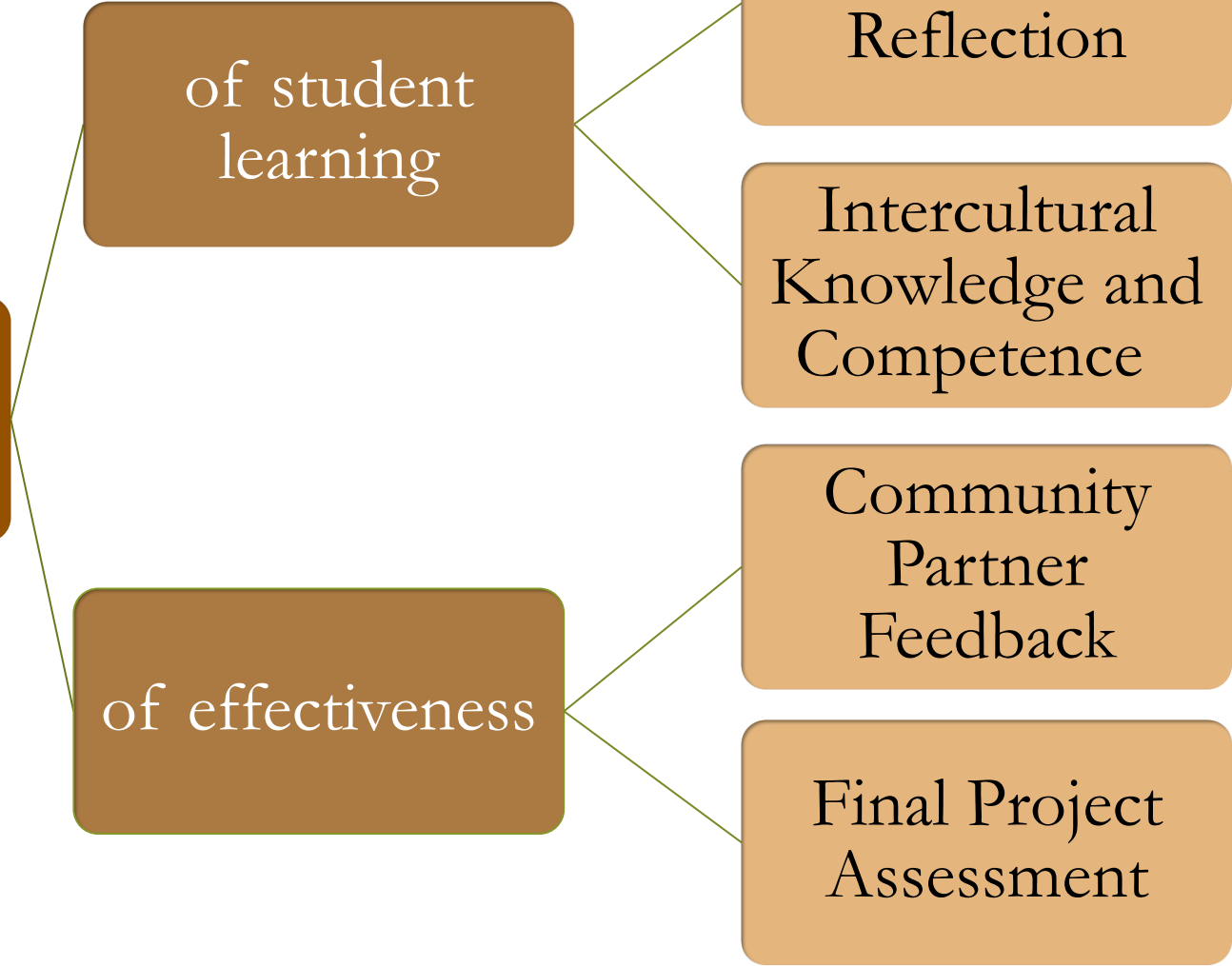
of effectiveness

Critical Reflection

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence

Community Partner Feedback

Final Project Assessment



Two Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- **Critical Reflection** – Students will connect knowledge from an academic discipline to their service-learning experience.
- **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence** – Students will identify the assumptions and attitudes they bring to service-learning issues.

Assessment of SLOs



- Writing prompts – tailored to the experience
- Separate prompts for each SLO
- Rubrics for each SLO
- Faculty-wide workshops to calibrate scoring of rubrics
- Results are documented on the campus grading system

Tips



- Goals & Objectives then planning
- Define the ideal experience then brainstorm community partners
- Find methods for contribution



Wrapping Up



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