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Introduction to Service-Learning: Cycles of Action & Reflection

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VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Community Engagement
Introduction to Service-Learning:
Cycles of Action & Reflection
Service-Learning Institute

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Goals for This Presentation


- Define service-learning
- Overview the benefits and challenges of teaching with service-learning
- Describe the characteristics of high-quality service-learning
- Review Cone & Harris' Theoretical Framework for Service-Learning Practice



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VCU Statement of Service-Learning
(must appear on every VCU SL course syllabus)

Service-learning at Virginia Commonwealth University is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets community-identified needs. Students reflect on the service activity to increase understanding and application of course content and to enhance a sense of civic responsibility.



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Specific VCU Requirements

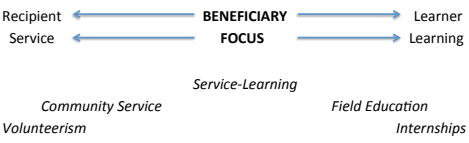
For a course to be designated as a VCU service-learning class, the course must:

1. Involve every enrolled student in a minimum of 20 hours of service activity (direct or indirect).
2. Service activities must meet a community-identified need.
3. Students must have opportunities throughout the semester to reflect on the connections between their community service and classroom learning. These reflection activities may be graded or ungraded but must be designed by the instructor to promote & deepen learning.




How does service-learning differ from other forms of experiential learning?

Service-learning balances the needs of the service recipient with the needs of the service provider and focuses equally on both service and learning.

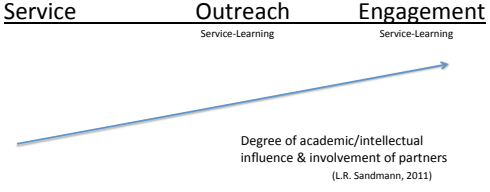


Recipient Service ← **BENEFICIARY FOCUS** → Learner Learning

Community Service Volunteerism Service-Learning Field Education Internships




Different approaches to community work



Service Outreach Engagement

Service-Learning Service-Learning

Degree of academic/intellectual influence & involvement of partners
(L.R. Sandmann, 2011)



Benefits of Service-Learning

- ♦ Service-learning engages learners and promotes students' academic, civic and personal development (Celio, Durlak & Dymnick, 2011),
- ♦ Service-learning increases graduation rates (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013),
- ♦ Service-learning strengthens communities,
- ♦ Service-learning helps faculty members integrate teaching, research & service, and
- ♦ At VCU, service-learning is specifically recognized as a priority in the *Quest for Distinction* Strategic Plan, as a targeted University Level Initiative (ULI), and as a valued teaching activity in the newly approved *Faculty Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures*.



Challenges of Service-Learning

- ♦ Service-learning (like any good teaching) requires time to plan and implement,
- ♦ Service-learning requires clear organization and ongoing communication to implement successfully,
- ♦ Service-learning (at VCU) requires instructors to build and sustain relationships with off-campus partners*
- ♦ Service-learning is a non-traditional pedagogy with which many students are unfamiliar,
- ♦ Service-learning is a non-traditional pedagogy with which many faculty members and campus administrators are unfamiliar.

*This one is also a benefit!



By the Numbers

2012-2013 VCU Service-Learning

3,109 students enrolled in **173** different service-learning classes in **40** different disciplines taught by **75** faculty members. These adult learners performed **62,180** hours of service valued at **\$1,423,922.00**.

*Note: The value of volunteer time in 2012 in the U.S. was estimated to be \$22.90 per hour. Value of volunteer time is based on the hourly earnings of all production and non-supervisory workers on private non-farm payrolls average.



10 Principles of High-Quality Service-Learning Practice

1. Academic credit is for learning, not for service.
2. Academic rigor is uncompromised.
3. Set learning goals for students.
4. Establish criteria for the selection of community service placement.
5. Provide educationally sound mechanisms to harvest the community learning.
6. Prepare students for learning from the community.
7. Minimize the distinction between the students' community learning role and classroom learning role.
8. Rethink the faculty instructional role.
9. Be prepared for variation in, and some loss of control with, student learning outcomes.
10. Maximize the 'community responsibility' orientation of the course.

Compiled from Howard, J. (2003). Principles of good practice for service-learning pedagogy. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Summer 2003, Page 16-19.

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