Service Learning 101
How do I get started?
Service Learning – The Definition

Service learning is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community.

-Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges
The Goal

...is to blend service and learning goals and activities in such a way that the two reinforce each other and produce a greater impact than either could produce alone...
Distinctions Among Service Programs

- Service Learning
- Community Service
- Volunteerism
- Co-op
- Internships
Community Involvement

Volunteerism

Civic Education

Service-Learning

Practical Experience

Academic Study

Co-Op
Why Service Learning?

- Lecture: 5%
- Reading: 10%
- Audio-Visual: 20%
- Demonstration: 30%
- Discussion Group: 50%
- Practice By Doing: 75%
- Teach Others/Immediate Use of Learning: 90%
Direct, Indirect, Advocacy

Indirect Service
Engaging students in performing service by providing goods or a product to a needy cause:
- Often episodic and short-term
- Indirect service may be of least value to students because they are so far removed from the need and do not directly experience the benefit of their efforts.

Examples of indirect service:
- Toy drive
- Bake sales to benefit an agency
- Swimming to save the dolphins
- Operating a database of agencies that help place peers in settings where meaningful direct service can be performed
Direct, Indirect, Advocacy

Direct Service

Placing students in direct contact with people in need results in:
- Receiving immediate feedback as they help others
- Working with a diverse population

Ideally, the students should be encouraged to commit to direct service projects that last for several weeks or months. This gives students time to:
- Feel they have made a contribution
- Develop friendships with the people they are serving and with whom they do service
- Understand better the problem they are working to solve

Examples of direct service:
- Mentoring incoming or new students
- Ongoing visits to a convalescent facility to lead exercise classes
- Coaching Special Olympics kids year-round in preparation for a spring event
Civic Action/Advocacy

Addressing the cause of a social issue:
- With a sense of commitment to a cause, students can become the movers and shakers who stimulate social change.
- When students are enabled to question, problem solve, network, build coalitions, and even challenge institutions, they are part of the democratic process.

Examples of civic action or advocacy:
- Establishing a voter registration campaign among students and the broader community
- Petitioning the local government to clean up a toxic area near an elementary school
- Increasing public knowledge about teen drug abuse
- Lobbying the school district for neighborhood trash cans so students won't litter before and after school
Identify Academic Connections

- What are your student learning outcomes?
- What are your current assignments to reach these outcomes?
- Why did you select these assignments?
- What activities could your students do to meet community needs and your learning outcomes?
Collaboration

- Curricular
- Co-curricular
- Extra Curricular
Preparation

- Identify a need
- Draw upon students' skills and knowledge
- Acquire new information
- Collaborate with community partners
- Develop a plan that encourages student responsibility
- Incorporate service and learning as natural extensions of the curriculum
Action

Through direct service, indirect service, or civic action, students take action that:

- Provides meaningful service
- Uses previous and acquired academic skills and knowledge
- Offers unique learning experiences
- Has real consequences
- Is in a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes, and to have successes.
Reflection

During systematic reflection, as the adviser guides the process using various methods such as role play, discussion, and journal writing, students:

- Describe what happened
- Record the difference made
- Discuss thoughts and feelings
- Place experience in larger context
Students demonstrate and celebrate mastery of skills, insights, and outcomes by, for example:

- Reporting to their peers, faculty, and/or community members
- Writing articles or letters to local newspapers regarding issues of public concern
- Extending their experience to develop future projects benefiting the community