



WHAT IS COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING?

Community Service-Learning integrates community-based activities with classroom. With the assistance of the CSL Office, instructors and community partners work together to design opportunities for students that aim to meet the needs of community organizations *and* fulfill the objectives of academic courses. While new courses might be created especially with CSL in mind, it is more common for existing courses to be revised to include a CSL component. As the outline of pedagogical approaches and course models on the following page suggests, there is no one best way to link service and learning within the university curriculum.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING

Adapted from University of Minnesota Centre for Community-Engaged Learning (www.servicelearning.umn.edu)

Students

- Increase understanding of course material and learn to apply course material to new situations
- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Improve ability to handle ambiguity (and be open to change)
- Develop or enhance other skills – notably in communication, collaboration, and leadership
- Gain hands-on experience in the not for profit sector
- Learn more about social issues and their root causes

Faculty

- Gain experience with interactive teaching methods -- fostering reciprocal learning
- Promote students' active learning -- adding new insights and dimensions to class discussion
- Engage students with different learning styles – involving more students
- Learn firsthand knowledge of community issues
- Develop relationships with the community – providing opportunity for collaborative work
- Discover new avenues for research – including research into teaching practices

Community

- Inject new energy, enthusiasm, and perspectives into the organization's work
- Gain additional human resources needed to achieve organizational goals
- Co-educate youth about community issues – perhaps correcting misperceptions
- Increase public awareness of key issues
- Network with colleagues in other organizations and agencies
- Identify and access other university resources; build relationships with faculty and staff

University

- Promote engaged citizenship and develop leadership skills
- Encourage faculty, student, and community interaction and collaboration
- Develop and improve university-community relationships
- Embed discovery learning experiences, both on campus and in the broader community
- Strengthen cohesiveness across the five university campuses
- Contribute to fulfilling the public role of the university



MODELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SERVICE-LEARNING

The following approaches to CSL, identified by Dan Butin (2007), overlap and intermingle in practice; nevertheless, they provide a useful starting point from which to think about your own approach to community engagement as a pedagogy. Each approach has its own emphases in bringing community experience into the classroom, and bringing classroom learning into the community.

I. Technical Model The focus is on the pedagogical effectiveness of service-learning for enhancing learning of course content

II. Cultural Model The focus is on the meanings of practices, especially to enhance respect for diversity and engaged citizenship

III. Political Model The focus is on the empowerment of historically disempowered groups (including the role of the university in unequal power relations)

IV. Anti-foundational Model The focus is on the potential for CSL pedagogy to defamiliarize the seemingly natural (norms, behaviours, assumptions) and expand the sense of the possible

TYPES OF SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES

Discipline-Based Service-Learning

Students are expected to have an engaged presence in the community and reflect on their experiences on a regular basis throughout the semester using course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding. The link between course content and community experience must be made very explicit to students.

Problem-Based Service-Learning

Students (or teams of students) work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This model presumes that the students will have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community, develop a solution to the problem, or produce some kind of tool or resource for the community.

Capstone

Students are asked to draw upon knowledge they have obtained throughout their course work and combine it with relevant service work in the community, with the goal of either exploring a new topic or synthesizing their understanding of their discipline. Such courses are generally designed for majors and minors in a given discipline and are generally offered to students in their final year.

Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research

Students work closely with faculty members to learn research methods while serving as advocates for communities. Such courses are generally designed for students (or teams of students) highly experienced in community work who can negotiate diverse communities as self-directed learners.

Dan W. Butin (2007) Focusing Our Aim: Strengthening Faculty Commitment to Community Engagement, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 39:6, 34-39, DOI: 10.3200/CHNG.39.6.34-39



KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING ON CSL

- **Mutual benefit:** Service placements benefit both the student's learning process (content of the course) and the community organization
- **Syllabus revision:** Changing assignments, some readings, and perhaps some teaching strategies to integrate CSL
- **Reflection:** Opportunities for students to continually think/write/discuss/creatively explore what they learn as they move between the course and the community
- **Co-education:** Community supervisors contribute to student learning, without over-burdening already stretched community resources

CSL PROGRAM SUPPORT

- Provide background information and material on CSL to help you get started
- Provide resources and training for planning course syllabi to include a CSL component (including suggested assignments, assessment tools etc.)
- Work with instructors to identify the types of community agencies that will best meet the learning objectives for their course
- Contact the community agencies (including those suggested by faculty) to identify volunteer options that are mutually beneficial
- Provide each instructor with a list of specific volunteer opportunities from which students can select (or be assigned to) their placements; this list includes the organization contact information; organization skill/knowledge requirements; any pre-training and background check requirements; total number of students the organization will supervise; total hours of service-work in term; accessibility by public transit; time requirements/restrictions and any other information relevant to the placement
- Determine what preparatory measures are required—Police Information Check; Youth Intervention Check; organization orientation/application procedures—for each CSL placement and facilitate the process of completing them
- Provide ongoing support throughout the semester in the form of resources, self-evaluation tools/mid-term assessments, liaising with community partners, and responding to questions and concerns

ON-LINE RESOURCES

Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL)	www.communityservicelearning.ca
Campus Compact (Main American website)	www.compact.org
Community-Campus Partnerships for Health	www.ccph.info
Imagining America	www.imaginingamerica.org
National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (American)	www.gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse
International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership	www.ipsl.org



KEY QUESTIONS IN PLANNING A CSL COURSE

What are the broad considerations in creating a syllabus that integrates a CSL component?

- Overall, what are the course goals/learning objectives?
- What are the goals/objectives for the service-learning component and how do they integrate with the overall goals/objectives?
- How will students demonstrate they have met the course objectives (both learning and community)?
- How will the service-learning component be evaluated?
- How will course requirements be adjusted to accommodate the hours students will devote to their CSL placements outside of class time?

How will CSL be integrated into the course in an ongoing and intentional way?

- How might reflection journals, blogs, group work, CSL-specific readings, etc. be used?
- Who might assume responsibility for leading discussions? How often?
- What sorts of presentations will be encouraged?
- How might other written work be shared on a regular basis?
- What sorts of collaborations might be encouraged amongst groups of students (e.g., participant and non-participant; interdisciplinary groups; volunteers working in teams)?

Will the CSL component be required for all students?

- How many hours will be required throughout the term? (we recommend a minimum of 20 hours per student)
- What types of community service will best contribute to the course objectives?
- How many different volunteer organizations/projects will be included?
- Will the volunteer work be accomplished in a short period of time (concentrated in a week or two around a specific project) or spread out over the term at an average of 2 hours/week?
- Will students work alone, in pairs, or in small groups?

If you decide not to require service-learning of all students, what is your alternative for other students?

- How will course activities integrate CSL and non-CSL students?
- How will CSL and non-CSL options be equitable for students, in terms of types of assignments and time commitments? (And what other name might you give to 'non-CSL' students?)

How will community partners be intentionally involved in the student learning process?

- How will students be matched to community partners? (How will they choose the right opportunity? Will they be asked to volunteer in pairs? etc. To ensure a 'good' match and an even distribution, we recommend a process whereby students submit in writing their top two choices and reasons for them; they are then assigned to one of these.)
- How will students be encouraged to learn about the organization they work with? How will they be encouraged to be accountable to the needs and expectations of the organization?
- How will they learn about ethical issues and responsibilities (beyond the information presented to them in the CSL Student Guidebook)?



FIRST WEEK OF CLASS

- Introduce CSL to the students: theory, background, expectations, goals
- Explain procedures and deadlines for the CSL Student Placement Process - 'matching' students and placements, contacting community supervisors, obtaining security checks, signing up on the CSL Student Site and completing the CSL Completion Form (CSL Staff can also visit your class to provide general introductory and logistical information)
- This is an excellent time to invite community partners to your class to speak about their organizations (you can pre-arrange these visits at the CSL Orientation Workshop)

SECOND/THIRD WEEKS OF CLASS

- Having determined how you are going to organize and allocate student placements, have students complete the online sign up form on the CSL Student Site and encourage students to contact their community supervisors
- Explain/discuss ethics issues and guidelines relevant to community service-learning
- Remind students to obtain security checks at CSL Office
- Share the CSL Completion Form with students and encourage students to go over form with their community partners

MID-TERM

- Schedule at least one check-in with your community partners (by phone or by email) to learn how the placements/projects are progressing

FINAL TWO WEEKS OF TERM

- CSL Staff will arrange for 15 minutes of class time toward the end of the term when we will come to your class to administer evaluations of the program; all students (CSL and non-CSL) and the instructors will be asked to complete an evaluation at that time
 - CSL Staff will send out and collect evaluation forms to community partners on your behalf
 - Remind students to meet with their community partner to complete the Student Completion Form
 - Collect Student Completion Forms by the last day of class, approve + sign them + return to the CSL Office a week after classes end
 - Plan for a time for students to reflect on and share their CSL experiences (e.g., through presentations, project/poster displays etc.); invite community partners and CSL Staff to attend on these days
- *CSLebration reminder:** collect student projects throughout the year for display at this annual recognition event.

THROUGHOUT TERM

- Provide informal opportunities for students to relate their CSL experiences to material being discussed in class – this also helps engage students who have not selected the CSL option to think about the theoretical material in different ways
- Consider inviting community partners into class as guest presenters
- Contact CSL Office with questions, updates, etc.