

## **Principles of Good Practice in Community Service Learning Pedagogy**

### **Academic credit is for learning, not for service.**

Academic credit is not awarded for doing service or for the quality of the service, but rather for the student's demonstration of academic and civic learning.

### **Do not compromise academic rigor.**

The perceived "soft" service component actually raises the learning challenge in a service learning course. Students must not only master academic materials as in traditional courses, but also learn how to learn from unstructured and ill-structured community experiences, merge that learning with the learning from other course resources, and satisfy both academic and civic learning objectives.

### **Establish learning objectives.**

It is a service learning maxim that one cannot develop a quality service learning course without first setting very explicit academic and civic learning objectives.

### **Establish criteria for the selection of service placements.**

Requiring students to serve in any community-based organization as part of a service learning course is tantamount to requiring students to read any book as part of a traditional course. Faculty who are deliberate about establishing criteria for selecting community service placements will find that students are able to extract more relevant learning from their respective service experiences, and are more likely to meet course learning objectives.

### **Provide educationally sound learning strategies to harvest community learning and realize course learning objectives.**

Requiring service learning students to merely record their service activities and hours for their journal assignment is tantamount to requiring students in an engineering course to log their activities and hours in the lab. Learning strategies must be employed that support learning from service experiences and enable its use toward meeting course learning objectives.

### **Prepare students for learning from the community.**

Most students lack experience with both extracting and making meaning from experience and in merging it with other academic and civic course learning strategies. Therefore, without sufficient supports, even an exemplary reflection journal assignment will yield uneven student submissions.

### **Minimize the distinction between the student's community learning role and the classroom learning role.**

Classrooms and communities are very different learning contexts. Traditional classrooms encourage learner passivity, while community placements tend to require students to become active learners. Assuming different learner roles adds an unnecessary and counterproductive challenge to students. Since faculty wield more control over the classroom than over the community placements, service learning faculty are advised to adjust the classroom so that students assume a more active learner posture that then will be consistent with the role students must assume in the community.

### **Rethink the faculty instructional role.**

If faculty encourages students' active learning in the classroom, what would be a co commitment and consistent change in the teacher's role? Commensurate with the preceding principle's recommendation for an active student learning posture, this principle advocates that service-learning teachers, too, rethink their role, from transmitters to facilitators of learning.

### **Be prepared for variation in, and some loss of control with, student learning outcomes.**

Given the variability in service experiences and their influential role in student learning, one can anticipate greater heterogeneity in student learning outcomes and compromises to faculty control in service learning courses.

### **Maximize the community responsibility orientation of the course.**

One of the purposes of a service learning course is to develop students' civic capacities. Civic learning can occur in the classroom. Designing classroom norms and learning strategies that not only enhance academic learning but also encourage civic learning reflects powerful service learning pedagogy.

Jeffrey Howard, ed. *Praxis I: A Faculty Casebook on Community Service Learning*. Ann Arbor, MI: Office of Community Service Learning Press, University of Michigan. 1993.

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