Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning

Understanding & Preparing for Your Role in Service-Learning

Service-Learning at Pellissippi State

Service-Learning is an experiential teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich students learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

In Service-Learning enhanced courses, students work in the community on issues that make education relevant and exciting. Course materials, lectures and readings improve the quality of service, and in turn, the service experience enhances the classroom dialogue and student learning. Service-learning may take the form of projects, several individual service visits, or community based research.

A Service-Learning Experience Is:

- A **collaborative partnership** between college and community. The community organization and the college together identify a project or activity that addresses a community need or contributes to the necessary work of the organization.
- **Application** of academic knowledge and critical thinking skills. The project or activity is directly related to learning goals that the students are already working to achieve. The project contributes to their understanding and knowledge of academic concepts or skills.
- **Reflection and assessment** leading to deeper understanding of course content and civic engagement. Service-learning students participate in a structured reflection or assessment process which facilitates the integration of the service experience and course content.

The Service-Learning Difference:

- Picking trash as part of a clean-up event is **Service**.
- Studying water samples under a microscope is **Learning**.
When students collect and analyze water samples, document their results, and present findings to a local pollution control agency, that is Service-Learning.

**How Service-Learning Differs From Traditional Community Service:**

Through service-learning, students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in the classroom to real world situations and then reflecting on their experiences. The results are social, civic, and moral learning, benefits not only to the students, but also to the faculty and community at large. While internships and cooperative education are experiential and often include a classroom component, they generally do not focus on service to the community like service-learning does.

Service-Learning attributes equal weight to both service and learning goals. *The service must relate directly to the course learning objectives*, enhancing students learning while also meeting the needs of the community.

**Community Partner Role in a Service-Learning Course:**

Community Partners play an active role in what takes place during service. Service-Learning is an intentional, sustained partnership whereby a professor and students work with you and your organization to meet a goal or need. The diagram below illustrates how these three elements work together to create a service-learning experience:
You Are a Co-Educator in the Service-Learning Process:

Students who work with your organization through service-learning are usually doing their work in connection with a specific instructional goal for an academic course. All people in the service-learning loop – faculty, students and community partners – are considered teachers and learners. We assume that the students and your faculty partner will learn from you. Hopefully, it will also be a learning experience for you, as you collaborate with a faculty partner to provide an experience for students in the context of your organization and course. It is important to keep in mind:

- You will usually have contact with the students’ professor before you have contact with the students
- Projects usually last no longer than a 12-14 week semester
- Students often work in groups to accomplish projects
- You can work with professors to plan the types of service students will provide
- Service can take many forms, including: direct/indirect service, advocacy, policy, research
- You are encouraged to consider longer term, capacity building projects which empower your organization with new resources you can utilize long after the students are gone or that can be continued over successive semesters with new students.

For example:

A therapeutic horseback riding academy that works with mentally and physically challenged children needs a marketing plan. One semester, the community partner teams up with a college class of web design students to revamp its website. The next semester, it works with the same college but another class on database management. Next semester, they team up with a third class of advertising students to finalize their revamped image.

Students Acknowledgements:

Each student taking a class with a service-learning component will receive his/her own guide to service-learning. Students should be aware of the following responsibilities in regard to their partnership with you, the community partner:
## Student and Community Partner Expectations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Acknowledgement</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Your Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Behavior</strong></td>
<td>PSCC students are responsible for their own behavior, and are subject to the rules, regulations, and policies of the Community Organization, as well as the College’s Code of Conduct. Any violation of these rules subjects the student to disciplinary action.</td>
<td>We hold high expectations for our students, and so should you. This may be their first job experience; please help prepare them for the real world by explaining their service and occasionally asking questions about it.</td>
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<td><strong>Law Compliance</strong></td>
<td>PSCC strictly adheres to federal &amp; state laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, or social status. PSCC students sign legal forms to participate in service.</td>
<td>If you have problems with student behavior, attendance, or productivity, please notify us immediately. Please provide students with necessary legal forms for your organization.</td>
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<td><strong>Compensation</strong></td>
<td>PSCC students earn course credit and acknowledge that they have no right to claim workers’ compensation, unemployment, or any other federal or state assisted employment service or program.</td>
<td>Please do not compensate students monetarily, even if your organization has funds to do so. Students should never be paid for a Service-Learning experience.</td>
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<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td>PSCC students are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to and from their community organization. The College does not provide transportation for S-L activities.</td>
<td>Community Partners are not expected or required to provide student transportation</td>
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<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td>PSCC students acknowledge through college enrollment that they are in good health, and have received all necessary immunizations.</td>
<td>It is the student’s responsibility to take any necessary actions to maintain good health. Please assist in their overall safety while working at your organization.</td>
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**What We Tell the Students**

Students receive strict guidelines in addressing their interactions with you, the Community Partner. Professional relationships are encouraged; however, it is your responsibility to share any special requirements of your organization with the students. Students have agreed to participate in service-learning activities as a representative of the college and are to maintain the expectations as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outline of Student Roles and Responsibilities</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Be Active</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Dependable</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Professional</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Flexible</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Present</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Focused</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Be Open</strong></td>
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Five Steps for Creating a Service-Learning Project with a PSCC Faculty Member:

1). Establish a faculty partner
   ✓ If you already know a faculty member you would like to work with, you may contact her/him directly.
   ✓ If you are not sure who you’d like to work with, contact the Coordinator of Service-Learning, Annie Gray (ajgray@pstcc.edu). She will assist you in scheduling a meeting with faculty to discuss the responsibilities and goals for a proposed project.

2). Meet with your potential service-learning professor
   ✓ Invite your potential service-learning partner to your agency to discuss what community needs you address and to begin outlining possible student-faculty-partner projects
   ✓ Think of this as a courtship process - everyone should have their needs met, and an early conversation will ensure that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

3). Prioritize your needs & determine a plan to meet those needs
   
   For Example:
   You and your staff determine that marketing is your agency’s greatest need and those needs have multiple dimensions and steps.
   ✓ evaluate the effectiveness of current marketing tools
   ✓ devise or revise a marketing plan
   ✓ break marketing plan into components to phase implementation
   ✓ outline the project into a sequence of one semester (12-14 week) steps

   During the first semester, you decide to address your first step- evaluate effectiveness of current marketing tools. The service-learning students in a marketing or media technologies course would work with you throughout the semester to achieve the following:
   ✓ Create survey
   ✓ Conduct Survey
   ✓ Analyze data in responses
   ✓ Write a report that outlines findings
   ✓ Propose a revised marketing plan

   In the second semester, a new group of students would work with you to begin implementation of a revised marketing plan.

4). Develop a service-learning project with your partner
   The project should accomplish two goals:
   ✓ It should help to advance the work of your organization
It should help the students to achieve academic learning goals appropriate to their class.

5). Define & outline a project description
- Describe & define a clear outcome
- Specify resources: people, funds, work space, materials, etc.
- Craft an estimated timeline
- Identify a point person for each step so instructors and students know who to contact
- Determine the level of authority & decision making ability and autonomy the students will have
- Ensure that everyone is on the same page by providing clear, specific direction. Doing so will enhance the long term viability of the project

Questions To Ask Yourself & Your Staff About Potential Service-Learning Projects:

- What kinds of preparation would my agency need in order to participate in a service-learning partnership with PSCC faculty and students? How will I facilitate this preparation?
- What types of service-learning experiences would be best for my organization?
- How many students will it realistically require to complete the project?
- How many students can we handle at once?
- What staff members will supervise and coordinate student work?
- What resources will you and your organization need to support the student project completion?
- What level of skills/knowledge do the students need before working with your agency?
- What academic discipline seems to be a “best fit” for this project?
- How will the partnership enhance academic learning through service experiences?
- In what way will my agency assess the service-learning partnership? What criteria will we use?

Collaborative Relationship Dedication:

Pellissippi State believes in the power of Service-Learning to be reciprocally beneficial to the students, faculty, you, and the community at large. The college is dedicated to forming and maintaining this mutual partnership. Service-Learning provides support for community partners through:

- Serving community needs
- Identifying meaningful connections between service experiences and courses
- Developing sustainable campus-community partnerships
✓ Providing enriching workshops and resources
✓ Assisting with student-learner recruitment, placement and tracking

We would like your clear and open communication in the following areas:
✓ Discussing service goals and opportunities with S-L facilitators and/or individual instructors
✓ Assisting students in gaining knowledge about your organization and facilitating service site orientation
✓ Providing oversight and feedback to students and faculty
✓ Completing student and project evaluations as they come your way
✓ Updating contact information with the S-L facilitators

You are welcome to share your service-learning ideas, questions and concerns with PSCC’s Service-Learning Facilitator:

service-learning@pstcc.edu  Annie Gray (ajgray@pstcc.edu)  (865) 694-6400