



Service-Learning Course Designation

The Center for Civic Engagement at WSU Pullman has established a service learning course designation (“C”) for courses at the WSU campuses that will appear in the course schedule to identify the many academic courses/sections offering a service learning component.

To ensure a level of consistency across “C” designated courses, a few basic criteria have been developed. While not all courses that offer service learning will acquire the “C” designation, those courses that are “C” designated will meet the following criteria:

1. Service learning activities are directly relevant to course content and goals.
2. Service learning activities address a community-identified need and are constructed to mitigate any associated risks.
3. Service learning activities benefit the community (broadly defined) and, as appropriate, provide an opportunity for collaborative partners to receive associated products and/or be involved in evaluation of the activity.
4. Course requirements, as expressed in the syllabus, provide opportunity and method(s) for students to reflect on what they have learned through their service learning experience.
5. Course requirement options ensure that no student is required to participate in activity that creates a religious, political and/or moral conflict.

If you believe your course should be marked with the service learning course designation, or if you would like more information about this course designation, please contact Veronica Puente at puentev@wsu.edu.

Course Development

Service learning is a teaching strategy used to advance academic learning through civic engagement. Service learning is not standalone community service. It is integrated into the course objectives to help students gain hands on experience in the field of study, apply and observe course concepts, and make real world connections to the subject, all while supporting and enhancing local communities!

Developing a Service Learning Course

1. Identify appropriate partnerships and projects

It is crucial that the service learning aligns with course objectives. The CCE has a large network of diverse community partners. We work with over 770 agencies throughout Washington and beyond. The CCE can assist with connecting faculty and students to relevant community agencies. Visit the Community Partner Maps page to see partners and their locations. It is crucial that the service learning aligns with course objectives.

2. Create a syllabus that reflects service learning as part of the course design

A syllabus for a service learning course should include the following components:

- What is service learning and why is it valuable?
- Why is service learning a key component of the course?
- What is the community engagement project for the course and how will students reflect on that experience?
- Be sure to include an explanation of the service learning option or requirement for the course. It is important to list all relevant assignments, presentations, due dates, and any other pertinent information.

3. Introduce service learning to the students in the first week

Service learning may be a new concept for some students. While relevant information is documented in the syllabus, a best practice is to introduce and discuss service learning during the first week of class. It is beneficial to underscore its connection and relevance to the course content and its capacity to offer dynamic experiences to students. This is a good time for a CCE representative to come and present to the class.

4. Contact the CESL Office with questions or concerns

The CESL Office at the WSU Health Sciences Spokane campus collaborates with the Center for Civic Engagement at WSU in Pullman to provide resources, training, and support to meet your needs. For more information please contact Veronica Puente at puentev@wsu.edu.

5. Become familiar with the best practices for service learning pedagogy

1. **Academic Credit Is for Learning, Not for Service:** Academic credit is not awarded for doing community service, nor for the quantity or quality of that service, but rather for the student's demonstration of academic and civic learning.
2. **Do Not Compromise Academic Rigor:** Integrate service learning in a way that supports or enhances existing academic standards and expectations through related readings, presentations, and assignments.
3. **Establish Learning Objectives:** Development of a quality service-learning course begins with explicit learning objectives.
4. **Establish Criteria for the Selection of Service Placements:** Establishing criteria for selecting community service placements/projects in order that students are able to extract more relevant learning from their experiences.
5. **Provide Educationally-Sound Learning Strategies To Harvest Community Learning and Realize Course Learning Objectives:** Discussion and assignments that provoke analysis of community experiences in the context of the course learning are necessary to ensure the service becomes an instrument of learning.
6. **Prepare Students for Learning from the Community:** Students realize the potential of community learning through appropriate preparation and orientation, examples of successful experiences, and recognition of the expertise and assets that exist in the community.
7. **Minimize the Distinction Between the Students' Community Learning Role and Classroom Learning Role:** Classrooms and communities are very different learning contexts, each requiring

students to assume a different learner role. The more these roles are made consistent, the better the chances that the learning potential within each context will be realized.

8. **Rethink the Faculty Instructional Role:** A shift in instructor role that would be most compatible with service learning would move away from information dissemination and toward learning facilitation and guidance.
9. **Be Prepared for Variation in, and Some Loss of Control with, Student Learning Outcomes:** The variability in community contexts necessarily leads to less certainty and homogeneity in student learning outcomes.
10. **Maximize the Community Responsibility Orientation of the Course:** One of the necessary conditions of a service learning course is purposeful civic learning. Designing classroom norms and learning strategies that not only enhance academic learning but also encourage civic learning are essential to purposeful academic learning.

Excerpted from Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning: Service-Learning Course Design Workbook, Howard, Jeffery, ed., University of Michigan: OCSL Press, Summer 2001, pp. 16-19.