Service Learning Manual

December 2022

Northwestern Michigan College, International Services and Service Learning

Abstract

Northwestern Michigan College has a rich culture of service that often goes undocumented or publicized on our campus and in the surrounding community. Our mission commits our institution to deliver learning that transforms lives and enriches our communities. In addition, our values of learning, collaboration, and excellence tie directly with our commitment to serve our community.

Marina Baratian, professor of psychology at Brevard Community College states, "By incorporating community work into the curriculum, service-learning not only addresses community needs but also helps students acquire hands–on experience that enhances academic learning." Often community issues that resonate with students' lives provide excellent ways to engage students in learning course concepts. This manual provides guidance in developing and documenting service learning both as part of the college curriculum and as forms of co-curricular learning. It also provides successful examples of how students are already impacting the community.

Future-Focused Education: The Importance of Service Learning in College

As part of the college's new strategic plan, NMC Next, we pledged to our students an empowering environment that encourages learners to discover new knowledge and explore questions related to their future career and life's work; and a meaningful education that equips learners with relevant skills and supports them in developing their sense of purpose. This pledge is realized through service learning. Service-learning is defined as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." (Learn and Serve Clearinghouse, 2013)

A national study of Learn and Serve America programs suggests that effective service-learning programs improve grades, increase attendance & persistence, and develop students' personal and social responsibility. A growing body of research recognizes service learning as an effective strategy to help students by:

"Promoting learning through active participation in service experiences; providing structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and writing about their service experience; providing an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations; extending learning beyond the classroom and into the community; and fostering a sense of caring for others. Service learning also strengthens both education and local communities by building effective collaborative

partnerships between colleges and other institutions and organizations; meeting community needs through the service projects conducted." (Learn and Service America, 2010)

The Higher Learning Commission addresses service learning under Core Component 4B.

4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

- The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
- The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Robert Franco suggests in <u>Service-Learning Course Design for Community Colleges</u> that, "community colleges can catalyze ideas, issues, practices, and policies so that a renewed civic energy results in stronger citizens and communities."

Northwestern Michigan Colleges Service Learning:

The mission of NMC service-learning is to involve students, faculty, and staff in service activities that mutually benefit the campus and community. The International Services and Service Learning office collaborates with academic departments, coordinates community partnerships, promotes service-learning, and offers programs in order to further the academic and public purposes of Northwestern Michigan College. Key to the success of a service-learning program at Northwestern Michigan College is the personnel to assist faculty and staff, develop, track and evaluate service learning at Northwestern Michigan College. Due to the unique placement of the International Services and Service Learning (ISSL) Office and the Experiential Learning Institute, it is fitting that these departments be responsible for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive service-learning program.

Goals for Service-Learning at Northwestern Michigan College: *(Based on college and university best practices from Campus Compact)* Support the development of service-learning projects and partnerships:

- Increase the number of faculty using service-learning as part of their courses
- Increase understanding and support for service-learning campus wide
- Increase campus participation in community service activities
- Develop and secure resources to support involvement in community services
- Advance the scholarship of service
- Promote civic engagement in higher education
- Track and provide evidence for service-learning
- Document the various campus forms of civic engagement

http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/service/what.html
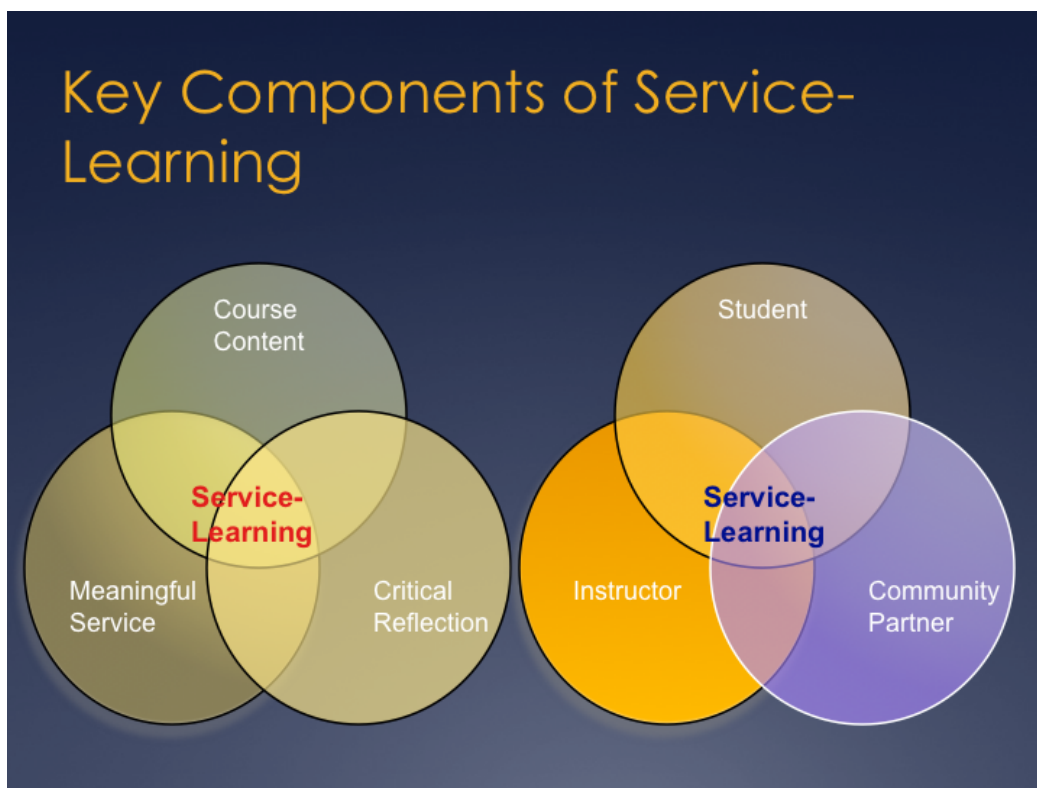
Types of Service Learning opportunities

Short-Term Service: Short-term or one-time service requires less time commitment than other options but can have a big impact, and can often serve to pique the interest of a student who is only marginally attracted to the idea of community service. These short-term commitments are aimed at achieving a specific goal, including increasing public awareness of an issue, completing a task, or creating a product. Examples could include serving as mentors with our Extended Educational Services College for Kids or our current partnership with Blair Elementary School, where NMC students mentor 5th graders and prepare them for middle school and beyond.

Ongoing Service or Placement: Placement at an agency implies that the student will serve over a period of time that can extend indefinitely with the student returning to the site on a regular basis, usually a few hours per week. For example, a set number of hours of service work is required as part of the Social Work or the Early Childhood Education Certificate program.

Class Project or Product: In this case, the class works as a team to complete a project within the confines of the classroom. For example, Kristy McDonald's BUS231 - Professional Communications course, Brandon Everest's SOC201 - Modern Social Problems, or study abroad courses (293s) where service learning is embedded in the on-site curriculum.

Implementation

The most critical process in selecting the level of service for each student is determined by the needs of the community partner, the type of project (short-term, ongoing, class project), the needs of the student and the course objectives. To begin the process of agency service learning placement, students should complete the Service Learning Student Application Form and submit it to their instructor. In addition to the Application Form, students placed off-campus will also need to complete the Placement Confirmation Form.

Determining the level of service can be done in several ways. One option in determining the appropriate number of hours to be served in a placement situation is to estimate the time that would be spent on other assignments in the class, such as the time it would take to prepare for tests or the time typically needed to research and write a term paper. It is recommended that approximately 20 hours in a 15 week semester is a good starting point. 20 hours is very doable for most students since it requires only 1 – 2 hours per week on average.

Documenting & Evaluating Service-Learning Projects

A record of service is important for a number of reasons:

- It provides data on the impact of service-learning (number of students placed, community partners/members reached, hours served, etc.). This information is also required to support the documentation for our strategic plan.
- It provides a means of establishing student recognition for use in awarding scholarships, graduation honors, or other special recognition.
- It provides a record of accomplishment for the student to have on their college transcript.
- It helps faculty members and/or the ISS office to monitor the fit between students and community partners.
- It helps community partners understand how best to use service-learning students to achieve their organizational goals.
- It guides students in identifying their goals for academic and personal growth.

An important component of service-learning is determining how learning will be measured when it is taking place outside of regular class. How do we know whether our students are meeting the course objectives through their service? How do we know whether they are gaining personal insights, knowledge of the community and awareness of their own role in the community?

It is important that faculty members guide the student's reflection and that the reflection produces a tangible result that the faculty member can evaluate (see Domains of Reflection https://www.nmc.edu/experiential-learning/files/domains-of-reflection-example-reflection-questions.pdf). Some evaluation tools that have been found to be effective include journals, essays, presentations and projects. For example, NMC has adopted the following methods to assess student learning.

- **A Journal or Essay** – This assignment should be significantly less structured than a research assignment. In urging students to connect what they've learned to the course objectives, instructors can ask them to answer pointed questions in a journal or essay: Whom did the community partner you worked with serve? What are the significant social problems confronted by the agency? What do you think are the causes of these problems? What did you do to affect this issue? What more could have been done? What impediments do you see before this agency in its quest to improve the community? Questions such as

these prompt students to go beyond a simple explanation of the duties and tasks they performed.

- **A Speech or Presentation to the Class** – Just as much preparation and creativity can go into an oral presentation as into an essay or journal. Students might present their findings in the form of an organized class discussion or debate, asking the class to participate in their learning. They might even bring to class a person who was served by the agency or (with the person's permission), details from his or her personal story.

- **Tangible Product or Project** – Examples of a product might include a promotional video or brochure created by a media class, an educational puppet show performed at a children's center, the eradication of non-native plant species in a public park/beach, or the repair of old air conditioning units at a senior center. In all of these examples, students should be asked to express what they learned from completing or creating the product. https://www.nmc.edu/experiential-learning/files/domains-of-reflection-example-reflection-questions.pdf

How the instructor chooses to incorporate this experience into the final grade is determined in the course syllabus. Equally important, the supervisor must also evaluate the student (1-5 scale) with the Service Hours Record (SHR) on the quality of service provided using the six criteria in the [Mid-Semester Progress Report](#):

1. Attendance
2. Dependability
3. Responsibility
4. Initiative
5. Attitude
6. Cooperation

The supervisor should also add open-ended comments, and provide thoughtful feedback concerning their student workers. The faculty member, the student and the ISSL office all receive copies of this document.

A [Service-Learning Questionnaire](#) reflection form is given to students during the last week of the semester. This form asks students a series of questions about their experience and how it has

affected them personally: in their choice of major, their career plans, their grades, their understanding of the course material, and their attitude towards the community. It also asks them to rate the effectiveness of the service-learning program.

Certification of Service Learning

Each student that completes a service learning experience has the option to add those recorded and verified hours to their student academic transcript.

The Service Learning (SHR) Verification Form is a means to record and report hours to a student's transcript (certification). All hours that a student serves in the community that are documented through the ISSL Office are recorded on the student's academic transcript, below NMC Degree(s). For example,

> *NMC Degree(s):   ASA – Associates of Science & Arts*
> *Community Service-Learning: 55 Hrs.*

The SHR Form is the formal instrument through which ISSL keeps track of each student's hours and conveys those hours to the Registrar. Hours are documented daily or weekly and approved by the agency or project supervisor. At the end of the service period (usually at the end of the semester), the supervisor signs the form to verify the total number of hours worked.

ISSL support for Service Learning:

In partnership with academic departments, ELI, faculty, and staff ISSL may be able to perform the following duties in the support of service-learning:

- Contact with individual instructors about appropriate sites for their courses
- Background checks for students, where appropriate
- Assistance for students, faculty, and community agencies when questions or problems arise
- Record keeping (placements, hours served, evaluation)
- Contact with registrar to document hours on transcripts
- Gathering of information from community agencies to facilitate evaluation of student performance

- Recruitment of new faculty to create service-learning course components, including best practices and syllabus & model materials
- Student placement (identification of sites; management of safety and legal issues; tracking of sites' capacity, hours of operation, need, clients served, and appropriateness for college students (*Additional* ISSL or ELI *staff hours will be needed to complete this duty*)

Examples of Current Service Learning at NMC:

BUS 231 – Professional Communications:

One of the semester-long projects is the Big Little Hero Race. It is a superhero themed race hosted by Kristy McDonald's Professional Communications students to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan and NMC's College for Kids. All assignments were through the lens of this project. Some of the successes recently documented were:

- Student completion (every student that enrolled in the class finished the class)
- Student academic success (every student was above a 3.0)
- Students made connections in the community that have led to internships and employment
- Students felt an increase in self-confidence and self-worth as documented in their final business presentation
- The community was supportive and encouraging of the students as they not only focused on their academic skills, but also on becoming productive citizens
- Additional skills demonstrated: leadership, team-work, critical thinking and problem solving

   "This semester I had the opportunity to learn in an experiential learning class with a service learning project, a process that allowed me to learn while giving back to the community. My experience has taught me valuable lessons that I wouldn't find in a lecture class. I learned how to properly; communicate with businesses, learn marketing tactics, and provide service to the community. This learning environment has allowed me to find a place of belonging in gaining education by helping others through the business and marketing world." NMC student Mahli Braak 2022.

SOC 201 - Modern Social Problems:

Brandon Everest structured his course highlighting pressing social problems, including poverty, racism, environmental problems and technological change. He describes it here;

"One kind of service learning is advocacy. Advocacy is a little different than more typical community service projects as they require students to research, partner and 'take a stand', making recommendations on policy to audiences of concerned publics."

"In the course, students are asked to choose a theme [above] for research that requires more depth than typical introductory courses like this. Each has an associated "Experiential Challenge" that requires them to 'do something' for a week around their topic. These include taking the Live Below the Line Challenge, Race Equity Challenge, One Week for the Climate, or One Week Digital Detox respectively. From there, they must complete a research project that creates a publicly shareable medium for reporting, including infographics, research posters and the like. These are shared for public audiences and distributed around campus. This authenticity of the topics, our applied real-world service learning approach and relevance of an actual audience fuels students' investment in the work."

"This prepares them for the Social Solutions Project. In it, they bring everything together: research, challenges, and a minimum of five hours of service to make recommendations on a policy or practice that could 'make a difference'. This can include individual, solo work on issues related to the topic all the way to a small, but structured community partnerships at thrift shops, food pantries, environmental organizations, and others. Students are given freedom to work with me to develop their own project to course standards."

"Students are graded by a combination of factors like weekly chapter summaries (30%), experiential challenges and service projects (10%), research paper and projects (30%), semi-weekly reflection in various formats (20%) and professional skills and communication with partners and teammates (10%)."

"The class's greatest 'success' was the Social Solutions project. It was a project that I kept in my mind since day 1, and, as someone incredibly passionate about politics, policy, and governance, actually getting to find ways to get more involved politically brought a smile to my face. I also found the natural flow of the class, from selecting a topic, to doing the Experiential Challenge, to the "What is it?"

assignment, and lastly the Social Solutions project to be perfect. It was a very natural flow that progressively got both more engaging and more involved and transcended the classroom into the real world." Grant Jacobs, Social Sciences ASA Student

Auto-Tech and Construction Technology Programs:

The Auto-Tech program involves several AT classes and takes donated vehicles, rebuilds them and then donates the car to a community member in need. The Construction Tech program has built benches put together by the carpentry class to be distributed along various local trails and picnic tables have been collaboratively assembled by the carpentry and welding classes.

Early Childhood Education :

Child Development currently offers an academic service-learning internship that works like an honors contract that is completed outside the classroom. The contract and service-learning plan are managed through Cheryl Bloomquist and Mark Delonge. This is a great example of a Service Placement process.

Dental Assistant Students:

Various agencies and organizations offer dental care to those in need. The NMC Dental Assisting students have served a variety of organizations including:

- **Traverse Health Clinic** – Dental Assistant students assisted fourth year U of M Dental students with chair-side procedures.
- **Migrant Dental Clinic** – Students were placed on an internship basis
- **Grand Traverse Band Dental Clinic** – Students were placed at the clinic as part of their internships, they also have assisted fourth year students to provide services to this population.
- V4V Victors for Veterans - A day long assistantship with area veterans and U of M dental students.

The list of outreach and service-learning by our Dental Assisting students continues to grow beyond the classroom. They are a prime example of the importance of service to our community and the ability to connect it to their education.

Co-curricular Learning Activities: :

Co-curricular Service Learning differs from academic service learning in that it is not connected to a specific course or discipline (see the following document from Kingsborough Community College https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/service_learning/documents/cc_FAQ.pdf). However, NMC student groups have, and will continue to have, a big impact in our community, for example:

The Co-Curricular committee in conjunction with the Student Life Office are actively involved with the student population as well as the greater northern Michigan community through event planning, committee work, and community collaboratives. Student Life is an active partner with organizations such as Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Third Level Crisis Center, and the Department of Human Services to promote community based services to benefit our student populations. Department leaders are on a community wide Anti-Bullying Task Force and are organizers with the "Embrace the Dream" initiative which aims to engage the whole of our community through programming that inspires social justice and equality for all people.

The NMC Rotaract Club created a project (Bridge of Books) whereby they collected over 400 children books to send to a primary school in Uganda. In addition, 15 students wrote, illustrated and published a children's book that will be distributed to schools in Uganda, Guatemala, and Traverse City.

The Alpha Rho Pi Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at Northwestern Michigan College prides itself on a high degree of community service. The chapter officers organize community service opportunities such as the Cherry Festival Green Team, volunteering at the Traverse City Film Festival, and the Adopt-a-Road Program. Throughout the year, as fundraising and volunteer opportunities become available in the community, the Alpha Rho Pi Chapter is often more than ready to participate.

Study Abroad Service Learning

NMC academic study abroad opportunities often include service projects. Some recent examples include:

Greece – working at a relief organization (soup kitchen and clothing facility) and interacting with Syrian refugees

Brazil – painting soccer facilities in a small Brazilian village celebrating their 100th anniversary offering sporting opportunities for low income children

Brazil - removing invasive species and planting trees to ward off erosion in a small coastal fishing village

India – helping cook and serve the Langar meal at the Sikh temple in New Delhi

India – working with elementary students on a school science project at a non-profit inner city school for families in poverty

Morocco – working with community members to rehabilitate a neighborhood square so local children would find it safe to attend following their school day

Morocco – painting a kindergarten classroom in a rural village

Costa Rica – mapping and photographing banana plantations to analyze and find a solution to banana rot.

Costa Rica - teaching classes highlighting North American biology and geography at an elementary school in a rural village

Ecuador – business and culinary students worked with a village in the cloud forest to help design and build a restaurant as an incentive to boost the village economy

Ecuador – removing invasive species and planted medicinal plants to support an ecological reverse in the Galapagos Islands

South Africa – nursing students taught basic health care in rural villages

South Africa – removing invasive species and rehabilitating trails on an African wildlife reserve

South Africa – helping to construct a rural airstrip to enhance delivery of medical supplies and other commodities in a rural area.

Indonesia – mapping with underwater and aerial drone technology coral reefs surrounding Budekin Island, to help prevent future destruction of the ecosystem due to over tourism

Getting Started

There are a number of ways to begin introducing service learning into your curriculum.

- Contact the Office of International Services and Service Learning - 995-2527
- Contact the Experiential Learning Institute - 995-1170
- Research successful discipline specific modules/plans from other institutions e.g.,
  https://wmich.edu/servicelearning/courses/general-examples

  https://www.estrellamountain.edu/students/service-learning/service-learning-ideas

  http://www.loyno.edu/engage/service-learning-examples

- Meet with NMC Service Learning Advisory Committee, or experienced faculty who have included service learning into their curriculum

Marketing

Important to the success of documented Service Learning at NMC is the promotion of various opportunities for student involvement. Whether it is an event sponsored by the Office of Student Life, an annual project aligned with a specific course, or a chance to serve for an extended period of time with a community agency, the campus must have a distinct awareness of the Service Learning being offered. The office of International Services and Service Learning, and the Experiential Learning Institute can help faculty market their opportunities. Suggested ways of promotion include:

- White Pine Press & WNMC
- Student Success Center Instagram page
- CIE Faculty Development workshops
- Sample syllabi distributed to discipline offices
- Announcements in student (Student Success Center) and employee email
- Intercom

Conclusion

With the co-curricular service learning certification, not only do students at NMC acquire a solid academic foundation but one of valuable service.

Students consistently rate the learning experience in service learning courses more favorably than learning in "traditional" settings. NMC Business Major, Jacquie Wilson provided feedback on her service learning experience.

What was the biggest impact from your experience?
"Twenty-one students started the class and twenty-one students finished the class. I knew every one's name and something about each of them. I felt connected to the entire class and had a much bigger investment in the whole learning process. That quality of being connected cannot be overstated."

How did what I learned in class work for my degree?
"My first reaction: How did it not?
More specifically: Proper formatting for correspondence, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and empathy. What I didn't count on was an increase of intangibles like self-respect and confidence."

"I know that I continue to reap the benefits, personally and professionally, from being a member of a high quality service learning project."

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