

# A Service-Learning Model

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There are many models of academic service-learning. The following model, typically used at Pacific Lutheran University, is for integration of service-learning into an *existing* academic class (history, math, etc.).

## Set Goals

### Set Class (Academic) Goals

*Example:* American History: Students will understand the forces in American History which have shaped urban development and economic specialization.

### Set Service Goals:

Service work is a “lived text.” (Carlton and Killen, PLU, 1993).

- **To achieve academic objectives:** *Example:* Students need to experience the economic pressures which affect humans living in urban areas.
- **To respond effectively to community needs:** *Example:* Local shelters for the homeless need donations of food and clothing as well as tutoring and childcare.

## Select Service Sites

**Important:** Do this at least one or two months ahead of your course. The service sites are community partners: their time and work needs are often scheduled in advance.

The Center for Public Service can assist you with many of these tasks. For the service-learning to be truly effective, however, it is very important that the faculty member personally interact with the site supervisors so that they have a greater sense of *involvement in the course and in the students' learning*.

1. **Visit sites first:** *Example:* One of the homeless shelters in the area is undergoing management and location changes and problems. They have asked for assistance; your visit allows you to determine that the site is not at this time appropriate for your students but it also allows you to make personal contact with the new manager and you can make plans for future possible site service.
2. **Select service site as you would a good text: same criteria:** *Example:* Well-organized, clearly defined agency goals, opportunities for questions and answers, challenging, etc.
3. **Inventory student interest/talent**
4. **Match service needs with student interest/talent:** *Example:* Four students are especially fond of children and would be willing to provide childcare at a homeless shelter while the parents are learning job skills.
5. **Match student transportation with site location:** *Example:* Three students have their own cars; others are dependent on public transportation or some other person to drive. Some of those who are dependent cannot get to the homeless shelter but they can walk to a nearby elementary school to tutor several recently-arrived immigrant children whose parents have come to the area to find work.
6. **Match service needs with student's time constraints:** *Example:* Seven students work at after-school jobs; five more are committed to sports activities. These twelve students choose to work with

evening computer training for residents of the homeless shelter or to take weekend shifts as food bank distributors, or to work on weekends for Habitat for Humanity building and repairing homes in the inner city. The students do not take service positions which require extensive training or a minimum 6-month commitment since this class continues for one semester only. Nor do they take assignments which might create strong bonds of dependency between themselves and children, such as mentoring positions, because their mentoring would be taken away from the children too soon (end of semester).

7. **Arrange for contract agreements between sites and students:** *Example:* One page agreement which states what the Site Supervisor expects, what the student expects, times and dates of work, and any “rules of conduct” which may need to be elaborated. This should include an agreement about what the student will be doing (generally) and what the student expects to learn (generally). Keep the agreement short: neither Site Supervisor nor student has time to fill out a lot of forms.
8. **Confirm dates and times students will work:** Send a confirming e-mail or letter to the Site Supervisor and agree to make a follow-up call once students have begun their assignments (better yet, visit the site within a week after they have begun).
9. **Arrange for liability and insurance to be covered:** Ask the host agency if they provide insurance. Students may need to be fingerprinted and have a background check prior to service work. Some sites will not accept volunteers under 18 years of age. Be certain that you, the Site Supervisor and the student know who is responsible for what. *For more information check with the Center for Public Service.*

## Orientation

### Provide In-class Orientation

- **Theoretical:** *Example:* Readings on the migration of workers to cities in search of work and on the ebb and flow of work availability in cities.
- **Site-Specific:** *Example:* Site supervisors from two homeless shelters, the local elementary school’s family assistance program for immigrant children, and a church food bank come to class to describe their programs and the work done there. They explain the background philosophy and offer some insight in what to expect.
- **Personal:** *Example:* Students write a short essay about what they expect to find at their sites, then discuss their essays in small groups in class. Also important: group exercises to develop communications skills. Chances are the service site experience will be a cross-cultural one, that is, students will be working in unfamiliar environments, encountering new kinds of expressions and situations.

### Provide Site-based Orientation

*Example:* The school counselor takes a half-hour to discuss with your students some of the issues which confront newly-arrived immigrant children at the school. The counselor and teachers explain school rules and the goals of tutoring.

## Reflection

### Build On-going Reflection into Class

- Students keep **journals**
- Student teams lead **discussions** of issues raised at their sites.

- Students create various **art projects** to illustrate their experiences
- Students watch videos and/or hear speakers related to the issues of the course. How does a particular film portray poverty and homelessness? How does it relate what they actually see at their work sites? How do the film, their work experience and the texts they read complement or contradict each other?
- Students **interview** site coworkers and others

### Maintain Contact with Service Site Supervisors

*Example:* Regular (but not too intrusive or frequent) phone calls. Notes. Site visits.

### Integrate Academic Topic with Final Project From Site

*Example:* Students who have worked at the homeless shelter with four women who are learning job skills use videos and posters to weave the written themes of economic history with the personal themes of the women's lives and struggles. They challenge the class to consider ways in which economic progress could occur *without* generating personal misfortune. **Particularly valuable** are projects which produce something **cooperatively with the community partners**: Perhaps the students who are teaching the women computer skills could ask them, as an assignment, to write letters of inquiry to employers. The students might also, as their project, develop a resource manual for other women who may be in the same situation.

### Evaluate and Assess

- **Academic Outcomes:** Evaluate relative to the *academic goals* of the course. Use familiar evaluation tools. DO NOT confuse the academic performance of the student with the student's site experience. Rather, assess the site experience for its quality and its contribution to achievement of the academic goals of the course. Was it an appropriate "text"? See below.
- **Site Experience: from student's point of view:** *Example:* Student completes evaluation form: was the experience as expected? Was anything learned? What could have been better? Worse? Has anything changed in the student's attitudes toward the people with whom she worked? Toward the problems addressed by the service site? In the student's ability to recognize the relationship between urban history and the development of the poverty she sees at her work site?
- **Site Experience: from site supervisor's point of view:** *Example:* Site supervisor completes (short) form: Did student fulfill duties? Was the students' service useful? What went wrong/right? Would the supervisor want more students? Were any of the original needs satisfied? Did the supervisor feel engaged in the student's learning? Did the supervisor feel connected to and involved in the academic course?
- **Site Experience: from point of view of people with whom students worked:** *Example:* What has the student heard in conversation with the people with whom he worked? What insights have they given the students?

**Please let the Center for Public Service know about your course in advance so that we can tell advising and registrar about it, and so that we can better assist you. Thank you!**

*Adapted from "Integrating Service into an Existing Liberal Arts Syllabus." Workshop presented at NSEE Conference November, 1995. Susan Brown Carlton & Oney Crandall.*

## Other Teaching Resources

### Syllabus revision

[http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Syllabi-EZlotkowski.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Syllabi-EZlotkowski.pdf)

### Faculty Toolkit for Service-Learning

[http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/HE\\_toolkit\\_with\\_worksheets.pdf](http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/HE_toolkit_with_worksheets.pdf)

This is a very large PDF file (169 pages) but very valuable set of tools for faculty teaching service-learning courses. It can be downloaded/divided into sections.