

MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY  
CAREER & EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION CENTER

# Service Learning & Civic Engagement Faculty Guide



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## **Service Learning**

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instructions and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. A learning experience must include community service, instruction, and reflection in order to be considered service learning.

### **Credit-bearing service learning:**

The Mount is one of the only universities in the country that offers credit bearing service learning experiences. Faculty can require all students to attach a service learning credit to a course, or they can let it be an optional experience for interested students. The service that the student completes must be directly related to course content. At the Mount, any student can elect to add a service learning credit to any course with faculty permission. Students may complete up to three service learning credits for free, the service learning credit fulfills the undergraduate experiential education graduation requirement, and it counts in the Talent Opportunity Program. At the Mount, credit-bearing service learning students are retained at 92.5%, which is significantly higher than the retention rate for all undergraduate students. Since 1994, Mount service learning students have contributed over \$1.4 million dollars of in-kind service to Greater Cincinnati nonprofits.



**Requirements for credit-bearing service learning students:** a service learning orientation, a service learning confirmation on MountConnect, a pre-evaluation, 30 hours of community service with one community partner, journaling on Blackboard, a mid-semester check in meeting with the manager of service learning & civic engagement, a mid-semester check in meeting with the instructor of the course, an end of semester in-class presentation, a guided reflection, and a post-evaluation.

**Faculty responsibilities for credit-bearing service learning students:** approving the service learning confirmation on MountConnect, a check in meeting with the student mid-semester discussing connections between the service experience and the content of the course, and allowing the student to deliver an in-class service learning presentation at the end of the semester.

### **Examples of credit-bearing service learning at MSJ:**

- HON 261- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In this course, all students go on a trip to the United Nations over the summer, where they learn about their sustainable development goals. The course itself is then facilitated in the fall, and requires all students to complete 30 hours of community service with one local nonprofit that does work related to a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.
- SED 215- Human Exceptionalities. In this course, students learn about working with children with exceptionalities (students on IEPs, learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder, gifted students, etc.). All students are required to complete 30 hours of tutoring and mentoring at a school or local nonprofit, working with children who have some sort of learning exceptionality.
- JCG 390- Appalachian Culture & Spirit. Students in this course learn about the culture and religious traditions of Appalachia. Over spring break, students in this course travel to southeastern Kentucky to build and repair houses with the Christian Appalachia Project, while

experiencing life in Appalachia. Students typically complete more than 30 hours of service while they are on their trip through this course.

- LCE 300- Leadership for the Common Good. In this course students learn about their personal and collective responsibilities as citizens in service to society. Emphasis is placed on critical analysis of local/global social problems and methods used in leading change to address them. All students spend at least 30 hours of community service working on a policy analysis/ developing an advocacy strategy on behalf of a local nonprofit community partner.

### **Project-based service learning:**

The most common model of service learning in the United States is project-based service learning. In this model, students learn course content by completing a real life project on behalf of a community partner. Project-based service learning usually requires all students in the course to complete 10-15 hours of community service while working on the project. While project-based service learning is not credit bearing, faculty could encourage students to attach a service learning credit to the course if they are interested in taking on an elevated role on the project; this would require them to complete 30 hours of service instead of 10-15 hours. Typical service learning projects include: a research project, the development/ facilitation of a workshop, the development/ facilitation of an advocacy project, or the creation of a tangible product. Recommended requirements for students participating in project-based service learning include: a service learning orientation, working on the project/ journaling along the way, and a presentation to the community partner.

### **Examples of project-based service learning at MSJ:**

- HLT 200- Foundations of Wellness. This course explores the emotional, environmental, intellectual, occupation, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions of well-being, quality of life, and overall health. They also learn about the healthcare system in the United States, and the concepts of health disparities and cultural competence. All students participate in a tour of South Cumminsville by Working in Neighborhoods, where they have the opportunity to see health disparities in the real world. Then are then all required to volunteer 10-15 hours with Working in Neighborhoods working on a project that helps to address health disparities in that neighborhood.
- CORE 425- Global Human Rights: The Case for Women & Child. In this capstone course, students examine the idea of the individual human right and how this idea has evolved to address the different needs of women and children throughout the world. During the second half of the semester, all students work together on a class service project of their own choosing that benefits local women and/or children. Students typically choose to complete a donation drive or a fundraising drive on behalf of a local nonprofit organization.
- EDU 384- Methods of Teaching Social Studies. Students in this course learn about the curriculum framework and philosophies behind various teaching approaches for teaching social studies. Throughout the semester all of the students develop lesson plans for a Girl Scout “Badge in a Day” program, which is facilitated towards the end of the semester. The “Badge in a Day” event allows the local Girl Scouts to earn their civics badge in just a single day.
- COM 250- Digital Video Production. Students in this course are introduced to the fundamental principles of shooting video for narrative and non-narrative projects. All students in this course are paired with a local nonprofit community partner and spend the semester developing video promotional materials on behalf of the community partner.

### **One-time service learning:**

Novice service learning faculty may be interested in incorporating a one-time service learning experience into a course to help them to become accustomed to service learning and civically engaged pedagogies. In this model, students usually complete a one-time, in-person experience

of 3-5 hours with a community partner. Again, the service performed must directly relate to course content, and some kind of reflection is required. Reflection strategies for one-time service learning could include: a group discussion, journaling, writing a paper, or completing a presentation.

**Examples of one-time service learning at MSJ:**

- COM 100- Spoken Word. Students in this course develop an understanding of interpersonal, small group, and public communication principles, processes, and practices. All students then form into groups of three or four. Each group completes a one-time volunteer experience, and then they deliver a group speech encouraging other students to volunteer at their site.
- CORE 115- Common Ground. In this course designed for incoming freshman, students examine their own role as citizens, and explore historical and current ideas about the common good. Some sections of CORE 115 require a one-time volunteer experience for all students as a way for them to explore how they can contribute to the common good locally.
- PAS 500- PA Profession: Evolving Issues in Medicine and Ethics. This course introduces students to the history of the PA profession and the role of the physician assistant in healthcare delivery. All students are required to volunteer at Santa Maria Community Service's community health fair as a way to think about ethical standards and to develop cultural competency.

## Student Philanthropy

Thanks to generous contributions from the Cambridge Charitable Foundation, the Mount is also home to one of the only academic student philanthropy programs in the country. Student philanthropy is an experiential pedagogy similar to service learning, except instead of completing community service, students complete



research on nonprofits that do work related to course content, and then make an investment decision in one nonprofit organization. Faculty may encourage their students to attach a service learning credit to their student philanthropy course as a way to add additional capacity to local nonprofits. A student philanthropy course is typically endowed with \$1,000-\$3,000. Since 2016, Mount student philanthropists have contributed over \$25,200 to local nonprofits.

**The following are requirements for student philanthropy courses:** student philanthropy orientation, researching form 990s, making site visits, releasing and reviewing requests for proposals, presentations, voting on one nonprofit to receive the funds, and a student philanthropy guided reflection.

### **Examples of student philanthropy at MSJ:**

- CRM 218- Victimology. This course provides an overview of the field of victimology. Topics covered in this course included domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. This class gave \$1650 to Her Turning Point, a women's transitional home in Harrison, OH. Students in this course fundraised an additional \$150 and they also completed a hygiene drive for Her Turning Point's clients. .
- ETH: REL 252- Theological Health Care Ethics. This course offers students an introduction to the study of health care ethics from the Catholic theological perspective. One of the topics covered in the class concerned the opioid epidemic. Students contributed \$2000 to Teen Challenge Cincinnati Women's Home because of their success in working with women through the addiction recovery process.
- ETH: REL 269- Environmental Ethics. Students in this course learn about the adverse effects of anthropogenic climate change, as well as how to respond from a Catholic theological perspective. The students in this course contributed \$1500 to GroundWork Cincinnati, a local nonprofit organization that works to remove pollution from the Mill Creek and the surrounding area. GroundWork was able to match these funds with additional funds to purchase a new van.
- CORE 425- Global Human Rights: The Case for Women & Child. In this capstone course, students examine the idea of the individual human right and how this idea has evolved to address the different needs of women and children throughout the world. The students in this course researched local nonprofits that serve women and children. They then donated \$1000 to Childhood Food Solutions, which used the funds to purchase meals and snacks for local children who experience food insecurity.

## **Election Engagement**

Election engagement is an opportunity to register students to vote, educate students on relevant issues, and to get out the student vote. In 2016, the Mount had a student voter registration rate of 85.7%, a 5.3% increase over 2012. Moreover, the Mount had a 65.2% student voting rate during the 2016 Presidential Election, which was a 3.1% increase over 2012. In fact, the Mount's student voting rate was in the top 40 out of all higher education institutions in the United States. As a result, the Mount was designated a "Voter Friendly Campus" during the 2017-2018 academic year by NASPA, and the Mount received the Silver Medal during the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.



### **Examples of course-based election engagement at MSJ:**

- In-class voter registration drives in required first-year courses like SOC 103, COM 100, and CORE 115.
- EDU 384- Methods of Teaching Social Studies. Students in this course learn about the curriculum framework and philosophies behind various teaching approaches for teaching social studies. Throughout the semester all of the students develop lesson plans for a Girl Scout "Badge in a Day" program, which is facilitated towards the end of the semester. Participants learned about how bills become laws, they talked about issues that they find to be important, and even completed a mock election.
- Service Learning. Credit bearing service learning students all complete a journal module in Blackboard that focuses on citizenship. During the fall 2016 semester, students who completed credit-bearing service learning were asked to complete their "I Side With" quiz, which matched their views on key issues to candidates and parties that were on the fall ballot. They were then asked to think about these issues through the lens of their service learning experiences, and whether they could make a voting decision based off of their research and experience.
- SWK 329- Organizational and Community Development. This course emphasizes organizing and planning service delivery primarily at the macro level. This course always requires an applied advocacy project that involves community outreach. Students in this course during the fall of 2016 were required to complete at least one election engagement experience, which for most students included voter registration, neighborhood canvassing, and/or installing yard signs.

## Course Design, Syllabus Creation, and Reflection Tools

### Course Design:

If you are interested in incorporating service learning and civically engaged experiences into one or more of your courses, please answer the following questions the semester prior to implementation:

1. **Articulate the reason for service learning/ civic engagement.** Why is service learning or civic engagement appropriate in your course? What do you hope the students achieve?
2. **Will the experience be required for all students?** Or will it be optional?
3. **Identify the type of service/ task.** Will it be a one-time service learning project? A project-based service learning experience? A credit-bearing service learning experience? A student philanthropy experience? Or perhaps election engagement?
4. **Determine the level of service.** Will students complete 30 hours for credit bearing service learning? 15 hours? 2-4 hours?
5. **Identify the community partner(s) that the students will be working with throughout the semester.** Will students have the opportunity to respond to a legitimate community need? Are the sites appropriate? Will you offer the students multiple community partners to work with, or one?
6. **Communicate with the community partner(s).** Define expectations and establish the means/ frequency of communication for the course.
7. **Identify how you will document the service/ experience.** If you choose credit-bearing service learning, use the credit-bearing service learning program requirements. For project based service learning experiences, consider the suggested requirements that are listed on page 2. For one time service learning experiences and election engagement experiences, consider creating a memorandum of understanding for all parties involved, and have all parties sign. You could also provide an opportunity for the community partner to evaluate the student, and for the student to evaluate their experience. Have the student track their service hours using an hours log.
8. **Determine how learning will be measured.** Grades should be given for the learning from service or experience, and not the service itself. Learning can be measured from journaling/ essays, a speech or presentation to a class, or a tangible product of project, for example.
9. **Anticipate problems/ logistical issues.** Will students need to complete a background check? A drug test? Does the supervisor understand his/her role? Is the service dangerous? Too dangerous? Will the students have enough tasks to be occupied, are the tasks meaningful, or will the supervisor need to babysit the student?

### Syllabus Creation:

The following are best practices for creating a syllabus for service learning/ civic engagement courses:

1. **Define the experience:** A sample definition of service learning is: “Academic service learning is 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.” A sample definition of student philanthropy could be: “Student philanthropy courses prepare student philanthropists to be able to



make decisions about awarding funding to nonprofit organizations. Faculty develop the philanthropy requirements of the course and set parameters for students to research nonprofits and solicit proposals for grants of \$1,000. The students then collaboratively decide on a nonprofit to invest in after researching the nonprofits and examining the proposals. Election engagement could be defined in the following way: "Election engagement provides students opportunities to register to vote, to become educated on voting issues, and it encourages students to vote."

2. **Explain why the activity is important for the course.** Is the goal to help students learn the course content? Is it to expose students to diverse cultures/ get them out of their comfort zone? Is it to have them explore power imbalances, questions of legitimacy, and expose students to silenced perspectives? Is the point to foster doubt, challenge assumptions, or problematize a social phenomenon? Is it to help students to be able to integrate life and learning?
3. **Highlight learning objectives.** Learning objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time determined. Learning areas could include personal outcomes (spiritual growth, interpersonal development, leadership, communication, professional development), social outcomes (reducing stereotypes, cultural and racial understanding, social responsibility, citizenship skills), or academic outcomes (problem solving, critical thinking).
4. **Describe the role of the Service Learning & Civic Engagement Office** (if applicable). Include the physical location of the office (SET 121) and the services it provides. Services include, but are not limited to: orientations, placement services, coaching and problem solving, Blackboard and MountConnect assistance, guided reflections, in-class registration drives, and absentee ballot assistance.
5. **Describe the placement process.** Are students responsible for placing themselves, or are you? What will be required on the community partner's end?
6. **Identify the time commitment involved for the student.** This includes the number of hours involved in the service learning experience and related activities.
7. **Highlight all deadlines, due dates, and documentation requirements for the experience.**

## Reflection Tools:

Service learning and civically engaged experiences require reflection in order to create meaning out of the experience. Grading should assess student learning, and should not be based off of completion. The following are typical reflection tools that can be used to measure student learning in courses with service learning and civic engagement.

1. **Journals:**
  - a. Key phrase: Ask students to integrate an identified list of terms and key phrases into their journal entries.
  - b. Double-entry: On the left side, have students describe their service experiences. On the right, have them connect what they did/ what they are learning in class to their service learning objectives.
  - c. Critical incident: Have students focus on specific incidents that occur by asking them to respond to directed prompts (I.e. Describe an incident or situation that created a dilemma for you because you did not know how to act or what to say. Why was it confusing? How did you feel about it? How did you consider reacting?)

How did you respond?) The prompts should be related to service learning objectives.

- d. Three part: Ask students to describe what they did/ accomplished, have them connect their actions to the course content, and then apply course content/ service experiences to learning outcomes.
  - e. Directed writings: Have students reflect on how specific elements of the course content connect to their service experience.
2. **Experiential research paper:** Ask students to identify and describe a perplexing experience at the service site, and then research an important social issue that may underlie the circumstance, and then make policy recommendations based off the research.
  3. **Directed readings:** Use supplemental readings to have students consider how knowledge within a discipline can be applied to a service site.
  4. **Class presentations:** Students can share experiences, accomplishments, or products produced. They can also discuss what they learned, and why their learning is important for the discipline.
  5. **Other forms of reflection:** blogging, Blackboard discussions, video essays, podcasts, painting/ drawing, music/ dance/ film, etc.

Questions? Contact Keith Lanser at [keith.lanser@msj.edu](mailto:keith.lanser@msj.edu) or 513-244-4634 or stop by the Service Learning & Civic Engagement Office in the Career & Experiential Education Center (SET 120).

## **Resources:**

### **Scholarship on Service Learning & Civic Engagement:**

- Ahmed, Shamima, and Julie Olberding. "Can Student Philanthropy Help to Address the Current Nonprofit Identity Crisis? A Case Study of a Multiyear, Multidisciplinary Project at Northern Kentucky University." *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, vol. 13, no. 3-4, 2007, pp. 593–615.
- Butin, Dan Wernaa., and Elizabeth L. Hollander. *Service-Learning in Theory and Practice: the Future of Community Engagement in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Cipolle, Susan Benigni. *Service-Learning and Social Justice: Engaging Students in Social Change*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.
- Clayton, Patti H., Robert G. Bringle, and Julie A. Hatcher. *Research on Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2013.
- Eyler, Janet S., et al. *At a Glance: What We Know about the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000*. 3rd ed., Vanderbilt University, 2001.
- Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, [quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mjcs/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mjcs/).
- Stoecker, R., Elizabeth A. Tryon, and Amy Hilgendorf. *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009.

### **Workbooks and In-class Literature:**

- Bellah, Robert N. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California Press, 1985.
- Coles, Robert. *The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Donahue, David M., and Star Plaxton-Moore. *The Student Companion to Community-Engaged Learning: What You Need to Know for Transformative Learning and Real Social Change*. Stylus Publishing, 2018.
- Duncan, Dawn, and Joan Kopperud. *Service-Learning Companion*. Houghton Mifflin, 2008.
- Graham, Bob, and Chris Hand. *America, the Owner's Manual: Making Government Work for You*. CQ Press, 2010.
- LaFasto, Frank M. J., and Carl Larson. *The Humanitarian Leader in Each of Us: 7 Choices That Shape a Socially Responsible Life*. Sage Publications, Inc, 2012.
- Loeb, Paul Rogat. *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times*. St. Martins Griffin, 2010.

### **Materials for Course Creation:**

- Baratian, Marina. *Service-Learning Course Design for Community Colleges*. Campus Compact, 2007.
- Gelmon, Sherril B., et al. *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques*. Campus Compact, 2001.
- Heffernan, Kerrissa. *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction*. Campus Compact, 2002.
- Howard, J. "Principles of Good Practice for Service-learning Pedagogy." *Service-learning Course Design Workbook*. Ann Arbor, MI: OCSL, 2001. 16-19.
- "Resources Archive." Campus Compact, <https://compact.org/resource-posts/>.