



Middlesex County College Faculty Service Learning Handbook

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SUCCESS STARTS HERE

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Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to embark on a new adventure by incorporating service learning into the courses that you teach! Service learning is a research-supported, high-impact pedagogical tool that will enhance both you and your students' classroom experiences while making a positive impact on the larger community. In order to support you in your effort to integrate service learning into your courses, we have prepared this handbook which offers a wealth of practical resources for getting started. We recommend that you read through this handbook thoroughly prior to the start of the semester and refer back to it throughout the course of the semester as needed. In addition to this handbook, we will also serve as your faculty mentors throughout the semester to provide you with feedback, support, and additional resources as needed. We look forward to working with you and thank you for your commitment to student success and community impact.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Altman and Alexandra Fields

About Service Learning at MCC

Mission: The mission of the service learning program at Middlesex County College is to enhance student learning and community impact by facilitating meaningful community-based partnerships between college courses and community non-profits/organizations that lead to increased academic knowledge, student engagement, faculty-student connections, community benefits, and civic engagement.

Service Learning Faculty and Staff Coordinators

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Introduction to Service Learning

What Is Service Learning?

“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” (Learn and Serve America).

Service learning is a high-impact pedagogical practice that is widely utilized in higher education and that engages students in an integrated service experience within their academic courses. Service learning practices have been embraced and well-established at higher educational institutions nation-wide due to extensive research which demonstrates that they improve college students’ engagement with course curriculum, civic engagement, academic achievement, and overall retention and attrition (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyer & Giles, 1999; Billig, 2000; Boyle-Baise & Efiom, 2000; Butin, 2006). Service learning has also been endorsed by the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of Community Colleges, and College Campus Compact.

What Service Learning Is Not

Service learning is not

- Offering community service opportunities to students without connecting the service back to the course curriculum and outcomes
- Sending students to for-profit organizations
- Having students fill in as extra employees at a non-profit

Service Learning Project Options

There are many different ways in which service learning can be implemented in a class:

- Direct service: Students provide face-to-face service out of class at a community partner site. Examples include tutoring students, serving meals, working on a community garden etc.
- Indirect service: Students do not work directly with individuals at a community partner but provide resources indirectly to the community partner. Examples include collecting and analyzing data that supports a community need, developing marketing materials or grant proposals for community organizations etc.

Extra Credit, Optional or Required?

Service learning can be offered as an extra credit project, an optional assignment in lieu of another assignment, or a required activity.

Note: Please keep in mind that when offered as an extra credit project, students often choose not to participate. Therefore, the MCC Service Learning staff highly recommend that faculty create required service learning activities or optional ones that students can complete in lieu of a required assignment.

Examples of Service Learning

Although service learning may only seem like a natural fit in social science and humanities courses, this is far from true. Service learning has been successfully integrated into courses across all disciplines as evidenced by the following examples:

- Calculus II: Students provide peer-to-peer tutoring for college students enrolled in Developmental and lower-level mathematics courses
- Marketing: Students create and implement a marketing plan and marketing materials for a non-profit
- Statistics: Students develop a survey and analyze data for a local food pantry that wants to assess their client needs and demographics.

- Accounting: Help low-income residents with tax returns and/or creating budgets
- Human Sexuality: Students create presentations for local teen center.
- Environmental Science: Students complete beach clean-up and support a community garden.
- Introduction to Computers: Students provide workshops for adults in need of community training
- Biochemistry: Students conduct workshops for teens on the effects of substance abuse on their bodies.
- Political Science: Students conduct a voter registration drive in partnership with a voter rights organization.
- Developmental English: Students create writing and reading workshops for juvenile detention inmates.
- Student Success: Students learn financial literacy from a community partner and then present this information to other student success courses.

What Are the Benefits of Service Learning?

Benefits for Students

- Enhances student learning by applying course curriculum to real-life experiences
- Connects academic theory to practice – academic theories come to life!
- Leads to a deeper understanding of course material
- Motivates students to care about class content and assignments
- Improves students' work readiness skills including professionalism, leadership, communication, and ability to work with diverse populations.
- Leads to higher engagement with peers, faculty, and college campus.
- Provides opportunities for students to make a difference within their own community
- Increases student retention and graduation rates
- Connects students to potential jobs, internships, scholarship opportunities, and career possibilities.
- Helps students develop a deeper understanding of their community's needs and the complexity of social issues.
- Fosters civic responsibility and community engagement

Benefits for Faculty

- Provides a new way to teach preexisting course material that reengages faculty
- Improves relationships between students and faculty
- Offers professional development opportunities to engage with other faculty throughout the college and academic community
- Leads to new research, conference presentations, publishing opportunities, and academic awards
- Enhances tenure and promotion portfolios
- Leads to positive engagements with the local community
- Provides an opportunity to engage in passion-projects that make a difference
- Engages faculty across disciplines through a shared approach to teaching

Benefits for Community Partners

- Expands number of committed volunteers
- Supports client/agency needs
- Provides student volunteers from the community who know the community's needs

- Provides a partnership between college and organization that can provide access to college resources
- Provides new ideas and energy from enthusiastic students
- Helps nurture future citizens in better understanding and supporting community issues
- Reinvigorate supervisors and staff

Benefits for the College Community

- Leads to improved student retention and graduation rates
- Enhances preparation of graduates
- Develops positive community relationships
- Offers opportunities for positive public relations/press and awards
- Fulfills college's mission of supporting students and the community
- Provides opportunities for expanding campus outreach and marketing
- Leads to higher levels of faculty and student engagement in state and local issues

Theoretical Frameworks for Service Learning

The theoretical roots of service learning stem originally from Dewey's six-step process of inquiry, which was then modified by David Kolb (1984) into a four-step experiential learning process (Cone & Harris, 1996):



The notion here is that service learning is much more than a concrete service experience; in order for learning to take place, students must engage in a learning process in which they are repeatedly exposed to service opportunities that provide new skills coupled with reflection around those service experiences and skillsets.

More recently, traditional understandings of service learning have been problematized for treating service work as “charity work” that does not work to critically analyze the larger social forces at play which often lead to the need for service in the first place. Therefore, Critical Service Learning has been developed as a means of ensuring that service learning is used as “an approach to civic learning that is attentive to social change, works to redistribute power, and strives to develop authentic relationships” (Mitchell, 2015, p. 20). In order to achieve this goal, “Readings, assignments, dialogue, and reflection are selected to highlight multiple perspectives, to critically analyze issues, and to promote action” (Mitchell, 2015, p. 20).

This idea of critical service learning is rooted in an array of social justice theoretical frameworks including critical race theory, critical pedagogy, critical feminism, critical literacy, and participatory action research (eg. Freire, 1970, 1973; hooks, 2003; Kumashiro, 2009; Rosenberger, 2000).

If you are interested in learning more about the critical frameworks that underpin critical service learning, please reach out to Alexandra Fields for additional resources.

Course Design: Steps to Integrate Service into the Curriculum

Integrating service learning into an existing course involves some planning. The service learning faculty coordinators are available to help guide you and provide support at any step in this process. A good start is to read through these steps and then setup an appointment with a faculty coordinator or the Coordinator of Civic Engagement.

Step One: Brainstorm

Think about the courses you teach and identify which course could be enriched by incorporating service learning into it. Are there social issues that you are passionate about incorporating into your coursework? Are there specific social issues that naturally fit within your discipline? Do you have any connections to non-profits or community organizations that you would like to tap into? Do you see a need within the community that is not being met? Start as broadly as possible and let your imagination take you in many directions!

Step Two: Connecting Service Ideas to Course Outcomes

One key purpose of service learning is to bridge the service experience with the academic learning outcomes for a class. Therefore, after identifying a course in which you would like to integrate service learning, write out the course outcomes for that course. What are you trying to accomplish for your students in the course? How can you link these course goals to a community project or partnership? An example could include an English Composition class that helps a job corps program with resume/cover letter workshops or an ecology class that supports a local community garden.

Step Three: Determine the Type of Service Project that You Want to Create

As mentioned earlier in this guide, there are several types of service learning options. Do you want students to engage in direct service, indirect service or offer both options? Do you want to work with one community partner or provide multiple partner opportunities for students to choose from? Do you want this to be extra credit, replace a required project/exam, become an additional assignment, or give students the choice between service learning and an opt-out assignment (exam, paper etc.)? Do you want the project to run throughout the course of the semester or one portion of the semester? Finally, do you want students to engage in some of the service during class-time or will all service work be completed outside of class?

Step Four: Time to Pick a Community Partner/Service Project

Once you have identified what you would like to accomplish, if you have not yet done so, it is time to reach out to the Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning in order to identify a community partner that meets your desired needs.

Step Five: Setting Up Your Course

Now that you have a community partner, you will need to alter your syllabus and course outline in order to successfully integrate service learning into your course. In partnership with your faculty coordinator, you will develop information to include in your syllabus and course assignments such as a modified course schedule and grading rubric, supplemental readings, service learning rubrics, and reflection exercises. Your faculty coordinator will provide you with a wealth of resources to prepare and successfully implement service learning throughout the entire semester. This includes assistance with introducing service learning to your students, an explanation to students of how the service-learning staff will manage all aspects of students' service learning experience (timesheets, signups, Q&A etc.) and any additional support that may be needed. Remember we are here to support you throughout the entire semester!

Principles and Best Practices

Reflection

Reflection is an integral component of any service learning program; it is the glue that connects the service experience to the academic learning outcomes, and it is a cyclical process.



In order for students and faculty to gain the most out of the reflection process, we suggest incorporating any of the following reflection activities into your course as you see fit:

- **Journals:** Students can complete journal assignments in which they draw connections between the material taught in class to their service experiences outside of class. Journals offer students the opportunity to reflect upon and analyze their service experiences while practicing writing skills. Journals also

prove useful in helping students record their learning experiences, and can also be used to develop larger reflective projects.

- **Papers:** A final paper or even a portfolio assignment can be given in which students focus on any of the following: reflective essays, research papers connected to service experiences, synthesis-analysis papers in which students apply the service experience to analysis of course readings/assignments.
- **Discussion Forums:** Online or face-to-face conversations in which students write or talk about their service experiences based upon questions provided by the faculty.
- **Presentations:** Students can develop posters, PowerPoints, speeches, videos, podcasts or any other medium to share their experiences with their peers and/or the larger college community. This can serve as a final class project or as a larger recognition of students' work that is shared with class peers, the college community, or the community organization.
- **Other:** Use your imagination! Some successful reflections have involved the development of student skits, improvisations, blog posts, dioramas etc. The key is to have fun while connecting service to the larger course curriculum and learning outcomes.

Risk Management

Orientation and Preparation

The best way to minimize risk during a service learning experience is to:

- Prepare students upfront, prior to the start of the service.
- Provide adequate information about expectations and the duties they should expect to perform while on site.
- Establish a communication process if any issues were to occur

Students should be fully prepared for their service learning experience prior to the start of service. All students should receive an in-class orientation explaining service learning, details of the service site(s) (schedule, location, specific requirements, etc.), and expectations of student volunteers. Orientation can be facilitated by the professor leading the course or by Service Learning Program staff. Please see the **Preparing Students for Service Learning** section for further guidance on orientation and preparation.

Liability Waiver and Photo Release Forms

All students participating in service learning must complete a **Waiver of Liability, Release, and Indemnification Agreement** and a **Background Check, Publicity, and Photo/Video Release Form** (see Appendix D). **These forms must be completed by the student and returned to the Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator prior to the start of service.** These forms are used to ensure students understand the risks involved with participating in off campus activities, and to protect the college in the event of an incident or issue.

Vetting Service Sites

All service sites are assessed by the Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator before students are offered the site as an option. If a student is interested in completing hours at a site that is not currently offered, they must complete the **Student Registration Form** (see Appendix D) and include all relevant information for that site. The proposed site will be reviewed and must be approved before a student can complete service hours there. The Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator will discuss site approvals (and other options in the event a site is not approved) directly with the student.

Communicating On-site Incidents

Communication of on-site incidents should be discussed in detail during orientation. Students are expected to report any incidents that occur on-site immediately to the Site Supervisor. Students must also report the incident to both their professor and the Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator. The Coordinator will communicate directly with the service site to address and resolve the issue at hand.

Transportation

Students are responsible for transporting themselves to and from service sites, unless reservations for a college van for a class or group excursion have been made. An explanation of the general risks involved with transportation should occur during orientation.

No service site should require students to drive any vehicle (the student's own or otherwise) to transport goods or deliver services. Students are **not** permitted to transport persons (clients, staff members, etc.) affiliated with their service site for any reason.

Minor Students

Students under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian sign the abovementioned liability and photo release forms, in addition to the student's own signature, before the students can participate in service learning. Both forms must be submitted to the Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator prior to the start of service.

Service Learning Excursions

Service learning excursions (full day or overnight trips) must be outlined in a formal proposal to the Service Learning staff a semester prior to the anticipated excursion dates. Service learning excursions will be reviewed by Service Learning staff and appropriate Dept. Chairs and/or Deans for approval.

Students participating in a service learning excursion must sign the **Excursion Waiver and Liability Form** (see Appendix D) and return it to the Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement Coordinator prior to the trip date. Students under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian sign the excursion waiver and return it to the Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator prior to the trip date.

Ensuring Service Learning Supports EVERYONE

1. Students, faculty, and community partners need to ensure that the service activities are directly connected to the course objectives and learning outcomes.
2. All reflection activities should be used to link service activities to course learning objectives/outcomes, and the service project should help students see theory actualized in practice.
3. Service placements should provide meaningful experiences for students that help them understand theory in action as well as being genuine resources to the community partners. Students should not be replacing paid staff but should instead be bringing new, additional resources to the community partner.
4. The community partner should serve as the voice for the community's needs and should be involved in the development of the service learning project/activities.
5. Students should be taught that this is not simply an act of charity but rather a reciprocal partnership in which they are supporting community organizations and their clients while gaining expertise and knowledge through their relationships with the clients and community partners.

Preparing Students for Service Learning

In order for service learning to run smoothly, we recommend that you spend some time preparing students for their service experiences prior to their service. The Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning will take care of all of the logistical steps required (directions to sites, site expectations etc.), but we encourage faculty to help students also prepare for service in any/all of the following ways:

1. Get students excited by helping them see the value of this service opportunity. Share the benefits of service learning with students and ask them to reflect on what steps they can take to get the most out of their service experiences.
2. Have students self-reflect prior to service. It is useful for students to gain a deeper understanding of themselves, including some of their expectations and assumptions, prior to beginning their service. Some questions they can be asked to reflect upon are as follows:
 - a. What knowledge or skills do I already have that will help me to successfully support my service site and grasp our course content? What is my experience in serving others? What is my experience in receiving services from others?
 - b. What assumptions do I have about myself and the clients whom I may be serving? What have I heard and/or what are my beliefs about the organization, its clients, or the neighborhood in which it is located? Are any of my assumptions based upon stereotypes or prejudice, and if so, how can I make sure that these assumptions are not harmful to myself or others with whom I work? What are my feelings about service and people in need? How are larger systemic state, national, and global issues connected to the local service work that I am going to engage in?
 - c. What expectations do I have for myself, the community partners, faculty, my peers, and the experience itself? What is motivating me to engage in service? How do I view myself in relation to those with whom I will be working? What do I see as my similarities or differences with those whom I will be working? What do I need to know in order to work effectively with others across our similarities and differences?
 - d. Do I have any fears, concerns, or questions? What am I most excited about in engaging in this work? What can I do to ensure this is a meaningful experience?

Faculty Checklist

Weeks prior to the start of the semester:

- Complete steps listed in the “Course Design” section of this handbook
- Schedule an appointment with Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning to identify and finalize community partner
- Schedule an appointment with faculty coordinator to modify syllabus, develop rubrics, course activities etc.
- Schedule an in-class service-learning presentation run by Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning during first two weeks of class
- Inform yourself about your community partner and the issue/issues they address – be sure to visit your community partner site before students begin service there

During the first week or two of the semester, the Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning will:

- Give a presentation to class on service opportunity, expectations, and required paperwork/logistics
- Introduce the concept of service learning to the class during presentation
- Share a sign-up sheet/online system for students to log and track hours
- Provide all necessary deadlines (end-of-service-date, campus-wide reflection, possible poster session etc.)

Throughout the semester:

- Meet with faculty coordinator for support and resource development as needed
- Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning will be periodically checking in and providing feedback from community partners
- Find opportunities to discuss service with the class to check-in
- Conduct periodic reflection activities
- Complete mid-semester survey to provide SL team with updates on your students’ experiences and the names of students whom you want to nominate for the end-of-semester service learning showcase

During the last two weeks of the semester:

- Have students complete surveys on service-learning experience (provided by Office of Institutional Research)
- Complete faculty service learning survey (provided by Office of Institutional Research)

- Attend end-of-semester college-wide service-learning showcase event
- Confirm that students completed all required hours of service and paperwork

Appendix A. Online Resources

Sample Syllabi

<http://www.compact.org/syllabi>

Campus Compact has a large database of service-learning syllabi in all disciplines. Use the link below to find syllabi related to your field.

National Organizations

Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://nationalserviceresources.org/>

Through The Resource Center, you can search and access online training tools, event calendars, and effective practices, as well as a catalogue of printed publications and videos available on loan. In addition, the Resource Center serves as a learning exchange where individual programs can share their innovations and effective practices with others.

Campus Compact

<http://www.compact.org/resources-for-faculty/>

Campus Compact is a coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents — representing some 6 million students — who are committed to fulfilling the public purposes of higher education. As the only national association dedicated to this mission, Campus Compact is a leader in building civic engagement into campus and academic life.

National Service Learning Clearinghouse

<http://www.servicelearning.org/hehome/index.php>

The Clearinghouse maintains a website with timely information and relevant resources to support service-learning programs, practitioners, and researchers. The Clearinghouse operates a national email discussion lists for K-12, tribes and territories, and higher education service-learning to encourage discussions and the exchange of ideas.

The National Service-Learning Exchange

<http://www.nylc.org/>

The National Service-Learning Exchange offers free one-to-one assistance to anyone interested in service-learning.

National Service Learning Partnership

http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=TR_index

The Partnership is a national network of members dedicated to advancing service-learning as a core part of every young person's education.

National Society for Experiential Education

www.nsee.org

A nonprofit membership association of educators, businesses, and community leaders. NSEE also serves as a national resource center for the development and improvement of experiential education programs nationwide.

Campus Community Partnerships for Health

<http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/index.html>

A nonprofit organization that promotes health through partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions. They are a growing network of over 1,500 communities and campuses that are collaborating to promote health through service-learning, community-based participatory research, broad-based coalitions and other partnership strategies.

American Association of Higher Education Service-Learning Project

www.aahe.org/services/

Delivers information on AAHE's Service-Learning Project. Links to other service-learning resources and to other AAHE programs and partnerships.

Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning

<http://www.umich.edu/~mjcs/>

The MJCSL is a peer-reviewed academic journal containing papers written by faculty and service-learning educators on research, theory, pedagogy, and issues pertinent to the service-learning community. The site also contains abstracts of MJCSL articles and information on subscribing and submitting manuscripts.

Online Articles

100 Ideas for Combining Service & Learning

<http://www.fiu.edu/~time4chg/Library/ideas.htm>

Ideas for specific academic disciplines.

Big Dummy's Guide to Service Learning

<http://www.fiu.edu/~time4chg/Library/bigdummy.html>

Provides information for faculty on ways to incorporate service-learning into courses, frequently asked questions and issues for various disciplines.

Facilitating Reflection: a Manual for Leaders and Educators

http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual

This manual was designed for educators and leaders of service groups who have an interest and a commitment to provide reflection opportunities for students and community partners.

At a Glance: What We Know About the Effects of Service Learning (pdf)

<http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/downloads/aag.pdf>

Summary of the findings of service-learning research in higher education over the past few years. This also includes an annotated bibliography. It is designed to provide a quick overview of where we are in the field today and a map to the literature.

How Service Works

<http://www.wvu.edu/depts/csl/download/How%20Service%20Works.pdf>

A summary of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's "Service Works:" A Retrospective Evaluation of Higher Education Service Programs

Principles of Good Practice

<http://www.community.vcu.edu/solutions/servicelearning/forms/goodpractice.pdf>

Excerpts from: Praxis I: A Faculty Casebook on Community Service Learning by Jeffrey Howard

Hallmarks of Effective Service-Learning Programs (pdf)

http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/06_0206_highered_hallmarks.pdf

This website lists the key elements that make for effective service-learning programs, provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Appendix B. References and Recommend Readings about Service Learning

Resources

(From: Gallager, L, Planawski, E. and Tarbell, K. *Faculty Guide to Service –Learning*, Experiential Learning Center, University of Colorado, Denver)

Books

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Appendix C. Current and Past List of MCC Community Partners

- Edison Township Environmental Commission
- Elijah’s Promise Soup Kitchen
- Highland Park Food Pantry
- Highland Park Food Pantry
- Jewish Family Services
- Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership
- Middlesex County College Tutoring and Writing Center
- Middlesex County Juvenile Detention Center
- New Brunswick Community Farmers Market
- New Brunswick Public Library
- New Brunswick Public Schools - Adult Learning Center
- New Brunswick Salvation Army
- Perth Amboy Salvation Army
- Reformed Church of Highland Park – “The Table” Homeless Outreach
- Reformed Church of Highland Park – Churches Accomplishing Long Term Recovery: Hurricane Sandy Relief Project
- Reformed Church of Highland Park – Elizabeth Detention Center Visits
- Reformed Church of Highland Park – Global Grace Café
- Tamerlaine Farm Animal Sanctuary
- Woodstock Farm Sanctuary