

## Definitions of Service-Learning

“Service Learning is a credit-bearing, educational, experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”

Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher, “A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty.” *The Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Fall 1995, pp. 112-122.

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“Service-learning means a method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully-organized service that: is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience.”

American Association for Higher Education (AAHE): Series on Service-Learning in the Disciplines (adapted from the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993).

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“Service-learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subjects, skills, and values are taught. It involves active learning—drawing lessons from the experience of performing service work. Though service-learning is most often discussed in the context of elementary and secondary or higher education, it is a useful strategy as well for programs not based in schools.

There are three basic components to effective service-learning:

- The first is sufficient preparation, which includes setting objectives for skills to be learned or issues to consider, and includes planning projects so they contribute to learning at the same time work gets done.
- The second component is simply performing service.
- Third, the participant attempts to analyze the experience and draw lessons, through such means as discussion with others and reflection on the work. Thinking about the service creates a greater understanding of the experience and the way service addresses the needs of the community. It promotes a concern about community issues and a commitment to being involved that marks an active citizen. At the same time the analysis and thought allow the participants to identify and absorb what they have learned.

Learning and practicing citizenship are life-long activities which extend far beyond the conclusion of formal education. Service-learning can be used to increase the citizenship skills of participants of any age or background. For this reason service-learning can be a tool to achieve the desired results of programs, even those involving older, highly educated participants. For example, service-learning can be part of the training of participants to prepare them to do high quality service that has real community impact.

Some service-learning occurs just from doing the work: after a month of working alongside police, a participant has surely learned some important lessons about how to increase public safety, and something about what it means to be a good citizen. However, programs that encourage active learning from service experience may have an even greater impact.

Developed by the corporation on National and Community Service as part of their briefing materials for national community service.

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“Service-learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other. The basic theory of service-learning is Dewey’s: the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning. Students learn best not by reading the Great Books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience. Learning starts with a problem and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and increasingly sophisticated skills to increasingly complicated problems.”

Thomas Ehrlich, in: Barbara Jacoby and Associates. *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey - Bass, 1996.

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“At their best, service-learning experiences are reciprocally beneficial for both the community and students. For many community organizations, students augment service delivery, meet crucial human needs, and provide a basis for future citizen support. For students, community service is an opportunity to enrich and apply classroom knowledge; explore careers or majors; develop civic and cultural literacy; improve citizenship; develop occupational skills; enhance personal growth and self-image; establish job links; and foster a concern for social problems, which leads to a sense of social responsibility and commitment to public/human service.”

From Brevard Community College, *The Power*. July, 1994.