

**Department of Marketing and Logistics
California State University, Fresno**

SERVICE-LEARNING – EVERYBODY WINS!

Service-learning defined:

Following are two widely accepted definitions of service learning:

1. "A method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs, that [are] integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provide structured time for [reflection, and] that enhance what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community." (Corporation for National and Community Service, 1990).
2. Service-learning is "Any carefully monitored service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience." (National Society for Experiential Education, 1994).

Service-learning requires the student to make a connection between the service and concepts being studied in the classroom. The result is the student examines an academic concept while performing the service – hence, service-learning. The connection is normally made by requiring a journal, report, class discussion, or other reflective activity.

What Service-Learning is Not;

It is not volunteerism, which engages students in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient. Service-Learning benefits both the service recipient and the students. In addition to providing the agency with a strategic or tactical plan to better meet its mission, another major benefit derived from service-learning is the fact that it leads, in many cases, to students later volunteering with one or more non-profit organizations throughout their lives.

Benefits of Service-Learning

The benefits of service-learning are varied and many. Benefits accrue to students, faculty, the school, and most of all to the community. While service-learning has been integrated into different academic curriculums, many schools of business have been slow to incorporate this experiential form of education. So, why should it be part of the business curriculum? The mission of the Craig School of Business emphasizes the fact that we wish to be recognized as an outstanding "applied" business school. In order to achieve this goal, we must continually find ways to allow students to learn by practical application. Internships may be the ultimate application of classroom knowledge, but this may be insufficient or impractical for all students. Therefore, we must find other ways for students to learn by application. Service-learning is one of the solutions to this problem.

Benefits to the students:

- Students expand problem solving, oral and written communication skills.

- Encourages students to engage in active rather than passive learning.
- Provides real life experiences of topics discussed in class.
- Synthesize community outreach with academic experience, thereby providing time to perform effective and meaningful service.
- Enhances communication with different populations.
- Students learn to face and define broader community issues.
- Develops initiative, independent reasoning and independent learning.
- Helps student to understand the relationship between theory and practice.
- Develops organizational skills which transfer to many occupations.
- Allows students to explore values and ethical issues.
- Helps students understand civic responsibility.
- Develops a habit of critical reflection on experiences, which enhances learning.
- Enhances respect and exposure to different cultures and socio-economic conditions.
- Helps students realize they can make a difference.
- Provides students with a rewarding experience to remember for a lifetime.
- On the selfish side, it makes a good line item on student résumé.

Benefits to the community:

- Helps meet some of the human services resource needs of the community.
- Increases the probability that students will become responsible citizens upon graduation.
- Provides agencies resources for problem solving.
- Provides a link to the University by involving the community in the student's learning process.
- Fosters collaboration on projects or grants.

Summary of Top Ten Reasons Service-Learning Is Required

Service-Learning:

1. Has a positive effect on student personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development
2. Has a positive effect on interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others, leadership, and communication skills
3. Has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding
4. Has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility, citizenship skills, and commitment to service
5. Has an impact on academic outcomes such as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development.
6. Contributes to career development and can influence major and career selection
7. Contributes to stronger student/faculty relationships

8. Has long-term effects that may surface even years after graduation in terms of public service commitment, willingness to contribute to social causes, and willingness to give back to one's institution
9. Has relevancy—it helps to link the often abstract theory of the classroom with day-to-day experiences of students and community members
10. Builds Community—links students, faculty and the institution of higher learning to the local community and beyond.