

# **Developing a Student Leadership Vision and Plan for Community Engagement at Southern Utah University**

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## ***DEFINING SERVICE LEARNING, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT***

Service-learning combines service to the community with student learning in a way that improves both the student and the community...

*Corporation for National and Community Service, Learn and Serve America*

Academic service learning, often referred to as “service learning,” is a teaching method that incorporates community service experiences into academic courses. Students learn through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content.

*California State University Chancellor’s Office, Center for Community Engagement*

A method of teaching that integrates community service experiences to provide a context for and enrich an academic curriculum. Service-learning is integrated into the academic curriculum, meets actual community needs, and provides structured time for students to think, talk and write about what they are doing in their service experiences.

*The Feinstein Institute, Providence College*

Service is a process of integrating intention with action in a context of movement toward a just relationship.

Community service is the application of one’s gifts, skills, and resources to provide something of value, to enhance the quality of life of people who articulate a need or desire for service.

Community service is a space to practice here and now, small scale models of a shared utopian vision.

Service-learning is a form or subset of experiential education and community service. In service-learning, service is the experiential component of experiential education. Service-learning is an intentionally designed (course, program, activity, etc.), and is a process of learning through reflection on the experience of doing service.

*Nadinne Cruz, Independent Consultant*

### **Common Components of Service Learning**

- **Service Learning is A Pedagogical Tool** (experiential, linking academic learning goals with service goals to teach course content/reach learning outcomes, involves classroom and community-based preparation, reflection, assessment, has academic relevance).
- **Community Partnerships are Central** (responds to community identified interests, needs and strengths, requires reciprocity and shared power, builds partnerships, fosters equity, sees University as part of the community rather than separate from).
- **There Is Often A Larger Purpose To Engaging In Service Learning** (to pursue social justice, the common good, to teach civic responsibility/ engagement, fulfill institutional mission, support faculty as community members, and/or to prepare graduates to be part of the

community).

### Community Engagement

Community Engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

### Civic Engagement

"Civic engagement means an institutional commitment to public purposes and responsibilities intended to strengthen a democratic way of life in the rapidly changing Information Age of the 21st century."

*Source: University of Minnesota Task Force on Civic Engagement*

### On the Relationship Between Service Learning and Civic Engagement

*Service-learning and civic engagement are not the same thing in the sense that not all service-learning has a civic dimension and not all civic engagement is service-learning. For definition's sake, civic engagement is the broader motif, encompassing service-learning but not limited to it.*

*One useful definition of civic engagement is the following: individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. Indeed, an underlying principal of our approach is that an engaged citizen should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.*

*From Michael Delli Carpini, Director, Public Policy, The Pew Charitable Trusts.*

### The Engaged Campus

An engaged campus is one that is consciously committed to reinvigorating the democratic spirit and community engagement in all aspects of its campus life: students, faculty, staff and the institution itself.

*Campus Compact*

The Engaged Campus is a college or university which emphasizes community involvement through its activities and its definition of scholarship. The engaged campus is involved in: community relationships, community development, community empowerment, community discourse, and educational change. Some of the benchmarks for the engaged campus include: campus-community partnerships, careful reflection, and sustained impact.

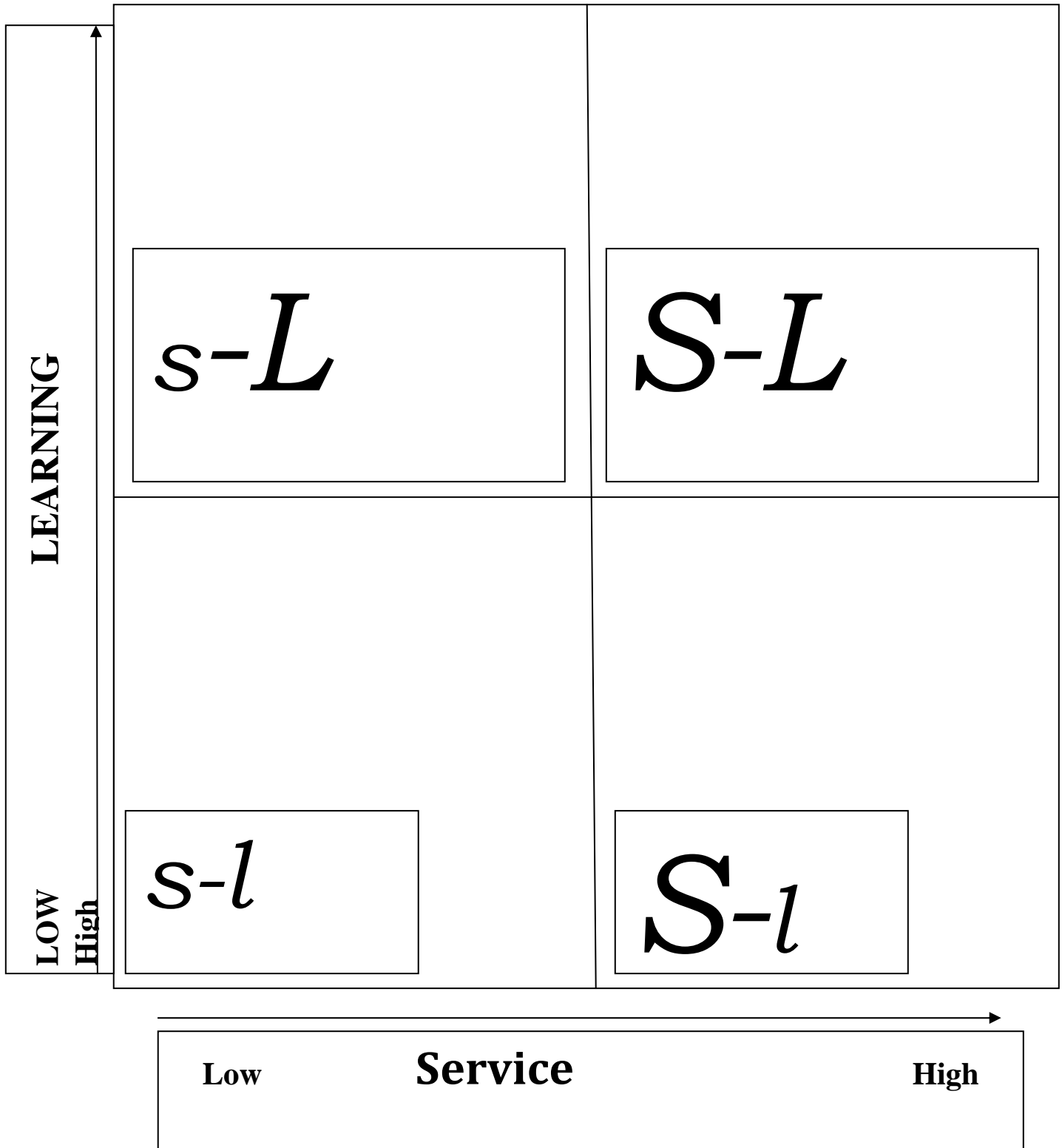
*Vermont Campus Compact*



# Service-Learning Matrix Exercise

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Inspired by the work of Robert Sigmon, especially in Linking Service With Learning, Washington, DC: The Council for Independent Colleges, 1994.



# ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

**Relationships** between faculty and community partners (including community members) initially, and then students with faculty, community partner staff and community members, that are based on respect, shared power, honoring all knowledge, on-going communication...

**Shared Interests and Goals** between community/university

**Shared Commitment** to fulfilling each agreed upon role and responsibility.

**Preparation** of and by faculty, students and community partners

**Reflection** by students, community partners and faculty

**Engagement** in experiences

**Coaching** by community partner and faculty

**Assessment** by community partner (including community members), faculty and student

**Celebration/Closure** with all.

## SERVICE LEARNING MODELS

<p><b>Course where Service Learning is Optional :</b> Students in a course choose from a list of curricular options (service learning, project-based learning, research papers, exams, etc.). Student earn credit for the learning gleaned from the service and articulated in critically reflective assignments, not from the service alone.</p>
<p><b>Service Learning Course:</b> All students in the course are involved in service learning. Each student, either individually or in a group, partners with the throughout the course. Reflection is also integrated throughout the course and linked to learning outcomes. This can occur in a general education or a major-based course.</p>
<p><b>Field Work Service Learning</b> – students in teacher education, nursing or human services programs, for example, partner with the community many times throughout their coursework, often for extensive periods of time, with reflection and academic learning occurring before, during and after. For field education to be considered field-based service learning, preparation, reciprocal partnerships, reflection and intentional integration with academic content are critical.</p>
<p><b>First Year Experience Service Learning</b> – As students are introduced to the University and build skills in writing, critical thinking and/or some other content area, they can also be introduced to the local community and to service learning, often through an introductory project integrated with the course.</p>
<p><b>Service Learning Capstone:</b> The Capstone is generally a culminating experience where students formulate a project and implement it from start to finish, employing skills in research and writing. A service learning capstone project, conducted in partnership with the community, incorporates critical self reflection and analysis, integrates all the students’ learning from their higher education experience, and benefits all partners.</p>
<p><b>Service Learning Internship or Independent Study:</b> Students in any major engage in the community for larger amounts of time, attend class (often a minimum of hours) and engage in on-going reflection and intentional application of academic learning. They also often complete assignments independently. Service learning internships benefit the community as well as the student and incorporate on-going reflection throughout the internship.</p>
<p><b>Co-Curricular Service Learning:</b> Co-curricular Alternative Spring Breaks, student organization community involvement, and K-12 outreach programs such as Upward Bound can also incorporate preparation, reflection and integration with academic learning and student development to incorporate a service learning approach.</p>
<p><b>Community Based Research/Participatory Action Research:</b> Faculty and/or students engage in research with the community, designed to be of benefit to <u>all</u> the partners. Community members are involved in every stage of the research process.</p>
<p><b>Course Sequencing:</b> A series of courses are taken in order, each one building on the work of the previous. Students partner with the same or different community agencies throughout the sequence. This can have a multidisciplinary approach.</p>
<p><b>Engaged Departments, Majors, Programs:</b> Faculty within a department or program support a comprehensive approach to engaging students in their major. Multiple courses engage students in community-based research and service.</p>
<p><b>Engaged University:</b> An institution as a whole makes a commitment to be a genuine partner with the local community. This is evidenced in every aspect of the life of the University from faculty and student recruitment, to library use, to curriculum, to community leadership in campus decision making and more!</p>

## EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATING SERVICE AND LEARNING

**Ethnic Studies** students learned about cultural differences and about relationships between power, privilege, oppression and access to higher education as they tutored high school students, coordinated a “Bridge” program to bring local students of color and their parents to campus, and conducted an oral history project with local community members of various ethnic groups.

**Civil engineering** students learned and applied engineering concepts by working with community members to make traffic flow in a safer and less disruptive manner.

Students in an **Introductory Biology** class learned about the social responsibility of becoming informed, sharing that information with others, and of influencing public opinion and policies to promote individual and collective well being in the biosphere. They applied this knowledge in a community education campaign about water quality.

Students in the **Social Impact of the Mass Media** learned about the impact of media messages, developed effective media literacy tools, and critically analyzed the cultural products they consume. They engaged in media literacy programs in local schools and community organizations as a way of sharing this learning which deepened their own.

Students learned about the multicultural **history** of their state by sorting and analyzing historical photographs and documents for a local museum and library.

**Teledramatic Arts** Students learned knowledge and skills necessary for theatre production, film production, video/television production, radio production, and/or new media production by engaging youth in various productions in out-of-school programs.

**Management** students learned about business and not-for-profit processes and laws by assisting new small businesses and non-profit organizations in preparing business plans.

Students in **Educational Research** partnered with a non-profit agency that assists individuals with developmental disabilities who wanted to know whether race affected people's use of their organization's services, the reasons people chose not to use their services, and the alternatives the non-users chose.

**Computer Science** students learned how to create computerized office management systems by designing a customized software program for a local non-profit to better manage volunteers, resources, finances, inventories, etc.

**Political Science** students were trained in community mediation skills and then served in the community dispute mediation center. Through a concurrent seminar, students reflected on their experience and tested political science theories' relation to conflict and compromise.

**Introduction to Chemistry** students taught chemistry to middle school students which reinforced the concepts for them.

## **THREE CORE COMPONENTS OF PREPARING TO ENTER A COMMUNITY SENSITIVELY**

*Understanding the service learning process, understanding myself, and understanding the community with which I will be working, are all critical for students faculty, and community partners to engage in respectful and reciprocal partnerships.*

### **Understanding of the Links Between Learning and Service Outcomes and Community Work**

- What learning outcomes do faculty/advisors/student leaders have for this course/experience (e.g. academic, community participation, social justice, leadership development, career preparation outcomes)? What learning outcomes do community partners have for students and for faculty? What learning outcomes do I have for myself? How will my work in the community help me reach these outcomes? How will the course help me provide effective service?
- How can my service experience help me understand course learning outcomes?
- What are all the parties' expectations/needs of one another?
- What is reflection and how will I engage in reflection with the other partners?

### **Knowledge and Understanding of Self**

- **My Assets:** *What skills, experience, awareness and knowledge do I already have that can help me be of service effectively? What do I have to give and share? What have I learned from past experiences of service with others? What informal as well as formal education have I had? What have I learned through my life experiences? How can they all become assets to the community (including my struggles and challenges, my joyful times, relationships...)*
- **My Lenses:** Knowing we all have assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, biases, and fears - what are mine that might impact the service experience (even unintentionally)? How can I be aware of my assumptions and not act from them in ways that are harmful to myself or others? What are my feelings and beliefs about service? What do I think people want and need? What assumptions do I have about myself and others based on societal conditioning about age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, language race, religion, sexual identity, career/ job/work status, life situation, etc.? What have I heard or what are my beliefs about the agency, neighborhood, or people I will be working with? What is the accuracy of the things I have heard?
- **My Expectations and Motivations:** What are my expectations of myself, and of the other partners in the service learning process? What do I expect of the experience? What do others expect of me? What are my motivations? Why am I involved in service? How might my motivations impact how I engage in service? How do I view myself in relation to the students, faculty, community partner staff and community members I will be engaged with?
- **My Social Identities:** How am I similar and different from people I will work, in terms of my identities (age, citizenship status, class, disabilities/abilities, ethnicity, gender identity, language, race, religious/spiritual affiliation or non-affiliation, sexual identity...)? How could these identities and my awareness (or lack of awareness) of my identities both help and hinder me from engaging in reciprocal, respectful service? What do I need to be aware of to work effectively across our differences and similarities?

### ***Knowledge and Understanding of the Community and of the Service***

What do I need to understand about:

- The community organization, its purpose and vision, the staff;
- The community members who utilize the services;
- The service tasks/projects I will be involved with and the larger context;
- The surrounding neighborhood and larger context (town, city, etc.);
- The local community assets and challenges and how I can best be responsive to them;
- The social and institutional issues that impact the local community;
- The history between the community, the agency, other community organizations and Public Allies
- How can I be of service and be open to being served as well?
- What might others have to teach me in this experience?
- How can I be responsive to what the community needs from me?

### ***How will my contributions be evaluated and my learning assessed?***

- How will I be evaluated and by whom (community member, community partner staff, self, peers, faculty)?
- What role will I play in evaluating my experience, my supervisor(s), and any other partners?
- How will the collective quality of the contribution by all students and faculty to the community be evaluated?

## WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO ENGAGE IN SERVICE?

**Part I:** The following is a list of reasons some say they had for engaging in community service, service learning, or other work with non-profit community-based organizations. Please read the list and put them in rank order, according to your own motivations. The most important reason why you choose to be involved with your community would be #1, then #2, #3 and so on. Number all the way through #21 (or 22 if you add your own reason). Shorter version: Rank your top and bottom 5. Feel free to add your own reason in #21.

MOTIVATIONS	YOU	Partner	Partner	Partner	Partner
1. To Continue A Family Legacy					
2. To Create A More Equitable and Socially Just World					
3. To Help Others					
4. To Fulfill a Requirement					
5. To Make A Difference					
6. To Give Back					
7. To Learn From Communities					
8. To Serve A Spiritual Purpose					
9. To Serve A Religious Purpose					
10. To Pursue Freedom and/or Liberation for All					
11. To Use My Skills					
12. To Pursue a Particular Career Path					
13. To Learn about Community Issues					
14. To Fulfill My Social Responsibility					
15. To Protect The Rights And Welfare Of Others					
16. To Make a Different World than the One I Have Known					
17. To Support or Honor My Family					
18. To Impact A Particular Issue Or Cause I Care About					
19. To Build Relationships					
20. To Feel More A Part Of My Community					
21. To Find or Deepen My Passion					
22. Other Reason:					

Note: This activity was inspired by a similar activity developed by Nadinne Cruz, "Reasons for Doing Community Service and Service Learning."

**Part II:** In small groups, share your top 3 and Bottom 3 reasons with the group. Record your group members' responses. Explore with one another your similar and different motivations. Try to really understand where each other is coming from, and be open to hearing other points of view that might challenge your own. Discuss how your motivations might both help and challenge you in your work as an Ally?

### Reflection Questions

What was one or two key learnings from completing this exercise on your own?

What was one or two key learnings from discussing this with others?

**Part III:** As you work with the community, how might this exercise give you some questions you might ask of your community partners? How might understanding the motivations of those you work with help you work more effectively together?