

## **Principles of Good Practice**

### **1. Assign Academic Credit for Learning, Not for Service.**

Credit in academic courses is assigned to students for the demonstration of academic learning. It should be no different in community service-learning courses. When community service is integrated into an academic course, the course credit is assigned for both the customary academic learning as well as for the utilization of the community learning toward realizing the course objectives.

### **2. Uphold Academic Rigor.**

The additional workload imposed by community service assignments may be compensated by an additional credit but not by lowering academic learning expectations. Adding a service component, in fact, may enhance the rigor of a course. In addition to having to master the academic material, students must also learn how to learn from a community experience and merge that learning with academic learning. These intellectual activities, if constructed correctly, are commensurate with rigorous academic standards.

### **3. Set Learning Goals for Students.**

Integrating the community with the classroom offers a multiplication of possible learning paradigms (e.g. experiential learning, inductive learning, participatory action research) and learning topics (e.g. the community, the public good). Nevertheless, it is crucial to have a clear sense of the course objectives when designing the service-learning component.

### **4. Establish Criteria for the Selection of Community Service Placements.**

There are three essentials to consider:

- The range of service should be circumscribed by course content.
- The duration of service must be sufficient to enable fulfillment of learning goals.
- The specific service activities and service contexts must have the potential to stimulate course-relevant learning.

### **5. Provide Educationally Sound Mechanisms to Facilitate Community-Based Learning.**

Course assignments and learning formats must be carefully developed to facilitate the students' learning from their community service experiences. Experience, as a learning format alone, does not consummate learning nor does mere written description of one's service activities. Discussions, presentations, and journal and paper assignments that provoke analysis of service experiences in the context of the course objectives are necessary.

### **6. Provide Supports for Students As They Engage in Community-Based Learning.**

Acquiring knowledge from the community and using it on behalf of course objectives is a paradigm for which many students are under-prepared. Faculty can support students in their efforts to realize the potential of community-based learning by helping them obtain the necessary skills and/or by providing examples of successful projects.

### **7. Minimize the Distinction between the Student's Community Learning Role and the Classroom Learning Role.**

Typically, classrooms and communities are very different environments, each requiring students to assume a different role as a learner. Classrooms generally provide a high level of learning direction and structure. In contrast, community-based learning tends to require greater leadership and initiative on the part of the student. A mechanism is needed that will provide learning direction for the students in the community (e.g. community agency staff serving as adjunct instructors). The more consistent the student's learning role in the classroom is with her/his learning role in the community, the better the chances that the learning potential within each context will be realized.

## **8. Re-Think the Faculty Instructional Role.**

The role of the educator must take a less conventional form in service-learning. Rather than emphasizing the dissemination of information, the educator must focus more on being a facilitator and guide to student learning. This means that some course content may be sacrificed.

\*Adapted from: Howard, J., ed. (1993) *Praxis I: A faculty casebook on community service learning*. Ann Arbor, MI: Office of Community Service Learning Press, University of Michigan.

## **1.4 As You Begin Planning Your Course, Remember . . .**

### **An Ethical and Academically Sound Service-Learning Course:**

- Explicitly connects the service component to course objectives
- Engages students in activities which meet identified community needs
- Provides structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their service experience
- Allows for those with special needs to define those needs
- Clarifies the responsibilities of each student and organization involved
- Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances
- Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment
- Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals
- Ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible and appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved
- Is committed to participation by and with diverse populations

Adapted from: *The Johnson Foundation Wingspread Report on the Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning* (1989).

### **Further Reading**

\*Billig, S.H. and Furco, A. (2002). *Service-Learning: The essence of the pedagogy*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

\*Available for check-out in B-29 Coates