THE SERVE CENTER

This manual is published by the SERVE Center at Truman State University in order to help students design, implement and execute successful service-learning advantage projects.

This manual summarizes the important steps for implementing cocurricular Service-Learning Advantage projects. These steps do not include work that may be required by anyone co-sponsoring these experiences. Be sure to consult other offices or departments that may be involved in your experience to determine other requirements or paperwork.

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Service-Learning Advantage FAQs

What is Service-Learning Advantage?

Service-Learning Advantage is Truman State University's unique program that allows students to participate in service-learning in a cocurricular setting. The program is designed to support student organizations, their leaders, and faculty/staff advisors as they create and implement a service-learning project within the workings of their current organizational structure and activities. Students who participate in the event, complete the online pre and post project surveys, and attend a Service-Learning Talk and Reflect (STAR) Session will receive a citation on their Cocurricular Record.

How is the Service-Learning Advantage different from service-learning in an academic course?

During academic Service-Learning, faculty members plan, guide, and direct all or at least parts of the Service-Learning experience, including project sites and reflection activities. The learning objectives for projects generally come from the course learning objectives, and faculty members are present to assess and evaluate how well students are meeting these objectives. The experience is also generally part of the final grade for the course.

During SLA, students plan and implement their **own** projects. They also determine their own learning objectives and reflection activities. While structured, group reflection (STAR Sessions) is held at the end of each semester, students should do their own reflections throughout the course of the project. Finally, students must find internal or group motivation to complete the project, as there is no final grade or formal figurehead facilitating the experience.

Who is eligible to participate in a Service-Learning Advantage project?

Individuals, student organizations, and groups of students (not part of an organization) can partake in Service-Learning Advantage. We want to give every Truman student the opportunity for Service-Learning and are very willing to work with students to make this experience both possible and successful.

Characteristics of Service-Learning

From the Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

Service-Learning experiences:

- Are positive, meaningful and real to the participants
- Involve cooperative rather than competitive experiences, and thus promote skills associated with teamwork, community involvement and citizenship
- Address complex problems in complex settings rather than simplified problems in isolation
- Offer opportunities to engage in problem-solving by requiring participants to gain knowledge of the specific context of their service-learning activity and community challenges, rather than only to draw upon generalized or abstract knowledge such as might come from a textbook
- Promote deeper learning because the results are immediate and uncontrived (there are no "right answers" in the back of the book)
- As a consequence of this immediacy of experience, service-learning is more likely to be personally meaningful to participants and to generate emotional consequences, to challenge values as well as ideas, and hence to support social, emotional and cognitive learning and development

Service-Learning is NOT:

- An episodic volunteer program
- An add-on to an existing school or college curriculum
- Logging a set number of community service hours in order to graduate
- Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators
- Only for high school or college students
- One-sided: benefiting only students or only the community

Benefits of Service-Learning

Parts of this list are from the UMSL Service-Learning website

Students

- Provides another opportunity for service-learning, as it is not offered academically in all disciplines, programs, and classes
- Valuable opportunity to meet the needs of the community and impact its residents through a hands-on experience
- Affords students an out-of-classroom experience that can enhance their overall education, growth as a college student, and time at Truman
- Enhances critical thinking, tolerance of diversity, civic responsibility, awareness of current social issues, and personal ability to impact the community
- Chance to gain transferrable skills that may be beneficial in a student's academic discipline or future endeavors
- Enhances Truman's commitment to the Kirksville and greater Northeast Missouri community
- Acknowledgement on the student's Cocurricular Record (Verification of your involvement for potential employers or internship advisors)
- Support from the SERVE Center throughout process (organizational, conceptual, etc.)

Community

- Provides substantial human resources to address needs of local communities
- Involves community partners as co-educators in providing rich learning experiences for students
- Allows the energy and enthusiasm of college students to contribute to addressing community needs
- Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation in students who will be tomorrow's volunteers and civic leaders
- Creates potential for additional partnership and collaboration with the campus

How to Get Involved

- Formulate a project on your own or with your student organization that includes community service and related learning objectives. Planning tools and templates can be found online.

- Review your organization's annual or past projects to see if any of them carry the required community service and learning objective elements. Work with the SERVE Center to alter projects to make them applicable.

- Contact the SERVE Center to find out about any already-accepted Service-Learning Advantage projects planned for the semester, and learn how you can become involved.

- Talk to faculty members or the Financial Aid Office about making the experience an internship, scholarship work, or community-based research. Some disciplines or programs allow students to complete an internship for academic credit. We can work with the internship coordinators or a new site to make your experience also a Service-Learning experience.

- *Contact the SERVE Center for assistance in getting started, planning and implementing projects, and completing the correct paperwork.*

Service-Learning Advantage Checklist

Project Facilitators

- Complete Necessary Consent Forms (Attached electronically) Faculty/Staff Advisor Agreement
- Project Facilitator Agreement
- Project Proposal
- Project Review

✓ Record observations, challenges, success of the project for future reference
✓ Stay in contact with Community Partner(s)
✓ Collect photographs and publicity materials
✓ Work with SERVE Liaison

Student Participants

✓ Sign Student Release Forms (print and submit to SERVE Center)
✓ Complete the Pre-Project Survey (via email/online)
✓ Complete the Project Evaluation (via email/online)
✓ Attend a Service-Learning Talk and Reflect (STAR) Session

Example Project Proposal

SLA Proposal
AIGA with Cruz Bilingual

Nancy Cruz is requesting the assistance of the Truman State University student chapter of American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA). Truman's student chapter of AIGA coordinates critiques, demos, workshops, fundraisers, and educational trips for members. It also provides access to creative resources and networking opportunities. Cruz Bilingual Services provides translation and interpretation services as well as Spanish tutoring for all ages and levels. Nancy Cruz at Cruz Bilingual can be reached at (660) 216-4434 or nkc67@hotmail.com.

Nancy is requesting AIGA to create/design promotional bookmarks to give away and flyers. She would also like the group to redesign her current business cards. I will be assigning or a small group to brainstorm and create the designs requested. In order to complete this project to the best of AIGA's ability, I will be providing multiple designs for Nancy to pick from. The responsibility to carry out this project will mostly be placed in the hands of the students who volunteer. I, as the SLA contact, will oversee all work done and we may consult with our advisor, Matt Derezinski, for design critique.   The student volunteers will be creating multiple designs for Nancy's requested business cards, flyers, and bookmarks. I will coordinate between designers and Nancy. Designers will have access to Mac computer labs on campus and use Adobe Creative Suite programs such as Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop for the completion of this project.

➢ **The Visual Communications program:**
- Seeks to encourage intellectual and creative growth by providing opportunities for various design environments.
- Seeks to encourage critical perspective and culturally diverse approaches to art.
- Seeks to prepare students for graduate study or employment within the art field.

➢ **This Service Learning Advantage Project will meet art department learning objectives by:**
- Involving students in a creative undertaking for a new environment and new client.
- Having students collaborate with one another on different design pieces for the same company.
- Introducing students to the bilingual culture.
- Providing real-world experience that can be used in post-graduation portfolios.

I believe once the project gets underway we will have designs for Nancy to look at within 3-4 weeks. We will go from there refining the work and picking the final designs. Nancy is flexible with her deadline and would just like to accommodate the students who are assisting her. I would like to have the designs finished for printing by December. The only materials/expenses I foresee us needing is paper and printing resources, but Nancy usually uses a local printer for her business cards, etc. Nancy has provided a few requirements for the designs. The color she typically uses is pale pink and her logo is a smiley face, but she is very flexible about color shades and the logo. The business card should be designed for both sides, while the flyer would obviously just be one-sided. Nancy said the bookmark could be either way.

The main challenge I expect to encounter is coordinating multiple designers and being able to have meetings with everyone involved. I don't anticipate needing a lot of meeting times, but I will want to set up a meeting with Nancy to show her design options and then again with the designers to give out critique and further instruction. The other challenge I anticipate is making sure the designs are cohesive. With multiple designers working on the project I will have to provide parameters for them to work within so the designs have some for of consistency.

Defining Learning Objectives

In order to classify an experience as "Service-Learning" we must demonstrate how the students actually achieve the learning through the experience. Below is a list of compiled resources. Please refer to this list when delineating the learning objectives that will be accomplished via the completion of your project (*Section IV Learning Objectives* in the Project Proposal).

Learning Objectives to Address:
- Academic: If a project aligns with an academic major or minor, students can utilize course syllabi, department websites, etc. to find objectives. These objectives should be specific skills, concepts, theories, etc. about which a student hopes to learn more. Students should also think about how this project ties into or enhances their coursework.
- University-Wide: Students can review the University mission and Strategic Plan, which sets forth objectives, such as interdisciplinary thinking, the development of essential skills, and the desired characteristics of Truman graduates.
- Community and Social Knowledge: Students should identify what they may learn about the community or population with whom they interact, specific social issues, the community partners themselves, and the overall importance of community service and civic engagement.
- Personal or Cognitive Development: Significant personal growth and gains in transferrable skills, such as organization, communication, problem-solving, etc. should also be acknowledged. Students should then think about how these knowledge and skills can help them in their future endeavors.

Learning Objectives are required in Project Proposals. When writing objectives, be specific. Make sure that you have…
- A **specific, observable behavior** (something that can be monitored or easily evaluated)
- The **circumstances** under which the behavior should take place (with what assistance, resources, etc.)
- The **level of performance** that is expected or desired (how well or with what accuracy you expect to do something.
- **Example:**
  - *Vague Objective: I will learn how to recycle.*
  - *Specific Objective: I will recycle community agency materials using the guidelines for proper recycling as identified by the city of Kirksville.*

Finding a Project and
Establishing a Community Partner

Community Partners are non-profit, government-run, or faith-based agencies that may be local, national, or international.

Community Partners are essential to the success of the service-learning advantage experience. Community Partners can be co-educators for students by identifying and assessing the needs of the community, informing students of social issues, and helping students realize their potential to meet these needs and improve their community.

The Service-Learning Advantage website has a database of potential projects and community partners. The SERVE Center is also a valuable resource for community information and contacts. Students should search for projects and/or partners that will provide them the opportunity to view the inherent material of their learning objectives first-hand. **During Service-Learning Advantage, the needs of the community dictate the service being provided, so Community Partners should be consulted during the project selection process.**

Once a potential project has been identified, students should set up a preliminary meeting with potential partners. This conversation should confirm:
- A community need for the project;
- The ability of the students to implement the project;
- The timeframe for the project (one academic semester, year, etc.);
- The connection between the project and the learning objectives;
- And an on-site orientation for the students, if necessary.

Tips for a Successful Partnership

- **Establish and active, on-going relationship with partners.** This will increase the likelihood of long-term success and help students gain a strong sense of social awareness, as they continue to interact with partners and community members.

- **Maintain open, honest contact with the community partners.** Explain your role in the project and make all critical communication efforts yourself.

- **Be realistic.** You are encouraged to be open and honest with partners as well. Don't give them false expectations or make false promises while working on the project. Partners understand that things don't always go according to plan.

- **Develop a sustainable relationship with a community partner.** If you have a large goal or project in mind, divide it into smaller, workable projects that you can complete over a few semesters. This will make it easier for you and your community partner to ensure that the end result is successful.

- **Focus on collaboration.** If you have an established relationship with community agencies and leaders, it will be easier for you to work with employees of those agencies. This will also be more effective in the long-run as you will be able to implement projects quicker by eliminating the first step (finding and establishing a community partner).

- **Identify resources and assets of community partners.** You are encouraged to identify the positive, helpful aspects of their community partners. Don't focus on how the community needs to be "fixed," which may make partners feel marginalized. If partners feel invested in the project, you are more likely to be successful.

- **Discuss, research, and get to know your community partners.** You should learn the mission and vision of the partners, the constituents they serve, how they can help the project, and what you can learn in working with them.

- **Respect the partners with whom you work.** Be punctual, honest, positive, well-mannered, etc. with your partners.

- **Be flexible.** Community partners are very busy and are working full time on other projects. Be flexible and patient as you work on the project.

- **Share the credit.** If you present your work to anyone outside of the partnership or classroom, give credit to your partners and thank them for all of their help.

Tips for a Successful Project Cont.

- **Find a project that is clearly linked to your learning objectives.** This will make it easier for you to make important learning connections, which will result in a more successful experience.

- **Start small with your first project.** This will give you time to adjust to the process and the amount of work involved. Even small community projects take a lot of planning and significant preparation.

- **Ensure that project expectations are realistic.** Consider other course requirements, work and activity commitments, etc. as to not overwhelm yourself or your partner.

- **Create a flexible process that helps you identify problems and make changes.** Allow for mistakes, delays, and other unforeseen problems and don't expect everything to work like clockwork.

- **Don't wait until the project plan is complete to begin your work.** Many students spend too much time developing the plan and then run out of time all together. Don't start without a plan either, but think about what you can do in the beginning, while the plan is being worked out.

- **Don't assume that you will know what is going on or will completely understand service-learning right away.** It can be a complex concept, and some students may not see the impact of their work until after the project.

- **Be prepared to "fail gracefully."** As projects are finished over time and over budget, be ready to minimize the consequences of the "failure." This may mean establishing a new deadline, finding the best finishing point, or creating new, more feasible goals for a future project. It helps if you acknowledge in the beginning that projects don't always go according to plan, which is ok. As long as you try, there is no such thing as "failure."