

Sept. 1, 2011



Dear Community Partners,

Thank you so much for joining Austin Peay State University in providing students with an opportunity to grow and learn through service. This is an exciting time to be involved with service at APSU. The university's Provost, Dr. Tristan Denley, has recently reaffirmed a campus-wide commitment to community engagement, and outlined steps to vastly increase the service capacity at Austin Peay. Through initiatives such as faculty service learning workshops and plans to create an Office of Civic and Community Engagement that will oversee service opportunities for the university as a whole, the Provost hopes that APSU will soon be known for its robust relationship with the wider Clarksville community.

I'm proud to say that I am a part of this expansion of community engagement as well. My name is Liza Kurtz and I am the Americorps VISTA volunteer here on campus. VISTAs devote a year of their lives to building capacity for poverty-fighting programs around the country, and it is my pleasure to assist Austin Peay in its efforts to create sustainable, responsible service learning partnerships, and to serve as the main liaison between community partners and the university. Enclosed in this packet you will find a number of resources illuminating service learning, as well as a sample partnership agreement form. If after looking over the material, you find you are interested in helping students connect with both their discipline and their world on a deeper, more meaningful level, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely yours,

Liza Kurtz

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Service Learning

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Service Learning | Definition

Service-Learning is, essentially, a form of experiential learning where students integrate community service with the structured learning taking place in the classroom to enrich their learning of the course material. In addition, Service-Learning helps students develop critical reflection, deepens their understanding of the complex causes of social problems, and enhances their skills in working collaboratively.

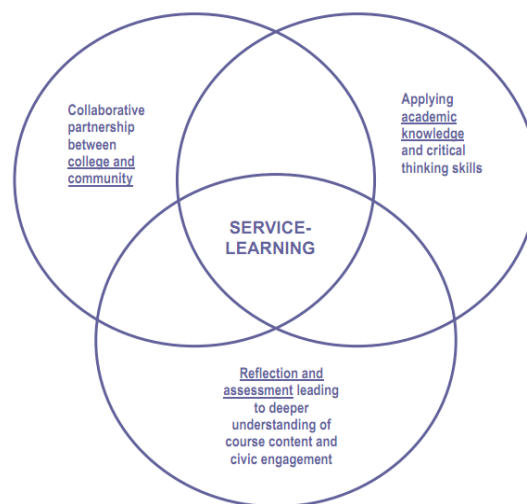
Service-Learning is more than just merely volunteering; it provides a level of critical thinking not obtained through regular volunteerism. Since the service is academically anchored, it enhances what students are learning in a class and gives them an opportunity to actively reflect on what they are learning because of the experience.

After reviewing numerous available definitions of service-learning in the large body of literature related to engaged learning, the Committee agreed that the following definition for the National Service-learning Clearinghouse (www.servicelearning.org) best suited the needs of APSU:

“Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

An experience must include three necessary components to be considered service learning:

1. A collaborative partnership between college and community. The community organization and the University representatives together identify a project or activity that addresses a community need or contributes to the necessary work of the organization.
2. Applying academic knowledge and critical thinking skills. The project or activity is directly related to learning goals that the students are already working to achieve. The project contributes to their understanding and knowledge of academic concepts or skills.
3. Reflection and assessment leading to a deeper understanding of course content and civic engagement. Students participate in a structured reflection or assessment process which facilitates the integration of the service experience and course content. The diagram below illustrates how these three elements work together to create a service learning experience.

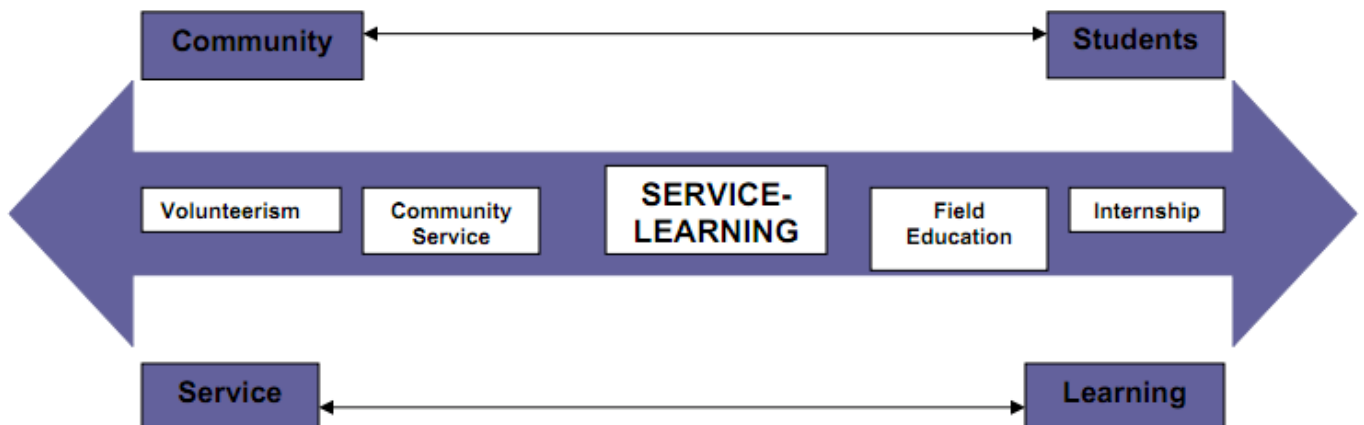


Service Learning Definition | Differences

Service-learning is different than other community outreach and academic experiences because it attributes equal weight to both service and learning goals. Think of community outreach activities on a continuum, as illustrated below. At one end, the focus is on the community as the beneficiary of service. On the other end of the continuum, the focus is on the student as the beneficiary of learning. Service-learning differs from:

- Volunteerism and community service, where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the benefit of the service activities to the community or recipients.
- Internships, which provide higher-level students with opportunities for service where they can apply concepts and skills from their major field of study, as they develop a substantial project that benefits the community, or field experiences, which provide students with co-curricular service-opportunities that are related to, but not fully integrated with their formal academic studies.

Service-learning places equal emphasis on community and student and on service and learning



What Service Learning is Not

There are many types of community involvement. However, it is important to note some vital distinctions between Service-Learning and these other forms of participation:

Volunteerism, where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient.

Community Service, where the primary focus is on the service being provided, as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients.

Internships that engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study.

Field Education that provides students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related, but not fully integrated, with their formal academic studies.

From Andrew Furco, "Service Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education." Expanding Boundaries: Service and Learn. Corporation for National Service, 1996.

What's the Benefit for My Community Organization?

At the beginning, partnering with a university to help implement a service-learning course can sound like a tricky proposition! There are, however, a number of benefits to participating.

What are the benefits?

- First and foremost, service learning students provide your organization with helping hands. This can take the form of direct service (service with the individuals your organization assists—such as students helping tutor children through a literacy program), or indirect service (service to help the organization's mission—such as students putting together lesson plans for future literacy tutors.) Service can be focused on your university partners tackling one project your organization directs (building a house for a disabled veteran), or it can be continual (helping disabled veterans find housing as needed.) The type and length of service can be determined by your organization and your university partners.
- Pre and post-service assessments can provide focused feedback from all service partners.
- Service learning connects willing volunteers with organizations they may wish to support even after an educational service component has ended.
- It exposes students to the ideas of civic and community engagement and cultivates social responsibility, helping to create a culture of volunteerism and service that lasts even after graduation.
- Service can also help the university's resources become accessible to the community through partnerships.
- And it helps the community's resources become accessible to the university!

Service learning is about responsible, *reciprocal* relationships between students, faculty and community organizations. Service learning creates partnerships that help build a better world.

Who can help?

If you're interested in more information about service learning, if you wish to be added to the database of potential service learning partners, or if you would just like to sit down and chat about what opportunities service learning might provide your organization, please contact:

- Liza Kurtz, APSU VISTA, 931-221-7357 or kurtze@apsu.edu
- Alexandra Howard, Assistant Director of Civic and Community Engagement, 931-221-7114 or howarda@apsu.edu

Both Alexandra and Liza are both personally and professionally committed to the incredible experiences service learning can provide and would be happy to help in any way they can!

Attached below is a sample partnership agreement form between a faculty member, students and a partnering organization. I hope it's a helpful outline of what a finished partnership agreement might look like, and that it gives you a better feel for service learning commitments. Once again, if you have questions or I can be any help at all, please let me know. Thank you all so much for your hard work and dedication to this community!

-Liza

Attachment 1 | Partnership Agreement Form

Service Learning Partnership Agreement | Austin Peay State University | Fall 2011

Austin Peay State University, 601 College Street, Clarksville, TN 37043

This form acts as a partnership agreement between Austin Peay State University and ##### agency. The intention of this document is to outline expectations for both the agency, student, faculty and Austin Peay State University Service Learning to insure all parties' needs are being met by the resulting student engagement/volunteering. Each party will read and sign the document and be reviewed quarterly to assess progress made through the partnership. Categories covered in this partnership include service learning outlined, time commitment, training, tracking, scheduling, safety/ liability, confidentiality, press/publications, and learning outcomes.

I. Service Learning Definition

The APSU Service Learning Advisory Board committee has accepted the following definition from the National Service-learning Clearinghouse: "Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." This definition permits numerous activities, including internships and on-campus SL projects, but it also emphasizes that SL is distinct from simple volunteering and that SL necessitates a relationship to course learning objectives and meaningful reflection.

How does service-learning differ from community service or volunteering? Community service is volunteer action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole. Service-learning is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of students engaged in service, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled. Service-learning provides structured time for thoughtful planning of the service project and guided reflection by participants on the service experience. Overall, the most important feature of effective service-learning programs is that learning and service are emphasized equally.

Service-Learning is not:

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

II. Time Commitment

Students are required to complete a certain number of hours per their course and instructor to get credit for their SL component. Minimum required hours vary between 13 – 15 hours, but students are allowed to volunteer longer if their schedule allows. A reminder that volunteers are students FIRST, and their priority should be going to class and completing course requirements.

III. Tracking Hours

The tracking of student's hours are encouraged by both the agency and required by the student and university. The university will confirm the hours logged by each student with the agency when the time commitment has been met. Students will log their hours weekly with an online university database.

IV. Scheduling

The scheduling of orientation and training for students will be handled by either the faculty member or university staff. During this orientation/ training, it will be the responsibility of the agency and the student to agree upon scheduled volunteer times. It is the responsibility of the student to give at least 48 notice if they are unable to meet an agreed upon volunteer time. The agency is encouraged to do everything they can to accommodate student's schedules, but are not required to provide make up opportunities if students cancel scheduled volunteer time. Students are ultimately responsible for scheduling their required time commitment.

V. Safety & Liability

Agencies take full responsibility for the safety of students during any time that a student is performing activities related to volunteer work designated by the agency. Agencies are encouraged to provide liability forms for all students and to insure that students are provided with appropriate safety tools for their work i.e. face masks, protective gear, gloves, etc. Students should be made aware of any potential risks or hazards to their health during their initial orientation and training. Students are responsible for their own safety and transportation to and from their volunteer site.

VI. Training

All students should be provided with an orientation and training session prior to beginning their volunteer work. These orientations should cover expectations, protocol, duties assigned, safety concerns and scheduling. Students must at all times follow the student code of conduct as listed in the student handbook. Students are to work in a drug and alcohol free environment at all times. Agencies will provide any specialty training that students may need to perform the duties requested of them by the agency.

VII. Confidentiality

Any information given by the student to the agency is to be kept private unless written consent is given from the student. Students are required to participate in reflection exercises as part of their course work based on the experiences taken from their volunteer work. Students will not be required to share names or private information during the reflection pieces, but will give an overview of the experience and information learned. If agencies have a strict confidentiality code, then they need to have students sign a confidentiality form through the agency.

VIII. Press & Publications

Any material that includes students' physical or intellectual content should not be used in publication or print without the written consent of that student. Likewise, a student cannot publish any piece of work based

on the content of their experience with agency without approval of the agency as not to hinder the progress of their nature of work. Austin Peay State University faculty and staff must secure approval of both the student and agency prior to using their stories or images in publications.

IX. Learning Outcomes

Faculty are to provide the learning outcomes and experiences that are expected for their student's experience and are listed below:

Agencies are to provide their desired outcomes from the student volunteers, specific projects, duties, and descriptions of tasks are listed below:

This agreement is to be viewed and signed by both the faculty member, agency representative, and the student before the partnership is confirmed for student placement.

Agency Representative

Date

Faculty Member

Date

Student

Date