WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

SERVICE-LEARNING is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. From the assignment of a project that addresses community needs, students learn from community members and develop leadership skills while practicing theoretical knowledge gained in class.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SERVICE-LEARNING AND INTERNSHIPS?

As a form of experiential education, SERVICE-LEARNING shares similarities with internships, field education, practica, and voluntary service. Andrew Furco (University of California Berkley) places these forms of education on a continuum. At one end of the continuum are internships and practica (professional development), with their primary focus on the students' career development. At the other end are volunteer activities, in which the emphasis is on the civic involvement and the services provided to recipients. Furco locates SERVICE-LEARNING in the middle of the continuum, and states that it is unique in its "intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring".

SERVICE-LEARNING is different from:

- **COMMUNITY SERVICE** (Volunteerism), where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is the service recipient. Students benefit by learning how their service makes a difference thus increasing their interest and motivation for civic engagement.
- **INTERNSHIPS** provide higher-level students opportunities for service in which they can apply concepts and skills from their major field of study as they may develop a substantial project that benefits the community.
- **FIELD EXPERIENCES** provide students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related but not fully integrated with their formal academic studies.
I'M STILL CONFUSED. CAN YOU MAKE IT SIMPLE?

- Picking up trash by a riverbank is **SERVICE**.
- Studying water samples under a microscope is **LEARNING**.
- When students collect and analyze water samples for the local pollution control agency and the agency uses the findings to clean up a river – that is **SERVICE-LEARNING**.

Let's take, for example, a nonprofit wishing to sponsor a 5K Walk/run as a fundraiser. The following is an example of how an university might respond to a call from the nonprofit organization for “help” with the event.

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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF SERVICE</th>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
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| Community Service        | Any student/any degree program | • Running or walking in the race with pledges for distance covered.  
|                          |                              | • Serving as race monitors along the course                               |
| Internship               | Business student/MBA or MPA  | • Market analysis/strategic plan to identify an unique, and potentially profitable, fundraiser appropriate to the organization’s mission. |
| Field Experience         | Students in nursing or medicine | • Staffing a medical tent, looking for signs of runners/walkers in need of medical attention |
| **SERVICE-LEARNING**     | Students in communication or marketing | • Developing a social network site to generate interest.  
|                          | Students in graphic design   | • Developing a print media campaign for marketing purposes                 |

**SERVICE-LEARNING IS NOT:**

- An episodic volunteer program;
- An add-on to an existing college curriculum;
- Completing minimum service hours in order to graduate;
- Service assigned as a form of punishment;
- Only for high school or college students; or
- One-sided, benefiting only students or only the community.