Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning at Loyola University Maryland

Service-Learning Designated Courses

Service-learning refers specifically to experiential learning within academic courses that is gained through structured reflection on community-based service. In most courses, service-learning pedagogies are combined with more traditional modes of teaching and learning.

The service-learning course designation is a hallmark of Loyola’s approach to community-engaged learning and scholarship and reflects nationally recognized standards of best practice. Designated courses demonstrate strong integration between community service and course learning aims, in-depth instructor and student preparation, a strong reflection component, and careful attention to partnership. To receive designation, courses must include the following components:

I. Integration of service and learning in course goals and activities;
II. Instructor training in service-learning pedagogy;
III. Attention to partnership and reciprocity with the community;
IV. Promotion of justice, diversity, and leadership;
V. Preparation of students for service;
VI. Inclusion of structured reflection in course design; and
VII. Assessment mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of service-learning pedagogy and activities.

Designation generally applies to individual sections taught by faculty who have been trained in service-learning pedagogy. Designated courses may require service of all students (denoted SL in Webadvisor) or may be optional (SO) depending on the pedagogical, curricular, and logistical preferences and needs of the instructor, department, and community partners involved.

Designated service-learning course sections should be capped at 80% of the usual enrollment for non-designated sections of the same (or comparable) course. Faculty members teaching designated service-learning courses and their department chairs or program/division directors are responsible for setting appropriate course enrollment caps for designated service-learning courses.

To aid in course development, partnership development, and initial implementation, full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members may receive a one-course reduction in teaching load during the first semester they teach a designated service-learning course. The scheduling of the service-learning course and concomitant reduction in course load should be determined in consultation with the department chair and dean. After receiving the initial course release, faculty must offer a designated service-learning course section (it need not be the same course) at least twice during the subsequent five academic years. In other words, faculty receiving a course release commit to teaching a minimum of three sections of a service-learning designated course (or courses) over the span of six academic years.

Full-time non-tenure-track and clinical faculty teaching designated service-learning courses are eligible to receive a stipend equivalent to 8% of their contracted annual salary the first time they develop and teach a designated service-learning course. After receiving the initial stipend, non-tenure-track faculty should
continue to offer a designated service-learning course section (it need not be the same course) to meet departmental needs as determined by the appropriate Chair or program/division director.

Service-learning is a high-impact teaching practice and is considered significant service to the University, both for the purposes of annual faculty evaluation and for carrying out the university’s mission.

Courses with service components and other forms of community-engaged teaching and learning

Many courses at Loyola incorporate community service and service-learning pedagogy but do not meet the criteria for service-learning course designation. These courses are valuable in the development of students’ civic education and are thus encouraged. To make service activities in these courses as meaningful as possible, Loyola encourages faculty desiring to incorporate service activities in their courses to consult with staff members in Academic Affairs and the Center for Community Service and Justice for appropriate resources.

All courses that incorporate community-engaged learning intentionally contribute to Undergraduate Educational Aims that promote justice, diversity, leadership and social responsibility. These values are central to the Jesuit educational mission of Loyola University Maryland and of all Jesuit colleges and universities.

More About the Service-Learning Course Designation Criteria

Loyola University Maryland strives for pedagogical excellence in the use of service-learning. To that end, service-learning designated courses at Loyola should fulfill the following criteria:

I. Integration of Service and Learning in Course Goals and Activities
   - Service should be incorporated in course learning aims.
   - All service activities and placements should enhance student learning and contribute to specific learning objectives of the course.
   - Course content should inform and deepen student engagement in service activities and help students be of greater service with and for community partners.
   - SO courses should strive to make the course requirements and experience of students opting to do service equal in weight (in terms of time, effort, and grading) to students who choose not to do service, and the course should include activities that will allow all students in the course to have the opportunity to learn through the experiences of students who engage in service.

II. Instructor Training in Service-Learning Pedagogy
   All service-learning designated courses require that instructors complete the Faculty Fellows Seminar or equivalent training approved by the Faculty Director for Community-Engaged Learning and Scholarship. For non-designated courses, we recommend that instructors participate in a 90-minute “Basics of Community-Engaged Teaching” workshop offered by CCSJ.

III. Attention to Partnership and Reciprocity with the Community
   Reciprocity is the defining principle of service-learning partnerships. Therefore, the service should address community-defined needs and desires, while also fulfilling learning aims and objectives. All parties should mutually benefit from both service and learning.

   Prior to syllabus completion and the beginning of the semester, instructors communicate with community partners and agree upon the service to be undertaken for the course and its connections with service-learning aspects of the course. In order to meet the needs of all parties, a minimum of 20 hours of service per semester (e.g., two hours per week for ten weeks, for program-based service-learning, or 20 hours of time devoted to a course project, for project-based service-learning) is generally expected of each student enrolled in a service-learning designated course. All parties (instructor, community partner, and
student) are involved in establishing their respective responsibilities and expected benefits prior to the start of the service-learning activity.

IV. Promotion of Justice, Diversity and Leadership
Service-learning intrinsically contributes to many of the Undergraduate Educational Aims of Loyola that are central to the mission of the University: e.g., the promotion of justice; diversity; and leadership. Service-learning courses should be designed to advance social justice and engaged citizenship and benefit from these inherent pedagogical strengths.

V. Preparation of Students for Service
Orientations to specific service sites and logistical support are available through the Center for Community Service and Justice. It is essential, however, for course instructors to provide additional preparation for students. They should prepare students to engage in service-learning by including the following information on the syllabus and presenting it in class, at the beginning of the semester and at points throughout:

- rationale for using service-learning in the course
- requirements for service-learning assignments and activities
- development of service orientation and skills (interpersonal communication, cultural awareness, etc.)
- structured reflection and its importance
- reciprocity as concept and practice
- development of partnership(s) with community co-educator(s)
- connections among course learning objectives and service-learning/service.

VI. Inclusion of Structured Reflection in Course Design
Meaningful, structured reflection is the primary link between service and learning in the course: it is how students make the experience of service educative and connect it to course content. According to Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996), meaningful, structured reflection is:

- **Continuous** over the course of each event or experience. Continuous reflection includes reflection before the experience, during the experience, and after the experience.
- **Connected** in that it links service to the intellectual and academic pursuits of the students at two levels: (1) service experiences illustrate theories and concepts, making academics real and vivid, and (2) through classroom work, students begin to develop conceptual frameworks that explain service experiences.
- **Challenging** to assumptions and complacency in a way that produces new understanding, raises new questions, and moves towards new frameworks for problem solving, and
- **Contextualized** within the setting and context of a particular course; the environment and method of reflection corresponds in a meaningful way to the topics and experiences that form the material for reflection. (Adapted from Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., & Schmiede, A. A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning: Student Voices and Reflections, Vanderbilt University, 1996, Chapter 1)

VII. Assessment Mechanisms to Measure the Effectiveness of Service-learning Pedagogy and Activities
Assessment of the service-learning aspects of the course is essential to the maintenance and improvement of service-learning pedagogy and practice at Loyola. Service-learning assessments should be completed by: (1) the instructor, (2) the community partner(s), and (3) students in the course.

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