

Vance-Granville Community College
Student
Service Learning Manual

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Overview of Service Learning

What Is Service Learning?

By combining theory from an academic perspective and practice from real-life experience, service learning fosters a broader understanding not only of your curriculum, but also of yourself and your place in the community. The concept is a simple one: you help provide a service for your community in connection with your class work, and your community helps provide an educational experience for you. So it's both service and learning in one!

At Vance-Granville Community College, service learning can be incorporated into courses by offering students individual service opportunities with community agencies, or by creating project based service activities for a group of students or for the entire class. The most meaningful service learning activities are developed through partnership and dialogue between the College and the agency "partners" with whom our students serve.

How Service Learning Differs From Volunteerism or Internships

A service learning project aims to fully integrate service with learning, while volunteering has little or no connection to formal coursework. Also, service learning examines the service experience in the context of ongoing learning, whereas internships apply what has been learned earlier.

Benefits of Service Learning

Service learning enriches student learning of course material by moving them from the margin of the classroom experience to the center. It "brings books to life and life to books."

- ◆ Helps students come to see the relevance and importance of academic work in their real life.
- ◆ Enhances students' self-esteem by allowing them to "make a difference" through their active and meaningful contribution to their communities.
- ◆ Broadens perspectives and enhances critical thinking skills.
- ◆ Improves interpersonal and human relations skills which are increasingly viewed as the most important skills in achieving success in professional and personal spheres.
- ◆ Provides guidance and experience for future career choice.
- ◆ Provides experience which can be used on a resume and future college applications.
- ◆ Develops students' networks of support and professional contacts.

Student Section

A. Student's Rights and Responsibilities

As a student in a service learning course, you are privileged to have a set of expectations for yourself, your instructor, and the partnering community agency:

Rights

- ◆ Understanding: An understanding of the connection between your service and the content of your course work.
- ◆ Quality: A quality service experience within a community organization which allows you to serve in ways which are appropriate to the skill levels you can offer, and which provides you the supervision and training you need to succeed.
- ◆ Communication: Clear communication between you, the instructor, and the partnering community agency.
- ◆ Expectations: Clearly defined expectations from both your instructor and the agency.

Responsibilities

- ◆ Commitment: You are committing yourself and your time to a community agency, so it's important to arrive on-time on the scheduled days.
- ◆ Communication: It is important to communicate with your instructor, the community agency and/or the Service Learning Coordinator if any problems or conflicts arise.
- ◆ Open-Mind: Have an open-mind to your experience by letting go of preconceived notions and stereotypes. Be open to learning about cultures and lifestyles that are different than your own.
- ◆ Be prompt, willing, respectful and positive at the placement site.
- ◆ Fulfill all agreed upon duties and responsibilities.
- ◆ Provide feedback about the service experience and its relevancy to the course material and participate in class discussions, as well as a reflection session held at the end of the semester.
- ◆ Respect the confidentiality of the people served.
- ◆ Participate in the evaluation process.

B. What to Expect From Your Service Learning Experience

In addition to expanding your mind and heart, service learning offers many benefits and expectations. Here are some key concepts to this type of learning experience:

- ◆ Greater Understanding: The service experience is clearly connected to your academic curriculum, providing a more in-depth and hands-on look at the theories explored through course work.

◆ **Social Awareness and Civic Responsibility:** Because your service is meeting a genuine community need, you have the opportunity to realize true social problems that exist around you and exercise your civil power by doing something about them.

◆ **Reciprocity:** By having a reciprocal relationship between you and the community agency, both parties benefit and are partners in the experience.

◆ **Reflection:** By reflecting on your experiences through activities such as journals, essays, scrapbooks, class discussions and presentations, you can focus on the connection between your service and your academics. These connections allow you to examine personal growth you might have had through your experience, like breaking down stereotypes, confronting fears, increasing empathy, etc.

C. Safety

The safety of VGCC Service Learners is of utmost importance. If at any time you feel unsafe--either during your service or during your travel to and from your site--please talk to the Service Learning Coordinator, your agency contact person, or your instructor. Basically, the safety precautions you take around campus are the same precautions you should take while out in the community. Here are some important tips for remaining safe while doing Service Learning:

- ◆ Be sure to lock your car, park in a well-lit area, and hide valuable possessions
- ◆ Do not bring valuables to a site
- ◆ Dress conservatively – business casual is usually appropriate – No short-shorts or midriffs showing
- ◆ Do not give out your phone number, or personal information to the people you are serving, (i.e., clients, patients, residents, etc)
- ◆ Be aware of your surroundings
- ◆ Ask your site contact where you can store your personal belongings while doing service
- ◆ Ask the agency staff to walk you to your car if necessary
- ◆ Respect your instincts

If an incident occurs-- even if it's something minor-- be sure to report it **IMMEDIATELY** to the Service Learning Coordinator or your Instructor.

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Where to Go For Help

Notify your instructor of any conflicts that might be preventing you from having a quality service experience. You should also have open communication between yourself and your community agency and someone to contact there if problems arise. If you feel you are having difficulty with the class and service, discuss it with your instructor.

D. Tips on Keeping a Reflective Journal (If Required by Instructor)

Journaling is a useful way to keep track of what you are learning and the kind of service you are providing to the community. It can also help provide insight into what you are experiencing and how you are feeling about it.

Your journal can take many different forms. However, a few ingredients are essential.

- ◆ Before your first visit to the agency (other than the interview for approval to work there), write down your thoughts, feelings, concerns, questions and preconceived notions about the agency and the population you will be serving. This will help you see if your thoughts and feelings change throughout your time there.
- ◆ Do not edit as you write. Instead, write your thoughts freely, without regard for syntax, spelling or punctuation. Editing can be done later, if you wish. The point is not to stop the flow of your thoughts.
- ◆ Remember to observe confidentiality and use pseudonyms when referring to clients.
- ◆ Other requirements of journal writing are candor and keen use of your senses and observational skills. Not only will your writing be more interesting as you develop your senses and observational powers, but your learning from your experiences will be enhanced as well.
- ◆ Write an **objective** account of the daily events that occur. Try to remember everything that happens but just write the facts. Don't make inferences. *Keep this part of your journal to only a few lines.*
- ◆ Next describe your feelings and perceptions, questions and ideas about what happened during the day. This is your **subjective** account of the day, and should constitute the bulk of your journaling.
- ◆ You will find the journal less of a chore if you take a few minutes at the end of each day of service, to review your learning objectives and reflect upon your experiences of the day.

Remember, it is important that you **NOT** think of your journal as a work log in which you itemize and record events, task and statistics.

Your journal is a reflective and analytical activity which allows you to grapple with problems and frustrations as well as identify your accomplishments and other positive

learning experiences. The journal is your means of regularly charting your growth and development both academically and personally.

Reflective Questions for Your Service Learning Journal

- ◆ What's the best thing that happened today/this week?
- ◆ What's the most difficult/satisfying part of your work? Why?
- ◆ What do you think is your most valuable/valued contribution?
- ◆ Did you receive any compliments/criticisms? What did you learn from this?
- ◆ Tell about a person there who you find interesting/challenging to be with.
- ◆ How do people there treat you? How do they see your role? Is this congruent/in conflict with how you see your role?
- ◆ Tell about something you learned as a result of a disappointment or failure (Remember "failure" is a personal growth opportunity.)
- ◆ Think back on a moment when you felt especially happy or satisfied in your placement. What does that tell you about yourself?
- ◆ Is there some situation that you had problems with that you would want to talk to your site supervisor about?
- ◆ How did you feel today? Did you just feel like you were doing your service because you had to? What charged you up?
- ◆ How is all this relevant to the readings, discussions and lectures in your class?

For Yourself:

- ◆ Be thorough with your journal, and as introspective and reflective as possible. In most cases, service learning papers and reports will not be due until the end of the project, and chances are you will forget a lot of the things that happened throughout the project. Do not just focus on the fact that you read a book to an elderly woman, but reflect on your thoughts about the agency, the services provided to the people, the lives and cultures of the people you meet, what you have in common with the people you serve, and what are the unique differences, etc. Make notes about ways your community experience relates to specific material from the course. A thorough and well thought out journal will help you when you produce your final paper, presentation or project. **Remember: you do not get a grade or credit for the service you perform. Your grade is based on how well you demonstrate to your instructor that you learned something about the course from your participation in the community.**

E. Making the Connection to Your Academic Class

Service Learning is intended to enhance your academic courses through experiential learning. However, sometimes it can be difficult to see the connection between your coursework and the service you are doing. Here are some tips for helping you to get the most learning out of your experience:

With Your Instructor:

- ◆ Find out what exactly your instructor wants you to be doing, seeing and experiencing while in the community. Ask him/her what he/she wants you to get out of your learning.
- ◆ Take a close look at the syllabus, and see what the instructor wants you to get out of the course.
- ◆ If you continue to struggle with making the connection, ask to talk to your instructor about it, either in class or in a private meeting. Don't forget the rest of the class learns when you share your questions and experiences. Encourage your instructor to allow service learners to discuss their community experiences throughout the semester, and not just at the end.

With Your Agency Contact:

- ◆ Communicate your course objectives and your own learning objectives to the site contact so s/he can help to place you in the best learning situation.
- ◆ If you are doing something that does not seem to be a fit with your class, speak up and let the contact person know. However, also realize that sometimes doing service offers you an exposure, or a foot in the door, or even a chance to be an observer. So although the service you are performing may not have to do with your class work, it is allowing you an opportunity to learn from a context. For example, you might not be enrolled in an education class, but you might be doing tutoring in order to learn about gender roles in children for your Sociology class. You might need to do a little searching, because the theories, concepts, and philosophies may not jump out at you right away.
- ◆ Your contact person has agreed to serve as a co-educator, so schedule a meeting with her/him to discuss your observations, asks questions, etc. Site contacts are great resources for filling in the gaps in your knowledge about the agency, the issues it addresses, or the population being served.

F.

**Service Learning
Student Checklist**

- _____ 1. Attend the Service Learning Project Orientation.
- _____ 2. Review the Student Section of the Service Learning Manual.
- _____ 3. Complete the **Service Learning Program – Student Contract Letter** in an initial meeting with your site supervisor. Return this form to your instructor before you begin your service. Form C.
- _____ 4. Complete the **Service Learning Risk Statement of Understanding.** Return this form to your instructor before you begin your service. Form D.
- _____ 5. Fulfill all requirements of the project.
- _____ 6. Complete the **Student Evaluation Service Learning Experience Form** at the end of your service learning experience and return the form to your instructor. Form E.
- _____ 7. Document Service Learning hours. Form H.

Forms

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM - STUDENT CONTRACT LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a student taking a _____ course at Vance-Granville Community College. As part of the course, I am participating in the **Service Learning Program**. I have chosen your agency/organization in which to complete my required volunteer hours. The number of hours required for my class is _____.

Service Learning is an educational tool used to promote student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content. The purpose is to enhance students' understanding of course content, critical thinking skills, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness and commitment to the community.

If given the opportunity to volunteer at your agency/organization, I agree to all of the following:

- 1) I will provide you with a copy of my course syllabus so you can see the learning objectives for this course.
- 2) I will set a specific start date and a regular work schedule with you today.
- 3) I will show up on time on my scheduled days and if I cannot make it or I am going to be late, I will contact you in advance via phone or email.
- 4) I will abide by all agency/organizational rules and regulations, including the dress code and code of conduct.
- 5) If I decide to drop my class and/or stop volunteering at your agency/organization, I will contact you via phone or email prior to missing any scheduled work hours. I will also immediately inform **my instructor**.

Thank you for the opportunity to use your facility as a learning resource. I will work diligently for you and your clients.

Sincerely,

Student Signature

Date

Student Name Printed

Agency Supervisor Name & Title

This form is a volunteer contract, give a copy to the Site Supervisor during the interview process and the original to your Instructor. If your Site Supervisor changes or is not the original person with whom you interviewed, you should give another copy to your new supervisor (the person signing your tracking form & evaluation).

SERVICE LEARNING RISK STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I, _____, intend to participate in Service Learning
(*please print full name*)
at (*placement site*) _____

for (*course title/number*)_____.

I understand that my responsibilities at the community organization are to include

_____.

I hereby acknowledge that there are risks of physical harm and injury inherent in service activities including but not limited to, working with people, participating in sports and recreational activities, cleaning and maintenance projects, preparing and serving food, transportation to and from service work sites, and other service activities. I specifically acknowledge that in performing these activities, I am doing so as a server/volunteer for the community agency and as a Vance-Granville Community College student, not as a server/volunteer, employee or agent of Vance-Granville Community College.

I understand that I am required to provide my own health and accident insurance. Vance-Granville Community College does provide limited student accident insurance for curriculum students purchased by the student at registration; however, this insurance may not cover all expenses of treatment received by the student. Coverage is a (secondary) policy unless there is no other insurance in place. The College is not responsible for non-covered expenses.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Vance-Granville Community College
STUDENT EVALUATION SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE
(Responses are confidential)

Name _____

Instructor _____

Course _____ Section _____

Agency where service was completed _____

Site Supervisor _____

1. Were you satisfied with the help you received in choosing a placement site?
 Yes No

2. Did your service learning experience have any effect on your career plans?
 confirmed my career choice made me think about a different career choice
 changed my career choice had no effect on my career choice

PLEASE RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE AT THE PLACEMENT SITE
(Mark only one per row)

Questions	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
3. Helpfulness of agency staff				
4. Adequate orientation & training				
5. Adequate supervision				
6. Meaningful tasks to perform				
7. Recognition of my efforts				

8. Overall, how would you rate your experience as a Service Learner? (Mark only one)
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

9. Would you recommend Service Learning to any of your friends or classmates?
 Yes No

10. Do you plan to continue volunteering at this agency after you complete the required hours?
 Yes No

Please place a check beside the word or phrase which most closely describes your opinion:

11. The service I did through this class helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

12. I feel that the service I did through this class was not at all beneficial to the community.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

13. The service I did through this class helped me to better understand the lectures and readings required for this class.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

14. The idea of combining service to the community with college course work should be practiced in more classes at VGCC.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

15. I was already doing service in my community before taking this class.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

16. This class made me more interested in doing service in my community than I was before.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

17. I probably won't do community service of any kind once this class is finished.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

18. I learned a great deal about myself through my service activities.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

19. I learned a great deal about the needs of others in the community, which I was unaware of before participating in the Service Learning Program.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

20. Some educators say that real learning means being able to integrate learning into your own behavior. With that definition, I feel that this class was very successful in helping me really learn.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

Comments: _____
