

Service-Learning

Center for Community Involvement

Frequently Asked Faculty Questions

1. What do I have to do to incorporate service-learning into my courses?

It is really not difficult to incorporate service-learning into your courses. Simply follow the guidelines below and you're on your way.

- Arrange a meeting with the Faculty Coordinator and the Center Director;
- Attend a faculty skills workshop;
- Integrate service-learning into your syllabus (Things to consider: optional vs. required, number of hours, types of service placements that fit your class, reflective component, assessment strategies, etc.). The Center Director, Faculty Coordinator, and the regular workshops that CCI offers will help with this process;
- Schedule a class presentation with the Center Director to introduce service-learning to your students;
- Help collect forms (applications, time sheets, and evaluations) and pass them on to the Center;
- Communicate regularly with the Center regarding any assistance needed.

2. What if I have a student who is doing service-learning for another class in addition to my own?

- When faculty understand that service-learning is not about "number of hours" but rather "academic credit for demonstrated learning," then "double dipping" becomes a non-issue. Faculty who are concerned with double dipping generally have little to no reflective assignments and basically are giving students a grade for hours of service completed-- which isn't service-learning;
- If the faculty member has a strong reflective component which guides students to connect service with course learning objectives (i.e., concrete academic assignments for which grades/credit can be assigned), then the hours are no-longer an issue. Of course, the assumption here is that the service project is relevant to both courses, which

sometimes is not the case (for example a student in English Composition and College Prep Reading could tutor children in reading for his/her service project and use this for both classes—doing all his/her writing about the tutoring, as well as completing all the reflective assignments from the reading class; however, a student in a math class and a biology class might have to do two separate service projects since it would be hard to find one service project that fits both classes).

3. How do I ensure that service-learning is academically rigorous?

- Read the "Reflection Activities: Tried and True Teaching Methods to Enhance Students' Service-Learning Experience." This handout details 24 different reflection techniques that you can choose from.
- Incorporate reflection strategies and techniques, even before students actually begin volunteering (pre-reflection) and continue providing structured opportunities for students to make connections between their service-learning experiences and the course content throughout the semester;
- Attend a workshop hosted by the Center for Community Involvement to learn new and creative reflection techniques;
- Develop and set specific service-learning objectives which will guide and focus the students' experiences based on your course learning objectives (see "Setting Your Service-Learning Objectives");
- Make sure students understand that they are getting academic credit for demonstrated learning, not for completing the necessary number of hours;
- Utilize the many resources available at the Center for Community Involvement. For example, there are sample syllabi for your particular subject, reflection activities, and many electronic resources, to name a few.

4. What is the minimum number of hours students have to do to complete a service-learning project?

- It is up to you as faculty to set the number of hours students must complete.
- Research indicates that two factors primarily influence the service-learning's impact on students, 1) the duration of the service experience, and 2) the amount and quality of reflection. Therefore the more hours and the more structured reflection (activities that help your students think critically about connections between the course and their service experience) the better.

- With this said, there is no right or wrong number of hours. The average number of hours per semester seems to be about 20, with a range from a couple of hours to 40 hours or more. A one time (e.g., a couple of hours) service experience can be perfectly fine if it includes reflection and helps students master your course learning objectives.

5. What does the Center for Community Involvement provide?

The Center for Community Involvement Will Provide:

- Individual consultation on integrating service-learning into your course;
- Class presentations at any time per your needs and requests;
- Student handbooks for all participants;
- A comprehensive list of approved service-learning sites appropriate for your course;
- Placement and tracking of all students;
- Regular reports regarding student status and progress;
- Mid-term and end-of-term thank you letters for every student;
- Service-learning certificate for every student;
- Problem solving/quality control;
- A campus-wide "Forum on Civic Responsibility" open to all students and faculty that helps students' reflect on the importance of being a responsible citizen;
- Assistance with any logistical issue or any problem/concern you might have.

For questions or additional information:

Miami Dade College
Center For Community Involvement
(305) 237-3848
Josh Young, College-wide director: jyoung@mdc.edu

www.mdc.edu/ci