Introduction

to CSL

for Instructors

What is Community Service-Learning?

Community Service-Learning integrates community-based activities with classroom. With the assistance of the CSL Program, instructors and community partners work together to design opportunities for students that aim to meet the needs of community organizations and fulfill the objectives of academic courses. While new courses might be created especially with CSL in mind, it is more common for existing courses to be revised to include a CSL component. As the outline of pedagogical approaches and course models on the following page suggests, there is no one best way to link service and learning within the university curriculum.

Potential Benefits of Academic Service-Learning

Adapted from University of Minnesota Career & Community Learning Centre (http://www.cclc.umn.edu/)

Students

- Increase understanding of course material and learn to apply course material to new situations
- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Improve ability to handle ambiguity (and be open to change)
- Develop or enhance other skills – notably in communication, collaboration, and leadership
- Gain hands-on experience in the not for profit sector
- Learn more about social issues and their root causes

Faculty

- Gain experience with interactive teaching methods -- fostering reciprocal learning
- Promote students’ active learning -- adding new insights and dimensions to class discussion
- Engage students with different learning styles – involving more students
- Learn firsthand knowledge of community issues
- Develop relationships with the community – providing opportunity for collaborative work
- Discover new avenues for research – including research into teaching practices

Community

- Inject new energy, enthusiasm, and perspectives into the organization’s work
- Gain additional human resources needed to achieve organizational goals
- Co-educate youth about community issues – perhaps correcting misperceptions
- Increase public awareness of key issues
- Network with colleagues in other organizations and agencies
- Identify and access other university resources; build relationships with faculty and staff

University

- Promote engaged citizenship and develop leadership skills
- Encourage faculty, student, and community interaction and collaboration
- Develop and improve university-community relationships
- Embed discovery learning experiences, both on campus and in the broader community
- Strengthen cohesiveness across the five university campuses
- Contribute to fulfilling the public role of the university
Models of Community Engagement in Service-Learning
These four different approaches to CSL, identified by Dan Butin (“Focusing our Aim” in Change, Nov/Dec 2007) overlap and intermingle in practice; nevertheless, they provide a useful starting point from which to think about your own approach to community engagement as a pedagogy. Each approach highlights a different aspect of bringing community experience into the classroom, and vice versa.

Technical Model
The focus is on the pedagogical effectiveness of service-learning for enhancing learning of course content.

Cultural Model
The focus is on the meanings of practices, especially to enhance respect for diversity and engaged citizenship.

Political Model
The focus is on the empowerment of historically disempowered groups (including the role of the university in unequal power relations).

Anti-foundational Model
The focus is on the potential for CSL pedagogy to defamiliarize the seemingly natural (norms, behaviours, assumptions) and expand the sense of the possible.

Types of Service-Learning Courses

Discipline-Based Service-Learning
Students are expected to have an engaged presence in the community and reflect on their experiences on a regular basis throughout the semester using course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding. The link between course content and community experience must be made very explicit to students.

Problem-Based Service-Learning
Students (or teams of students) work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This model presumes that the students will have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community, develop a solution to the problem, or produce some kind of tool or resource for the community.

Capstone
Students are asked to draw upon knowledge they have obtained throughout their course work and combine it with relevant service work in the community, with the goal of either exploring a new topic or synthesizing their understanding of their discipline. Such courses are generally designed for majors and minors in a given discipline and are generally offered to students in their final year. Personal experience.

Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research
Students work closely with faculty members to learn research methods while serving as advocates for communities. Such courses are generally designed for students (or teams of students) highly experienced in community work who can negotiate diverse communities as self-directed learners.
Deciding on CSL

Key Elements to Consider

- **Mutual benefit**: Service placements benefit both the student’s learning process (content of the course) and the community organization.
- **Syllabus revision**: Changing assignments, some readings, and perhaps some teaching strategies to integrate CSL.
  - **Reflection**: Opportunities for students to continually think/write/discuss/creatively explore what they learn as they move between the course and the community.
- **Co-education**: Community supervisors contribute to student learning, without over-burdening already stretched community resources.

CSL Program Supports for the Development of CSL Courses

- Provide background information and material on CSL to help you get started – see Brown Bag Orientation Sessions.
- Provide resources and training for planning course syllabi to include a CSL component (including suggested assignments, assessment tools etc.) – see Syllabus Building Workshops.
- Work with instructors to identify the types of community agencies that will best meet the learning objectives for their course.
- Contact the community agencies (including those suggested by faculty) to identify volunteer options that are mutually beneficial.
- Provide each instructor with a list of specific volunteer opportunities from which students can select (or be assigned to) their placements; this list includes the agency contact information; agency skill/knowledge requirements; any pre-training and background check requirements; total number of students the agency will supervise; total hours of service-work in term; accessibility by public transit; time requirements/restrictions and any other information relevant to the placement.
- Determine what preparatory measures are required—Police Information Check; Youth Intervention Check; agency orientation/application procedures— for each CSL placement and facilitate the process of completing them.
- Provide ongoing support throughout the semester in the form of resources, self-evaluation tools/mid-term assessments, liaising with community partners, and responding to questions and concerns.

On-line Resources

- Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL) [www.communityservicelearning.ca](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca)
- Campus Compact (Main American website) [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)
- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health [http://www.ssph.info/](http://www.ssph.info/)
- Imagining America [www.ia.umich.edu/specifying-scholarship.html#feedback](http://www.ia.umich.edu/specifying-scholarship.html#feedback)
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (American) [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)
- International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership [www.ipsl.org](http://www.ipsl.org)
**CSL Course Planning Checklist**

**Key Questions in Planning a CSL Course**

- **What are the broad considerations in creating a syllabus that integrates a CSL component?**
  - Overall, what are the course goals/learning objectives?
  - What are the goals/objectives for the service-learning component and how do they integrate with the overall goals/objectives?
  - How will students demonstrate they have met the course objectives (both learning and community)?
  - How will the service-learning component be evaluated?
  - How will course requirements be adjusted to accommodate the hours students will devote to their CSL placements outside of class time?

- **How will CSL be integrated into the course in an ongoing and intentional way?**
  - How might reflection journals, blogs, group work, CSL-specific readings, etc. be used?
  - Who might assume responsibility for leading discussions? How often?
  - What sorts of presentations will be encouraged?
  - How might other written work be shared on a regular basis?
  - What sorts of collaborations might be encouraged amongst groups of students (e.g., participant and non-participant; interdisciplinary groups; volunteers working in teams)?

- **Will the CSL component be required for all students?**
  - How many hours will be required throughout the term? (we recommend a minimum of 20 hours per student)
  - What types of community service will best contribute to the course objectives?
  - How many different volunteer organizations/projects will be included?
  - Will the volunteer work be accomplished in a short period of time (concentrated in a week or two around a specific project) or spread out over the term at an average of 2 hours/week?
  - Will students work alone, in pairs, or in small groups?

- **If you decide not to require service-learning of all students, what is your alternative for other students?**
  - How will course activities integrate CSL and non-CSL students?
  - How will CSL and non-CSL options be equitable for students, in terms of types of assignments and time commitments? (And what other name might you give to ‘non-CSL’ students?)

- **How will community partners be intentionally involved in the student learning process?**
  - How will students be matched to community partners? (How will they choose the right opportunity? Will they be asked to volunteer in pairs? etc. To ensure a ‘good’ match and an even distribution, we recommend a process whereby students submit in writing their top two choices and reasons for them; they are then assigned to one of these.)
  - How will students be encouraged to learn about the organization they work with? How will they be encouraged to be accountable to the needs and expectations of the organization?
  - How will they learn about ethical issues and responsibilities (beyond the information presented to them in the CSL Student Handbook)?
Timeline for CSL Instructors

By early May (for fall courses) OR early October (for winter courses)
Suggested steps in deciding on course involvement in CSL and the development of a course syllabus:

- Seek out examples of CSL courses in the subject area of the course. Visit our website for sample syllabi and for links to Campus Compact and other online resources, visit our library (and the U of A Libraries) for more CSL-specific resources, set up a meeting with us to discuss your plans
- Fill in the CSL Intention form (attached). This form is used to match your curricular needs to the placements offered by prospective community partners
- Please send your CSL Intention form to Lorraine Woollard by email (lmw@ualberta.ca) no later than Monday, May 2nd for 2011 fall courses
- Plan to attend a syllabus building workshop: Tuesday, May 17th for fall 2011 courses
- Work with the CSL Office to identify community agencies (or types of agencies) that likely will provide the service placements.

Based on your CSL Intention form and our conversations with you, our Partnership Coordinator works to identify and contact community agencies most likely to provide course-appropriate engagement opportunities for your students. (Please leave the contact to us, or let us know of contacts you would like to make. This makes life easier for community partners.)

By early July (for fall courses) OR mid-November (for winter courses)

You will be provided with the draft list of placements developed for your course. Please feel free to discuss this list with staff at the CSL House. As you develop your syllabus, you might find it helpful to:

- Consult CSL resources and readings that are relevant to your disciplines and/or course
- Determine more specifically how the service experience will be integrated into the course curriculum—the readings and assignments (journals, blogs, papers, presentations, tests)
- Decide on whether the course assignments involve projects that require Research Ethics Board approval (this process may take up to six weeks; the CSL Program has developed guidelines for your course ethics approval; these are available from the Program office and on our website)
- Decide how outcomes will be assessed
- Consult with the CSL Office about any concerns that may arise as you develop your syllabus

By mid-July (for fall courses) OR early December (for winter courses)

- Check in with the CSL Office if you have not received your final list of selected community agencies
- Confirm the nature of activities at agencies and any outstanding details (see above)
- Become familiar with the agencies and opportunities being provided to your students
- Arrange for classroom guest speakers from the agencies (if appropriate)
- Familiarize yourself with the various forms students will need: CSL Student Guidebook, Student Agreement Forms, Student Placements
- Make plans to attend the CSL beginning-of-term workshop (August 31, 2011 for fall 2011 term, December 8, 2011 for winter 2012 term); it is an invaluable chance to discuss details with community partners. We will send you more details prior to the workshop
First Week of Class

- Introduce CSL to the students: theory, background, expectations, goals
- Explain procedures and deadlines for ‘matching’ students and placements, contacting community supervisors, obtaining police information checks and/or child welfare checks, and completing the Student Agreement form (CSL staff can also visit your class to provide general introductory and logistical information)
- This is an excellent time to invite community partners to your class to speak about their organizations (you can pre-arrange these visits at the orientation workshop)

Second and Third Weeks of Class

- Having determined how you are going to organize and allocate student placements, encourage students to contact their community supervisors so they can successfully complete their Student Agreement forms
- Explain/discuss ethics issues and guidelines relevant to community service-learning (refer to the CSL Guidebook, pp 6 – 7)
- Remind students to obtain security checks at CSL House
- Collect CSL Student Agreement forms and return to CSL House

Mid-Term

- Schedule at least one check-in with your community partners (by phone or by email) to learn how the placements/projects are progressing

Final Two Weeks of Term

- CSL Staff will arrange for 15 minutes of class time toward the end of the term when we will come to your class, distribute, and collect evaluations of the program; all students (CSL and non-CSL) and the instructors will be asked to complete an evaluation at that time
- CSL Office will send out and collect evaluation forms to community partners on your behalf
- Plan for a time for students to reflect on and share their CSL experiences (e.g., through presentations, project/poster displays etc.); invite community partners and CSL staff to attend on these days

Throughout the Term

- Provide informal opportunities for students to relate their CSL experiences to material being discussed in class – this also helps engage students who have not selected the CSL option to think about the theoretical material in different ways
- Consider inviting community partners into class as guest presenters
- Contact CSL Program staff with questions, updates, etc.
**Community Service-Learning - Instructor Intention Form**

**Deadline:** May 2, 2011 for the Fall 2011 term or Winter 2012 term. Orientation Workshop will be held on **August 31, 2011** for Fall term.

**Instructions:** Use this form to “register” your intent to teach a CSL course. It helps CSL staff begin the work of supporting the CSL component in your course. Fill out the form online and click the “submit” button when completed. If you have any questions, contact Lorraine Woollard by email at lmw@ualberta.ca, or by phone 780-492-9252.

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<td>CSL Component: Required</td>
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<td>Other Relevant Information (restricted volunteer hours, etc):</td>
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**Brief Overview/Description of Course**

**Objectives/Goals of the Course (including how CSL “fits” with these goals)**

**Preliminary Plan for Integrating CSL into the Course (projects, assignments, activities)**

**Possible Themes/Areas to be covered in the Course**

**Types of Community Activities Envisioned**

**Potential Community Partner Organizations**

(general types, or actual organizations you know of)