The Many Shapes of Service-Learning

There are many types of service-learning courses. What defines a service-learning course is whether it (1) meets a community need, (2) integrates the community work with course learning objectives, and includes (3) regular, structured reflection and (4) an assessment of the community work &/or outcomes. Service-learning is NOT defined by the number of hours spent in the community (unless that interaction is the primary “outcome”), or the absence of funding.

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Six Basic SL Models

1. General Education
   - “Pure” Service Learning

2. Discipline-Specific
   - Discipline-Based SL

3. Problem-Based SL

4. Service Internships

5. Capstone Courses

6. Community-Based Action Research

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Courses that send students out into the community to serve. These courses have at their intellectual core the idea of service to communities by students, volunteers, or engaged citizens.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)
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3. Problem-Based SL

“Students are expected to have a presence in the community throughout the [course] and reflect on their experiences on a regular basis using course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)

**Examples in the Design Disciplines:**

- Art students teach art classes at a local community center and reflect on their experiences in the classroom
Problem-Based SL

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Students (or teams of students) relate to the community much as “consultants” working for a “client.” Students work with community members to understand a particular community need or problem. This model presumes that the students will have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community or develop a solution to a problem.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)

Examples in the Design Disciplines:

- Community-based “consultant-client” projects, such as developing a website for a community-based organization or designing a park for a local neighborhood
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More intense than typical service-learning courses, with students working...10 to 20 hours a week in a community setting. As in traditional internships, students are generally charged with producing a body of work that is of value to the community or site...unlike traditional internships, service internships have regular on-going reflective opportunities...[and a] focus on reciprocity: the idea that the community and the student benefit equally from the experience.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)
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6. Capstone Courses

“Generally designed for majors and minors in a given discipline...in their final year. Capstone courses ask students to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their coursework and combine it with relevant service in the community. The goal...is usually either to explore a new topic or to synthesize students’ understanding of their discipline.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)
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= “Similar to an independent study option for the rare student who is highly experienced in community work. Community-based action research can also be effective with small classes or groups of students. Students work closely with faculty members to learn research methodology while serving as advocates for communities.” (Campus Compact website, 2003)