

Experiential Learning

Undergraduate Catalog Academic Policies Registration, Records, and Academic Regulations Academic Regulations

Service-Learning, Co-Curricular Learning, and Volunteerism

Service-learning, co-curricular learning, and volunteerism are all forms of experiential learning that do not include financial remuneration. Experiential learning is an important aspect of a student's academic career and includes pedagogies that incorporate practical application and hands-on experiences into learning.

Service-Learning: Service-learning, while enrolled at Western Michigan University, is a mutually beneficial endeavor in which course learning objectives are met by addressing community-identified needs-putting academics into practice. The criteria for the service-learning course designation are as follows:

- Service project must enhance understanding of course learning objectives
- Students provide at least 15 hours of service during the semester. Project-based learning is determined by completion of project goals rather than number of hours. *Hours must be logged*
- Must include critical reflection of student's experiences
- Projects must serve a community-identified need
- Must be a reciprocal partnership among community partners, students, and professors/instructors/staff
- Projects must be arranged by University faculty or staff
- Only courses in which service-learning is required for all students will receive the service learning designation
- To receive the designation, the course must include the service-learning requirement every time it is taught

Co-Curricular Learning: Co-curricular learning, while enrolled at Western Michigan University, takes place outside formal academic studies. The criteria for co-curricular learning include:

- Learning objectives are determined by the organizing body, and are not associated with course content and objectives
- Number of hours is set by the organizing body—Registered Student Organizations (RSOs), Resident Assistants (RAs), other student groups, etc.
- Includes structured reflection
- Service enhances student learning and meets community needs

Volunteerism: Volunteerism refers to work done to give back to the community and may be completed by individual students or by organized group activities. It may be done on a voluntary basis or as required for an academic course, program or other campus organization. Volunteerism:

- Is usually not related to an academic course
- Has no minimum or maximum number of hours; hours should be logged in GoRSO
- Does not necessarily include reflection

Undergraduate Catalog Glossary of Terms

Experiential Learning

Western Michigan University defines “experiential learning” as that which “informs many methodologies, in which educators purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities” [Association for Experiential Education and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).] Experiential learning includes, but is not limited to:

- *Service-Learning:* Service learning is a mutually beneficial endeavor in which course learning objectives are met by addressing community-identified needs-putting academics into practice.
- *Co-Curricular Learning:* Co-curricular learning takes place outside formal academic studies. It is similar to volunteerism, but includes structured reflection.
- *Volunteerism:* Refers to work done without financial remuneration in order to give back to the community and may be completed by individual students or organized group activities. It may be done on a voluntary basis or as required for an academic course, program or other campus organization.