Best practices for peer institutions

Among our ten research-one peer universities (see Appendix E), the following are best practices with regard to faculty, student, and community development:

Definitions:

- Service-Learning is a pedagogy that links academic study and civic engagement through thoughtfully organized service that meets the needs of the community. This service is structured by and integrated into the academic curriculum, which provides opportunities for students to learn and develop through critical reflection.

- Service is integrated into an academic course, utilizing the service experience as a course “text” for both academic learning and civic learning.

- Students learn civic responsibility through meaningful, intentional service.

Requirements of a service-learning course:

- Students serve a community-identified need.
- Service mutually benefits both the student and the community.
- Uses reflection activities as rigorous teaching and learning strategies.
- Course options ensure that no student is required to participate in a service placement that creates a religious, political, and/or moral conflict for the student.
- Assessment of service is clearly defined in course grading and/or learning objectives.
- Syllabus includes a statement regarding the expectations and impact of service on discipline(s).
- Courses range from 1-6 credit hours.
- Requires a minimum of 20 service hours per course.

Faculty development and professional staff support:

- Professional learning community or other faculty training to help faculty develop a strong background in the service-learning pedagogy (required by several of our peers).

- Assistance integrating service-learning projects into coursework.

- Funding to faculty members who utilize service-learning in the classroom or public scholarship in their research.

- Strong faculty support measures to ensure broader adoption of service-learning in merit, tenure, and promotion throughout the academy.
Fellowships:

- Allows faculty to design new courses or modify existing ones to include a service-learning component. May include release time and/or financial remuneration and development grants.
- Creates a community of scholars who will integrate the philosophy, pedagogy, and process of service-learning into each component of their professional lives – research, teaching, and professional service.
- Lends greater legitimacy to service-learning with regard to matters of tenure and promotion.
- It is expected that the benefits to fellows will increase the quality and visibility of the Service-Learning program by increasing the number and variety of service-learning courses available.

Student development, support, and recognition:

- Enhancing social responsibility, citizenship and awareness of community needs to improve the quality of life – opportunities for realizing self-efficacy to create change.
- Every student will have the opportunity to effect positive change in society and enhance a personal philosophy of leadership through service.
- Gives students a sense of empowerment and a better understanding of issues in diversity and civic responsibility.
- Help students better understand and retain course content.
- Connect students to the larger community.
- Leadership development: Civic Engagement Fellows (CEFs) are unpaid student leaders who are dedicated to bringing community service, issue awareness and advocacy opportunities to their campus.
- Service-Learning Scholars may apply for mini-grants to fund their projects. Money will be available for items such as supplies, some travel and other related expenses.
- Formal student recognition banquet.
- Many peers issue certificates of achievement and special insignia to be worn at graduation.
- Several institutions have a service-learning graduation requirement.

Community partner capacity building and support:

- Celebration of community-university partnerships (luncheon and awards)
- Most progressive of our peers, WMU hosts:
  - Annual networking breakfast for community and campus partners—students are welcome and encouraged to attend.
  - Annual service-learning summit, recognizing the contributions of all constituencies
  - Annual service-learning awards for partners, faculty/instructors, and students
Importance of a designation for service-learning courses:

- Provide the ability to identify, track, report, and assess service-learning courses to provide accurate data.
- Gives students and advisors the opportunity to select courses that provide innovative learning opportunities.
- Provides faculty with guidelines for creating new service-learning courses.
- Assists faculty with promotion and tenure by displaying their use of civic engagement pedagogy.
- Once a course receives the SL designation, it is assigned an s-l attribute. Each semester, a list of SL-designated classes is posted online to allow students and faculty to view the full list of SL classes offered in any given semester at NIU.

Steps for s-l designation:

For courses to count toward the service-learning student requirements, they must be approved by the service-learning campus advisory team;

- A course approval submission form (see Course Designation Request form above) will be completed by faculty and signed by chairs. The form will specify how a course meets the criteria for a service-learning designation and will be submitted to the service-learning advisory team.

- The service-learning advisory team will meet periodically to review and approve course proposals received by chairs.

- The criteria for a service-learning designation states:
  
  - Service project must enhance understanding of course learning objectives.
  - For interpersonal service, students must provide at least of service during the semester with some exceptions; for project-based courses, service extends to completion of the project and may take more or fewer hours of service.
  - Must include critical reflection of student’s experiences (see sample reflection activities in Appendix C).
  - Projects must serve a genuine community need (as identified by the community).
  - Must be a reciprocal partnership among community partners, students, and instructors. To this end, see Stakeholder Expectations section above. Also see Student Participation Agreement forms that must be signed by students and instructors.
  - All students are required to participate as service-learners; service-learning is not an “option” within a single course.
• Once a course is approved and designated as service-learning, the service-learning team works closely with the Office of the Registrar to complete course notation process for Banner and course catalogs.