Western Michigan University

Office of Service-Learning

Creating Human-Centered Progress in the Classroom & Community

Resource Guide
The Office of Service-Learning was established in February 2010. Since then, students have taken part in a diverse selection of service-learning courses across most academic departments. The program connects students and faculty with community partners through constructive service-learning projects that strengthen the Kalamazoo community.

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Click the appropriate link to complete your evaluation.

STUDENTS  
FACULTY  
COMMUNITY PARTNER
SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

Service-learning courses enhance learning by connecting academic coursework to hands-on community service experiences outside of the traditional classroom. In addition to learning about academic subject matter, research-based service projects will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of your community and yourself. You will work to find solutions to social injustices and other problems that have been identified in the community. Service-learning courses blend meaningful community service, and critical reflection to create human-centered progress in the Kalamazoo area.

EXAMPLE

If students collect trash out of an urban streambed, they are providing a valued service to the community as volunteers. If students collect trash from an urban streambed, analyze their findings to determine the possible sources of pollution, and share the results with residents of the neighborhood, they are engaging in service-learning.

CRITERIA FOR SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES

- Mutually beneficial partnership between the community and WMU
- Critical reflection of experience increases student learning and community progress
- Course academic objectives applied during 15+ hours of service
- Service-learning courses enhance the understanding of course learning objectives and target a community-identified partnership between community partners and WMU must be reciprocal in benefit
- Service-learning should be a transformative experience
- Syllabus should include a statement regarding the expectations and impact of service on discipline(s)
- Course options ensure that no student is required to participate in a service placement that creates a religious, political, or moral conflict for the student
BENEFITS OF SERVICE-LEARNINING

The benefits of service-learning have documented positive outcomes for students, faculty, and the greater community.

STUDENTS

- Provides an opportunity for students to identify and dissect biases and stereotypes, empowering them to build a new framework for understanding.
- Builds a reputation for students as innovative and engaged learners from a range of disciplines.
- Enhances work-force development and students’ employability through applied learning and real-life experience.
- Encourages civic engagement and social responsibility, and decreases effects of cultural and political apathy.
- Offers opportunities for students to learn and practice leadership skills.
- Assists in the development of critical thinking skills.

THE COMMUNITY

- Leads the region through the introduction and engagement of new ideas, products, and services throughout the region with curriculum engagement and student innovation in the service of our stakeholders.
- Adds value to businesses & agencies with student innovation, energy, and creativity.
- Meets community-identified needs.
- Provides access to university resources.
- Contributes to a culture of innovation, unconventional thinking, and problem solving.
- Engages the community in mutually supportive endeavors.

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

- Develops Western Michigan University as a relevant research-one institution.
- Builds human capital by expansion and strengthening of the student experience.
- Enhances the reputation of the University as an engaged campus committed to regional support, student growth, and economic development.
- Provides strong experiential education in line with the University’s mission for a high-quality education.
- Provides opportunities for strong partnerships with stakeholders throughout the region.
- Prepares high-quality graduates who are better prepared to enter the workforce, which serves to entice potential students, both domestic and abroad.

FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- Generates opportunities for research and publishing through use of the growing service-learning education pedagogy.
- Supports professional development by engagement of faculty and students as both teachers and learners in creative and innovative practice.
- Likely to promote tenure and funding opportunities for service-learning designated courses.
- Enhances potential for strong faculty/student relationships.
- Increases engaged student participation in class, and increases students’ ability to internalize course material through application of objectives.

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ADDRESSING MYTHS ABOUT SERVICE-LEARNING

From the Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning Course Design Workbook.

THE MYTH OF TERMINOLOGY

ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING IS THE SAME AS STUDENT COMMUNITY SERVICE & CO-CURRICULAR SERVICE-LEARNING.

Academic service-learning is different from student community service and co-curricular service-learning. Academic service-learning utilizes service experience as course text for both academic and co-curricular service-learning. In contrast, student community service rarely involves a learning agenda, and co-curricular service-learning aims to at raise consciousness and familiarity with issues related to various communities.

THE MYTH OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING IS JUST A NEW NAME FOR INTERNSHIPS (OR STUDENT TEACHING OR PRACTICA).

Despite many internship programs referring to themselves as service-learning programs, the two pedagogy are not the same. Internships are generally not aimed at civic learning, instead focusing on developing and socializing students for a profession. Additionally, internships emphasize student benefits, whereas service-learning is equally attentive to student and community benefits.

THE MYTH OF SYNONYMY

EXPERIENCE, SUCH AS IN THE COMMUNITY, IS SYNONYMOUS WITH LEARNING

Experience and learning are not the same. Experience is a necessary condition of learning (Kolb, 1984), but independently, experience is insufficient. One cannot assume that student involvement in the community automatically yields learning. Harvesting academic and/or civic learning from a community service experience requires purposeful and intentional efforts. The harvesting process is often referred to as “reflection” in the service-learning literature.

THE MYTH OF MARGINALITY

ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING IS THE ADDITION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE TO A TRADITIONAL COURSE

Grafting a community service requirement (or option) onto an otherwise unchanged academic course does not constitute academic service-learning. While such models abound, the interpretation marginalizes the learning in, from, and with the community, and precludes transforming student community experiences into learning. To realize service-learning’s full potential as a pedagogy, community experiences must be considered in the context of, and integrated with, the other planned learning strategies and resources in the course.

DEFINITION OF 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.
The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project was initiated at the request of citizens to identify, investigate, and interpret the physical remains of Fort St. Joseph, one of the most important Colonial outposts in the western Great Lakes. WMU conducts its annual archaeological field school at the site, in partnership with the city of Niles, the Fort St. Joseph Museum, and Support the Fort, a non-profit focused on preservation of the fort’s history. The project has net more than 100,000 artifacts and animal bones associated with the French and English occupation of the fort from the 1680’s to the early eighteenth century.

The archaeological project gives students an opportunity to receive instruction in the classroom and gain hands-on experience at the dig site, and to work with the Fort St. Joseph Museum to create a wide range of programs to teach the public about the post’s history. Each field season, WMU field school students host three summer camps - one for young adults, another for continuing education adults, and one for elementary and high school teachers. Student-led education and outreach programs also allow the public to view ongoing excavations and to interact with the student archaeologists. At the close of the field season, students host “Community Days”, a two-day open house to interpret and share the archaeology and history of the fort. The event attracts approximately 2,000 visitors annually and includes lectures, an outdoor museum, site tours, historical reenactments, demonstrations, period music, and food.

First-year students in Civil & Construction Engineering (CCE) enrolled in ENGR 1001 have an opportunity to work on a service-learning project called “Safe Routes to School” (SRTS). SRTS is a federal program intended to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children to bicycle or walk to school, and to relieve the regular physical activity necessary for good health. The SRTS initiative also helps ease traffic jams and air pollution, unites neighborhoods, and contributes to students’ readiness to learn.

The SRTS project is a collaboration among the WMU College of Engineering, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and local public schools. Each fall a partner school is identified, and WMU students learn and apply transportation engineering principles as they identify barriers to safe travel. WMU students complete a walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood, survey children and their families, as well as school teachers and administrators. Upon completion of the assessment, WMU students present a remediation plan to city engineers and other city and county officials, as well as to school administrators, members of the school board, and to the general public.

In addition to best practices found in all service-learning, E-service-learning instructors should educate the instructional design team about the philosophy behind the course to increase buy-in and technological support. Community partners can engage with the class through online instructional tools. Instructors utilizing exclusively online content must remain actively engaged throughout the course to support the service-learning.
HOW TO START YOUR SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

New to service-learning? This section will provide you with some tips and documents to help you become a service-learning guru in no time.

PRE-PROJECT PLANNING PROCESS

Starting a service-learning project takes time and effort, but the results are always worth it. Here, you will find best practices for pre-project planning process.

**STEP ONE**
Instructors and a representative from the Office of Service-Learning, meet with community partners. The instructor provides the course description, contact information, syllabus, and stakeholder expectations form. Partners have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

**STEP TWO**
The Office of Service-Learning will contact potential partners, based upon course learning objectives and partner needs, to gauge interest. Once partners are identified by the Office, best practices suggest that an e-introduction between a partner and the faculty member opens the communication and adds to the success of the partnership.

**STEP THREE**
Following e-introductions, the Office of Service-Learning will confirm partners and facilitate meetings or presentations as requested by faculty.

**STEP FOUR**
Faculty will provide partners with either the course syllabus or learning objectives as appropriate. Contact information may also be shared, with the understanding that the Office of Service-Learning is also available as needed. Partners will provide volunteer applications and background check procedures as needed.

**STEP FIVE**
Communication plan is identified for primary contact method, as well as how frequently contact will be made, and by whom. For example, a faculty member may indicate that the Office of Service-Learning is to serve as the primary contact throughout the semester, and that the Service-Learning office staff will check in with partners every month.

**STEP SIX**
Partners provide information with regard to schedules and availability so that students may sign up during shifts that fit their schedules. Faculty provide parameters of services such as how many weeks, start and end dates, etc.

**STEP SEVEN**
Students sign up, are e-introduced to their partners, and then contact partners to set up a semester-long schedule within the first three weeks of classes, and begin service no later than the beginning of week four, unless specifically requested otherwise by faculty or partners. Mid-term contact is made to monitor project progression. Additional contact will be made as necessary, and office staff is always available to address questions or concerns among partners, faculty, and students.

**STEP EIGHT**
Evaluations will be e-mailed to all parties three weeks prior to semester’s end. Student responses are higher if class time is provided.

BACKGROUND CHECKS AND PRE-SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Starting a service-learning project can take a bit of time and effort, but the results are always worth it. Here, you will find a set of best practices for pre-project planning process. The timeline, as follows, is based on the fall semester:

**NECESSARY CHECKS AND PROCEDURES**

**NOTE:** Procedures vary among partners and types of services provided.

- Background checks are required for almost all projects with medical providers who frequently require TB testing. In some instances, certain vaccinations are also required; this is more frequently the case with interns, as interns are more commonly involved in direct medical care, than with service-learning students.

- Students working with children under the age of 18, such as with public schools or Communities in Schools, are generally required to have a background check. Some exceptions exist for students who serve fewer than four hours per week and are never left unsupervised with children (e.g., Junior Achievement).

- In addition to background checks, many medical and educational institutions require drug screenings. Some may also require a credit report.

- The necessary screening may be paid for by the community partner, though this decision is at the discretion of the community partner. Often, this decision is based on the number of hours the students serve during a semester or academic year. In some cases, students are required to cover these costs, so it is important to be familiar with the practices of all partners you collaborate with.

**WHEN TO BEGIN THE SCREENING PROCESS**

Consider how soon into the semester students should begin their service.

If students will begin sooner than five to six weeks into the semester, best practice suggests the screening process begin six to eight weeks before the semester begins. The screening process must start ahead of the semester because, dependent upon the number of checks and the volume of requests agencies have at a given time, checks have been known to take up to eight weeks to complete, and students cannot begin service prior to receipt of clearance.

**FORMS**

Forms also vary from partner to partner, so contact your upcoming partners well in advance to be sure you have the most up-to-date forms and procedures. If you require pre-registration interviews for students, the interview is a good time to have all these forms completed, signed, and submitted.
Collaborations can, and often do, face challenges—especially during the first semester or two of a new partnership. Relationships take time and effort to find their footing. The following section addresses a few common pitfalls you may face in your partnership along with steps you can take prior to the start for prevention of missteps, and interventions you can make should you encounter obstacles along the way.

**POTENTIAL PITFALLS, PREVENTIONS, & INTERVENTIONS**

**PITFALL**

**UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS BETWEEN PARTNERS ARE PRESENT.**

**PREVENTION**

- From the beginning, make sure there is an expectation for all parties that communication about issues or potential issues are discussed immediately, at the first sign of trouble, not after the project has failed.
- Partners should have instructor phone numbers in case of urgent issues. For service-learning courses with a TA or service-learning scholar, student assistants’ numbers may be provided in lieu of the instructor's number.
- Foster open communication among instructor, students, and partners. Students must trust that site glitches are to be expected and asking for help will not affect their grades, or they are unlikely to admit problems. Students are taught to see instructors as authoritarian and are not used to a co-learner / co-teacher expectation.
- On the first day of class, have students sign expectations agreement; include community partner site, and rules.
- Contact community partner half way through the semester to assure that everyone is on track.
- Make a final contact with the partner to debrief.

**INTERVENTION**

- Immediate communication between all parties. Instructor (and Office of Service-Learning for service-learning courses) communicate with partners as needed. If necessary, instructors and students should sit down with partner to identify a solution.
- Even if the project doesn’t work out in the end, have everyone meet—again as soon as possible. This helps students frame the experience as a positive learning opportunity and may salvage the relationship with the partner for future projects.

**PITFALL**

**LACK OF RESOURCES, WHETHER MONEY, PEOPLE, OR TIME.**

**PREVENTION**

- Ask all stakeholders to contribute if unexpected expenses occur, but set that expectation in the planning stage.
- Make sure students are aware that transportation may be necessary.
- Seek placements close to campus for those without vehicles.
- Provide bus schedules or recommend the WMU app which includes the bus schedule.
- Cover these needs in the pre-semester contact/interview with students.

**INTERVENTION**

- Oftentimes, departments will cover the cost of transportation arrangements, if previous arrangements fall through.
- Buddy students with transportation when possible.
- Seek funding beforehand. The Office of Faculty Development has some small grants available. Always contact the Development Office before writing external grants to get the go-ahead.
- Agree to share the burden of funding with dollars or in-kind donations.
- Set realistic goals and boundaries based on available resources.
- Use the service learning project checklist.
- Consider having a teaching assistant or service-learning student scholar (request through the Office of Service-Learning; based upon availability).
- Keep your number of students and partners at a manageable level. The more sites active, the more communication is required, also we do not want to overburden partners with too many students to manage. Again, a TA or Service-Learning Scholar can help manage.
- Ask all stakeholders to contribute if unexpected expenses occur, but set that expectation in the planning stage.
- Contact your dean.

**PITFALL**

**TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

**PREVENTION**

- Seek placements close to campus for those without vehicles.
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**PITFALL**

**A STUDENT IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE CLASS, COMMUNITY PARTNER, OR PROJECT**

**PREVENTION**

- Define “safe space” with student during your first contact and reiterate at the start of the semester.
- Communicate to students that discomfort is to be expected. Service-Learning requires students to move beyond their comfort zone and try something new. Reassure the students that this is okay. Meet students where they are, not where you want or expect them to be.
- Set realistic boundaries for all parties.
- Invite discussion of discomfort. Also, have a backup plan for students who are in unhealthy (for them) placements.

**INTERVENTION**

- Instructors should serve as the first resource for students.
- If a student does not feel comfortable with an instructor, they may contact the Office of Service-Learning for guidance.

**PITFALL**

**LACK OF TIME FOR FOLLOW-THROUGH ON EVALUATION.**

**PREVENTION**

- Set evaluation expectations in advance and include them in the collaboration agreement.
- Provide a copy of the evaluation form at the beginning of the course so everybody knows what they are to evaluate.

**INTERVENTION**

- Ask appropriate stakeholder to follow up with partners.

**PITFALL**

**DEPARTMENTAL OR COURSE STRUCTURES DO NOT SUPPORT THE SERVICE-LEARNING MODEL**

**PREVENTION**

- All parties understand that service-learning is relational; all stakeholders are co-learners, co-teachers, and co-creators of knowledge.
- Check with your department chair and dean to learn what the policy is in your area.
- Advocate for universal teaching and learning expectations of service-learning.

**INTERVENTION**

- Step back and create space for open communication and discussion in regard to service-learning pedagogy.

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**PUT IN TIME UP FRONT**

- Meet potential partners a full semester, or as soon as possible, before the course begins.
- Provide a copy of course syllabus and sample stakeholder expectation information to partners at first meeting.
- Clearly lay out expectations for all parties, including assessment and evaluation.
- If a match is made, use a document with dates, times, orientations, and any other necessary information—NOT as a contract, but as a schedule to follow.
- Consider interviewing students prior to registration.
- Set realistic goals and boundaries.
- Contact students four to six weeks before the semester begins to inform them of expectations—conduct, time commitment, pre-placement requirements, e.g., background checks, transportation, etc.
- Plan for orientation for partners and orientation at the sites for students.
- Make sure partners know up front of planned university closures.
SUPPORT & POLICIES FOR SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS

Does this seem like a lot to process? Don’t worry - we are committed to helping you in any way we can. We will do due diligence to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all community-engaged students. This includes working with partners whose policies reflect the values stated in WMU policies. The following section will serve to provide information about the Office of Service-Learning and the support offered.

MISSION OF THE OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING:
The Office of Service-Learning seeks to connect and engage students, faculty, and the community in projects that intentionally redistribute power, create egalitarian partnerships, and generate deeper learning and civic engagement to benefit the greater community.

THE OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING STRIVES TO:

- Serve as a campus resource to facilitate the implementation of service-learning and community-based learning.
- Effectively match academic and professional development with needs identified by community stakeholders for the purpose of transitioning classroom learning into practical, professional experience.
- Advocate for the incorporation of service-learning into every curriculum campus-wide.
- Coordinate activities between, and build community among, service-learning stakeholders.
- Provide students with opportunities to engage with nonprofit and for-profit sites to stimulate service-learning and workforce development.
- Create reflection structures that provide a contextual framework to challenge and interrogate theories, stereotypes, and preconceptions students experience in their community.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PEER INSTITUTIONS

Among our ten research-one peer universities, the following are best practices in 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 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 15 service hours per course.
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT & PROFESSIONAL STAFF SUPPORT

Participation in service-learning stands to benefit faculty in many ways. As required by several peers, a professional learning community or other faculty training to help develop a strong background in the service-learning pedagogy is present. Assistance is available in integrating service-learning projects into coursework, and there is funding available to faculty members who utilize service-learning in the classroom or public scholarship in their research. Additionally, strong faculty support measures are present 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 Office of Service-Learning by increasing the number and variety of service-learning courses available.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORT, AND RECOGNITION:

Students have the opportunity to realize self-efficacy to create change through the pedagogy of service-learning. Every student will be empowered to effect positive change in society, and enhance a personal philosophy of leadership through service. When students have the opportunity to DO, they better understand and retain course content while connecting them to the larger community. Below, you will find additional opportunities available for students through service-learning are listed.

OPPORTUNITIES FROM SERVICE-LEARNING

Leadership development in the form of Civic Engagement Fellows 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, which would be fulfilled.

As the most progressive of our peers, WMU annually hosts:

- Networking breakfast for community and campus partners—students are welcome and encouraged to attend.
- Summit, recognizing the contributions of all constituencies.
- Awards for partners, faculty/instructors, and students.
Reflection is a vital part of the service-learning process. You will find best practices, and resources for development of guided reflection below.

**BEST PRACTICES FOR REFLECTION**

Begin communication with students before the semester begins. This sets expectations and acts as prevention for many things that can go wrong when working with multiple partners.

Transparency; be real with your students. This facilitates openness, risk-taking, and builds the culture of co-learners and co-teachers versus the traditional teaching model which is more authoritarian.

Consider opening each class with a brief time for students to meet in assigned small groups for checking in with one another (if you have multiple partners, it’s beneficial to have students grouped by partner). Start by providing prompts that will help focus and direct discussion toward that day’s course content. This builds community and trust, which enhances connectedness and learning and helps students make connections between themselves and course content.

Make it clear that notes taken during class should not reflect what the instructor is saying, but how the what the instructor is saying relates to the student.

Students often shut down when the instructor enters the conversation. Consider modeling good reflection practices and then let students take turns leading for the rest of the semester.

Best outcomes are accomplished when instructors work with the students who will be leading for the class period so that students have a structure to give the exercise shape—something more than open discussion. Those who utilize this method have found that students become increasingly engaged throughout the semester.

Consider allowing students to choose their own topics, within course context or content, when working with the week’s leaders.

Instructor serves as monitor and asks agitating questions to increase depth of discussion.

**QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO CONSIDER**

What did you do (during project hours with community partners)? How did you feel about it?

What did you discover about yourself or those you were serving?

Did you discover personal biases or uncover subconscious stereotypes about the group or activity?

How does your service work relate to course content?

**PREVENTION**

Cookie cutter reflection requirements don’t always get the desired depth and critical outcomes:

Requiring students to read or comment on one another’s journals may impede some students’ willingness to honestly reflect.

Many students view this as “just one more thing” and miss the intended benefits. Offer opportunities for students to read each other’s journals, but not as a requirement.

Lack of structure and/or unplanned activity, relying on open discussion, frequently leads to “chatting” or complaining without the desired critical analysis. Be prepared and intentional.

Whenever possible, offer students opportunities to individualize reflections—use other means than written journals.

When reflection journals are utilized:

Reading journals can be labor intensive; consider having a teaching assistant or service-learning scholar be your first pair of eyes.

Ask questions—and keep asking to get at deeper meaning and critical thinking. Instructors need to be engaged in student’s learning so as not to be viewed as the disinterested teacher just collecting papers. Give students feedback throughout.

Offer opportunities for students to read each other’s journals with students’ permission. Making this a requirement can be counterproductive.

Use course materials to reflect on who students are and what they believe to foster self-awareness and identify biases.
LIABILITY GUIDELINES, WMU

Academic Experiential Learning (e.g., service-learning, capstone courses)

In most cases, WMU’s liability insurance covers WMU, its faculty and staff when working within the scope of their duties. WMU’s coverage will extend to students when they are working in the community as part of an academic requirement for a WMU course. This coverage will extend to students under the following:

- Off-campus service is explicitly stated in the course syllabus as a core requirement
- Activity is organized by WMU faculty or staff—does not cover “volunteer” work even when it’s associated with a course.
- Students must complete and sign community partner site sign-up form when required by faculty or partners.

With regard to transportation, students should not have community partners or constituents in their cars as a part of their service. If they do, the student’s personal auto insurance policy will cover in the case of an accident; if uninsured/underinsured, students will be responsible for damages. THEREFORE, STUDENTS SHOULD NOT TRANSPORT COMMUNITY MEMBERS DURING STUDENTS’ SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBERS.

Non-Academic Community Service (aka co-curricular learning and volunteering) (even service hours required for a course if there is no specific community partner and project set up by university professors or staff)

WMU does not cover students or community partners when students are volunteering

WMU is not liable if a student does something intentionally harmful. In such cases, students would be held responsible for damages.

NOTE: Exceptions may be made if a student unintentionally causes damage, accident, or injury; these incidences are determined on a case-by-case basis

Dress Code

The following dress code applies to everyone:

- No shorts
- No crop tops
- No t-shirts or tank tops
- No sweats
- No low-cut or unbuttoned shirts

You will be working with different populations, and as in any job, you adjust to fit into the culture and environment you are entering. Err on the side of conservative dress at all times. This is both toward professionalism, and may in some cases be a matter of safety.

All policies available in the Student Code of Conduct.

Students as Clients Interactions

No touching This includes, but is not limited to sitting on laps, frontal or full contact hugging, grabbing a misbehaving child, or braiding hair. Be mindful and respectful of others’ personal space.

No social media friending with those students served, e.g. K-12 students and agency clients

No sharing of personal email addresses
No closed doors one-on-one time with clients
No photographs at placement sites or during service-learning hours without a signed release form, available through the Office of Service-Learning.

If working with children or justice system, background checks and drug screens must be done before semester begins.

Community Partners

Non-discrimination policy:

All community partners who wish to collaborate with the Office of Service-Learning are encouraged to contact the office; however, LGBT status must be included in the organization’s Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer statement, prohibiting discrimination and harassment, based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

WMU Minors Policy

The policy of Western Michigan University is that all existing and future University programs and activities involving minors be developed and administered so as to:

- Provide safe and protective environments for participation of minors; and
- Mandate compliance with policies and requirements enacted by the Board, President, and the administration, including WMU’s Duty to Report Criminal Acts policy, the President’s Statement on Reporting Illegal and Unethical Activities, and Ethics Points reporting procedures; and require appropriate training for those WMU employees, students, and volunteers that come in direct contact with minors in these University programs and activities, which includes training on reporting of child abuse as mandated or allowed under state law.

REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS—See “Non-Academic Community Service” with the addition of the following:

RSOs are not covered as part of the University with the exception of staff and faculty advisors covered as part of their employment with the University

Some RSOs purchase their own insurance

Some RSOs are insured under a national organization, such as some fraternities and sororities.

Extemuating circumstances may be reconsidered on a case-by-case basis.

Some RSOs are insured under a national organization, such as some fraternities and sororities.

Office of Service-Learning Resource Guide

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Support & Policies

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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) 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 15-20 hours of service during the semester (15-20 is the recognized academic standard; however, consideration will be given to those who serve less than 15 hours).
- Engaged in service-learning that includes reflection of the work, interactions, and learning regarding the service.
- Effective collaboration among community partners, students, and professors/instructors/staff.
- Must include critical reflection of student’s experiences (see Sample Reflection Activities).
- 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 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.

**ELIGIBILITY**
Must be Western Michigan University faculty or staff, student, or community partner.

**NATURE OF AWARDS**
Award winners will receive a plaque and public recognition for her/his commitment to service-learning.

**CRITERIA**
Candidates must demonstrate dedication to outstanding service-learning.

The following criteria should be used as a guide:

- Engagement in service-learning, defined as a mutually beneficial endeavor in which course learning objectives are met by addressing community-identified needs.
- Students must provide at least 15-20 hours of service during the semester (15-20 is the recognized academic standard; however, consideration will be given to those who serve less than 15 hours).
- Engaged in service-learning that includes reflection of the work, interactions, and learning regarding the service.
- Effective collaboration among community partners, students, and professors/instructors/staff.
- Finding innovative solutions to problems.
- Projecting a positive attitude and/or promoting a positive image of the University and service-learning.

The Office of Service-Learning will collect forms, organize and preserve anonymity, and disseminate for review by selection committee members.

Compromised of five individuals (i.e., WMU faculty/staff, students, and community partners).

The Office of Service-Learning will notify nominees via email and telephone.

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