**SOURCE Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program**

**FAQs**

**What is Service-Learning?**
Service-Learning "is a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens" Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH; Seifer, 1998).

**What is the difference between service-learning and an internship?**
An internship is a much broader concept where students might have a guided project in the community; however, it does not necessarily have the pedagogical elements which service-learning entails. Additionally, service-learning implies working directly with a community-based organization (CBO) which is providing a specific social service to the community, in this case working in the area of health. A service-learning project might be an internship; not all internships are service-learning.

**What is the difference between service-learning and traditional clinical education in the health professions?**
CCPH (Seifer 1998) describes the difference as such:
- Service-learning strives to achieve a balance between service and learning objectives -- in service-learning, partners must negotiate the differences in their needs and expectations.
- Service-learning places an emphasis on addressing community concerns and broad determinants of health.
- In service-learning, there is the integral involvement of community partners -- service-learning involves a principle-centered partnership between communities and health professions schools.
- Service-learning emphasizes reciprocal learning -- In service-learning, traditional definitions of "faculty," "teacher" and "learner" are intentionally blurred. We all learn from each other.
- Service-learning emphasizes reflective practice -- In service-learning, reflection facilitates the connection between practice and theory and fosters critical thinking.
- Service-learning places an emphasis on developing citizenship skills and achieving social change -- many factors influence health and quality of life. The provision of health services is not often the most important factor. In service-learning, students place their roles as health professionals and citizens in a larger societal context.

**How does service-learning differ from community service and volunteerism?**
Community service and volunteering are a part of service-learning, but the “learning” component makes service-learning distinct from them independently. The learning component implies an important pedagogical tie to the experience where the in-classroom discussion and focus is shaped by the community service experience and vice versa. The learning takes place through guided discussions and reflections about the experience with supporting text that pushes students to think critically about the work they are doing in the community and dive deeper into the root causes of the social issue. Community service and volunteerism take different forms as they could be one-time activities (e.g., working in a soup kitchen) or on-going engagement (e.g., tutoring and mentoring children from a local school), but without the reflective discussion and classroom structure, it is not service-learning.

**What if I don’t have community contacts in Baltimore?**
Not a problem! SOURCE has a partnership network of nearly 100 partnering CBOs in Baltimore City to which we can match faculty and courses, depending on the course objectives. SOURCE uses a thorough application and review process for forming intentional, mutually beneficial partnerships with CBOs.

**Will we have to go through IRB?**
Over the years, SOURCE has worked closely with the IRB office in the Bloomberg School of Public Health to discuss all student projects conducted in the community. Faculty have also discussed proposed student projects with the IRB, in order to clarify the details and scope of service-learning projects. It is important to note that student service-learning projects are typically considered to be "public health practice" opportunities, and are not for student publication purposes (unless IRB approval is received in advance).
Can my students do clinical practice through service-learning?
Due to logistical challenges, SOURCE does not usually match students for clinical practice work because a faculty supervisor must be on site at all times during that service. However, if faculty are committed to serving as the on-site supervisor during clinical practice work, it is possible to develop clinical experiences through service-learning. Faculty should also note that such activities typically require additional review and approval by university legal counsel and department chairs.

What if we want to work with a CBO that isn’t an official SOURCE partner?
Faculty Fellows are not required to use SOURCE CBOs to partner for their courses if they already have contacts in the community for the service-learning component of their course. However, CBOs that are not already a part of SOURCE’s network of partners, and who are interested in utilizing SOURCE services for additional student recruitment can apply for SOURCE partnership (information for that can be found here). Please note that there are a number of benefits of tapping into SOURCE’s network of partners, particularly due to the system of checks and balances that are in place as part of SOURCE’s partner review process (including safety, liability, sustainability, reciprocity, and more).

What is the benefit of working with SOURCE over partnering with a CBO on my own?
SOURCE provides a streamlined process for locating projects through our network of 100 partnering community-based organizations. SOURCE’s extensive partnership network can be utilized to recruit non-profits that have mutually beneficial interests in collaborating on course projects. This essentially takes the burden of managing the community partnership off the faculty, as SOURCE can provide support.

Is this just extra work or is this a benefit to me?
It is true that a service-learning component takes a bit more time and effort than when the community is not involved. However, service-learning literature (Eyler et al., 2001) points to the positive learning and developmental outcomes from service-learning, making the additional work quite beneficial. Eyler et al. (2001) gives a comprehensive overview of recent service-learning literature that demonstrates that there are positive developmental outcomes (personal growth and leadership development), social outcomes (reducing stereotypes, facilitating cultural understanding, raising sense of social responsibility and commitment to service), and learning outcomes (academic learning is increased, improved ability to relate in-classroom learning to “real world”, and improved critical thinking skills). Furthermore, students who engage in service-learning report stronger faculty relationships than students not involved in service-learning. In the health fields, these outcomes are essential in cultivating highly successful practitioners.

Why should I consider getting involved in service-learning?
Service-learning pedagogy is engaging and participatory, thus energizing the teaching experience. Students learn to think critically, become involved in their local community through their professions, and provide powerful connections to the community. Service-learning can also provide opportunities for faculty to make connections in the community for future research.

Would I need to make changes to my curriculum for a service-learning component?
Because service-learning requires a great deal of work outside the classroom, SOURCE staff and CCPH consultants will work with faculty to make the appropriate changes to the curriculum. Additionally, the FFP seminar in June will cover service-learning pedagogy and what adjustments should be made to already existing courses.

Additional Resources:


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