

**SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
SERVICE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM**

**CIVIC CAPACITIES &
STUDENT CIVIC LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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SERVICE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Service learning is defined as “an experiential approach to education that involves students in meaningful, real-world activities that can advance social, emotional, career, and academic curricula goals while benefitting communities” (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007, p. 8). Within the context of higher education, service learning has significant value beyond providing students with hands-on experiences (Rooks and Winkler, 2012). Service learning experiences “often challenge students to develop new ways of thinking about and responding immediately to novel circumstances as they work side by side with peers on intellectual and practical tasks, inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus” (Kuh, 2008, p. 15).

Identified as one of five “high-impact” educational practices by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (Brownell & Swaner, 2010), community-based service learning typically focuses on a “connection between the academic curriculum and an experience that meets real community needs” (Jerome, 2012, p. 59). Service learning in higher education “can make theory and research more ‘real’ to students by placing them inside organizations responding to social problems; exposes students to the lived experience of individuals struggling with pressing social problems; can be an effective mechanism of civic education helping students learn principles of solidarity and social citizenship; engages students in discussions about the promise and limitations of public policy, by exposing them to the real-world impact of policies; and articulates the differences and similarities in disciplinary approaches to social problems” (Rooks & Winkler, 2012, p. 2).

From a career perspective, “four in five employers want colleges to place more emphasis on community-based field studies that teach students to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings” (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Community-based service learning projects encourage not only the development of competencies related to specific academic disciplines but also “broader work-related competencies, such as cross-functional thinking, teamwork, interpersonal interaction, communication, and multicultural sensitivity” (Metcalf, 2010, p. 8). Thus, service learning provides a transformational experience and prepares students for a global and diverse workplace. Additionally, service learning contributes to their sense of social responsibility, which allows students to feel more engaged and motivated to become involved with social movements that support their values. Moreover, when an intentional pedagogical integration of service learning and course content is practiced, students’ academic learning is enhanced, as they are able to tie course content into practical applications (Zimmerman, Krafchick, & Aberle, 2009).

SERVICE LEARNING AT SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

San Diego State University’s Service Learning and Community Engagement Program (SLCEP) initiatives are designed and implemented for fostering civic engagement, civic participation and civic responsibility. Specifically, the goals of the SLCEP are to integrate service learning with other high-impact practices, such as study abroad and participatory action research (PAR); to document student learning in community contexts; and to continue developing a system to track SDSU community service contributions and partnerships. The SLCEP supports service learning courses that are purposefully created with the intent to provide community-based opportunities for undergraduate students to conduct research related to solving real-world problems; strengthen the community service and civic engagement curriculum through clearly articulated student

learning outcomes and aligned assessments; and identify local, regional, national and/or international community initiatives, agencies, and partners, that are engaged in social justice practices/services. The SLCEP continues to strengthen and increase the number of community partnerships at SDSU that support service learning.

Service learning courses incorporate essential civic knowledge capacities and learning outcomes that ensure students' ability to explicate course content as they serve the community and reflect on the connections between structured formalized learning and their experiences in the field. "Essential requirements of service learning are that the service is connected with the coursework and that, through critical reflection, students make the connections between their service experiences and the abstract concepts of the coursework. Other requirements are that the coursework is assessed (but not the service per se) and that the service meets community needs" (Deeley, 2010, p. 43).

An effective service learning course is innately multidisciplinary, emphasizes collaborative learning, is built upon carefully articulated civic capacities and student learning outcomes and has a pedagogically sound assessment methodology for evaluating learning success (Metcalf, 2010). The alignment of civic capacities and student learning outcomes with the service learning experiences along with the integration of explicit and reciprocal feedback loops for students and community constituents to acknowledge the contributions made by each other creates essential opportunities for deeper understanding of course material (Muwana & Gaffney, 2011).

CIVIC CAPACITIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR SERVICE LEARNING

Nurturing a campus climate of civic learning, responsibility, and engagement requires strategic creation of service learning courses, which, through planned teaching, research, service, and institutional architecture, will enable students to acquire a suite of knowledge, skills, and values necessary for them to be collectively-active and -involved citizens (Campus Compact, 2012).

Intentionally identified as San Diego State University's roadmap for a civic-minded campus (adapted from A Crucible Moment, National Taskforce on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15), the following six Civic Capacities (CCs) and respective Student Civic Learning Outcomes (SCLOs) should be integrated within Service Learning courses, in order to exhibit the full scope of civic dimensions supporting civic learning and democratic engagement:

- I. Civic Ethos
- II. Civic Literacy
- III. Civic Inquiry
- IV. Civic Action
- V. Civic Leadership
- VI. Civic Partnership

I. CIVIC ETHOS

How well does the course help students develop civic competencies and civic habits, both locally and globally? These competencies and habits include the demonstration of civil public argument and civic imagination. They also include the capacities and curiosity to listen, develop interest in and knowledge of local and global interdependencies, and the ability to work with others different from themselves on public problems in ways that deepen appreciation of others' talents.

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Infuse civic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, structures and interactions
2. Emphasize the character of open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person,

- ethical behaviors, and concern for the wellbeing of others
3. Promote a spirit of public-mindedness that influences civic engagement with local and global communities
 4. Create structures that generate a more porous and interactive flow of knowledge between campus and community

II. CIVIC LITERACY

How well does the course help students develop the ability to critically evaluate arguments and information relating to civil public argument and community significance? These competencies include the demonstration of comprehensive knowledge about local and global community affairs through information and communication technology.

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Cultivate foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates regarding civic practices and affairs, both within the U.S. and in other countries
2. Develop familiarity with key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements that have influenced civic argument and civic imagination
3. Instill the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences
4. Analyze communication systems in order to plan and engage in public action

III. CIVIC INQUIRY

Are students in the course given multiple opportunities to do the work of civic engagement and civic contribution through real local and international projects of impact and relevance? How are the service opportunities linked to their academic learning?

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Apply the practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of the subject of study
2. Explore the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, both locally and globally
3. Deliberate consideration of differing points of views
4. Describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within the major or area of study

IV. CIVIC ACTION

How does the course provide opportunities for community and civic engagement and integration in local and international contexts? Do these activities include participation in community campaigns and/or other change-oriented societal activities?

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate the capacity and commitment to participate constructively with diverse others
2. Work collectively to address common societal problems
3. Practice working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet
4. Develop moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good

V. CIVIC LEADERSHIP

How will the course prepare our future leaders — to integrate civic learning and applications into their personal and professional goals? To what extent does the course include a regular time and place for reflection about how such experiences might shape student's view of the world and their

future careers and life work?

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Promote awareness that civic engagement is an essential part of social leadership
2. Emphasize the role of leadership in making improvements to the physical and human condition of community/neighborhood residents
3. Provide solutions that have significant impact on the community's improvement agenda
4. Identify leadership successes and failures, build on success, analyze the causes of failure

VI. CIVIC PARTNERSHIP

How will the course help students develop new ideas, which they can contribute — document, execute and present, to SDSU and the service learning organizations/sites? How will our U.S. and global civic partner(s) provide long-term, positive experiences that link with our campus? To what extent have we improved the condition of the communities surrounding our campus?

Student Civic Learning Outcomes

1. Create and sustain long-term partnerships with communities and civic bodies
2. Develop partnerships which reflect the campus' commitments to community building and civic vitality
3. Integrate community experience into the learning of students through professional service opportunities that provide public forums for the dissemination of scholarly work
4. Improve the condition of the communities surrounding our campuses

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