

Guidelines and Processes for Designing a Service-Learning Course

1. As you consider whether you would like to teach a course using the service-learning pedagogy, it is wise to consider whether your objectives for the course align with the elements that distinguish service-learning courses at Denison. These are:
 - The course uses community service and structured reflection to bring students into a more critical relationship with a canon of knowledge. Service-learning courses combine substantial activity in the community with critical examination of theory or application of disciplinary concepts and skills relevant to that activity.
 - The activity undertaken by students in a course addresses a need or seeks to reduce the severity of a problem or concern identified by a community partner. Students might be engaged to assist in assessing the environment faced by an organization, identifying needs, evaluating responsive strategies, or implementing elements of those strategies. Community partners are usually organizations and agencies that operate for educational, charitable, religious or scientific purposes. Whenever possible, we prioritize service to those for whom resources may be limited.
 - Students are encouraged to develop an understanding of their discipline in a larger social context, one often characterized by seemingly intractable problems. They are encouraged to consider how their experience informs their own sense of social responsibility, and to consider how the knowledge they are gaining might enhance their ability to serve their community effectively.
2. Some faculty are well-versed about community needs and have relationships with agencies to lay the groundwork for a service-learning experience for their students. Others have learning goals in mind, but are less familiar with our community and its needs. **Either way**, please contact Laurel Kennedy (kennedy@denison.edu) to begin a conversation the logistics of your course. Ideally, you give us a “heads-up” by October 1 for Spring courses, and by February 15 for Fall courses. Depending on the types of social service organizations that emerge as viable partners, you’ll probably meet with either Laurel, Susie Kalinoski or Michele Doran to talk more about community needs, before communicating with specific agencies.
3. Take advantage of the many resources available to our faculty for S-L course design. Laurel can pair you with an experienced S-L faculty member to talk about your course. Attend a Service Learning Advisory Committee meeting to bounce ideas off of colleagues. Use the Alford Center collection of journal, books and pamphlets. We also have thick files of ideas for reflection exercises and sample syllabi from Denison and elsewhere. Finally, we may be able to point you to a colleague at another institution with whom you may find useful common ground.

4. Provide a course title and number and a brief description of the course to the Center prior to student registration. We'll help to promote your course to students and inform faculty colleagues who may send interested students your way.
5. Once your service-learning site has been determined, the Center will help to coordinate with the agency and arrange the logistics of student service. Logistics with which we can be of assistance include arranging transportation, sorting out fingerprinting and background checks, providing contact information at your site(s), and other general support. During the semester, we'll continue to serve as a liaison.
6. Work with the Center for Service Learning regarding assessment initiatives. In most semesters, we will ask you to conduct small-scale measurements for purposes of assessment at the beginning and end of the semester. We will conduct assessment around focused subjects on a rotating basis to minimize use of class time.
7. Throughout the semester, stay in touch and let us know of issues or concerns that arise. Service-learning has the subversive goal of complicating what we think we know. The Center's goal is to limit the complication, as much as possible, to the intellectual realm.