FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is it?

Service-learning is both a philosophy of education and a learning method. It is a type of experiential learning that engages the student in service within the community in a way that supports the learning goals of a course. Students enhance their learning by engaging in critical, reflective thinking and examining the relationship of theory and practice.

Service activities are course-driven. They are determined by your instructional goals: what students should know and be able to do as a result of successfully completing the course.

At the same time, service activities respond to real needs, mutually defined in partnership with representatives of community organizations.

Unlike most pedagogies, which are inductive, relying on presenting theory and then encouraging application to specifics, service-learning is more deductive, using experience provided by students to lead to conceptual and theoretical understanding.

How is it different from other types of practice-based education?

Clinicals, internships and co-op programs provide students with experiences to develop professional skills. These typically occur within vocational programs after necessary course work is completed. They may be in the for-profit business sector. Service-learning students find placements in non-profit agencies, hospitals and schools. Service-learning emphasizes the service contribution of students and links the service experience to specific learning objectives of a course. This focus on civic responsibility and critical, reflective thinking help the student integrate theory and practice. Service-learning requires a shorter service time commitment (16-20 hours per quarter).