



**Service-Learning CSER Handbook**  
**LU Serve - Office of Spiritual Development**  
**Liberty University**

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## I. LU Serve's Mission & Purpose

**Mission Statement:** LU Serve exists to develop champions for Christ through local, domestic, and international engagement opportunities.

**LU Serve (CSER):** Service-Learning closely relates to the mission and goals of LU Serve and the CSER program. Students now may earn CSER credits through Service-Learning opportunities upon approval from the LU Serve Office. Many of the guidelines for CSER credit will also apply to Service-Learning opportunities.

## II. Service Learning Overview

**Definition:** "Service learning combines community services with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and personal and civic responsibility. Service-learning programs involve students in activities that address community-identified needs, while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community." (American Association of Community Colleges).

"Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning objectives."  
B. Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education*, 1996

### **Rationale:**

- ✓ Links theory to practice by allowing students to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to real world situations
- ✓ Links the community and the classroom for mutual reciprocity
- ✓ Requires students to reflect on objective situations using critical thinking and problem solving, thus improving overall learning

### **Benefits:**

#### *For the University*

- ✓ Enhances relationships with public and private community members
- ✓ Improves university public image and brand
- ✓ Improves student retention and commitment to curriculum

#### *For the Department*

- ✓ Recognition by the institution
- ✓ May provide justification for additional funding

*For the Community*

- ✓ Provides assistance with community projects or programs
- ✓ Provides aid to non-profits and non-government organizations
- ✓ Could alleviate the burden of public resources to address issues

*For the Student*

- ✓ Connects students with professionals in their career fields through learning and service opportunities
- ✓ Hands-on experience improves students' employment credentials in career field
- ✓ Enhances retention and learning outcomes

### **III. Creating Service-Learning Opportunities**

*The following section provides the essential components for integrating Service-Learning into an academic course. These components include the creation of course objectives, critical reflection assignments, and evaluation criteria.*

**Course Objectives:** Service-Learning opportunities should incorporate the following objectives into academic learning. These objectives distinguish Service-Learning from community service.

- ✓ **Critical Thinking**: ability to identify problems, propose solutions, and evaluate the results
- ✓ **Communication**: develop argumentation skills through public speaking and written communications
- ✓ **Civic Responsibility**: cultivate a sense of moral and spiritual responsibility toward the community and apply it through planning community improvements
- ✓ **Understanding of Citizenship**: understand the implications of communal engagement through exposure to different cultures in local, domestic, and international communities
- ✓ **Academic Development**: integration of course content into personal experiences; ability to reflect upon course learning in practical ways

**Critical Reflection:** Reflection is the fundamental component of Service-Learning. Since critical reflection is primarily where learning occurs and is a continual process through the course, faculty should grade students based on their reflections and not on the completion of a service project.

*Stages of Critical Reflection:*

- ✓ Pre-reflection – Students should read about Service-Learning and complete a reflection on their readings.
- ✓ On-Going Reflection – Students should maintain a reflective mindset as they serve.
- ✓ Post-Reflection – Students should complete a reflection assignment after the service project and near the end of the course.

*Critical reflection Assignments:*

- ✓ Verbal: Discussions, Focus Groups, Class Presentations
- ✓ Written: Journal entries, essays, case studies, etc.
- ✓ Activities: Problem-based learning, interviews, etc.
- ✓ Media: photos, video, digital publications, etc.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Professors must clearly state how they intend to evaluate student reflection and how this will affect the student’s final grade.

- ✓ Instructions will show how students should complete their reflections
- ✓ Grading policy should include weighted totals for reflection assignments
- ✓ Rubrics should be clear and available for the students at the start of semester

## **IV. Earning CSER Credit through Service-Learning**

*Students may earn CSER credit through Service-Learning opportunities. This section explains the requirements for earning CSER credit through Service-Learning:*

1. Project Criteria

*Service-Learning projects must:*

- a. Have a syllabi approved by LU Serve on an annual basis
- b. Identify a tangible problem within the community
- c. Involve all stages of critical reflection assignments
- d. State at least one measureable goal or target
- e. Follow one of six suggested models
- f. Participate with an approved community partner

2. Community Partners Criteria:

*A spirit of reciprocity should exemplify how faculty and students relate to community partners. Although Service-Learning focuses on student learning, all participants should mutually benefit from it. Qualified community partners may include:*

- a. Non-profit organizations
- b. Public/Civic organizations
- c. Religious organizations aligned with LU’s doctrinal statement

### 3. CSER Criteria

*Service Learning must require a minimum of 20 hours of work, divided among these three categories - Pre-Reflection, Serving with a Community Partner, Post-Reflection.*

#### a. Pre-Reflection

- ✓ Minimum of five hours
- ✓ Must include assigned reading about Service-Learning
- ✓ Reading will be determined by faculty member

#### b. Serving

- ✓ Minimum of ten hours. Hours cannot include travel time
- ✓ Students must serve with a community partner (see Community Partner Criteria)
- ✓ Activities may include assignments that promote reflection and analysis (observation, surveys, interviews, conducting a study, etc.)
- ✓ Activities should be designed by groups with faculty guidance. It is recommended that these groups be no larger than five students

#### c. Post-Reflection

- ✓ Minimum of five hours
- ✓ Student must complete post-reflection assignments based on the service project (see examples under Critical Reflection Assignments on p. 3)

## V. Six Recommended Models of Service-Learning

*For examples of each model, please email [luserve@liberty.edu](mailto:luserve@liberty.edu).*

### Model #1 – Service-Learning Course Component

- ✓ In this model, the faculty incorporates Service-Learning into a traditional classroom-based course.
- ✓ Students complete a short-term project that takes place in the community (with community partner involvement). They must work towards completing the project by applying what they have learned in the classroom.
- ✓ Prior to the start of the project, students should engage in reading assignments about Service-Learning in the area they are investigating and complete a pre-reflection assignment. At the conclusion of the project, they must provide post-reflection of their experience and findings.

### **Model #2 – Service-Learning Course**

- ✓ Majority of coursework consists of Service-Learning experience in the community. This involves weekly class meetings to assess students' progress, to disseminate important information, and to answer common questions.
- ✓ Students commit to serving with a community partner, provide weekly reflections, and record their time. Students will often need to complete a presentation or final paper detailing their research, community involvement and learning outcomes.

### **Model #3 – Service-Learning Capstone Course**

- ✓ Similar to Service-Learning courses, capstone courses focus on Service-Learning in the community.
- ✓ These courses provide real world, hands-on learning in their field of study. The project and subsequent paper or presentation are much more rigorous than a normal Service-Learning course.
- ✓ Field research is a primary component of capstone courses.

### **Model #4 – Service-Learning Internship**

- ✓ Students may intern at a variety of nonprofit and governmental agencies and enroll in a Service-Learning course.
- ✓ Students work directly for community partners by putting their knowledge gained through their degree program to use in real-world application.
- ✓ Interns also receive individualized academic instruction from a faculty member and hands-on experience that will help them grow as community leaders.

### **Model #5 – Domestic and International Service-Learning**

- ✓ In this model, students engage in experiential learning and service as they study abroad or do an international internship with a nonprofit organization or governmental agency.
- ✓ Students studying abroad on short term trips will be accompanied by faculty members and engage in service activities while they receive academic instruction relevant to the history and contemporary life of the host community.
- ✓ Students doing domestic and international internships will serve by putting their knowledge attained through their degree program to use in real-world application.
- ✓ Faculty must contact LU Serve for approved partners and organizations.

### **Model #6 – Community-Based Research**

- ✓ In this model, students may engage in high quality academic research that provides benefits to the local community.
- ✓ Students will apply and develop their academic knowledge by identifying local needs relevant to their field of study, submitting a research proposal that may be eligible for funding, and completing research that provides benefit and/or pertinent information for the local community.
- ✓ Community-Based Research will be done under the supervision of a sponsored faculty member.



## Resources

### LU Serve Office:

Email: [luserve@liberty.edu](mailto:luserve@liberty.edu)  
Phone: 434-582-2325  
Location: Dorm 20, First Floor

### Websites:

- ✓ Campus Compact: <http://compact.org/initiatives/service-learning/>
- ✓ Corporation for National and Community Service: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/service-learning>
- ✓ National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: <https://gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse>
- ✓ National Service-Learning Exchange: [www.nslexchange.org](http://www.nslexchange.org)
- ✓ Campus Community Partnerships for Health: <https://ccph.memberclicks.net/>

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