SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

THE CENTER FOR SERVICE
& COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

2011 JSU FACULTY BROWN BAG SERIES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011

TODAY'S AGENDA

**GOAL:** *TO EXPLORE THE COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE-LEARNING SYLLABUS*

- Defining Service-Learning
- Models of Service-Learning
- Elements of Service-Learning
- Service-Learning Syllabus Components
- Questions & Answers

DEFINING SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-learning is a **credit bearing** experience in which **students participate** in **organized service experiences** that **respond** to a wide spectrum of **community needs**.

Through **structured reflection** on their service activities, students gain a deeper understanding of course content, develop skills in community leadership, and advance their appreciation of social responsibility, global awareness, and diversity.

Service-learning allows **students** to practically **apply and test** their **academic learning** through **hands-on career** and **professional development opportunities** that also **promote community interests**.
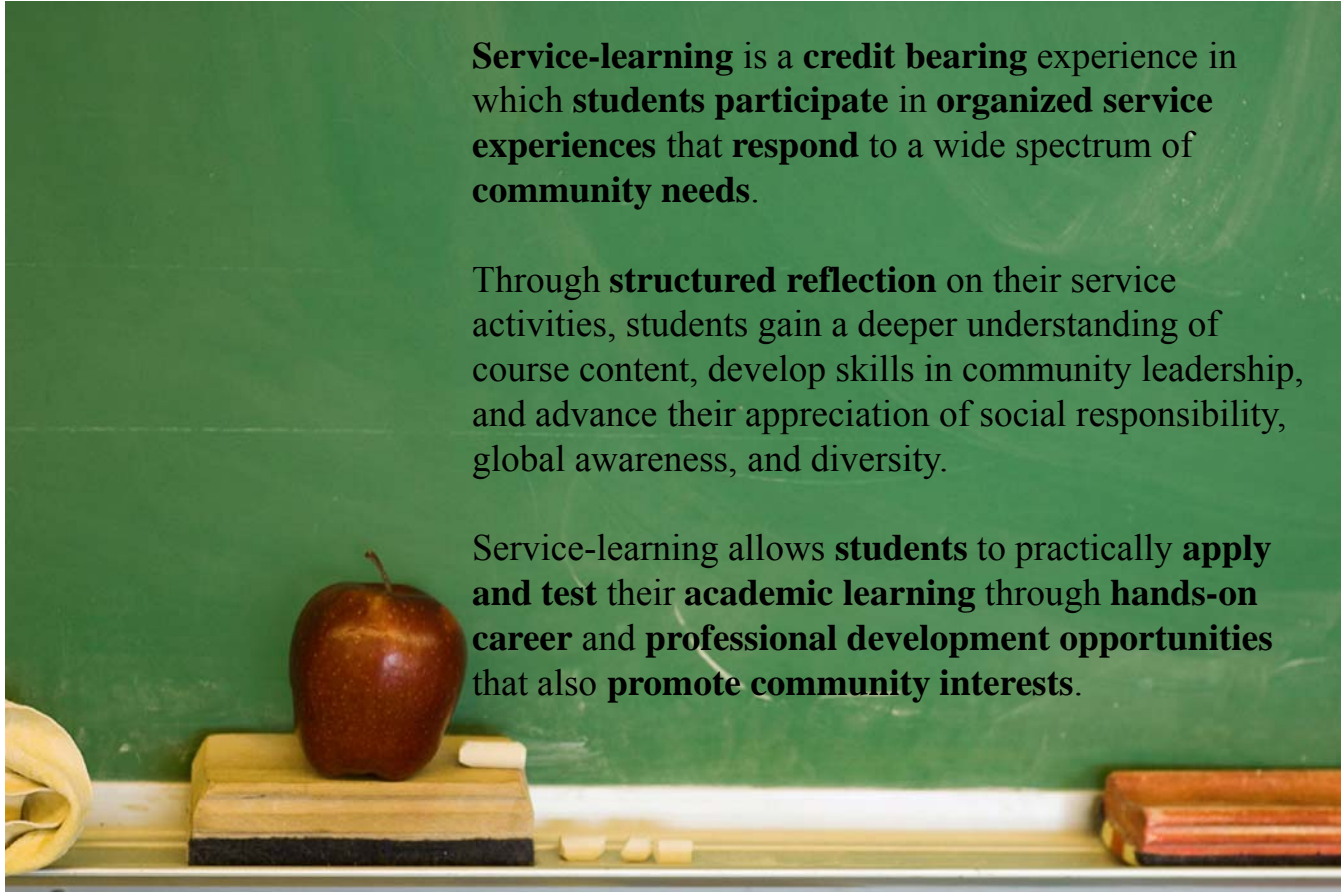
Service-Learning Models

Civic-Based or Pure Service-Learning. The learning objective is to promote civic engagement.

Problem-Based. The learning objective is to solve real, community-based problems.

Consulting-Based or Discipline-Based. The learning objective is to apply technical expertise to community needs. Students use course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding.
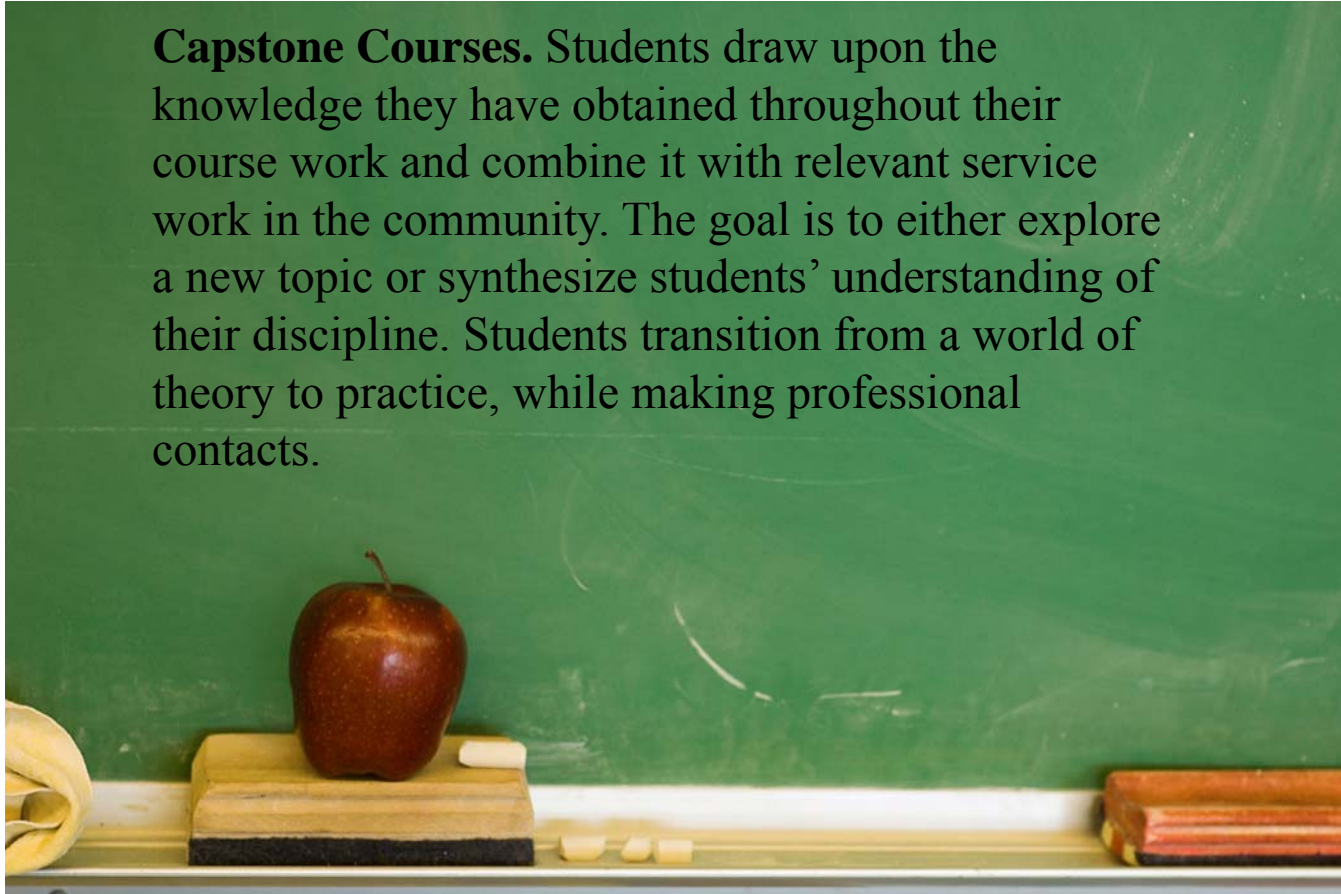
Service-Learning Models: *(continued)*

Community-Based Action Research. The learning objective is to capitalize upon student experiences in a content-based or research methodology course and to focus the experiences around research performed by the students in conjunction with the faculty member and community members. Community members and students contribute equally to setting the research agenda and determining how the results will be used.

Service-Learning Models: *(continued)*

Capstone Courses. Students draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their course work and combine it with relevant service work in the community. The goal is to either explore a new topic or synthesize students' understanding of their discipline. Students transition from a world of theory to practice, while making professional contacts.

Service-Learning Models: *(continued)*

Service Internships. Like traditional internships, these experiences are more intense than typical service-learning courses. As in traditional internships, students produce a body of work that is of value to the community or site. Unlike traditional internships, these experiences have regular and ongoing reflective opportunities that help students analyze their new experiences using discipline-based theories. Service internships are further distinguished by their focus on reciprocity (i.e., the community and students benefit equally).

Elements of Service-Learning

The service-learning process is comprised of three major elements: ***preparation, action and reflection.***

- **Preparation** consists of the learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. During this period, students learn what is expected of them as well as what they can expect from the service activity/project.
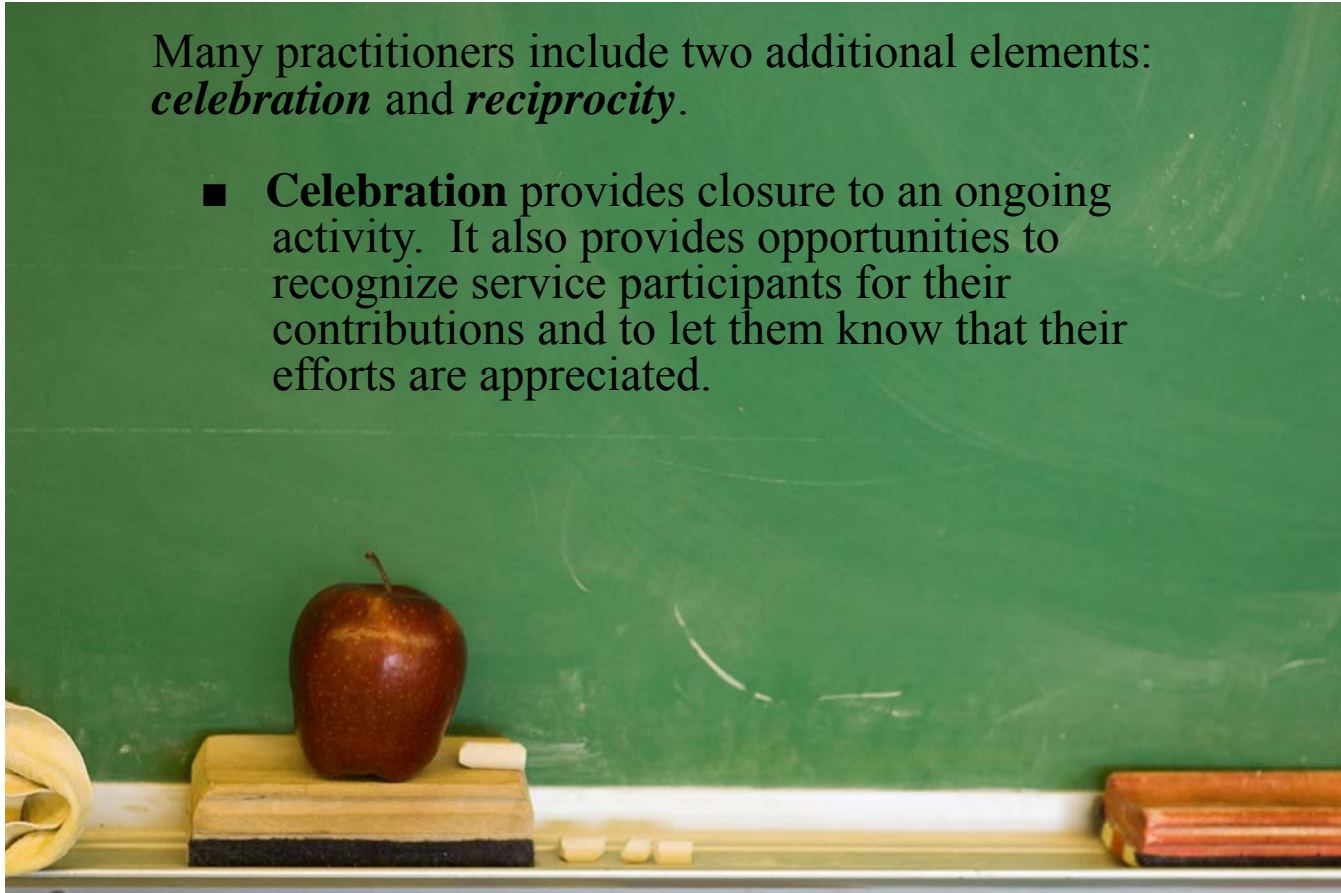
Elements of Service-Learning

- **Action** is "service" itself. It must be meaningful, have academic integrity, provide student ownership, have adequate supervision, and be developmentally appropriate.

- **Reflection** occurs when service participants engage in a thought provoking activity that deliberately connects the service experience to learning objectives. It can transpire before, during, and after the service experience. Reflection may involve writing, reading, telling, and showing.
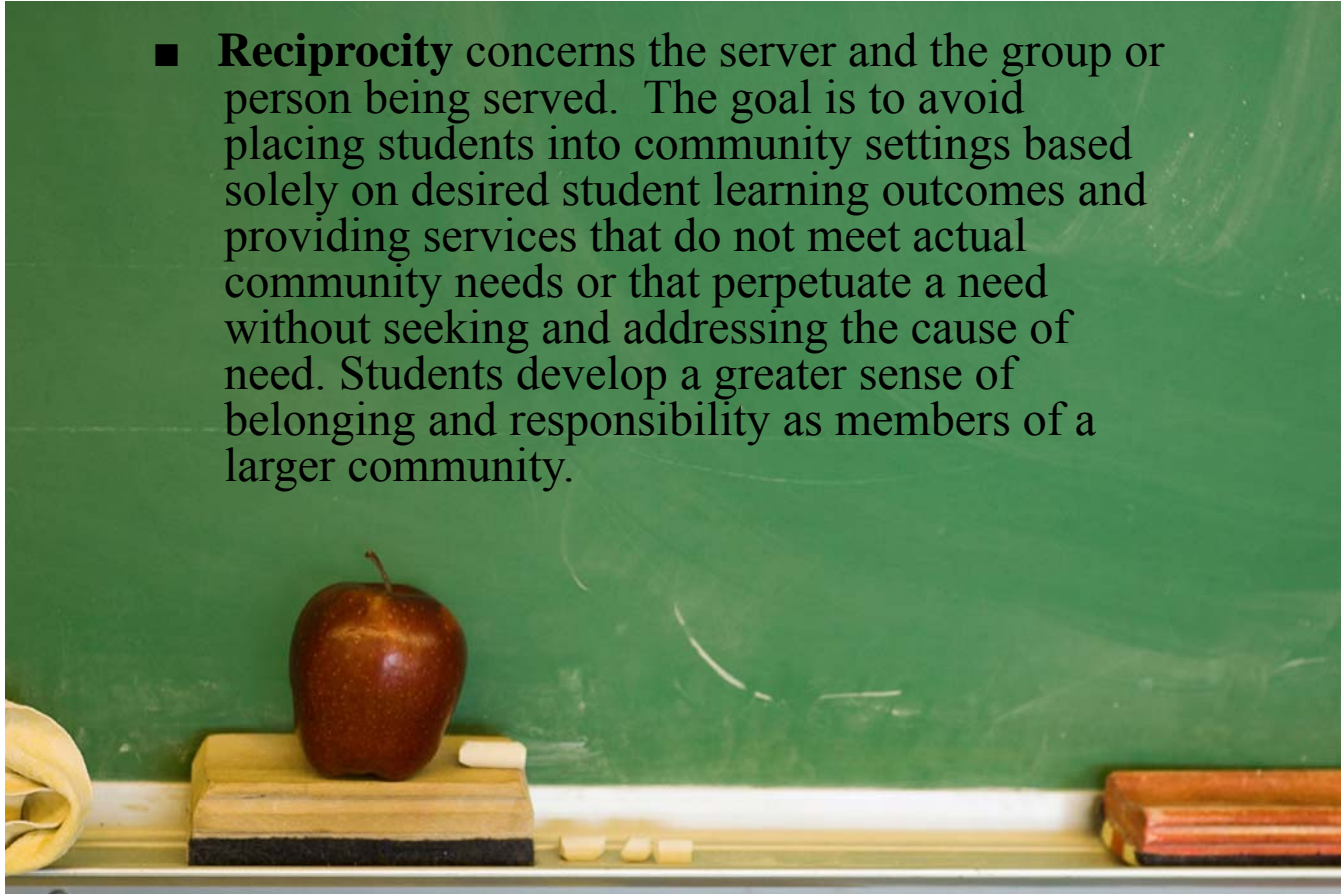
Elements of Service-Learning

Many practitioners include two additional elements: *celebration* and *reciprocity*.

- **Celebration** provides closure to an ongoing activity. It also provides opportunities to recognize service participants for their contributions and to let them know that their efforts are appreciated.

Elements of Service-Learning

- **Reciprocity** concerns the server and the group or person being served. The goal is to avoid placing students into community settings based solely on desired student learning outcomes and providing services that do not meet actual community needs or that perpetuate a need without seeking and addressing the cause of need. Students develop a greater sense of belonging and responsibility as members of a larger community.

Service-Learning Syllabus Components

The Heading

Course title, catalog number, semester/year, university, department faculty and co-instructor (i.e., community partner) contact information (including rank, office hours, email, office phone and address)

▪ Syllabi should be considered public in nature (not strictly internal documents).

▪ They have a life beyond the formal weeks of a semester or academic year.

▪ The syllabus heading is comprised of basic administrative components which are fairly self-explanatory, but each item is important.

▪ They should be as clears as possible.

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

Course Description

▪ The course description is the first opportunity to truly describe the course.

▪ While brevity is often prudent, the instructor should introduce the service-learning component of the course and clearly articulate the relevance of the service to the course.

▪ More specifically, the description should explain how service-learning will shape the course learning outcomes.

▪ It should also include a statement regarding the course's service-learning designation (i.e., *This is a service-learning course. Students will be required to complete a minimum of 30 hours…)*

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

Introduction, Overview, Purpose, or Rationale

- While many fold the course description and introduction together, the two serve different functions.
- The course description briefly describes the course.
- The introduction is an expanded version of the description in which you can elaborate on the course, discuss prerequisites, and more fully introduce the service-learning component of the course.

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

Course Goals & Objectives

▪ Goals are learning outcomes, broad statements identifying the general educational outcomes you want students to display upon completion of the course (Woodcock, 1997, p. 12).

▪ Objectives are the concrete measures by which goals will be realized and are usually expressed as relationships between specific concepts.

▪ Often, goals and objectives are conflated. Confusion occurs when the combined goal/objective fails to delineate between outcomes and measures.

Example: (Political Science Course)

Course Objective: To encourage students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of welfare policies in American society

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

The problem with this combined goal/objective is that it does not clarify for students what learning outcome will be measured. A more coherent approach would be to break down this goal/objective into a goal and a corresponding objective:

GOAL: To encourage students to think critically about current welfare policies in the US

OBJECTIVE: Students will critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of social and economic theories and arguments that inform current welfare policies.

Students are aware that they will be evaluated on their ability to analyze particular theories and arguments that inform current welfare policies. Faculty can connect this objective to the specific assignment (evaluative measure) in the syllabus, thereby clarifying what they will measure and how they will measure it.

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

Course Content: Required Readings

▪ Once you have a clear sense of course goals and objectives, you must select the materials that best facilitate the realization of those goals and objectives and promote the needs of the service placement.

▪ While examining potential course material in relation to the intended service experience, many find that the original course objectives are inappropriate, a poor fit, or poorly specified. If so, don't be discouraged.

▪ This is an opportunity to connect course materials and assignments to course goals and objectives.

Service-Learning Syllabus Components: *(continued)*

Course Content: Sequencing

▪ After deciding upon the appropriate course content, namely the readings and service placement, the next step is to work out the order in which you present the material.

▪ This is a challenging task, one that requires faculty not only to project the kinds of students who will be in the course but also to prepare for the questions those students will raise throughout the service experience.

An Overview of the Grading Policy

Course Requirements & Grading Criteria: *Students are evaluated on the learning outcomes that flow from the service (materials they produce that are inspired by the service). The grade or weight allocated to the products of the service experience and related non-service assignments should accurately reflect the course objectives. The most common allotment is 100 points, with each assignment allocated a percentage of the 100 points. The points should be distributed in a manner that accurately reflects the value of the assignment and the time students must invest.*

An Overview of the Grading Policy

Course Requirements & Grading Criteria: *Before assigning a final percentage to a course requirement, faculty must ask, "Does this reflect my hopes for student learning outcomes?" and "Does this reflect a coherent progression of knowledge?" In addition to referencing course objectives when describing the allocation of percentage points, you should provide a clear and concise description of who will evaluate the students' community work and what the relative weight of that evaluation will be (e.g., Will a community partner evaluate student work?).*

An Overview of the Grading Policy

Rubric(s) for Evaluation: *If your department or college utilizes a common rubric, then feel free to continue the use of that rubric. You will, however, have to make some adjustments for the service-learning course component along with any student evaluations conducted by community partners or service site coordinators. If there is no common rubric, then you will need to develop a rubric that includes all course requirements and evaluation criteria, including the service-learning course components.*

EXEMPLARY SERVICE-LEARNING SYLLABI

1. Include service as an expressed goal
2. Clearly describe how the service experience will be measured and what will be measured
3. Describe the nature of the service placement and/or project
4. Specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the placement and/or service project (e.g., transportation, time requirements, community contracts, etc.)
5. Define the need(s) the service placement meets
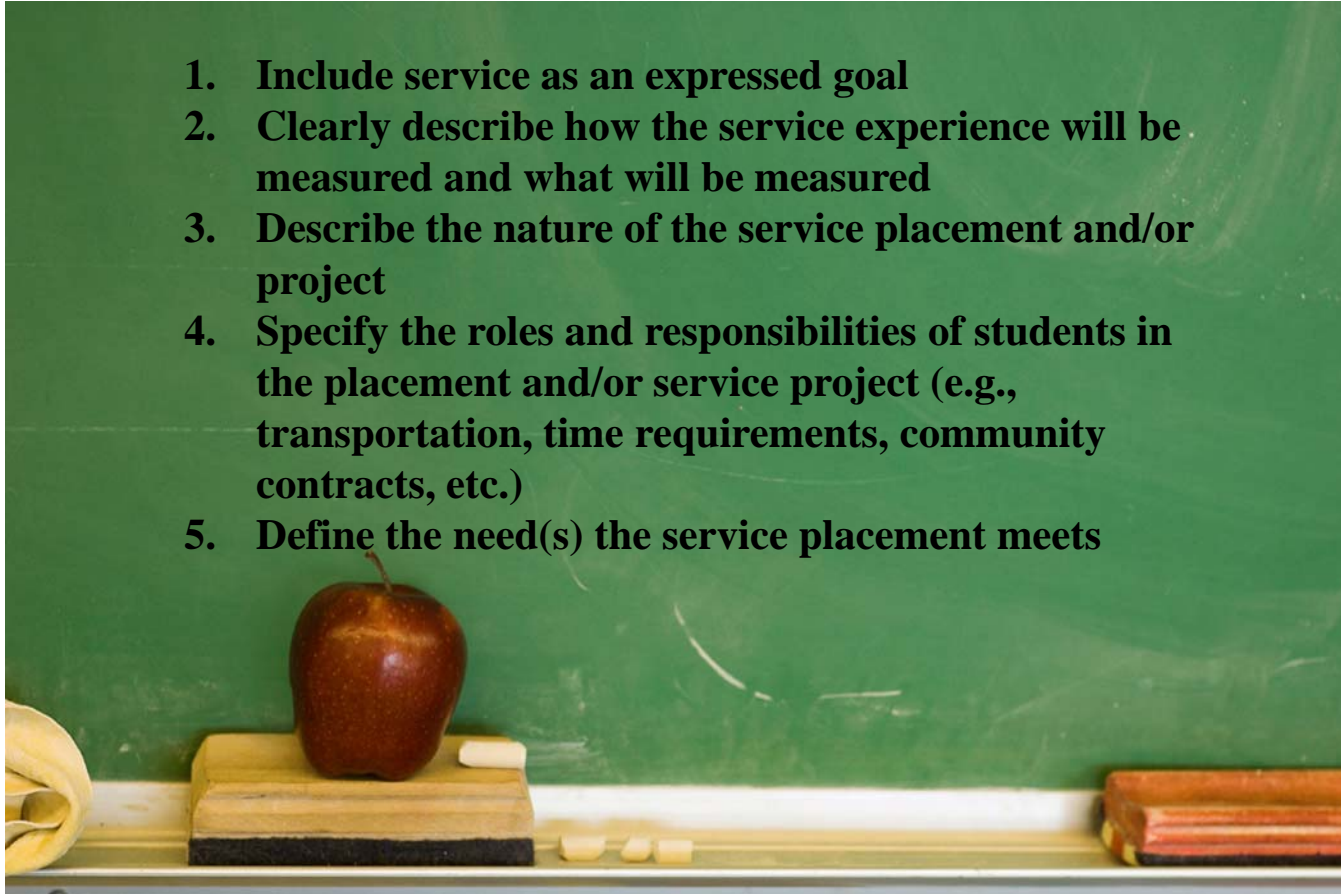
EXEMPLARY SERVICE-LEARNING SYLLABI: *(continued)*

6. Specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned in the placement/project (journal, papers, presentations)
7. Present course assignments that link the service placement and the course content
8. Include a description of the reflective process
9. Include a description of the expectations for the public dissemination of students' work.
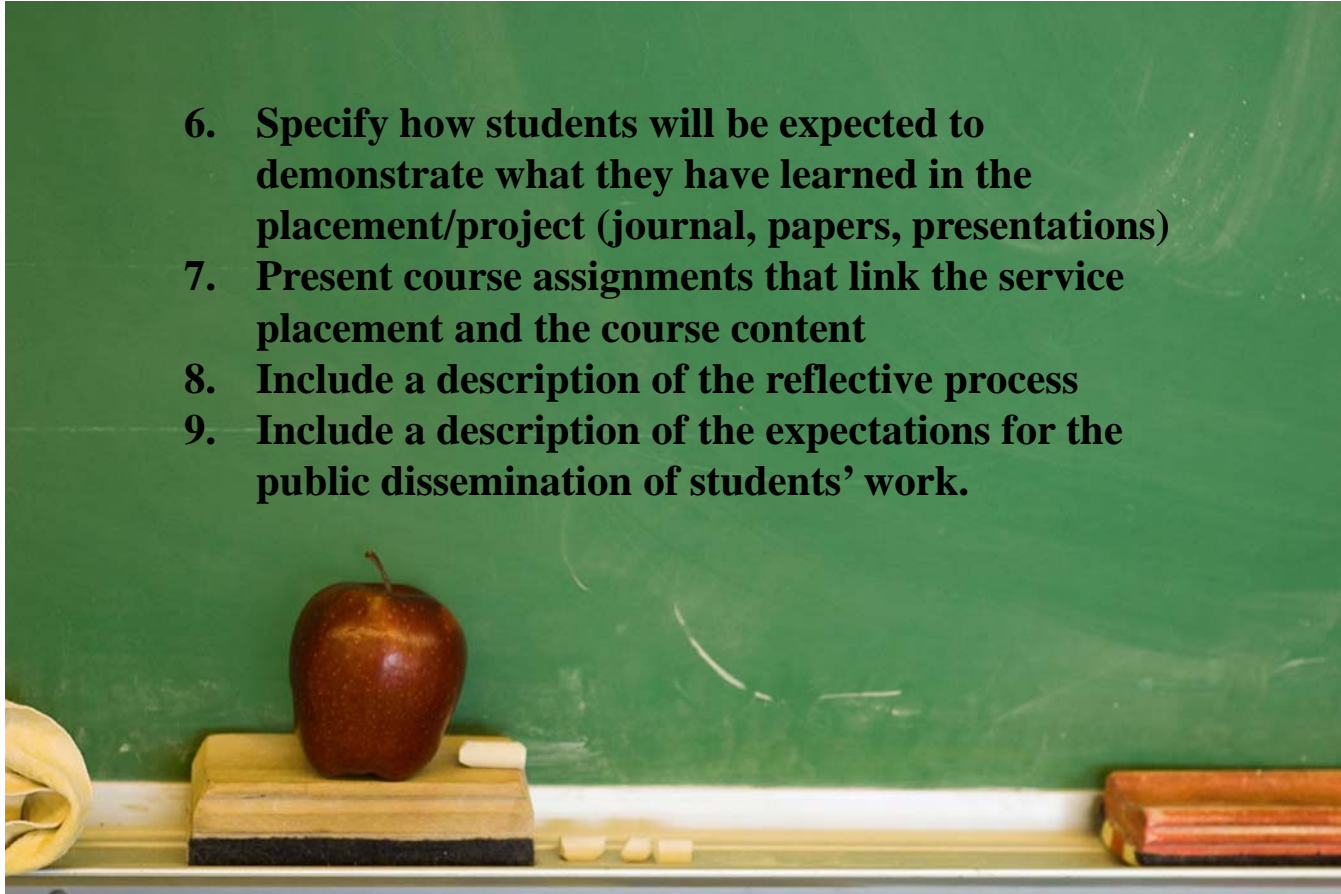
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