“Commit our lives and resources to act in solidarity with one another as we embrace our multicultural and international reality.”

—Sisters of Mercy Mission Statement
Service-learning is a structured experiential learning pedagogy that provides students with the opportunity to meet academic objectives through provision of community service. Ideally, students work with community members to identify need, develop and implement projects to meet those needs, and then reflect on the value of the experience for the community and themselves.

**WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE-LEARNING?**
- It is a vehicle for achieving specific academic objectives.
- It is based on the philosophy that service enhances learning and learning enhances service.
- It provides students with opportunities to develop personal and professional skills in the service to others.
- It is a learning experience that values group work, social responsibility and civic responsibility.
- It assists students in development of writing, reading, speaking and listening skills through reflection.

**HOW IS SERVICE-LEARNING DIFFERENT FROM INTERNSHIPS, CLINICAL PLACEMENTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE?**

**Service-Learning** refers to academic courses in which service and learning are balanced. In addition to traditional means of meeting course objectives, objectives are achieved through delivery of service based on defined needs of individuals, communities or agencies. Faculty, service recipient(s), and students all participate in the learning experience. Through reflective exercises, this pedagogy strengthens students’ understanding of the role they can play in their community.

**An internship** is a short-term work experience in which students receive training and gain experience in a specific field or career area. An internship can be paid or unpaid and can vary in hours and length. There are several characteristics of an internship, including supervision requirements, credit vs. non-credit bearing, learning goals and student reflection.

**Clinical/Fieldwork Placements** are required field experiences in the major program that provide a setting for students to apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in the classroom. The setting for this experience is an environment that facilitates performance for an entry level professional. The focus of the experience is on the development of professional practice by the student.

**Community Service** is a volunteer activity done by individuals or groups that provides personal and professional service to the community.
Creating A Quality Service-Learning Experience

By incorporating service-learning into a course, it does not change what is taught; it changes how it is taught. Studies within service-learning indicate that there are four traits to a quality experience.

Commitment to the community in which the service is being performed is paramount. The community can be reflective of either a geographic location or a type of service. The type of service being performed should be based on a need identified by the community partner and the learning goals established by the faculty member. Orientation to the service experience helps to set the stage for where, what, and who will be partnering with the students.

Service-learning should include academic rigor. By name, this pedagogy acknowledges that learning is an important component of the experience in which students will participate. When done properly, it is more rigorous than traditional teaching strategies because students not only master the text and lecture materials, they also integrate their service experience into that content. When developing a syllabus to include service-learning, it is important to consider what students should know, do, and learn in the process. In consultation with the Office of Service-Learning, appropriate activities can be developed which will address and augment the academic requirements of the course.

Meaningful reflection moves the experience of service-learning from a service opportunity to a learning and service educational opportunity. The reflection should be intentional and continuous (i.e., throughout the course, rather than sporadically or at the end of the semester) and can be done either written or orally. Additional information about reflection is provided on subsequent pages.

Students will begin to learn from this experience an understanding of civic responsibility. As Misericordia students develop academic credentials that prepare them for professional positions, it is important for them to learn that there is a duty to live responsibly in a community that includes the workplace and the neighborhood (which can be local, national or international). Service-learning, by its nature of combining rigorous academic responsibility with intentional service, sets the stage for developing productive citizens.

PROCESS FOR FACULTY TO INTEGRATE SERVICE-LEARNING INTO COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Before the beginning of the semester, confer with the Director of Service-Learning to discuss the type of service placement appropriate to meet your educational goal.
2. Complete the online Faculty Request Form (on the service-learning main page)
3. Develop your syllabus by including:
   a. A definition of service-learning and its link to your course
   b. The length and type of service your students will be performing
   c. Specific service and learning objectives
   d. The kind of reflection activity you will use
4. If appropriate, invite a service-learning staff person to your class to discuss the service location(s) and the logistics of the experience.
5. During the semester, conduct meaningful discussions in class that link the service being performed with the learning goals and service objectives
6. After completion of the students’ service and before the end of the semester, submit hours of service completed by each student and evaluation forms to the Service-Learning Office.
7. At any time throughout the semester, contact the Service-Learning Office whenever you have a question or need assistance.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING

The Office of Service-Learning can support you in a variety of ways, including:

1. Assist with finding the community organization(s) where the students will serve
2. Consult with you on the syllabus revision and provide resources that will address your needs
3. Help you determine the type of reflection activity you would like to use, providing resources as appropriate.
4. Attend your class to discuss logistics of the service, including the service location(s), the students’ roles at the agency(ies), and transportation needs, as well as the role of service-learning at Misericordia University.
5. Coordinate transportation to service sites.
6. Survey students and community partners at the end of the semester to help you determine whether the needs of all stakeholders were addressed.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

While preparing for a service-learning experience and during it, students have responsibilities that include:

1. Secure criminal and child abuse clearances prior to the beginning of the semester
2. Depending on the model chosen by the faculty member, complete the schedule for attendance at the organization or develop plans for independently completing service-learning responsibilities
3. Be respectful of the agency and people with whom service is being provided
4. abide by the policies and procedures of the community organization
5. Notify the agency if an emergency arises and attendance is not possible on the expected day
6. Be professional by observing the agency’s dress code and respecting confidentiality
7. Complete evaluations of the experience and reflecting on the experience and its impact
Reflection is a guided process of exploring and clarifying values identified during service-learning experiences. Reflection provides the student and faculty with the opportunity to state ideas as well as hypotheses and feelings that develop based on the service-learning experience. It can help students make meaningful connections between their service experience and course content, and in the process help them develop critical thinking skills.

In most cases, Misericordia faculty do not accompany the students during their service-learning experiences. Reflection therefore can facilitate the exchange of information between the students, the faculty member and the community partner.

Regardless of the method of reflection chosen, students should gain:

- A connection between the service experience and the course work
- Better developed critical thinking skills about themselves, the community, and civic responsibility
- An opportunity to assess and review their project’s effectiveness
- An opportunity for feedback on what they have seen, felt and experienced

Types of Reflection activities include:

- Journals
- Essays
- Directed Writings
- Experiential Research Paper
- Service Logs
- Service-learning Portfolios
- E-mail Discussion Groups
- Ethical Case Studies
- Directed Readings
- Personal Narratives
- Story writing/telling
- Class Presentation

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF SERVICE-LEARNING**

For Faculty:
- Opportunity to engage in another pedagogy
- Enriched teaching process
- Becoming facilitators of learning
- Engaging students in critical thinking and analysis processes
- Expanding course content beyond the classroom
- Commitment to serving the community

For Community Partners:
- Becoming partners in the academic process
- Enhanced service to recipients
- Increased human resources for problem-solving
- New and creative solutions to genuine community needs
- Development of a potential pool of adult volunteers

For Students:
- An enriched learning experience
- Application of classroom knowledge
- Problem based learning
- Establishing community contacts
- Developing critical thinking skills
- Engaging in the reflection process
- Becoming more aware of one’s responsibility to the community
- Fostering concern for social problems
- Enhancing leadership skills
- Identifying interest area for future career

**Misericordia Students’ Reflections of Service-Learning**

In addition to quantitative evaluations completed at the end of each semester, students are also asked to provide some reflective qualitative assessments. Provided below are thoughts that address two of the questions.

**What did you learn about yourself through participating in service-learning?**

- Possibilities are endless in all opportunities
- People like my ideas and when I help them
- When doing things for people in need, I work much harder
- If given the “proper motivation”, any amount of work can be done
- I am able to step outside my comfort zone and make a difference for myself and others
- I am more fortunate than I ever realized
- It really made me reevaluate my personal beliefs, put aside any judgments, thus I now know how to deal with certain situations
- Little things that an individual does go a long way in some people’s lives
- Thinking on my feet and being able to use clinical reasoning to alter programs based on others needs
- I must be more assertive and not laid back and easy in order to accomplish the goals that I have set

**What was the most enjoyable aspect of your experience?**

- Researching and learning about the places that we were going to go during service-learning
- Creating new ideas to share with others in my group
- More interaction with my peers and professor than I am used to in a normal lecture class
- Being involved in the community and knowing that I can help others out
- Being able to apply what was learned in class to the real world and it helped me strengthen my knowledge of group activity
- Working with the people we were assigned to and making bonds with them in order to increase their success and talk with them
- Seeing the people that I was helping and seeing that I made a difference
Learn to Succeed.