

# Service-Learning & Student Civic Engagement: *Journeys toward Discovery, Contribution & Civic Responsibility*

**NAPSA--Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
Membership Call**  
May 22, 2009

**Karen McKnight Casey**, Director  
Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement  
Michigan State University

## What is service-learning?

Intentional student engagement that combines community service with academic instruction and/or co-curricular learning that is focused on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility.

(Definition adapted from Campus Compact, <http://www.compact.org/> )

## What is service-learning? (cont')

Service-learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic and life skills, sense of civic responsibility and commitment to the community.

(adapted from Campus Compact, <http://www.compact.org/>)

## Three general characteristics of service-learning:

- It is based on the experience of meeting needs in the community.
- It incorporates reflection and learning.
- It contributes to students' interest in and understanding of community life.

*Adapted: Bringle, Robert and Julie Hatcher. "A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty," in: Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 2, pp. 112-122.*

<http://www.compact.org/help/glossary>

Note: Similar construct in *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*, Eyler and Giles, Jossey-Bass 1999

## What is Civic Engagement?

Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

Source: Michael Delli Carpini, Director, Public Policy, The Pew Charitable Trusts.

### Key components:

- Incorporates the essentials of service-learning, but also, critically, includes -
- Exploration of underlying/prevaling social issues
- Context of “self” in the equation in a way that stresses and strengthens reciprocity with community
- May be service-oriented, but not exclusively --
- Additional components, such as action research and community dialogue can be/are integrated.

## How do students engage?



- Academic/course-connected service-learning & civic engagement
- Curricular service-learning
- Co-curricular service-learning & community engagement:
  - Individual action
  - Student-led initiatives

## Operational Definitions at MSU:

- *Academic Service-Learning:*

A teaching method that combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility.

([campuscompact.org](http://campuscompact.org))

- *Curricular Service-Learning:* Service/engagement opportunity distinctly connected to an academic major/program, but not a particular course.

Examples include pre-nursing, pre-med students who serve in hospitals and health clinics; finance majors who choose to participate in VITA.

<http://outreach.msu.edu/factsheet.asp>

## Operational Definitions at MSU (cont'):

- *Co-curricular Service-Learning & Civic Engagement:*

Co-curricular service experiences provide students with opportunities to volunteer through community-based placements in personal areas of interest that may be unrelated to courses or academic majors. Many of these opportunities are available through student-led initiatives dedicated to service, community and civic engagement, and advocacy.

<http://outreach.msu.edu/factsheet.asp>

## Operational Definitions at MSU (cont'):

- Co-curricular cont'.
  - **Individual Action:**
    - ‘ Linked to personal interests and motivation -  
“I want to “do something” after Hurricane Katrina”.
    - “I am an engineering major, but I just miss working with kids.”

## Operational definitions cont’.

- *Co-Curricular, cont’:*
  - **Student-led Initiatives:**  
Formal or informal student organization/group activities that are focused on service community engagement. ‘Generally advised in some way by faculty or staff:
    - Alternative Spring Break
    - Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
    - “Into the Streets”/COOL Action-type
    - Residence Hall Floor “Adopt-a-School”, etc.

## Where do they serve?

Alternative Breaks

Communication

Community Administration

Community Nutrition

Community Projects & “Into the Streets”

Education and Special Education

Engineering and Construction

Hospitals and Health Services

Mental Health and Human Services

Museums and Cultural Arts

Pre-School and Day Care

Recreation Leadership

Youth Mentoring

Senior Citizens

Spartan Smart\$tatements

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

***Local & Global***

## Why do we Engage?

### It's in the Mission!

- For MSU: is “pioneer” Land-Grant, now land-grant to world-grant, creating global citizens
- Private R1's: Stanford: .... studies and exercises directed to the cultivation and enlargement of the mind: Its object, to qualify its students for personal success, and direct usefulness in life; And its purposes, to promote the public welfare ...  
<http://www.collegereportcard.com/college-profiles/stanford-university-243744.html>
- Liberal Arts: *Olivet (MI) Plan: Education for Individual and Social Responsibility.* [http://www.olivetcollege.edu/about/olivet\\_plan.php](http://www.olivetcollege.edu/about/olivet_plan.php)

## Why do we Engage? (cont')

- Accreditation
  - Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association: Criterion Five  
<http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/download/Overview07.pdf>
  - Carnegie Classification-Community Engagement (optional)  
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp?key=1213>
- Increased Learning and Retention
  - Numerous studies  
<http://www.servicelearning.msu.edu/faculty/academic-service-learning>
- It's the "Right Thing to Do"!

## Infrastructure Support

- **Some form of institutional support is critical for success!**
- **Models of support and implementation vary widely.**  
At MSU the CSLCE is university-wide, Board-mandated and jointly administered between the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs and Services and the Office of the Associate Provost for Outreach and Engagement.
- **No “right way” to organize, but support and infrastructure for engagement is vital.**
- **Preparation, e.g. <http://outreach.msu.edu/tools/> and monitoring are key.**
- **Includes collaboration not only with and between student affairs/services and academics, but entities such as Risk Management.**

## YouVote: Example of Collaboration



- Borne from a campus-community problem - 2000 “Motor Voter” Election
- Also Higher Ed. Reauthorization Act
- City & MSU collaborated!
- Numerous campus partners: academic, student services, governmental affairs, student-led, operations.
- Shared “Ownership”!
- Successful & Sustained



*You make a living by what you get.  
You make a life by what you give.*

Winston Churchill

## Contact Information

Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement  
27 Student Services Building  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Mi 48824-1113

Phone: (517) 353-4400

Fax: (517) 353 6663

E-mail: [servlrn@msu.edu](mailto:servlrn@msu.edu)

Web: [www.servicelearning.msu.edu](http://www.servicelearning.msu.edu)