Tips for Practicing Ignatian Pedagogy: Service Learning

Servicing learning extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community. Meaningful community service is integrated with instruction to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service learning furthers course learning objectives across the curriculum while also fostering a consciousness of social justice that promotes the common good. The following tips will help you to build service-learning activities into your course curriculum.

1) Think about the explicit connections between your course and departmental objectives, as well as your discipline. Service should not be presented as an "add-on" or a mere sidebar to your course.

2) Use the syllabus to explain why this kind of service is a part of the course. Guide students in understanding the relevancy of their work in the community to the course objectives.

3) Conceptualize the relationship between the University and the community partner as a reciprocal partnership.

4) Provide opportunities for students to reflect upon their experiences, using a variety of mediums.

5) Allow students to learn from other class members.

Sample Activities for Students

- Students in an English class partnered with seniors in a retirement home and conducted one-on-one interviews to capture each senior's life history. The story was then turned into a mini-biography of the individual, which was given to the senior, his/her family, and the staff of the home. The seniors are being provided with companionship, an opportunity to let their voices and personal memoirs be told, and a living history to be passed down to their families and community. The students used their expertise and skills in rhetoric and teaching to create questions, focus the interviews on important aspects of the senior's life, and turn these into meaningful written documents.

- Students in a chemistry course partnered with a neighborhood to test soil for the presence of lead. Soil was tested and neighborhood residents received reports summarizing the analyzed data relative to EPA standards. Students learned about the risks and health effects associated with lead poisoning and became skilled in well-established protocols of collecting soil samples from area homes and analyzing them for lead using an atomic absorption spectrophotometer (AAS). The students also helped create presentations and materials on the health effects of lead poisoning so that the neighborhood leaders could continue educating their residents.

- A French class partnered with a local historical society's Festival of Nations. Students researched Champlain's exploration of the area, the French heritage of the region, and the relationship between the Native Americans and early French explorers. They prepared French lessons and visual aids and learned early French songs that were popular at the time of Champlain's arrival to the region. During the Festival, the students and their instructor performed French songs, judged an art contest for elementary school children, taught French language lessons, and gave tours of the local heritage sites.

Additional Resources

Colby, A., T. Ehrlich, E. Beaumont, and J. Stephens. "Weaving Moral and Civic Learning into the Curriculum." In *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. 167-199. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Eyler, J. and D. Giles. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*? San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Furco, A. "Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education." *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning*. 2-6. Washington DC: Corporation for National Service, 1996.

Heffernan, K. *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction.* Providence, RI: Campus Compact, 2001.

Jacoby, B. (ed.). *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concept and Practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

Jacoby, B. *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Saint Louis University, Center for Service and Community Engagement Website.
    http://www.slu.edu/service.xml