What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens. (CCPH Website)
Service-Learning:

- strives to achieve a balance between service and learning objectives
- places an emphasis on addressing community concerns and broad determinants of health
- integral involvement of community partners
- emphasizes reciprocal learning - In service-learning, traditional definitions of "faculty," "teacher" and "learner" are intentionally blurred.

- emphasizes reflective practice - fosters critical thinking.
- emphasis on developing citizenship skills and achieving social change … The provision of health services is not often the most important factor. In service-learning, students place their roles as health professionals and citizens in a larger societal context
What distinguishes service-learning from other forms of experiential education?

Recipient Beneficiary Provider
Service Focus Learning

service-learning

Community service Field education
Volunteerism Internship

Andy Furco, University of California at Berkeley, July 1999
Points of Departure: 
SL and Clinical Education

- Balance between service and learning
- Emphasis on addressing community-identified concerns and broad determinants of health
- Integral involvement of community partners
- Emphasis on reciprocal learning
- Emphasis on reflective practice
- Emphasis on developing citizenship skills and achieving social change
Health Profession Schools in Service to the Nation

- School-based health education
- Health promotion and disease prevention
  - teenage pregnancy
  - domestic violence
  - oral health
- Worksite-based health education
- Companionship
- Case management
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Rural access to care
Findings: Students

- Transformational learning experiences
  - clarification of values, sense of self
- Taken more seriously when it’s required
- Greater gains when non-clinical:
  - awareness of determinants of health
  - sensitivity to diversity
  - knowledge of health policy issues
  - leadership development
Findings: Community Partners

- Service, economic and social benefits
- ↑ awareness of institutional assets/limitations
- High value placed on relationship with faculty
- Eager to be seen as teachers and experts
  - campus involvement limited
- Benefits of SL outweighed the burdens
- Concerns re: communication, logistics, needs-based and expert approaches
Findings: Faculty

Stronger relationships associated with:

- joint planning
- partners offered specific and active roles
- genuine sense of reciprocity
- student preparation and orientation
- single point of contact
- consistent, accessible communication
Findings: Institutional Capacity

- Clear definition of service-learning
- Link to mission and strategic goals
- Supportive leadership at all levels
- Effective institutional structures and policy
- Investment in faculty development
- Integration of SL into existing courses
- Long-term community relationships
- Ongoing assessment and improvement
Lessons Learned

- Service learning is powerful pedagogy
- SL can contribute to competencies needed for health professions practice
- SL can benefit students, faculty, the community and community-university relationships
- Community can be effective educators
- Community assets are often overlooked
- SL requires schools to give up “control”