



exemplary
SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

Western
Carolina
UNIVERSITY

Exemplary Service-Learning Projects

is a publication of the Center for Service Learning, WCU.

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Center for Service Learning

The Center for Service Learning is an administrative unit of the Office for Undergraduate Studies within the Division of Academic Affairs.

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SERVICE LEARNING *defined*

A teaching and learning strategy that integrates community service with academic instruction and structured reflection in such a way that students gain further understanding of course content, meet genuine community needs, develop career-related skills, and become responsible citizens.

SERVICE LEARNING *differentiated*

Picking up trash as part of WCU's Tuck River Cleanup is **service**.

Studying water samples under a microscope in a WCU lab is **learning**.

WCU science students collecting and analyzing water samples, documenting the results, and presenting their findings to the Tuckasegee Water & Sewer Authority – That is **service learning!**



Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning

AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINED PROGRAM OR PROJECT:

- Engages students (as well as faculty and staff) in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
- Provides structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their service experience.
- Articulates clear service and learning goals.
- Allows communities to define their own needs.
- Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
- Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
- Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
- Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
- Ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved.
- Facilitates participation by and with diverse populations.

Source: Honnet, E. P., & Poulson, S. J. (1989). *Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning*. (Wingspread Special Report.) Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation. (Adapted by the Center for Service Learning, Western Carolina University, 2009.)



Principles of Good Practice in Community Service-Learning Pedagogy

- Academic credit is for learning, not for service.
- Do not compromise academic rigor.
- Establish learning objectives.
- Establish criteria for the selection of service sites.
- Provide educationally sound strategies to harvest community learning and realize course objectives.
- Prepare students for learning from the community.
- Minimize the distinction between students' community-learning role and classroom-learning role.
- Rethink the faculty instructional role.
- Be prepared for variation in, and some loss of control with, student learning outcomes.
- Maximize the community responsibility orientation of the course.

Source: Howard, J. (n. d.). *Principles of Good Practice in Community Service-Learning Pedagogy*. (Updated by the author from his 1993 publication and slightly adapted by the Center for Service Learning, Western Carolina University, 2009.)

Service Learning

AT WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY



ACE – ACTIVE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

WCU students assisted the Jackson County Public Health Department with a “walkability” assessment of Downtown Sylva and its environs. They reported findings on the town’s traffic flow, accessibility of sidewalks and footpaths, availability of bike paths, and activity needs. *(Dr. Ben Tholkes, fall 2006)*



AQUATIC INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

This project provided aquatic activity sessions for children with developmental disabilities in the Life Skills classroom at Cullowhee

Valley School. Physical Therapy students served as project leaders. They performed an evaluation and developed an individualized aquatic intervention program for each child. The project provided hands-on experience for PT students, who highlighted the benefits of social interaction and recreation. *(Dr. Karen Lunnen, 2003-07, 2009)*

BRIGHT – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO INCORPORATE GOOD HEALTH IN TEACHING

BRIGHT was designed to (a) address environmental and policy issues affecting health and nutrition habits of students in Jackson County Schools; (b) help teachers incorporate more health, nutrition, and physical fitness lessons into the curriculum; and (c) provide a service-learning opportunity for WCU students enrolled

in ND 340: Community Nutrition. BRIGHT was a collaborative project involving the Jackson County Child Nutrition Program, Jackson County Department of Public Health, and Western Carolina University’s Department of Health Sciences (Nutrition & Dietetics Program), supported by an “Eat Smart–Move More” (NC) grant. *(Dr. April Tallant, spring 2006)*

BUILDING PROJECT EVALUATION

Students evaluated a Police Department building project for the town of Maggie Valley as part of a Construction Management capstone course. The students presented projected building costs and schedules and discussed concerns related to the proposed 5,000-square-foot police station. *(Dr. Craig Capano, spring 2006)*

CANTON CONNECTIONS

WCU implemented a multifaceted post-disaster community revitalization project in the town of Canton, which was ravaged by hurricanes Frances and Ivan in 2004. For example, a class of 16 Finance students (including five who emerged as leaders) conducted research designed to determine the best way for Champion Credit Union to establish and present a new service (credit card) to a young audience. The students presented a report based on their analysis, which the Credit Union adopted as part of its operating strategy. *(Dr. Austin Spencer, fall 2008)*

A group of students improved the computer information system at the Building Inspection Office in Canton. *(Dr. William Richmond, fall 2007-08)*

Theatre in Education students staged “Dogwood’s Search” in Canton’s historic Colonial Theatre before an audience of about

100. It was “an excellent community awareness builder, [showing the] impact of arts-based learning experiences,” according to an observer. Nine students were involved.

Another group of students, numbering 20, took “Tales of Trickery” to Canton. More than 200 fifth- and sixth-grade students were in the audience. The WCU students had taken a three-credit course, followed by a two-credit practicum, to cover the tour aspect. Their reflection papers (examining the impact on their own learning and understanding of content from other courses they have taken in both Theatre and Education) contained positive comments about the experience. This student group, consisting primarily of upper-level performance majors, inspired other faculty members to enquire about the possibility of taking other shows “on the road.” (Prof. Glenda Hensley, Prof. Peter Savage and Prof. Claire Eye, fall 2007 through summer 2008)

COMMUNITY MURAL

A group of 12 students in an Art Design course transformed the Pigeon Community Development Center in Waynesville with a mural, featuring patterns and symbols from southeast Africa. The design celebrated the center’s historic African-American heritage. (Dr. Erin Tapley, fall 2007)

CRIME PREVENTION PROJECT

In this semester-long Criminal Justice (CJ 493) project, approximately 20 students worked with local businesses to determine potential crime situations. They developed crime

prevention strategies for the businesses and made specific recommendations. (Dr. Ron Hunter, spring 2006)

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLANS

Students enrolled in CMPR 400: Crisis Communication created free Crisis Communication Plans for local businesses and agencies. Playing the role of consultants, the students worked in groups to produce each plan – a set of procedures and agreements that detailed the key messages to be communicated in the event of a crisis. (Prof. Michael Caudill, spring and fall 2005, spring and fall 2006, spring 2008 and spring 2009)

CuRvE – CULLOWHEE REVITALIZATION ENDEAVOR

As part of a Civic Engagement course, Political Science students conducted a survey on campus (with plans to do a similar survey in the community) to determine development goals for Cullowhee, the unincorporated community in which WCU is located. The surveys complement the work of the faculty-led nonprofit organization that will formulate a comprehensive plan for revitalizing Cullowhee. (Dr. Todd Collins, spring 2009)

Honors College students undertook what has become a major annual beautification project in the Cullowhee community. The project included planting flowers, painting over graffiti, and picking up litter. The students also assisted Cullowhee Revitalization Inc. with ticket design, seating arrangements, and sales for a fundraising concert. Service learning is one of the specific emphases in the Honors Path Curriculum, a proposed liberal studies program. (Dr. Brian Railsback, fall 2008-09)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Honors College students engage in a beautification project as part of CuRvE – Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor. | Art Design students create an African-themed mural at a community center. | Construction Management students present an evaluation of plans for a Police Department building project. | Theatre in Education students stage a play as part of Canton Connections, a multifaceted post-hurricane community revitalization project.





DOCUMENTARIES

Six groups of student filmmakers created documentaries to support and showcase community agencies and projects, including REACH of Jackson County, the Community Table, Balsam Mountain Preserve, Full Spectrum Farms, and Mountain Heritage Day. Service-learning project for MPTP 460: Directing the Documentary. (Prof. Arledge Armenaki, fall 2008)

DOGWOOD'S SEARCH

The WCU Theatre in Education (TIE) Company produced and presented an original dramatic production based on Cherokee legend. A student activity book was designed to encourage reflection on the themes of the play. TIE students demonstrated a tremendous level of responsibility, service, and authentic engagement with the learning and creative processes. (Prof. Glenda Hensley, Prof. Peter Savage and Prof. Claire Eye, spring 2007-fall 2008)

EMPLOYEE TIME-TRACKING SYSTEM

A four-member team of Computer Information Systems students developed a system (including software) to capture social worker time for the Jackson County Department of Social Services. The new system has improved the process through which time was tracked manually and then entered into a state system. Service-learning project for CIS 465: Applications Development. (Dr. William Richmond, fall 2008-spring 2009)

Students demonstrate creativity and celebrate Cherokee culture by producing and performing "Dogwood's Search."

ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENTS

Students in WCU's graduate program in Physical Therapy learned to assess workplace ergonomics and identify conditions that can lead to repetitive stress injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Working in pairs, the students visited 10 to 12 offices, wrote reports, and recommended improvements. They returned to each office a month later to see whether the volunteers actually used their suggestions to improve the ergonomic conditions. (Dr. Todd Watson, fall 2004-09)

GRANT WRITING

Thirty-one MGT 306 (Organizational Behavior) students were involved in writing proposals to nine grant-making organizations on behalf of the Community Table, a Jackson County agency, which organizes a "Food for Kids" program. Students worked in teams to write the proposals, seeking financial support for the program, which was under way at two local schools – Blue Ridge and Smokey Mountain. Two of the grant proposals were funded. (Dr. Paul Jacques, fall 2007)

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM

A team of WCU seniors majoring in Computer Information Systems developed an information technology system for Appalachian Wireless ISP, a small business venture, as part of a service learning-based capstone course in Applications Development. (Dr. William Richmond, spring 2009)

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Students in CMHC 415: Intercultural Communication played the role of consultants, assisting agencies and organizations in solving cross-cultural communication problems. (Prof. Michael Caudill, fall 2005, 2008 and 2009)

KEENER CEMETERY: HISTORY AND EVALUATION

A 17-member group of students taking an Introduction to Public History (HIS 471/571) course researched the history of Sylva's Keener Cemetery and examined pertinent physical conservation and preservation concerns. The students prepared a detailed report, which included policy recommendations – establishing a Perpetual Trust and a Community Volunteer Program. This project was implemented in response to a request to the Service Learning Department (now Center for Service Learning) from the Town of Sylva. (Dr. Amanda Epperson, spring 2006)

LEAMOS Y APRENDAMOS AND ESTRELLAS BRILLANTES

Two Spanish literacy projects were implemented as part of the Jackson County ESL (English as a Second Language) program. The projects promoted social interaction and cultural understanding. (Prof. Patricia Hackett, spring and fall 2006)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A nursing student provides medical assistance in an impoverished community during an international service-learning trip. | Public health employees in Macon County learn Spanish phrases from a WCU Spanish student supervised by his course instructor. | The “Senior Prom” organized by Recreation Therapy majors is a major social event at a local nursing home. | Museum-based public history projects are organized as part of a regular course.



MEDICAL CARE FOR IMPOVERISHED RESIDENTS

Two working nurses enrolled in WCU’s Family Nurse Practitioner Program, accompanied by two faculty members, embarked on a 12-day service-learning trip to help provide medical care for impoverished residents of rural Honduras in Central America. The four-member WCU group joined volunteers from other universities on an eight-hour bus ride on winding mountain roads to establish primary clinics in three “base camp” villages. From those villages, the group traveled by truck to deliver services to other villages in the surrounding areas. A particular focus on the trip was assessments for malnutrition in the villages, especially among children, and treatment for vitamin deficiencies, parasites, and infections. (Prof. Janet James, spring 2008)

sensors could be purchased, as could the baseboard, but everything else had to be designed and custom-built in-house. In the first year of this project, students designed the hardware. They built their own circuit boards and created a data storage center that would record and store readings from the sensors every 15 minutes. Also, they wrote programs that allowed the sensors to interface with the data center and transmit the data to the baseboard. The following year, students determined how to make the components weatherproof. They designed rugged housing and connectors durable enough to hold up to the thrashings of a torrential creek during a storm. The third group of students worked on the digital baseboard component and started a redesign. Since then, students have improved the design and, like others before them, have found the project “immensely rewarding.” (Dr. Brian Howell, spring 2006-08)

MUD METER

Engineering Design students put their technology skills to work creatively on a “Mud Meter” project that produced tangible benefits. In response to an idea from the executive director of the Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River (WATR), the Mud Meter became the core of a senior design project over a three-year period. WATR used the instrument to help monitor and maintain the Tuckasegee watershed. Each year, a group of students worked on the Mud Meter and its components as their senior design project, a required part of their major. The system proved so complex that students kept passing the torch to the next group as they graduated. The Mud Meter consists of four sensors – the primary one for measuring sediment and the others for measuring water depth, temperature, and mineral concentrations. The actual

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Students in a Project Management for Engineers (ET 461/575) course plotted a sequence of tasks and priorities involved in planning and executing an organization’s major move to a new facility. The project provided the 22 engineering students with an opportunity to put the problem-solving, leadership, and planning skills gained in the classroom to work in the community. Foothills Industries Inc., of Marion, NC, a small nonprofit corporation that employs and trains people with disabilities and prepares them to enter the workforce, had outgrown its original space scattered in multiple buildings and, with support from the community, built a new, much larger facility. The students exceeded expectations, finishing the project ahead of schedule. (Dr. Phillip Sanger, fall 2005)

PSAs (PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS)

Students wrote and produced public service announcements for local nonprofit organizations. The exemplary PSA for Pathways for the Future (a nonprofit agency serving as a center for independent living) promoted the opening of its first thrift store. (Prof. Linda Nicodemus, spring 2008)

SUPPORTING PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECTS

Introduction to Public History (HIS 471/571) students cataloged and organized artifacts, or assisted with other programming needs, at museums across the region. (Dr. Scott Philyaw, spring 2008)

PROJECT PANAMA

A 32-member team, including 14 students (most enrolled in a Psychology Freshman Seminar) and four faculty members, embarked on a 10-day service-learning trip to Panama, Central America. The main service sites were in Boquete, a small mountain town. The team delivered more than \$3,500 worth of medical and school supplies, provided medical care, and constructed or repaired buildings (three schools, a mission, and an orphanage). Cash donations totaling \$6,700 were given to local organizations. Students reported increased knowledge, broadened perspectives, cultural awareness, a sense of accomplishment and pride, and personal growth. (Project Panama became a WCU-supported initiative in 2005, with a trip taking place in spring 2006.) (Dr. Lydia Aydlett, spring 2008)



RECYCLING CAMPAIGN

Students in three classes (in the Communication, Theatre, & Dance Departments) created a campaign to promote and support a curbside recycling project in the town of Sylva. They produced a brochure and flyers, organized an art exhibition, and staged a “Recycled Fashion Show.”

(Prof. Debra Connelly and Prof. Glenda Hensley, 2007-08)

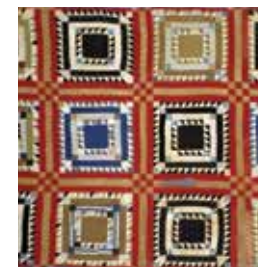
Psychology (PSY 321) students created and compiled lesson plans, with related learning aids, on recycling to support the town of Sylva’s recycling project. (Dr. Mickey Randolph, spring 2007)

“SENIOR PROM” FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

Recreational Therapy (RTH 360) students – members of the WCU Recreational Therapy Association – organized and took part in a “Senior Prom” with residents of the Alzheimer’s Unit at Mountain Trace Nursing Center, located in Webster, NC. RTH 360 was the first WCU course to receive the “SLC” (Service-Learning Component) designation. (Dr. Margaret “Peg” Connolly, spring 2007)

STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT FOR VICTIMOLOGY

Students in two Criminal Justice classes participated in a service-learning assessment of victimology – the scientific study of victimization, including the relationships between victims and offenders, the interactions between victims and the criminal justice system, and the connections between victims and other social groups and institutions. (Dr. Lisa Briggs, fall 2007)



SUPPORTING FOLK ARTS AND CRAFTS

Students in IDES 455: Contract Design II (a spring-semester capstone that includes a service-learning project as a major course requirement) worked in small groups to select the arts/crafts and food-preparation activities for a proposed craft school at the

Appalachian Homestead Farm and Preserve at Tilley Creek, near Cullowhee. They selected and recommended quilting, spinning and dyeing, chair-caning, whittling, candle-making, and pickling as well as storytelling and dancing. The students designed the buildings to reflect the architectural vernacular of late 19th-century Appalachia, created floor plans, and selected sustainable exterior and interior building materials for the school buildings. They also developed the unique programming and designed all interior spaces to accommodate the activities. In addition, students created visual presentation boards depicting all finishes, furnishings, and lighting, and built scaled models that were appropriately sited on the property. Evaluators said this was “a wonderful service-learning opportunity for senior design students,

who worked with an actual client on a real project that could provide economic benefits and cultural pride to local residents while reviving traditional folk arts and crafts that could otherwise be lost to future generations.” (Prof. Jane Nichols, spring 2009)

SURVIVAL SPANISH AND SPANISH-LANGUAGE TUTORING

Students in an intermediate Spanish course and a Spanish for Criminal Justice Professionals course taught ‘survival Spanish’ to Macon County law enforcement officers. (Dr. Jamie Davis, spring 2009.)

Students studying Spanish for the Health Care Professions assisted Macon County Public Health Center employees with learning Spanish phrases for essential instructions and responses. (Dr. Jamie Davis, spring 2009.)

A total of 174 WCU students served as tutors and mentors to schoolchildren (kindergarten through eighth grade) from non-English speaking homes. (Dr. Jamie Davis and Dr. Lori Oxford, fall 2008)

WOW: WALKING THE WORLD

WOW was a program created by Community Health Link (Jackson County Department of Public Health) through which students in social studies classes in elementary/middle schools experienced an adventure in “walking around the world.” Teachers chose destinations according to the NC curriculum and, with the help of their parents, “walked” to those places. The program promoted positive attitudes among obese children while encouraging every participating child to exercise regularly. WCU Center for Service Learning staff supported the program. (Fall 2007-spring 2008)

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