Chapter 1

Understanding Service-Learning: History, Pedagogy, Philosophy

"By its very definition, civic responsibility means taking a healthy role in the life of one's community. That means that classroom lessons should be complemented by work outside the classroom. Service-learning does just that, tying community service to academic learning."
—Senator John Glenn

What is Service-Learning?

"Service-learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other. The basic theory of service-learning is Dewey's: the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning. Students learn best not by reading the Great Books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience. Learning starts with a problem and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and increasingly sophisticated skills to increasingly complicated problems" (Thomas Ehrlich, in: Barbara Jacoby and Associates. *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 1996)

> **Related concepts and activities:**
> Academic Service-Learning, Experiential Learning, Experiential Education, Field Placement, Clinical Experience, Practicum, Field Projects, Learn and Serve, and Field Education, Action and Practitioner Research, Community Service, Civic Engagement, Civic Responsibility, Volunteerism, Internships, Charity, Youth Service, Professional Development

SL blends meaningful community service with course objectives and assignments to enhance the learning experience, gain a deeper understanding of course content, promote professional development, teach civic responsibility, encourage lifelong civic engagement, and strengthen communities.

"Service-Learning is a method which engages young people in service to their communities as a means to enrich their academic learning, promote personal growth, and help them develop the skills needed for productive citizenship" (from: *Service-Learning Technical Assistance Packet – Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service*).

"Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-

discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content"
(http://www.servicelearning.org/what_is_service-learning/service-learning_is/index.php).

"Service-learning is still evolving and has not yet settled into a shared vocabulary, a set of common ideas and theories and a generally accepted approach to validation. This has encouraged a great deal of experimentation, discovery and local adaptation, but it is also impossible to have one definition for all service-learning programs" (Learn and Serve America).

Service-learning is more than community service. Community service focuses on meeting the needs of service recipients, with little or no emphasis on learning. Service-learning, on the other hand, involves intentionally linking service activities with the academic curriculum to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement and reflection.

"Service-learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community" (http://www.compact.org/resources/service-learning_resources).

What NLU Students Tell Us about Service-Learning

"Service learning is taking an altruistic attitude towards your community and at the same time, looking introspectively at your beliefs, convictions, and prejudices. From there, a desire to make a change, must occur, and the new information must be used to educate others and strive for further social justice."

"In service learning, volunteering is not enough. Where volunteering helps those whom social injustices are affecting, service learning helps affect those who can change the social injustices."

"Service learning is designed to increase the consciousness of the person who is providing the service. It is reciprocal in nature – everyone involved benefits. It is engaging, meaningful and interactive. People involved in service learning adhere to the philosophy that it is important to serve others in and out of their communities. Ideally, service learning will challenge our stereotypical views and change our opinions."

"Volunteering at [...] made me realize again how just a little bit of time can make a big impact. I will definitely be helping again beyond this course. I also realized throughout [SL] process how I had transformed my thinking about the environment."

"Service-learning project is a unique way to learn but gives the best possible outcome to a social justice class. You'll not only have the chance to impact the community around you but you'll hear about the impact others had in your class. If colleges across the nation were doing these service-learning projects our communities would be so much more compassionate and ready to volunteer and give their time for each other."

"A service-learning project seems like such a simple thing. All I need to do is to volunteer a bit of time and then move on with the rest of my life, right? Maybe I'll do this a few times a year so that I can pat myself on the back and know that I've done a good thing. It's a nice gesture and to be honest, that's what most of my previous volunteer experiences have been. But with this class, I was asked to look at the whole picture and to actually see the social injustice that takes place in the community around me.

"After my [SL] project I realized that there are still kind hearted and selfless people out there giving everyday to make a difference in other people's lives. So many times we get caught up in the hustle and bustle of our lives that we don't take the time to help others. Through my project I discovered a place with so many wonderful people all working together to create a great community for those who are developmentally challenged. This experience changed me, and if it weren't for this class I'm not sure I ever would have had that experience."

"Service learning has helped me to expand my understanding of social justice through the things that I have lived through and the issues of others that I have come into contact with. I want service learning to be a part of my curriculum and hope to teach my students about social justice through service learning. I hope that I can teach my students that they can make a difference in the world, even if they start small, they can still make a difference by making a commitment to service learning. I believe that service learning can be part of our everyday lives; we can make a difference by doing small things too."

Service-Learning: Related Concepts and Key Elements

A Typology of Service-Learning	
Service-LEARNING	Learning goals primary; service outcomes secondary
SERVICE-Learning	Service outcomes primary; learning goals secondary .
service-learning	Service and learning goals completely separate
SERVICE-LEARNING	Service and learning goals of equal weight and each enhances the other for all participants

(Sigmond, 1994)

SL is an extension of an academic course, which provides tangible, meaningful, and valuable service to the community combined with a clear connection to a course curriculum and gives students an opportunity for reflection in which students explain how the activity clarified, reinforced, expanded, or illustrated course concepts.

SL incorporates the following key elements:

- ➢ Connection to course objectives
- ➢ Service to the community
- ➢ Structured and/ or unstructured opportunities for reflection

High quality SL projects promote learning that integrates key course concepts or skills taught in college courses or programs and allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the course content. SL projects meet authentic community needs and provide meaningful assistance to community organizations.

The emphasis of SL is on **reflection**, which connects service as practice and its conceptualization in relation to particular themes and issues with how students view themselves and their activities as constructive and meaningful. Successful application of the key elements of SL ensures the general success of the project, enriches learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens the community.

There are several **related to SL concepts, notions, and activities**. Community involvement activities differ in their scope and intended audiences. It is important to draw distinctions between service-learning and the following activities:

Volunteerism, where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient.

Community Service, where the primary focus is on the service being provided, as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients.

Internships that engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study.

Field Education that provides students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related, but not fully integrated, with their formal academic studies.

Volunteering

Unlike volunteer activity, which may be unrelated to any curriculum objectives, SL links community service with specific course goals. SL requirement must be stated in the course syllabus so students are aware of it from the beginning of the term. Students should understand how SL requirement is relevant to their mastering of course material. By clearly explaining the link between the required community service and course content, students will strengthen their commitment to SL assignments.

When this is explained to the student it must be emphasized that they are not being required to volunteer. Required volunteerism is an oxymoron. The community service is an assignment and its purpose is to facilitate student learning.

Professional Development

Through professional development, it is possible for students to provide service to others while learning a valuable skill, however providing a benefit to the student is the primary objective of professional development. Community service is fundamentally different from professional development in that the organization being provided the service is the primary beneficiary. SL as we have defined it thus far is of equal benefit to both the student and the participating community-based organization.

(Adapted from Stacey, Kathleen, et. al. *Academic Service-Learning: Faculty Development Manual*. Eastern Michigan University)

Roots and Beginnings of Service-Learning

The development of SL initiatives has been accompanied by a renewed interest in progressive education and in the philosophy of John Dewey, whose writings on the active nature of understanding and the benefits of and conditions for participatory democracy "provide an early theoretical foundation for a pedagogy in which students cooperatively engage actual social problems" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 19).

Service-learning is a philosophy of "human growth and purpose, a social vision, an approach to community, and a way of knowing" (Kendall, 1990, p. 23).
Service-learning is a pedagogy that is "grounded in experience as a basis for learning and on the centrality and intentionality of reflection designed to enable learning to occur. It is based on the work of researchers and theorists on learning, including John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, Donald Schon, and David Kolb, who believe that we learn through combinations of action and reflection" (Jacoby, 2003, p. 4).

Like Jacoby (2003), we hope that service-learning will not become "something educational researchers document in a historical review published in 2030 as a passing fad, an innovative pedagogy, that disappeared as corporate influences remade the modern university into an efficient vehicle for delivering standardized education in a low-cost, but highly profitable, fashion. When we speak of campus-community partnerships and transformations, we mean significant changes in how universities understand the world. Transformation promises a more holistic and coherent understanding of our common situations" (p. 39).

The roots of service-learning are closely related to civic and political activism. At the turn of the 19th century, American colleges and universities became more prominent in community life and civic engagement. The model for university graduate engagement in reform and democracy was Wisconsin and its university in Madison. President Charles Van Hise called it "the Wisconsin Idea," a broadly conceived project to foster reform and civic improvement based on the specialized knowledge embodied by the university and its graduates. The Wisconsin Idea "rested on the conviction that students and university-trained experts could apply themselves to the problems of modern society and make democracy work more effectively" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 30).

Two other initiatives—precursors of SL—from the Progressive Era were cooperative education at the University of Cincinnati and the establishment of the first community junior college in Joliet, Illinois. Both were experiments to connect more closely the worlds of work and education, and education with the community.

> *"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn."*
> - Benjamin Franklin

In the early 20th century, civic and political activism shaped educational philosophy into a vehicle for social change. A key development in SL was a massive employment program for youth included in Roosevelt's New Deal. In 1935, the National Youth Administration, created jobs and educational opportunities for more than 700,000 citizens age 16 to 25. The program's purpose was "to teach by example, the practice, responsibilities, and rewards of citizenship. This philosophy spilled into other New Deal programs like the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), which attempted to take youth out of one environment and place in another where they would both learn and serve at the same time" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004 p.35-36).

Political and social upheaval in the 1960s and 70s also contributed enormously to the development of SL.
In 1961, President Kennedy established the Peace Corp. In

> "We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity." –Martin Luther King, Jr.

1964, President Johnson created VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). VISTA provides opportunities for thousands of Americans to serve full-time within their communities. Calls for linking service and learning became a main stay in the missions of American universities. In the late 70s, the development of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education and the National Center for Service-Learning gave countless opportunities to Americans hoping to learn and serve.

During the 1980s, national service efforts were launched at the grassroots level, including the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984) and Campus Compact (1985), which helped mobilize service programs in higher education. Other organizations, which had their beginnings in the 80s, include the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), which helps replicate youth corps in states and cities; National Youth Leadership Council (1982), which helps to prepare future leaders; and Youth Service America (1985), through which many young people are given a chance to serve.

Since 1990s, there has been an incredible increase in the development of service-learning in institutions of higher education. In 1990, Congress Passed, the National and Community Service Act. The legislation authorized grants to schools to support service-learning and demonstration grants for national service programs to youth corps, nonprofits, and colleges and universities. Learn and Serve America was established at the same time. In September of 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service. The legislation united Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, VISTA and Learn and Serve America into one independent federal agency. (Adapted from Learn and Serve America. America's National Service Learning Clearinghouse – Historical Time Line)

Service-Learning: Conceptual Frameworks

Historically, SL has been evolving along the lines of the following **basic models**:

➢ ***Philanthropic model***: is "based on the perceived need for charity and philanthropy. It claims neutrality with regard to social issues and argues for altruism and compensatory justice. Philanthropic model is a tool of mitigation or immediate relief, best applied in cases and situations where other models of service-learning have not yet been employed or considered" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 69).

➢ ***Civic engagement model***: is "based on the premise that democracy demands equal participation and voice of all citizens. Civic engagement has a broad appeal as a source of long-term positive impact on communities, as faculty and students serve as agents of social change consistent with democratic principles. Civic engagement model renews and alters the focus of higher education institutions on service as the focal point of their mission of teaching, research, and professional service" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 77).

➢ ***Communitarian model:*** assumes that "humans are social beings, not self-interested individual egotists who see their main concern in politics as protecting their liberty and property. Service-learning is central to developing a sense of human community at the local level. Civic action is public action and public action is collective action. Communitarian paradigm applies the notion of the golden rule at the societal level, to characterize the good society as one that nourishes both social virtues and individual rights" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 129).

NLU SL philosophies and initiatives integrate the above models and add emergent paradigms to SL practice. We strongly encourage our faculty and students to pursue **SL as social and political activism**, and **as advocacy and transformational models and practices**. As we continue to develop and implement our projects, we aspire for creativity and innovation. Examples of these practices and samples of various activities embedded in our course curricular are presented in appendices of this manual.

SL is becoming increasingly popular among students and faculty in higher educational institutions, and National-Louis University is no exception to this. Established in the 1880s, NLU has made service the cornerstone of its mission, values, and strategic goals.

References

Jacoby, B. et al. (2003). *Building partnerships for service-learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Speck, B. W., Hoppe, S. L. (Eds.). (2004). *Service-learning: History, theory, and issues.* Westport, CT: Praeger.