

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SERVICE LEARNING SYSTEM TO ENHANCE CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

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## Abstract

This study was a quantitative research, composed of surveying and interviewing, and an experimental research. The study aims to analyze corporate social responsibility, to analyze service learning, and to develop service learning system to enhance civic responsibility of un-dergraduate students in business administration programs. Data was collected from businesspeople of Top 100 Companies listed in the Corporate Governance Report of Thai Listed Companies 2005 and BBA instructors of fifty-four private and public universities in Thailand, via a questionnaire for corporate social responsibility. Six advisors of SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) and one lecturer were also interviewed about service learning courses. Data was analyzed in order to develop a service learning system. The findings indicated that students, who participated in the service learning system and underwent the entire process of prepara-tion, action, reflection, evaluation, and celebration, improved their civic responsibility, aca-demic skills, professional skills and life skills.

## INTRODUCTION

The Business Administration program is designated to provide the fundamental concepts and theory of business practice and specialized study in a business discipline, develop an awareness and understanding of the global context in which business operates, and prepare students to become responsible and contributing members of the community. Service learning is a teaching and learning

strategy that integrates meaningful community service with classroom learning, which focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Students use their newly acquired classroom academic skills to help solve a real-life problem or meet a need in the community. Through hands-on experiences, students apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world. Therefore, service learning is appropriate pedagogy for courses as ethical and moral education.

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## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Service Learning**

Service-learning is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection. Students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Service learning fosters civic engagement and social responsibility while enriching and enhancing student learning within the active context of students' lives. As part of a transformative process, service learning meets civic and academic goals when structured reflection is an integral element of the process.

Necessary Criteria for Academic Service Learning are: (1) Relevant and meaningful service for the community. Service provided in the community must be both relevant and meaningful to all stakeholders. There is purposeful collaboration between the University and the community and the community plays an active role in defining what the student's service activities will be. (2) Enhanced academic learning. The addition of relevant and meaningful service for the community must not only serve the community but also enhance student academic learning in the course. The service and academic goals must inform and transform one another. (3) Purposeful civic learning. The addition of relevant and meaningful service in and to the community not only serves the community and enhances student academic learning in the course, but also prepares students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society (Howard, 1993).

### **Civic Responsibility**

Civic Responsibility means active participation in the public life of a community in an informed,

committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good (Gottlieb and Robinson, 2002). Concepts of civic responsibility include 'citizenship for democracy', 'participatory democracy', and 'social responsibility'. Essential competencies and skills that help promote civic responsibility include intellectual skills, participatory skills, research, and persuasion (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2000).

Many educators believe that civic responsibility can best be developed when teachers work toward linking three components: community service, learning outcomes, and civic education. Quality service-learning exists only when all three come together (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2000). Using service-learning to develop civic responsibility allows community colleges to fulfill their basic mission of providing a quality educational experience and serving the needs of the community. This effective practice offers strategies that educators can use to integrate civic responsibility concepts and activities into their courses so that students come away with a greater understanding of what is expected of them as citizens in our society (Gottlieb and Robinson, 2002).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life. A coherent CSR strategy, based on integrity, sound values, and a long-term approach offers clear business benefits to companies and contributes to the well-being of society (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2002). As there is no single, commonly accepted definition of CSR, there is also no commonly accepted classification of the main components of CSR. Often, CSR is related to (1) Environmental protection (2) Labor Security (3) Human rights (4) Community involvement (5) Business standards. (6) Marketplace (7) En-

terprise and economic development (8) Health promotion (9) Education and Leadership Development and (10) Human Disaster Relief (World Bank, 2005).

## **Character Education**

Character education is defined as the planned and unplanned efforts of society to nurture the moral development of its members (Bradley, 2001). It holds that there are widely shared, pivotally important core ethical values -- such as trustworthiness, citizenship, caring, honesty, responsibility, fairness and respect for others and self that form the basis of good character. (Ida and Rose, 2003) To develop students socially, character education infuses ethics and academics into every aspect of the school culture and curriculum. (Haynes and Thomas, 2001) Service-learning has been found to be an excellent motivator of character development and one of the most effective methods for teaching and learning the lessons of character. It provides young people with the opportunity to act on and affirm the values they learn in school. As with any other academic subject, putting the ideas into practice makes students come alive (Holman, 2001).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was an experimental research which aimed to analyze concepts of service learning, civic responsibility, corporate social responsibility and character education in order to develop a service learning system. Data was collected from businesspeople of TOP 100 Companies listed in the Corporate Governance Report of Thai Listed Companies 2005 and BBA instructors of fifty-four private and public Thai universities, via a questionnaire for corporate social responsibility. Service learning advisors from six Thai universities were also interviewed about service learning courses. Data analysis was based on qualitative-

quantitative approach.

As a result of the analysis, a service learning system was developed. One of the Insurance Department's major courses, Insurance Marketing, was selected to implement the service learning system as a pilot study. The study was conducted through a one-group pre-post test experimental design. Twenty BBA students, majoring in Life Assurance and Property & Casualty Insurance from the Faculty of Business Administration, Assumption University, participated in the pilot course for 45 hours (3 hours for 15 sessions).

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Expectation and Performance on Corporate Social Responsibility**

A total of 90 out of 100 businesspeople of TOP 100 Companies listed in the Corporate Governance Report of Thai Listed Companies 2005 and a total of 47 out of 54 BBA instructors of private and public universities responded to the questionnaires. The response rate was 90.00% and 87.00% respectively. The respondents were asked about expectation and performance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in business companies. Components of corporate social responsibility are environmental protection, labor security, human rights, community involvement, business standards, marketplace, enterprise and economic development, health promotion, education and leadership development, and human Disaster Relief.

The survey showed that businesspeople had significantly higher expectation rates than performance rate for all components of corporate social responsibility. This indicated that businesspeople should improve their performance on corporate social responsibility. Common reasons for lower performance rate were less knowledge, less authority and fewer budgets to achieve

some components of CSR; no time to join CSR program; and less interest to do so. BBA instructors also had higher expectation rate than performance rate for all components of corporate social responsibility. Five components, namely environmental protection, human rights, community involvement, health promotion, and education and leadership development, diverged significantly. This indicated that BBA instructors should teach or cultivate more corporate social responsibility to students. However, reasons which caused them lower performance rate were the difficulty in teaching CSR in some courses because of course content, and limitation of timeframe.

### **Service Learning in Higher Education**

Service learning advisors from six Thai universities were interviewed about service learning in higher education. The results found that few Thai universities integrated service learning into courses and used it as a teaching and learning method. Most universities arranged service learning activities, supervised by Students Affairs, to cultivate students morally and ethically. Some universities required students to service the community, as a part of Business Ethics courses with or without credits, before they graduated. To arrange service learning, three components should be taken into account: (1) the university policy should support service learning through curriculum, budgets, etc.; (2) a center for service learning should be established to act as the responsible unit for all activities concerned with service learning; and (3) the university should support service learning by setting service learning as a requirement for graduating students.

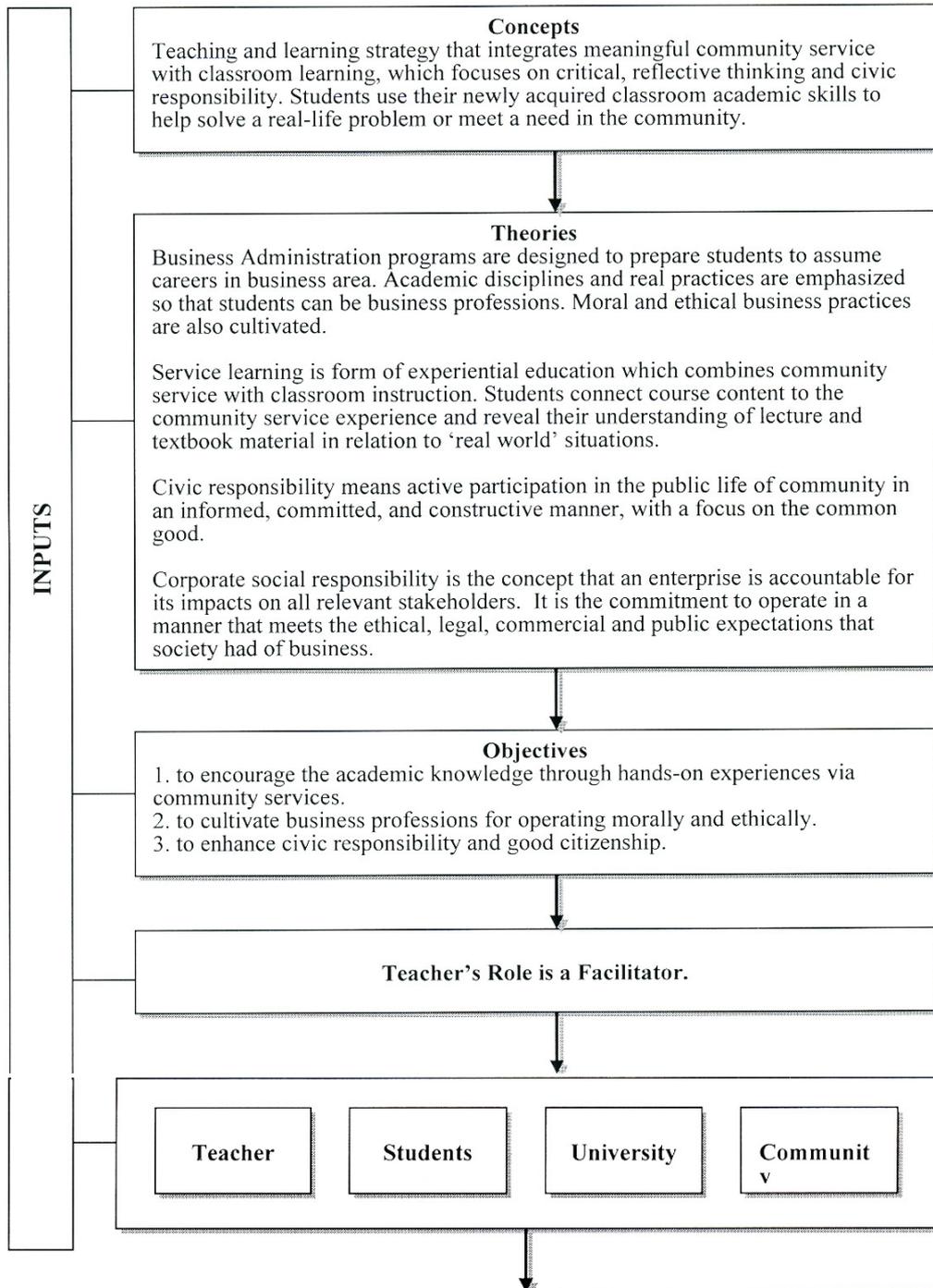
To get started on service learning activities, a teacher provides students with information on service projects, such as objectives, types, places, budgets, and timeline. Students are grouped together, ranging from 5 to 60 members, depending on type of services. A survey on the communities must be done to design service

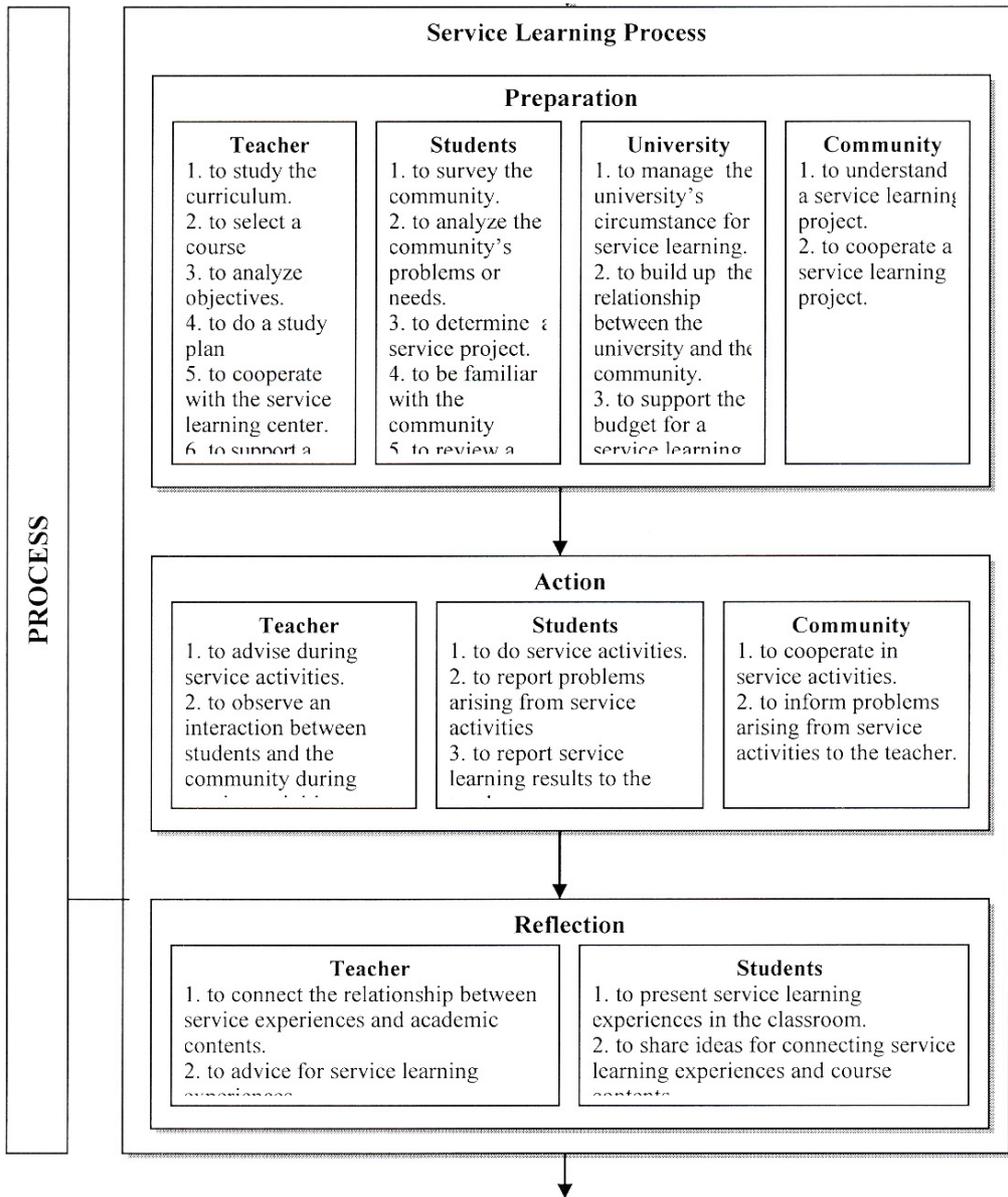
projects which meet their needs or problems. A teacher performs the role of a facilitator or guide. Reflection is recommended to see what students' learning had occurred during the service. It helps for a teacher to examine and form students' beliefs, values, opinions, assumptions, judgments and practices related to an action or experience. Through hands-on experiences, students could learn how to apply knowledge to a real-life, real-world context. As a result, service learning offers powerful opportunities to acquire the habits of critical thinking; i.e. the ability to identify the most important questions or issues within a real situation. Examples of service projects are to assist with the costume design, to provide e-commerce knowledge, to prepare marketing plan for a local product, to arrange eco-tourism, to teach kids English, to write papers of environmental projects and to develop a website for nonprofit organization.

### **Development of a Service Learning System**

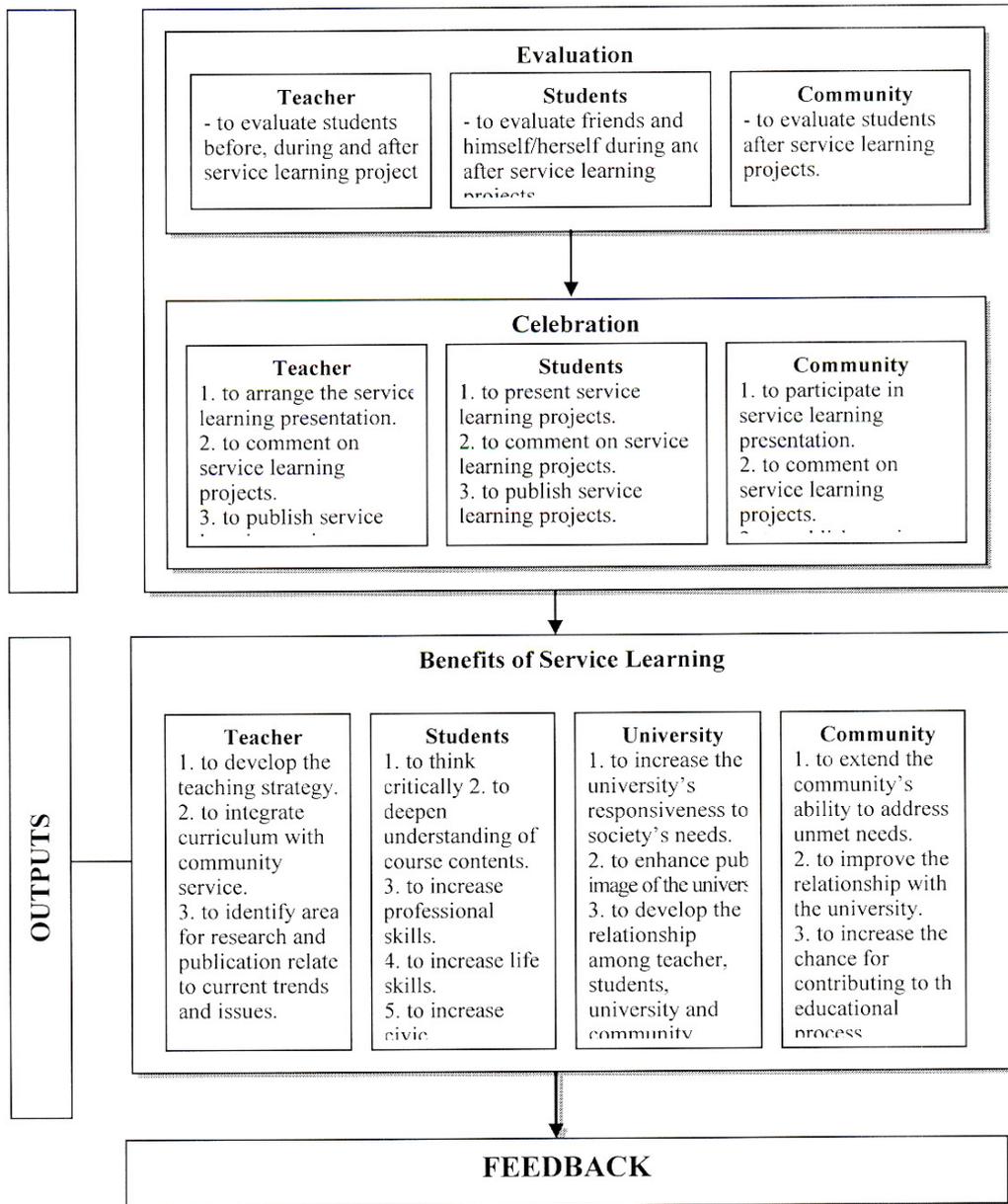
The service learning system was developed from concepts of service learning, civic responsibility, corporate social responsibility and character education for undergraduate students in Business Administration programs in order to enhance civic responsibility. The system consisted of inputs, process, outputs and feedback. (see Figure 1)

**Figure 1: A Service Learning System to Enhance Civic Responsibility of Undergraduate Students in Business Administration Programs**





*The Development of a Service Learning System to Enhance Civic Responsibility of Undergraduate Students in Business Administration Programs*



The system consisted of three components as follow:

1. Inputs. Concepts, theories, objectives, and all stakeholders (i.e. teacher, students, university and community) were brought into the system;

2. Process. Service learning process included five steps: (i) Preparation. It was to define learning objectives for the course and design the instruction for the service learning projects. (ii) Action. Meaningful action was crucial to successful service learning experience. Service activities should be related to course content and community needs. (iii) Reflection. It established connections between students' service experience and all course contents; and created their own notions of morality. Reflection could be done by discussions, portfolios, analytical papers, journal writings, etc. (iv) Evaluation. It was based on what students learned from service experience and was done by teacher, students and community throughout the projects. (v) Celebration. It was to acknowledge that the projects were accomplished. All stakeholders celebrated and shared the service experience through meeting or publication; and

3. Outputs. All stakeholders gained benefits as service learning outputs. Finally, all results were taken into account as a feedback to determine whether the service learning system was achieved and, consequently, to identify what should be amended to improve overall system performance.

## **Experimental Results of Service Learning**

As a pilot study, a service learning system was integrated into Insurance Marketing, a major course of Life Assurance and Property & Casualty Insurance. Twenty students participated in such course for 45 hours. Four groups, 4 to 6 members each, did different service learning projects in the same community. The service learning process, included preparation, action, reflection, evaluation, and celebration, was accom-

plished.

1. Preparation. Students surveyed the community and identified its risks in order to plan service learning projects which met the community needs or problems. Findings indicated that most community members had the risks of poor health and motorcycle accidents. Students reviewed the course contents of risk management and insurance in order to provide service activities effectively.

2. Action. Students provided service projects by using risk management techniques, i.e. risk control and insurance, to handle risks of the community. One group taught kids about sanitary and accident prevention in the nursery school. The others provided insurance knowledge to community members through insurance broadcasting, insurance exhibition and insurance games.

3. Reflection. Each student reflected on what he/she learned from providing services and what he/she thought of civic responsibility. The teacher helped students to connect the relationship between service experiences and course contents. Reflection methods used were discussions and analytical paper writings. This step helped students to deepen their understanding of course contents and to form their beliefs, values and opinions.

4. Evaluation. Teacher evaluated on students' learning from service, not quality or quantity of service. A set of evaluation instruments, consisting of activity records, analytical papers, portfolio, discussion and presentation, were used. Students also evaluated the performance of other students during the service activities. Finally, the community members evaluated the service projects after the project's completion.

5. Celebration. The service learning projects were presented to all stakeholders in the last class. At this stage, it was important to say thank you to all involved. The meeting also helped to reaffirm partnership and renew the commitment to provide service. As a part of the presentation, students arranged their work for service learning on

an exhibition board. The projects were also published in the University's newsletter.

## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Service learning provides an opportunity for instructors to develop a teaching method that is an alternative to traditional lecture, connecting the community with the curriculum. Through hands-on experiences, students have an opportunity to learn by using newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in a real life situation. Service learning extends learning beyond the classroom, which allows students to see the real world. Students learn to perform teamwork, solve real problems, think critically and foster a sense of caring for others. As a consequence of service experience, students gain self respect, empathy and civic responsibility. Therefore, service learning supports social, emotional and cognitive learning and development.

To successfully integrate service learning in teaching and learning, good practice for service learning pedagogy should be applied: (Adapted from Praxis I: A faculty casebook on community service learning by Howard, J., 1993).

1. Academic credit is for learning, not for service. Credit must be awarded for demonstrated learning from the service provided, not on the quality or quantity of service. Students should be graded according to the extent and depth of their learning.

2. Do not compromise academic rigor. The level of faculty expectations for students' learning in a service learning course can and should be equal to the level of faculty expectations in any other course. Using service learning pedagogy doesn't change the content you teach, it only changes how you teach.

3. Set learning goals for students. It helps students focus on intended learning objectives and take full advantage of the rich learning opportunities offered by service learning.

4. Be prepared for uncertainty and variation in student learning outcomes. In traditional courses, the learning strategies (i.e., lectures, labs, and reading) are constant for all students under the control of the faculty. In service learning courses, community service experiences vary from site to site and from student to student. This leads to variability in student outcomes.

5. Re-think the faculty instructional role. The instructor shifts away from the role of information transmitter towards the role of learning facilitator or guide.

Service learning should be integrated as a requirement in academic courses. Students would be provided with the opportunity to learn from experiences and enhance their civic responsibility through direct participation with the community. The course integrating service learning should allow students to implement and apply theories into practices, and should not be courses that are pure theory. Students should at least have some basic knowledge to arrange service projects for communities; otherwise, communities may lose the advantage from the service provided. To get the best learning outcomes for students, teachers should prepare communities for students' services. This eliminates any confusion or approach communities. Students should review all course contents in order to effectively provide services to communities and, as a result, extend their knowledge from experience. The University should support service learning through curriculum and budgets. At the same time, a center for service learning, set up as a responsible unit for service activities, is also suggested. Communities should extend their cooperation in providing an opportunity for students to service activities. In return, communities would be able to fulfill their unmet needs. All service projects should address the community's problems or needs, while at the same time, enhance the student's academic knowledge. The type of service, places, timeframe, budgets, and community should all be taken into account. Through good preparation and support from all

parties involved, service learning is an experience that provides rewards to students, teachers and community members for a lifetime.

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