

Service Learning Communities: Guidelines from the General Education Committee

Service learning is defined by the National Service-Learning Clearing House as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities." Evergreen II established new parameters for Learning Communities in which an LC can range from four to six credits, and can involve credit-bearing activities such as a 3-credit course paired with a 1-credit service-learning experience :

The service-learning LC focuses on themes, questions, or material using the different approaches of theory *vs.* application. A three-credit course taught by an Augustana faculty member provides the theory to frame the themes, questions, or material, while a community leader guides the practical application of the theory. Students would register for the three-credit academic course plus a one-credit service learning experience, which might be either a service-learning internship (catalogue code Lxx) or departmental internship with a service-learning component (e.g., COMM 384). The faculty member and community leader would be in close contact to determine the need of the community and to facilitate a service-learning experience for students. On-campus resources to develop this type of LC are available through the CVR. Needs unique to the Augustana campus could also be addressed using this LC format, in which the greater community would be defined as the Augustana campus.

Courses applying as service- learning communities will need to demonstrate the following:

- The need for the service- learning project is identified by the community partner.
- The community partner contributes as a "teacher" for the class. "Teaching" can be variously defined here; it might involve leading discussions, participating in reflective conversations, evaluating student projects, etc. The important thing is that the students are receiving meaningful feedback from the community partner as well as from the academic instructor.
- There is substantive reflection on how the 3-credit course materials (readings, writing assignments, etc.) relate to the experience of the students working in and for the community. In other words, the instructor should demonstrate that there is integrative work requiring students to make explicit connections between their 3-credit course and their community work.
- The community project should be defined in advance of offering the LC so that the students can schedule accordingly.
- The time requirements need to parallel those of internships as defined in the catalogue. On-site training may be included in the time counted toward internship hours.