High-Impact Practice (HIP): Service Learning/Community-based Learning

Definition of Service Learning/Community-based Learning

Courses that (A) require student participation in service projects or community engagement (either on campus or through institutional partnerships with off- campus organizations) and (B) integrate the service experience into the course content. With service-learning/community-based learning, field-based "experiential learning" is an instructional strategy and a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life (AAC&U).

Characteristics of a HIP Service Learning/Community-based Learning

1. Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels
    - Students go beyond just volunteering; they are applying course content to address community problems and are deeply engaged.
    - It relies on community partnership(s) where students collaborate with local (internal or external to campus) organizations or groups.
2. Significant Investment of time and effort over an extended period
    - Students are engaged in the process of service learning/community-based learning, building skills and understanding over a significant period during a semester, starting with student preparation, where students are provided with context, training, and expectations.
3. Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters
    - Students have regular discussions with their faculty and peers about the service learning, connecting and aligning the service activities, practice, and understanding to course objectives, theory and content.
4. Experiences with diversity
    - Students engage with diverse community members and worldviews, fostering intercultural competence.

5. Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
    - Timely, constructive feedback from faculty and community partners helps students refine their service and understanding of community needs.
6. Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
    - Students should be provided with periodic and structured opportunities – ideally before, during, and after the service/community learning project – for reflection about their service/community-based learning to integrate their service learning with their academic learning.
7. Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
    - Students see the relevance of their academic learning through the real-world applications of course content to community issues.
8. Public demonstration of competence
    - Students are provided with opportunities to evaluate the academic and service outcomes of their experience and to present their work, solutions, and impact to the community, campus, or other professional settings.

Documented Impacts of Service Learning/Community-based Learning

- Enhanced academic understanding
- Increased civic engagement and social responsibility
- Improved interpersonal and leadership skills
- Increased career-related skills

Checklist to Service Learning/Community-based Learning HIP

- ❑ Clearly defined learning objectives
- ❑ Identified community partner(s) (internal or external to campus)
- ❑ Service activities aligned with course content
- ❑ Pre-service orientation for students
- ❑ Ongoing support and supervision
- ❑ Structured reflection activities (journals, discussions, presentations)
- ❑ Assessment tools for academic and service outcomes
- ❑ Feedback mechanisms from students and partners

Resources

- Defining High-Impact Practices at KSU
- Give pulse at KSU
- Student Engagement Through Research. KSU Campus Hub.

- Chittum, J. R., Enke, K. A. E., & Finley, A. P. (2022). The effects of community-based and civic engagement in higher education. American Association of Colleges and Universities.
- Community-Based Learning as a High Impact Practice (HIP). Nov 3, 2022.
- Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale by George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell, with Case Studies by Sally Reed. (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2013).
- High-Impact Practices. AAC&U website
- KSU – It's About Engagement: Service-Learning Taxonomy for Course Development and Student Learning.