

# **Principles of Ethical and Effective Service-Learning**

Haas Center for Public Service

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## Why Principles?

Community organizations have long provided rich learning opportunities for Stanford students engaged in public service. Stories abound of students' transformative experiences through community involvement. Many in the Stanford community have developed respectful relationships with community organizations that enhance student learning. Unfortunately, there have also been breaches of community trust and respect by students, faculty, and staff. In response, we at the Haas Center for Public Service are developing principles to raise campus awareness about our responsibility to communities and organizations involved with public service activities at Stanford.

## Background

In the 2000-2001 academic year, we consulted community participants, faculty, students, and staff regarding their experiences and perspectives on ethical and effective service-learning. Through this process many insights emerged about how course design can deepen both the ethical dimension and effectiveness of service-learning. This brochure provides a summary of beginning principles gleaned from discussion groups, surveys, interviews, and current practice.

## Other Resources on Ethical and Effective Service-Learning

Many institutions of higher education and organizations that support service-learning have participated in nation-wide efforts to develop principles and practice for service-learning and community partnerships that address the challenges of integrating learning goals with serving communities. We invite you to visit the following websites to view the results of some of these efforts:

- [http://www.servicelearning.org/library/online\\_documents/good\\_practice.html](http://www.servicelearning.org/library/online_documents/good_practice.html)
- <http://www.compact.org/csds/partnering.html>
- <http://www.futurehealth.ucsf.edu/ccph/principles.html>

## INTRODUCTION

We hope the following principles will serve Stanford faculty, students, and staff as a resource for creating and deepening community partnerships. These principles focus on service-learning courses with the hope that their use will help inform and inspire the continued development of ethical and effective principles and practice across the spectrum of public service at Stanford. Not meant to be definitive, these principles are a work in progress presented in order to raise issues and ethical questions to consider. The text of the principles represents paraphrasing of feedback from over 75 respondents and discussants, and the headings are themes that emerged from clustering responses.

### 1. RECIPROCITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- Develops collaborative and sustainable relationships with community partners and recognizes their role as co-educators of student participants.
- Involves potential community participants in the design of a service-learning course in order to provide both learning for the students and service of value to the recipient (individual, group, or organization).
- Provides ongoing opportunities for feedback from community partners and works with the same community partners over multiple iterations of the course as much as possible.

### 2. HUMILITY

- Encourages students to serve with an attitude of listening and learning from community participants as part of the process of getting things done in a service-learning situation.
- Offers diverse and ongoing opportunities for students to discuss, reflect upon, and evaluate their actions and roles in their community placements.
- Prepares students to view the administrative and clerical work that they may be asked to do at their service placements as a valuable learning opportunity.

### 3. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

- Integrates into the course work means by which students can develop respectful relationships across differences, including, but not limited to, racial, ethnic, cultural, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, educational experience, and language differences.
- Creates an atmosphere in the classroom that models respect for diversity.
- Engages students in discussion and training on issues of diversity.
- Encourages collaboration among diverse campus-community groups.
- Offers service opportunities that reflect the diversity of the larger community.

### 4. COMMITMENT

- Models and emphasizes to students the importance of keeping commitments made to community partners.
- Provides feedback mechanisms for accountability to community partners (e. g. a contact person at Stanford who community partners know they can contact, final evaluations for students with their internship supervisors).
- Clarifies the academic schedule and time frame of community placements and considers offering students the opportunity to work in their placements for more than one quarter.

### 5. ONGOING COMMUNICATION AND CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- Provides a structured experience that encourages safe, comfortable channels of communication and sets clear expectations among student, supervisor and faculty or Teaching Assistant.
- Arranges student service placements through a process of asking organizations about their needs and preferences for interns, and matching students accordingly.
- Provides a learning agreement at the beginning of the course, so that students and placement organizations are clear about their mutual goals and expectations.

## 6. PREPARATION

- Prepares students for community placements with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge they will need to serve ethically and effectively.
- Involves community partners in designing and providing preparation whenever possible.
- Provides students with current and historical information about their placement organizations and the communities the organizations work with before beginning their internships.

## 7. CONTEXT

- Assists students in connecting specific service-learning experiences with the larger contemporary and historical political, economic, and social context in which the service experiences are embedded.
- Involves knowledgeable community members and utilizes other available materials to present key issues specific to the communities and organizations in which students are placed.

## 8. PARTICIPATORY PEDAGOGY

- Engages all participants (students, faculty, community participants) as teachers and learners.
- Provides students with opportunities to share new knowledge obtained from their service experiences.
- Offers classroom structures that support the self-directed learning role that students often take during internships.

## 9. SAFETY

- Anticipates and takes precautionary steps to ensure the safety of all people involved in service-learning activities.
- Complies with special safety or liability requirements of community partners (e.g. finger printing, copy of driver's license).