



WEPPNER CENTER FOR  
SERVICE-LEARNING AND  
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Division of Student Affairs  
Florida Atlantic University

# *Academic* **SERVICE-LEARNING**

AT FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

## **Faculty Guide**



The Weppner Center for Service-Learning & Civic Responsibility supports the development and implementation of Academic Service-Learning experiences in academic courses and programs of study at FAU.

*Our goal is to enrich the learning experience for students through relevant and meaningful community service.*

## Academic Service-Learning programs consist of four main roles:



*This handbook is about understanding and developing critical partnerships with results that can be dramatic and transformational for your course, the Academic Service-Learner, and our community. Please review this handbook carefully as it is the first step in the process of having your course Academic Service-Learning (A S-L) designated.*

## What Is Academic Service-Learning?

- Academic Service-Learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
- Academic Service-Learning is more than a volunteer activity; it is designed to enrich the learning experience through hands-on activity by integrating community service with instruction. It requires students to apply what they learn in the classroom and to reflect on their experiences by thinking, discussing, and writing about them.
- Academic Service-Learning teaches students how to apply academic knowledge to real-life civic issues, promotes teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, develops life skills and makes learning more personally meaningful.

## What are the Benefits of Academic Service-Learning?

The benefits of Academic Service-Learning are mutual:

### For Faculty

- Incorporate diverse teaching styles
- Represent the college for best teaching practices
- Further engage students
- Partner with the community
- Incorporate diverse teaching styles
- Fulfill service requirement for tenure
- Obtain opportunities for research/publishing

### For Students

- Apply and understand concepts from class
- Build résumé
- Experience civic responsibility
- Prepare to lead lives of engaged, democratic citizenship
- Explore career options
- Learn about community agencies and their clients
- Gain awareness of social issues
- Develop life skills
- Broaden horizons

### For Community Partners

- Gain community development expertise
- Connect to University resources
- Acquire skilled volunteers
- Utilize invaluable people-power to fulfill community opportunities
- Inject fresh energy and creativity
- Strengthen advocacy efforts
- Enhance public awareness of community needs
- Build long-lasting relationships
- Identify potential employees

## Step-By-Step Course Planning Guidelines

### 1. Consider the type of project you want to incorporate.

Would you prefer your students to work together as a class, in groups, or individually? Will the project involve direct service with the agency's clients or indirect service which supports the agency? Will the service work take place on or off campus? Will students be actively involved in selecting (and being selected by) a placement agency or have you chosen an organization(s) with whom the students must work?

### 2. Consider what kinds of agencies with which to establish a community partnership.

Are there specific populations, issues, or neighborhoods to which you want your students to be exposed? Are there specific tasks you would like your students to perform? Consider these questions in relation to key themes and topics you will cover in class. You are welcome to consult with the WCSLCR to discuss agencies that may match your course objectives or draw on your own contacts in the community. For a current listing of partner agencies and community opportunities assessments, please see our [Community Opportunities Bank](#) on our website.

### 3. Decide what time commitment you will expect from students.

How many service hours will the student be required to fulfill? How will the time commitment work? Will students be asked to submit their hours on a regular basis or submit all of their hours once they have completed the total requirement? Note: The minimum number of hours required for an A S-L project is 10 hours/semester.

### 4. Decide whether the academic service learning will be required, optional or extra credit.

### 5. Decide on a grading procedure.

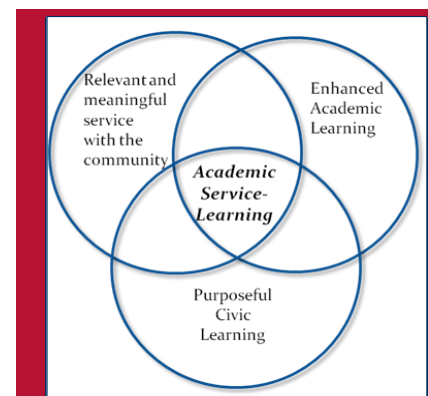
Whether academic service-learning is optional, extra credit, or required, the quality of a student's work and learning should carry some weight in a student's overall course performance. The exact percentage or point value is up to you. How many points or what percentage will the academic service-learning project be worth?

### 6. Review your syllabus and course materials.

Reflect on key points where you can integrate students' academic service-learning activities into class discussions and assignments.

### 7. Complete the Application for Academic Service-Learning Course Designation and course syllabus.

Please see page 5 for more information regarding this application.



**According to most of my students, their Academic Service-Learning class is their greatest learning experience at FAU, since it places them in the real world with real problems, issues and solutions... I also believe that Academic Service-Learning helps me help students give back to the community and produce beneficial change for all.**

**Professor Dennis S. Palkon, Ph. D., M.P.H., M.S.W.  
College of Business, Florida Atlantic University**



## Academic Service-Learning: Required Elements

In order for your course to be designated as an Academic Service-Learning (A S-L) course at Florida Atlantic University, the A S-L project within your syllabus must contain/demonstrate the following criteria:

1. **Academic Service-Learning Statement** - See next page
2. **Relevant and Meaningful Service in the Community** - The A S-L project should be applicable to the course and worthwhile in meeting community needs.
3. **Enhanced Academic Learning** - The A S-L project should complement what is learned in the classroom and provide an experience in a “real world” setting.
4. **Purposeful Civic Engagement** - The A S-L project should be designed to have students practice the learning strategies and/or content of the class that meets course learning objectives in a community setting.
5. **Critical Reflection** - The A S-L project should ask students to reflect on how the project links to (1) course objectives, (2) the impact of the students’ work in the community, and (3) the impact on the students’ personal and professional development.
6. **Hours Required** - FAU requires students spend a minimum of 10 hours on the A S-L project.
7. **Assessment** - Syllabus should state how A S-L project will be assessed.

### Academic Service-Learning Statement:

The following statement must be present in the syllabi for all classes that contains an Academic Service-Learning component:

#### ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING STATEMENT:

Due to the nature of the course content, this course is designated as an “academic service-learning” course. The assistance you provide to the agency/organization during your academic service-learning experience is a service to the community and will allow you to apply knowledge from the course to local, national, and/or global social issues. Throughout this course you will be participating in academic service-learning activities while demonstrating civic engagement at campus, local, national, and/or global community levels. You will also reflect on your academic service-learning experience and the impact on the community as well as your professional development.

To receive academic service-learning notation of hours on your transcript, your hours must be logged electronically through NobleHour, [www.noblehour.com](http://www.noblehour.com), while completing your academic service-learning project. Also, pre-assessment and post-assessment surveys are required to be taken by academic service-learning students. Please visit the Weppner Center for Service-Learning & Civic Responsibility website, [www.fau.edu/volunteer](http://www.fau.edu/volunteer), for instructions on how to log hours through NobleHour and the links for the surveys. Once your hours have been approved and both surveys have been completed, you will receive an academic service-learning notation on your transcript.

**As a result of teaching one STEM A S-L class, I plan to make academic service-learning a major component of every class that I teach. The level of student enthusiasm that the STEM A S-L generates makes it possible to set learning goals that would be almost impossible to achieve in an ordinary classroom setting. In addition, the community partners that have worked with my students on the STEM A S-L projects are eager to expand their involvement in the program, and their participation allows me to include course material that is beyond the scope of my own expertise.**

**Professor Dianne Owen, Ph.D.  
Charles E. Schmidt College of Science, FAU**

## Applying for Academic Service-Learning Course Designation

1. Submit the [Application for Academic Service-Learning Course Designation](#) and your syllabus to the WCSLCR based on the following schedule.

*For Fall inclusion: 2nd Monday in July*

*For Spring inclusion: 2nd Monday in October*

*For Summer inclusion: 2nd Monday in March*

Note: Submitting your course application does not obligate you to include academic service-learning in your course. After submitting your application, you may opt not to include academic service-learning. Also, you are not obliged to keep A S-L in your course every semester it is taught.

2. Wait for your syllabus to go through the review process.

Once submitted, the A S-L Review Committee will review your syllabus. After review, an approval notification or request for revisions will be sent.

## A Typical Academic Service-Learning Semester

### Before the semester

1. Review the step-by-step course planning guidelines on page 3 of this guide and submit the [Application for Academic Service-Learning Course Designation](#).
2. Join and become familiar with NobleHour, our paperless hour-tracking system. For more details about this program, please review the Faculty Guides on our [NobleHour Guides page](#).
3. If you select the community partner(s) for your class (as opposed to letting students select), collaborate with the agency to schedule any necessary class visits, orientations, and/or trainings and review your expectations of the students with the agency. Also, you may need to assist the agency in getting started with NobleHour.

### Beginning of the semester

1. Inform students about pre- and post-assessment requirements, the NobleHour hour tracking system, risk waivers, A S-L project assessment details, and time expectations.
2. Students view the "What is Academic Service-Learning?" PowerPoint and complete the Pre-Assessment Survey (see the [Academic Service-Learning: For Students](#) page of our website).
3. Once students identify or are assigned to an agency, collect Risk Waiver forms from students and turn in to the WCSLCR, UN 218, attn: Nori Carter.
4. Work with your students and the community partner(s) to develop a clear and specific description of the project if you haven't already.

### Throughout the semester

1. Check in with students frequently and ask them how their academic service-learning project is going.
2. Integrate students' academic service-learning activities/reflection into your class.
3. Credit students' A S-L hours through NobleHour
4. Troubleshoot as necessary.

### End of the semester

1. Remind students to log hours and submit for verification and crediting through NobleHour to have hours notated on their transcript and tracked for our class.
2. Credit students' hours through NobleHour.
3. Remind students to complete the post-assessment survey (link for survey can be found in the [Academic Service-Learning: For Students](#) portion of our website).



An A S-L student in the Explore LLC gives a presentation to local middle school students at a mini-career day.



## Opportunities and Tips

### How the Weppner Center for Service-Learning & Civic Responsibility (WCSLCR) can support you

The WCSLCR can...

- Consult with you one-on-one to assist in developing a constructive A S-L component for your class
- Aid in cultivating and maintaining partnerships with community agencies
- Help you draft project descriptions
- Visit your class to explain academic service-learning procedures to students
- Facilitate communication between students, faculty, and agencies
- Help you with evaluation and assessment
- Help you develop reflection tools for your class
- Make academic service-learning transcript notations at the end of the semester
- Troubleshoot and problem solve throughout the semester

### Examples of previous successful FAU A S-L Projects:

- A marketing class created a public relations tool for a local non-profit.
- A Spanish class provided foreign language tutoring and conversational partnerships.
- A freshman seminar planned, marketed, and hosted the Hunger Banquet, promoting awareness for a social issue on campus.
- Students in an art education class prepared lesson plans for students attending after-school programs at Pine Jog Environmental Education Center.
- An education course sent students into local high school classrooms to complete a teaching practicum and tutor students.
- Students in a transportation engineering course analyzed traffic congestion of evacuation routes during a simulated catastrophic event and formulated alternative design choices to meet engineering requirements for safety and reduce operational time.

### Remember you are working within an academic calendar

- Because service is integrated into the class structure, students must be able to complete their placement within the semester time frame (12-15 weeks, maximum).
- Although the Fall and Spring semesters are 16 weeks long, it takes a couple of weeks to get students assigned, oriented, and started.

### Planning A S-L Projects

- For direct service projects students should have some contact with the community the agency serves.
- For indirect service, capacity-building work may include publicity, research, technical assistance, or support for special events.
- Depending on the project, students may have the flexibility to work on campus, at home, or at the agency.
- The best results are achieved when the A S-L project is carefully planned in advance.



An A S-L student works in a classroom as part of a teaching practicum.

## Opportunities and Tips Continued

### Practical Tips for Academic Service-Learning Course Success

- Treat the academic service-learning as a course assignment.
- Give students multiple opportunities to reflect on their A S-L project verbally and in writing.
- Be very specific in communicating expectations to students.
- Treat agency needs as equal to course needs, and treat agency staff as co-educators.
- If you are new to A S-L, we recommend focusing on one service learning course per semester. Faculty members typically report that teaching service learning courses requires more time and effort than teaching conventional courses.

### Resources for Faculty

- [Generator School Network: National Service-Learning Clearinghouse](#)
- **Example Syllabi:**
  - [National Service-Learning Clearinghouse](#)
  - [Campus Compact](#)
- **Academic Service-Learning and the first year experience:**
  - [Northern Michigan University](#)
- **Other Resources:**
  - [Weppner Center for Service-Learning & Civic Responsibility](#)
  - [Florida Campus Compact](#)
  - [Corporation for National & Community Service](#)



A S-L nursing students participate in the 2011 Earth Day Competition.

## Contact Us

Website: [www.fau.edu/volunteer](http://www.fau.edu/volunteer)

**Boca Raton Campus**  
Nori Carter  
Director, Weppner Center for  
Service-Learning & Civic  
Responsibility  
Student Union, Bldg 31, Rm 218  
561-297-3607  
ncarte10@fau.edu

**Broward Campuses--Davie**  
Gary Santos Mendoza  
Coordinator, Campus Life  
Student Union, SD 219  
954.236.1264  
gsantosmendoza@fau.edu

**Jupiter Campus**  
Devin Herrera  
Assistant Director, Campus Life  
Student Resources, SR 151  
561.799.8724  
djherrera@fau.edu