Community Partners as Educational Collaborators

California State University

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Community Partners as Educational Collaborators

Logistics of Partnerships

a. What things support partnerships?

b. What things get in the way of partnerships?

Explore the challenges and opportunities raised by each of these questions.
In February 2004, Barbara Holland presented a workshop for CSU service-learning practitioners and community partners titled, “Understanding and Strengthening the Role of Community in Service-Learning Partnerships.” Holland designed the workshop to be easily replicated and modified by others. Elements from Holland’s workshop are included here for reference, and a modified version of her PowerPoint presentation can be found in Appendix A. Inspired and challenged by her ideas and suggestions, campus directors went on to produce their own unique workshops. Our goal with this publication is to keep the momentum going by providing examples and materials from several of these workshops for others to adapt for use in the CSU and elsewhere.

To simplify use and to facilitate comparison, we have tried to present these campus examples in parallel formats. In each case, you will find a brief narrative identifying the campus service-learning staff member who coordinated the workshop, as well as a number of key elements: details about the workshop presented, including where it was held and how much it cost; an interactive activity that he or she used; the recruitment strategy that he or she used; and a lesson or two he or she thought might be helpful. In addition, agendas are provided to help give you a specific sense of the workshop’s organization and timing.
Train-the-Trainers Learning Strategy

Today you will observe, learn, and practice elements of a workshop format that can be used to help campus and community partners develop enhanced skills essential to creating service-learning partnerships. The basic approach is to share what has been learned about the features of effective partnerships and what strategies help partners move toward success. This approach emphasizes the exploration of common and distinctive goals as a way of clarifying expectations, and a shared approach to planning, teaching, and assessing partnerships in a way that focuses on the mutually beneficial relationship more than any individual project or activity. In this way, we learn as partners that projects and students may come and go, but our interaction is sustained through our knowledge of each other's capacity and needs, and our commitment to exchanging expertise and knowledge in many different ways over time.

Basic Organization of Workshop Elements

- Learn key terms and core concepts
- Focus participants on importance of shared goal development as foundation of effective partnerships
- Learn and practice effective practices for strengthening and sustaining partnerships
  - Focus on partnership relationship more than individual activities
- Link service-learning objectives to partnership design; students as bridge
- Recognize and cope with the inhibitions/limitations/challenges of academic culture and suggest ways to overcome same
- Learn strategies for actively involving community in SL planning and teaching
- Learn and practice strategies for aligning SL activities with learning objectives
- Role of assessment in building and strengthening partnerships
- Resources for further information

Suggestions for Workshop Replication

- This is a workshop that is most successful when done over four hours with two short breaks or split over a meal in the middle.
- The setting should be round tables with space in the room or nearby for small groups to work together.
- The most effective workshops bring campus and community partners (and students if possible) together.
- The program intersperses short periods of lecture with intense small group work; the emphasis is on teaching a few concepts and then encouraging participants to practice the application of those concepts to their projects and partnerships. The interactive work activities should be given 20-30 minutes to work and then just 5-10 minutes to share in brainstorming mode. The idea isn't to have everyone hear all of everyone else's work as much as to practice the techniques that they can more fully develop later within their own partnership.
- The design of the program encourages participants to continue working on a partnership assessment plan after the workshop is concluded, thus fostering the continued use and application of partnership techniques and strategies.
- A good idea would be to reconvene participants several weeks after the workshop and encourage the sharing of goals, activities, and assessment ideas along with new strategies for partnership operation. An alternative would be to hold a conference call or to at least exchange documents online so as to share ideas.
- You might wish to assign one or two of the resource readings ahead of time to enhance preparation for the workshop.
- Involving both a campus and a community partner in facilitating the workshop would be ideal.

End-of-the-Day Reflection Question:

What were your own reactions to today's (albeit accelerated) workshop? When were you excited/eager, uncomfortable or very clear, wanted to ask more questions, felt skeptical? This reflection may help you anticipate how you might need to adjust the workshop elements, especially the time for each segment, for your own colleagues.
CSU FRESNO

Trisha Studt, the Community Partnerships Coordinator, explained that their event took place on campus; they served a light breakfast. Approximately eight faculty members and four community partners participated, and the format was very informal. The event started after introductions and a short exercise on what makes effective partnerships (see Activity 4 in Appendix A for the question used). Additionally, the four community partners were placed at different "stations" around the room and the faculty members spent approximately 15 to 20 minutes with each partner exploring the possibility of working together—discussing, for example, whether the curriculum fit the need at the agency, whether the partnership would work, and so forth.

Successful Interactive Activity

The "wagon wheel" approach worked very well at Fresno. The community partners and faculty were "forced" to talk to each person. It was great for participants to discover potential partnerships, but, even if a partnership was unlikely, it was still a chance to learn more about the other person.

Successful Recruitment Strategy

Fresno chose a topic (Hmong refugees) and focused recruitment on faculty members whom they thought were interested in that topic. It helped to keep it issue-focused and small because they were able to personalize the invitation for everyone. Also, no one found themselves unable to converse, as the opening topic had been provided. Some found other ways to partner, but the initial focus on Hmong refugees made the conversations easy from the beginning.

Lessons Learned

Trish recommends keeping the workshops small and focused. She would rather do three trainings like this one than a very large training where it doesn’t feel personal and some participants can get lost in the shuffle. They kept the "talking at" to a bare minimum and focused on encouraging dialogue between the guests.

Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:25 a.m.</td>
<td>Trish introduces the day and the participants. Question to ask: Tell us about someone whom you've admired and looked up to who has lived a life of service or made that a part of their life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:25-8:35 a.m.</td>
<td>Kathy, Community Partner, overview of the Hmong resettlement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:35-9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Don, Community Partner, talk about partnerships between community-based organizations (CBO) and faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:25 a.m.</td>
<td>Each CBO will spend five minutes talking about their organization's mission, programs, and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:25-9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Five-minute break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:35-10:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Wagon Wheel Discussion. Rotate partner stations every 15-20 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Feedback and next steps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY
Annie Bolick-Floss at Humboldt State University incorporated the concepts from Holland's workshop on collaborative education in a number of ways. The HSU Service-Learning office:

- Offered a breakout session within a larger civic engagement forum that encouraged HSU faculty and community partners to explore the meaning of co-education.
- Held three community partner forums at different locations using the world café model dialogue and explored co-education as a table topic.

Some, but not all, of the training offered by the HSU Service-Learning office brought together faculty and community partners. HSU hosted monthly SL Faculty Fellows meetings during which participants discussed the role of co-education and co-educators, how HSU faculty worked with their partners, and how they respected the strengths and abilities of those partners. Other forums, such as those on civic engagement and community partners, deliberately included both faculty and community partners so that everyone could be at the table during discussions.

HSU felt a commitment to a large geographic area and wanted to be out in those communities. For these meetings, they considered faculty who worked or perhaps lived in those areas. HSU wanted community members to see people they recognized and had worked with on research projects or in school settings. This strategy was extremely appreciated and useful. Of four major events, one was on campus and was attended by about 150 people who came from both Humboldt and Delmart Counties. The other three events were held off campus: 50 miles south of HSU, 40 miles east of HSU, and one in the Humboldt Bay region. Sites included a community services district, a community foundation office, and a California Conservation Corps facility.

HSU did not charge a registration fee. Through Learn and Serve they were able to underwrite food and receptions, and all the facilities were free. Costs therefore included only supplies, materials, staff time, and food. Estimated costs for one forum included $150 for food, as well as coordination time for faculty and staff. All participants received a $25 stipend thanks to a grant from the California Campus Compact.

Successful Interactive Activity
Meeting organizers found the world café activity (see www.theworldcafe.com for more information) particularly useful. In addition, they found a modified version was also useful: Participants broke into small groups to brainstorm about various issues. HSU also invited its risk manager to attend one of the forums. The risk manager and the participants found this to be a positive experience, as it allowed the risk manager to put names to faces, to hear directly from the partners themselves, and to hear about some of the issues that community partners face. Other nonfaculty were also invited to attend trainings.

Successful Recruitment Strategy
Annie felt that HSU was fortunate not to need an elaborate recruitment strategy. Although stipends were offered, she does not believe they were responsible for the good participation. Rather, the Humboldt community is very collaborative and recognizes the intellectual expertise, the availability of facilities, and the opportunities for programs to work with the campus and university folks. The nonprofit and public entities are "lean and mean" in terms of budgets, and HSU focused on meeting their needs and accessing campus resources. She felt that HSU faculty want to be involved. To help faculty find a partner for a particular course, Annie called the community agency to ask about the potential fit. She assured them that it was okay to decline and that doing so would not deter HSU from offering them other opportunities in the future. Annie felt that community partners often fear that declining a particular partnership might jeopardize their relationship with the university in the future, so she emphasized in her conversations that the partnership needs to make sense to the community agency based on its capacity, staff, and work.

Lessons Learned
First, HSU was surprised to discover that regional issues are very different. It heard very different things from individuals living in the southern part of Humboldt County in comparison to those in the eastern part of the county.
Second, HSU sees the importance of being ready for the diverse responses of participants. HSU discovered that its understanding of “community education” was very different from its partners’ ideas. It is important to structure meetings and forums so that participants can have time to discuss terminology and come to an understanding together of what is being discussed. It is important to have an orientation with community partners and faculty (prior to placing students at the site) to talk about teamwork and building collaborative work. Many community partners said it was not their responsibility to educate students. It was the first time for many partners, some of whom came to the table thinking, “Do you mean like boys and girls co-education?” HSU realized that it also comes to these forums with major assumptions about what that term means. The world café model therefore offers a wonderful way to say, “No, we are really talking about you being experts in the field and recognizing your strengths and what you have to offer our students.”

Also surprising was the reaction from community partners when they heard what is being expected of them as co-educators. Many said, “Whoa, it’s not our role to educate the students.” Therefore, the forums have allowed them to recognize their strengths and honor their abilities. They’ve been able to see how they are educating HSU students.

Agenda: Community Partner Forum
Welcome and Introductions
Statement of Meeting Purpose
World Café Dialogue Session Topics
  Co-education
  Building and Sustaining Partnerships
  Logistics of Partnerships
Break
Group Call Back
Small Group Brainstorm: Where Do We Go from Here?
Evaluation

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CAL POLY POMONA

Hollie Lund, Director of Service Learning at Cal Poly Pomona, explained that the location of the workshop was an important strategic decision. The entire three-day workshop was held at the Cal Poly Pomona Downtown Center (located in downtown Pomona) in order to (a) expose faculty to downtown Pomona and emphasize the importance of getting off campus when working with the community and (b) make the workshop more accessible to community partners. They also used locally owned restaurants for all the food and refreshments in an effort to support the local economy.

The co-educator session was integrated into their three-day Summer Service-Learning Course Development Workshop and was designed to bring faculty and community partners together during the early stages of course development. This was accomplished by asking faculty to invite their community partners to attend the second day of the workshop from 12-4 p.m. In some cases, faculty members had a general idea for a course but no specific partners, so the service-learning group worked on some preliminary faculty-partner matching. During that day, partners and faculty members talked about potential partnerships in Pomona. Faculty often overlook the city of Pomona, largely because of misconceptions about what is/is not there; therefore, one of the goals of the workshop was to improve faculty members’ understandings about the city. They also spent time brainstorming goals, objectives, outcomes, and activities for their specific projects (faculty later used this information to build their syllabi and course assignments), and faculty-partner teams visited the community partners’ sites and conducted site evaluations. A handout on effective faculty-community partnerships is available in Appendix B.

The event cost just under $1,000. In addition, $250 mini-grants were offered to each of the faculty for use in carrying out their service-learning activities (by purchasing supplies, etc.). There was no registration fee.

Successful Interactive Activity

From 12-2 p.m. (see agenda), faculty and community partners worked through a guided activity on defining goals, objectives, outcomes, and activities for the course. This helped faculty and partners build a sense of mutual understanding between themselves and their organizations. It also helped them think about the connection between the academic and service components of the course, steps that are too often skipped. In addition, it provided an opportunity to begin clarifying faculty, student, and partner roles and to identifying and resolving logistical issues. More time could have been devoted to the latter, especially since the discussion started over lunch.

Successful Recruitment Strategy

Free food! Also, timing was very important: They held the workshop in mid- to late summer, after faculty had “recovered” from spring quarter and before they started feeling overwhelmed with thinking about fall quarter. It also still allowed more than one month for faculty with fall service-learning courses to work out the logistics of the service experience.

Lessons Learned

Allow opportunities for spontaneous and unstructured discussion! One of the most beneficial experiences during the workshop involved going around the room and having the community partners and faculty across different disciplines share with each other their specific interests, needs, and so forth. By the end of this process, at least a dozen new opportunities had been identified between faculty and community partners that the office hadn’t even thought of matching up. Faculty had identified projects that their colleagues could pursue, and a few community partners left with multiple projects. At least three of these new opportunities have already been carried out through service-learning courses. Even more time devoted to this kind of brainstorming would have been great.

The more one-on-one interaction between the faculty and community partner, the better. Guided exercises for these interactions are critical, especially if the faculty and/or partners are inexperienced. This was definitely a good experience—they’ll be offering the same workshop again this summer.
Agenda

DAY ONE—OVERVIEW OF SERVICE LEARNING

12:00-12:30 p.m. Check-In and Lunch
12:30-2:00 p.m. Introduction to Service-Learning/Project Overviews/Introductions
Service-Learning Basics & Models w/ Role of Reflection and Assessment
Center for Community Service-Learning Overview
2:00-2:15 p.m. Break
2:15-4:00 p.m. Learning Outcomes & Benefits
Dos and Don’ts of Service-Learning Construction

DAY TWO—PARTNERSHIPS

8:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00-10:30 a.m. Creating and Sustaining Community Partnerships by Dr. José Calderón
10:30-10:45 a.m. Break
10:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Overview of Pomona Existing and Potential Partnerships with Pomona

[Community partners join the conference at this point.]

12:00-2:00 p.m. Lunch with Community Partners
Defining Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, and Activities with Partners
2:00-2:30 p.m. Travel to Community Partner Site Visits
2:30-4:00 p.m. Community Partner Site Visits and Site Evaluations

DAY THREE—COURSE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

8:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00-9:30 a.m. Risk Management by Sharon Reiter
9:30-10:45 a.m. Syllabi Construction Assignments Reflection
10:45-11:00 a.m. Break
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Interaction with Faculty Service-Learning Mentors
12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch with Faculty Service-Learning Mentors and President Ortiz
1:30-2:30 p.m. Create Syllabus on Computer at DTC
2:30-3:30 p.m. Peer Review of Syllabi
3:30-4:00 p.m. Identifying Support Mechanisms for Service-Learning Success

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CSU MONTEREY BAY

Luis Sierra, who at the time was Coordinator of Community Partnerships at the Service Learning Institute of CSU Monterey Bay chose to integrate the training of faculty and community partners. Two days of meetings focused on developing syllabi with the active participation of community partners. The activities were structured to develop a shared understanding of social justice, service learning, and civic engagement. There were many small-group discussions mixed in with whole group role-playing games. This was held on campus, and, since it was two full working days, community partners were paid to attend. No registration fee was charged.

Successful Interactive Activity

"The Outside Expert" exercise (see Appendix C) highlighted the limitations of academic understanding of community issues and generated great discussion on the role of community partners as instructors.

Successful Recruitment Strategy

Faculty were encouraged by the thought that their syllabi would be completed on time, and community partners seemed to be drawn simply by knowing they were selected by a faculty member who wanted to work with them. There were very few refusals. The goal was to develop syllabi with community. There needed to be a clearer example of what such a syllabus looks like compared to a traditional “from the mind of the instructor” syllabus. However, Luis and others noticed that the most exciting outcomes came from new faculty with little or no experience in teaching service-learning courses.

Agenda

DAY ONE

8:30-9:00 a.m. Coffee and Sign-In
9:00-9:30 a.m. Welcome Activity: What is Service? Social Justice? Civic Engagement?
9:30-10:30 a.m. Power Line-Up
10:30-10:45 a.m. BREAK
10:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Paper Chain
12:00-1:00 p.m. LUNCH
1:00-2:00 p.m. Curriculum Framework: Learning for Action for Social Change
2:00-3:30 p.m. Curriculum Teams Work Time
3:45-4:30 p.m. Curriculum Teams Gallery Walk and Report Out
4:30-5:00 p.m. Reflection and Closure

DAY TWO

8:30-9:00 a.m. Coffee and Reconnection
9:00-10:30 a.m. Community Partners as Co-Teachers
10:30-10:45 a.m. BREAK
10:45-11:30 a.m. Reflection Activities for Social Justice and Civic Engagement
11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Curriculum Development Task
12:00-12:30 p.m. LUNCH
12:30-3:00 p.m. Curriculum Teams Work Time
3:15-4:30 p.m. Sharing Curricula
4:30-5:00 p.m. Reflection and Closure

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The following is an excerpt of Barbara Holland's PowerPoint presentation given at the 2004 CSU Colloquium. Dr. Holland presented a series of slides during her discussion and interspersed these with a number of activities. We encourage you to use these slides and activities in any way that you find useful. You may want to use the questions as a vehicle for developing and deepening partnerships between universities (and, in some cases, faculty members) and community partners. For example, you might give each stakeholder a few minutes to reflect on the question and ask them to write about their responses; you could then facilitate a discussion based upon these responses. You may mix up the structure and ask for people to share in pairs, trios, and so forth.

Understanding and Strengthening the Community Role in Service-Learning Partnerships

Presented at the 2004 CSU Colloquium on Community Service Learning

Barbara A. Holland, Ph.D.
Director, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
Senior Scholar, Indiana University-Purdue University
Indianapolis

Why Community-University Partnerships?
Partnerships:

• Enhance quality of life in the region
• Increase relevance of programs & services
• Add public purposes to research agendas
• Attract new resources for campus & community
• Link campus and community in common purpose

Common Partnership Themes

• Education through the lifespan (technology, literacy, English language, etc.)
• School improvement
• Youth development
• Community planning and capacity
• Workforce quality
• Economic development
• Health
• Livability (environment, safety, culture, conflict resolution, etc.)

The Role of Higher Education in Society

• Universities are all resources for:
  - Economic benefit
  - Innovation and creativity through research
  - Social opportunity through student learning
• The Engaged University also addresses:
  - Community development
  - Social concerns and opportunities
  - Development of future citizens
  - Community capacity and quality of life
• UNIVERSITIES ARE COMMUNITY ASSETS

Activity 1
Community:
• What are the University's goals for partnering with you? What do they really want?
University:
• What are the Community's goals for partnering with you? What do they really want?

Activity 2
Community:
• What do you believe the University thinks you want from them? How do they see your interests/goals?
University:
• What do you believe the Community thinks you want from them? How do they see your interests/goals?

Activity 3
• What is your ONE greatest fear/concern regarding the future of your community-university partnership?
• What ONE thing do you most wish your partner organization would do differently?
Why do Academics Want to Partner with Community?
• Enhance student learning
• Increase local student enrollment
• Contribute to quality of life in the region
• Increase relevance of programs & services
• Add public purposes to research agendas
• Attract new resources for campus & community
• Link campus and community in common purpose
• Build public understanding and support

Why do Communities Partner with Universities?
• Motivate students to link education and community
• Tap into academic expertise; university as resource for progress
• Promote economic stability/growth
• Improve schools and youth outcomes
• Gain new perspectives on program services
• Build a responsive workforce
• Create new community networks

Civic Engagement
Civic engagement refers to the many ways an academic institution demonstrates through mutually beneficial partnerships the alignment between the teaching and research agenda of the university and the self-identified interests of the communities of its region. Service learning is one example of a civic engagement strategy.

Engaged Campus Characteristics
• Articulates engagement in mission and strategy
• Involves community in continuous, purposeful, and authentic ways
• Links learning to engagement
• Links engagement to every aspect of campus organization; accountability to community; listens!
• Develops and sustains necessary infrastructure for partnerships
• Demonstrates leadership at all levels of organization
• Supports interdisciplinary work; reflects community priorities
• Makes engagement visible internally and externally
• Assesses engagement within the context of faculty, students, and community

The Engaged Community Partner
• Articulates their specific goals for collaboration
• Values student/faculty involvement in the work of the organization
• Understands university’s goals and capacity
• Prepares staff and clients for interactions with campus
• Provides necessary supervision/support for students
• Communicates limitations/expectations clearly
• Participates in planning of activities
• Provides critique and participates in assessment activities

Characteristics of Effective Partnerships
• Joint exploration of goals and interests
• Creation of a mutually rewarding agenda
• Emphasis on positive consequences for each partner
• Identification of opportunities for early successes
• Focus on knowledge exchange, shared learning, and capacity-building
• Attention to communication, cultivation of trust
• Commitment to continuous assessment of the partnership itself, as well as outcomes
Sustaining Partnerships

- Invest the time to build understanding
- Create formal partnership structures
- Articulate substantive roles for all partners
- Meet regularly and often
- Involve/employ citizens in projects from the start
- Collaborate in identifying funding
- Create a timeline; short and long goals
- Take time to assess and reflect together
- Celebrate
- Focus on LEARNING

Activity 4

- Thinking about the “Characteristics of Effective Partnerships” as they apply to your own partnership experiences, on what factors do you believe the partnership was strong or weak?
- List 3-5 strategies you might use to more fully realize the characteristics of effective partnerships.

Learning is the Connection

- Learning:
  - About each other’s capacity
  - About each other’s goals
  - To develop students through SL
  - To exchange expertise
  - To share control and direction
  - Through assessment and documentation
  - To experiment; to fail; to try again—To Trust!

Service Learning and Students

- Increases retention
- Makes learning relevant
- Influences career and major selection
- Develops social responsibility and leadership
- Personalizes educational experiences
- Encourages students to be participants in community
- Promotes exploration of values
- Demonstrates the link between work and service

University/Community Partnerships
Service Learning and Faculty
• Promotes innovation and creativity in teaching approaches
• Renews love of teaching
• Suggests new lines of research
• Links personal values with profession
• Links knowledge to action
• Leads to multidisciplinary activities

Service Learning and Community
• Develop role as co-teachers
• Influence student goals & attitudes
• Gain capacity to serve clientele
• Participate in research/assessment
• Gain new perspectives on services
• Build new community networks
• Gather evidence for policy and fund support
• Potential for future collaborations

Activity 5
• Thinking of your service-learning course, discuss the learning goals for students as expressed by faculty and by community partners.
• Community: What do you want students to learn about your Mission? Clients? Programs? Their own values, careers, etc.
• University: What course goals are you connecting to the service-learning experience?

Activity 6
• Identify 1-2 service-learning activity strategies that would serve both course and community learning objectives.

Elements of Course Design
FOR PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSION:
• What are the expected learning outcomes?
• What are community expectations?
• How does SL help us reach those outcomes/goals?
• What behavior/action will be evidence of mastery of content by students?
• How will we measure impact on community and students? (positive/negative; intended or not)
• How will the relationship be sustained?

Exemplary Service-Learning Syllabi
• State the goal(s) for including service and specific learning objectives related to course content
• Describe how and what will be evaluated
• Describe the service placement
• Specify skills, roles and responsibilities of students
• Describe the community’s goals and roles; provide contact information
• Specify how students will demonstrate learning
• Describe reflection strategies and purposes

Partners as Co-teachers
• Discuss learning objectives for the course
• Link course objectives to partner organization objectives
• Identify essential skills/attributes needed
• Design learning activities, schedules
• Plan/co-lead orientation
• Supervision on-site; feedback; reflection
• Evaluation of student from both perspectives
Challenges and Needs

- Dependency on early leaders; need to build critical mass and broad involvement in both campus and community
- Redesign academic work to include community expertise and participation
- Dependency on external funding; need to invest institutional assets; seek joint funding
- Lack of a common language across partners
- Better tools for assessing the quality of this work, its impacts, its effectiveness
- Time!! Patience! Time! Did I mention Time?

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Guidelines for an Effective Partnership

Partnerships between faculty and community organizations are formal, long-term relationships founded on the clear articulation of needs, capacities, responsibilities, and expectations. Regular communication, evaluation, and equal say in the design and implementation of projects are its defining features. Partnerships entail making a commitment to the agency, relinquishing control over aspects of the program, and accepting new responsibilities. The following is a list of guiding principles for creating and sustaining a mutually beneficial partnership:

• Partners agree on the mission, values, goals, and measurable outcomes for the partnership.

• The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.

• The partnership builds on identified strengths and assets, but also addresses areas that need improvement.

• The partnership balances power among partners and assures that resources among partners be shared.

• There is clear, open, regular, and accessible communication between partners. Listening to each need, developing a common language, and validating/clarifying the meaning of terms are ongoing priorities.

• Roles, responsibilities, and procedures for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners.

• All stakeholders in the partnership provide regular feedback, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.

• Partners share the credit for the partnership’s accomplishments.

• Partnerships take time to develop and evolve.

A sustainable partnership requires working on common interests while maintaining a quality service-learning experience for everyone.


Benefits and Risks in Partnership Building

Creating a partnership is not an easy task. Both the community organization and the faculty member experience remarkable benefits from the relationship, but also may also face risks in doing so due to lack of planning. On the next page is a listing of both parties and how partnership building can be of benefit or of cost.
## Benefits

### Community Partner
- Further advancement of community organization's mission
- New perspectives and insights sparked by interaction with students, faculty members, and other campus partners
- Access to knowledge and research on campus and from campus partners
- Expanded resource base
- Grant opportunities
- Credibility for their own efforts among the other benefits of affiliating with an institution of higher education
- Exposure to the possibility of higher education

### Faculty
- Enhances student learning
- Increases relevance of academic content
- Research opportunities that integrate their academic expertise and their desire for community empowerment
- Increases faculty's awareness and involvement in the community
- Grant opportunities for community revitalization

## Risks

### Community Partner
- The time it takes to create work, supervise students, or participate in research
- The opportunity cost of not doing funded or billable work using the same staff resources
- Time lost that could be spent working with other constituencies (a board, donors, or other partners)
- The "irritation factor" when organizational staff members are not treated as experts and peers by campus partners and students, and when parity is not demonstrated in the way things are planned and decisions are made

### Faculty
- The great amount of additional time it takes to coordinate a service-learning course
- The lack of appropriate funding to finance service-learning activities
- Utilization of time and service that may not be valued in one's academic department
- Relinquishing some course control

## How can these risks be mitigated?

Truly reciprocal service-learning experiences grow from the collaborative planning efforts of community partners, faculty and students. Highly effective partnerships are designed to meet the academic needs of the students while also addressing a community issue as defined by the partner agencies.

As in all partnerships, each entity is responsible for its share of the work and for its commitment to contributing to the overall relationship.

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The role of the community partner is extremely vital in the creation and success of service-learning endeavors. Beyond functioning as the setting of experiential learning, community organizations, comprised of staff and residents, share their expertise and knowledge with the student service-learners and the faculty partner. Below are things one can do for a successful service-learning experience:

Be Mindful that Service-Learners and Volunteers are not the Same
Even though they are both students, community representatives should remember that service-learning students want to collaborate in agency initiatives while they use the experience as the basis for understanding their college course. Service-learners are receiving academic credit for learning through their service efforts. Volunteers are choosing to serve for a variety of reasons, including professional development, personal growth, or altruism. Regardless of their classification, all students need encouragement, guidance and appreciation from agency staff. Please help them to think about what the experience means to them within the context of the organization, its challenges, and its role in addressing community issues.

Plan Ahead
Work in conjunction with your faculty member to outline the service-learning experience. Planning will assist both of you in choosing what activities best suit the needs of the course and the community. You will also be more prepared when the students start their “service” aspect.

Be Realistic
Be realistic with time commitment and expectations. Think in terms of 10-week quarters and the academic year. Check in with students regularly about their schedules and plans for holiday breaks, examination crunch times, etc. Understand that a faculty member is also pressed for time and must cover certain curriculum requirements within the short timeframe.

Be Involved
Throughout the experience, community partners should help students interpret the experience and the relationship between what they are doing and the work of the organization. Community partners should view themselves as co-educators and a vital part of the students’ education.

' Adapted from California State Northridge's Community Partner Handbook.
Faculty serve the instrumental role of connecting the academic content with the service. To productively accomplish this, faculty can follow the tips listed below to assist in partnership development.

**Listen**

The best thing a faculty member can do when initiating a partnership with a community organization is to listen. Create an equitable relationship from the start. Learn about the community organization and ask questions.

**Communicate**

It is of extreme importance that faculty members remain in constant communication with their community partner before, during, and after the service-learning experience. Decide together what the best way to do this is. Constant interaction throughout the experience will enable a community partner to share what is going right and what is going wrong with the project. Communication is also key with students as they can share how the experience is going as well.

**Plan, Plan and Plan**

Give yourself some time to plan with your community partner. Don't organize a service-learning course a week before the quarter you plan to teach it begins. Work in conjunction with your community partner on how students will be oriented, how course work will relate to the service experience, and how students will be afforded the opportunity to reflect. The more time you give yourself to plan with your partner, the better your service-learning experience will be. Students will also appreciate it when they understand more directly what they are doing.

**Be Flexible**

Understand that service-learning experiences will not always go as planned. With a multitude of variables at play, remain flexible. Issues may arise in the community, and changes will need to be made along the way.

**Utilize the Expertise of Your Community Partner**

Recognize that your community partner is investing a lot of time and energy in working with your students. Your community partner is bestowing many talents and skills upon your students and supporting their personal and professional development. Invite your community partner to give a guest lecture. Contact them to attend final class presentations. Ask them to assist in the evaluation your students.
What does an effective partnership look like? How will you know when you have reached that point? Assess, assess, assess. Set time aside to evaluate your partnership. Discuss the impact of the partnership on all participating organizations. The subsequent outcomes are indicators that your partnership is indeed a fruitful one.

Involvement in Each Other's Activities
Do all entities feel comfortable in each other’s settings? Is there evidence of personal investment in the activities of the partnering organizations?

Duration of Partnership
Has the partnership thrived over time? Do all parties wish to continue the partnership if feasible?

Evidence of Shared Decision-Making
Do all parties feel as if they were an integral part of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the service-learning experience?

Adaptability to Change
As changes to the plans arise, are parties adaptable?

Evidence of Open Lines of Communication
Are partnering organizations in constant communication? Does everyone feel comfortable to provide feedback?

Impact
What is the impact of the partnership on the participating organizations? What outcomes can be measured to illustrate such impact?

If the answers are positive for all these questions—Congratulations! You have achieved a mutually beneficial partnership that is contributing to the quality of life. Don't stop there! A partnership is a continual process. The commitment of both parties will ensure its success and longevity. The Center for Community Service-Learning staff seeks to support the development of your partnership. Feel free to contact us at (909) 869-4269 with any step of the partnership initiating, building, or evaluation phases. We applaud you in the efforts you have put forth already to engage our communities, our campus, and our students.

1 Holland, B. Understanding and Strengthening the Community Role in Service-Learning Partnerships. Presentation at CSU Colloquium in February 2004.
CSU Monterey Bay Winter Institute on Service Learning and Civic Engagement
January 13 & 14, 2005
CSUMB University Center Ballroom

Winter Institute Goals
- To understand CSUMB's social justice-oriented approach to civic engagement in service learning.
- To develop specific social justice-oriented civic engagement learning outcomes, relevant learning strategies, and approaches to assessment.
- To develop specific roles for community partners as co-educators (both in the class and at the site) in social justice-oriented civic engagement.
- To learn about pedagogical approaches and resources to more effectively teach about social justice issues.
- To identify a process to document student learning/curricular transformation related to social justice-oriented civic engagement.

Outside Expert Exercise

GOAL:
- To experience what it's like to “gather information” and watch one’s assumptions and stereotypes run wild filling in the blanks...

SET-UP:
We need volunteers to be “experts.”
- Pick 3 men and 3 women

Offer guidance to “experts:”
- Try to find out the issues that the community is confronting
- You can only ask yes/no questions

Offer guidance to the community:
- The “experts” will be coming
- There are two rules of communication:
  1. Women can’t talk to outside men; men can’t talk to outside women.
  2. If someone is smiling, the answer is yes. If they are not smiling, the answer is no.
- Arrange yourself as an interesting “community in its day-to-day action.”

Activity:
- Ask experts to come in and do their thing.
- Then, ask experts to leave, and develop a “brief report of their findings.”
  1. What is the problem that the community is confronting?
  2. What was it like interacting with this community?
- Then, inform the “experts” of the rules of communication for this community.

PROCESSING:
- How did it feel to try and find out the problems?
- What assumptions and stereotypes were apparent?
- What were the “deficits” that emerged?
- What better ways are there to get information?

TAKE-AWAY:
What will you do (and not do) when you go to the community?
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3. Author(s): ___California State University, Office of the Community Service Learning at the Chancellor's Office

4. Author's institutional affiliation:

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8. Date of publication: ___February 2006

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