NCA Special Emphasis

Community Engagement Definition

Indiana State University has defined community engagement as: the development of collaborative partnerships between education, business, social services, and government that contribute to the academic mission of the University and directly benefit the community. Community engagement at Indiana State University includes activities in the teaching, research, and service endeavors of faculty, students, and staff. Examples of community engagement activities include:

- Technical assistance and applied research to help increase understanding of a local or regional problem or test solutions for that problem.
- Lectures, seminars, and other public forum that provide a neutral place to explore community issues.
- Extension of learning beyond the University walls and into the community.
- Enriching the cultural life of the community.
- Service, including internships and service-learning, that directly benefits the public.
- Economic development initiatives, including technology transfer and support for small businesses.
- Involvement of community members in planning and decision making activities of the University.

Experiential Learning Definition

Experiential learning, at its core is operationalized by engaging students in learning through sequential exposure to challenging, compelling, and enriching activities conducted in appropriate settings. It integrates development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and fosters application of methods of critical inquiry. It engages students in personal reflection in order to organize, interpret, and bring meaning and coherence to their learning experience.

Service Learning Definition

Service-learning is still evolving as a distinct area of scholarship and, as a result, there is not a common set of terminology used by educators. The core principles of a service-learning experience are that service-learning should:

- Engage students in meeting the unmet needs of communities. Effective service-learning is built on a partnership between the University and a community organization. Faculty and students work in conjunction with this University partner to identify the issue that will be addressed by service-learning students.
- Enhance students’ academic learning; their sense of social responsibility, and their civic skills.

The following definitions are cited frequently in service-learning literature:

Service-learning is a process through which students are involved in community work that contributes significantly:
- To positive change in individuals, organizations, neighborhoods, and/or larger systems in a community; and
- To students’ academic understanding, civic development, personal or career growth, and/or understanding of larger social issues.

This process always includes an intentional and structured educational/developmental component for students, and may be employed in curricular or co-curricular settings.

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Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding or course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher
Michigan Journal of Community-Service Learning, 1995

Internship and Related Definitions

Clinical Experience: Supervised course work within which the student has the opportunity to engage in clinical activities similar to those performed by a departmentally approved professional. Departmental policies and accreditation criteria often define the experience. Site supervisors are often held to specific credentials as a component of such.

Co-op: Attributes of cooperative education include:
• Being an integral part of the Academic Program and with policies and practices appropriate to achievement of program educational goals;
• Having a clear and publicly stated, formalized plan for the alternation, full or half-time, of campus based classroom study with multiple periods of work experiences;
• Academic programs have understandings with employers on the goals for cooperative education. (Adapted from the Accreditation Council for Cooperative Education.)

Field work: Activities performed outside the classroom, library, studio, or laboratory for University credit and under the supervision of an instructor.
Internship: Faculty sponsored educational experience, most often for University credit, in which a student works in a professional setting relative to academic studies, under the supervision of at least one practicing professional.

Non-credit Internship: An internship that is elected by the student, for which the student does not receive academic credit. The internship may be a repeated experience, or one that does not meet academic criteria even though it is relevant to the student’s major. Non-credit internships may be sponsored by the academic department, the Career Center, or any other University supported area and should also be supervised by at least one practicing professional.

Practicum: An academic course that combines classroom and field activities under the supervision of an instructor.

The following definitions from Campus Compact also may be helpful:

Action research - 'In its simplest form: action research is a way of generating research about a social system while simultaneously attempting to change that system. While conventional social science aims at producing knowledge about social systems (some of which may eventually prove useful to those wishing to effect change), action research seeks both to understand and to alter the problems generated by social systems.' Kurt Lewin, the social researcher who coined the phrase, explains: 'one of the best ways to understand the world is to try to change it.'


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Civic responsibility - The commitment of a citizen to his or her community. Service-learning and community engagement are often cited as developing students' civic responsibility.

Civil society - Civil society refers to those groups, organizations, and associations that are neither private (businesses) nor public (government); often called the nonprofit, independent, or voluntary sector.

Community - Community can be used in a number of ways to apply to almost any group of individuals. It is used here specifically to describe a geographic group whose members engage in some face-to-face interaction. Such communities exist all around us in our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, our campuses, etc. The term community can also be used in a more meaningful sense to emphasize the common bonds and beliefs that hold people together.

Community development - In this book, the terms community building, community development, and economic development are generally used to express a similar idea: that of community members working together to achieve long-term benefits for the community and an overall stronger sense of community. Effective development has four important characteristics:

1. It is predicated upon the importance of social and economic institutions in the lives of community members.
2. It is planned and achieved with representation, input, and guidance from a cross-section of community members.
3. It builds efficient, self-sustaining, locally controlled initiatives to address social and economic issues in the community.
4. It promotes the economic self-reliance of community members and of the community as a whole.

Community service - Community service refers to action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole. Benjamin Barber writes that community service is an essential component of democratic citizenship. Service to the neighborhood and to the nation are not the gift of altruists but a duty of free men and women whose freedom is itself wholly dependent on the assumption of political responsibilities.

Professional service - Professional service, along with teaching and research, is generally considered one of the three elements of faculty scholarship. In its broadest sense, professional service has been defined as "work based on [a] faculty member's professional expertise that contributes to the mission of the institution." Nancy L. Thomas further clarifies the idea by distinguishing five ways in which service is commonly understood in colleges and universities: service to the department or institution; service to students; service to a profession; service to a local community organization; public service. It is the last of these five that most closely approximates professional service as a form of community engagement.

Ernest Lynton points out that this aspect of professional service been expanded upon by several institutions, arriving at three general criteria for professional service:

1. It contributes to the public welfare or the common good.
2. It calls upon faculty members' academic and/or professional expertise.
3. It directly addresses or responds to real-world problems, issues, interests, or concerns.

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**Public good** - The public or common good is that set of goals which promotes the overall well-being of a citizenry. Public good is conceived in two different ways by the liberal and republican traditions of political philosophy. In the liberal tradition, the public good is the sum of private goods. That is, people are happier when each individual person is able to do what makes that person happy. In this book, we emphasize the notion of the public good as it is conceived in the republican tradition. In this view, the public good transcends individual goods. Public well-being conceived this way helps citizens to achieve private well-being, but is also something valuable in and of itself. The public good amounts to those goals which individuals in a community have in common and achieve by sharing ideas and working together.


**Reflection** - Reflection describes the process of deriving meaning and knowledge from experience. Virtually all thought entails some level of reflection. Effective reflection engages both teachers and students in a thoughtful and thought-provoking process that consciously connects learning with experience. Reflection as it is discussed in this book turns primarily to the theories of John Dewey and David Kolb. Dewey describes reflection in terms of the "scientific method" approach to education, in which students undergo five steps as they process experience:

1. Reflection begins with a particular problem, situation, or experience.
2. The problem is identified and articulated.
3. A hypothesis is formed for a solution.
4. The hypothesis is tested and thereby confirmed or rejected.
5. The resulting knowledge is used as background for future inquiry.

**Social capital** - By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital—tools and training that enhance individual productivity—'social capital' refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital. Working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital.


**Social change**

Social change describes efforts to address the root causes of problems that affect society. As a goal of service-learning, this may be contrasted with "palliative service" that provides help without addressing the root causes of social problems. Marie Troppe and Mark Langseth distinguish six sets of activities that, when taken together, help to foster social change.

1. Charitable volunteerism: activities that address immediate needs, but not the conditions from which these needs emerge.
2. Community/economic development: activities that identify and increase the human and/or economic assets of a neighborhood or community.
3. Formal political activities: activities that mobilize influence on public policy through formal political channels, such as campaign work, voting, or voter registration.
4. Confrontational strategies: activities that use confrontation, advocacy, or public disobedience to raise awareness of or change policy on an issue.
5. Grass-roots political activity or public policy work: activities that identify allies, build common ground, and implement a strategy for changing public policy.

6. Community building: activities that build trusting relationships among individuals and groups around issues of common concern.


Volunteerism - The act of engaging in service that addresses immediate social needs, but does not necessarily address the conditions from which those needs emerge. This may be contrasted with service that actively seeks to foster social change and community cohesion.