The Institute for Learning and Teaching

Service-Learning Task Force

The Service and Community-Based Learning Task Force was charged with devising a comprehensive plan that identifies a clear pathway for students to participate in and progress through a range of community-based service and experiential learning opportunities designed to enhance their academic learning, deepen their civic skills, and/or extend their professional experience and preparation. These opportunities might range from one-time service activities to more academically-integrated learning communities, capstone projects, and/or field experiences.

As a leading 21st Century land grant institution, Colorado State University has identified the need within its strategic plan to extend and expand active and experiential learning opportunities for students in all academic disciplines (Goal 9). This task force was organized to advance this goal and to consider what resources, structures and possible collaborations would be necessary to assure a clearer pathway for students to participate in community-based service-learning opportunities.

Members:
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Guiding Questions: Task Force activities were guided by the following key questions:
1. What are competencies and knowledge do we want students to develop during their college career through service and community-based learning experiences?
2. What is currently being done at CSU (range of services and programs) to encourage and support service and community-based learning experiences for students?
3. What is being done elsewhere to encourage and support service and community-based learning experiences for students?
4. What isn't being done (that should be)?
5. What should be included in a plan designed to develop and maximize students' academic, professional, and socially-responsive skills through service and community-based learning?
6. What groundwork would need to be done to prepare for a successful implementation of the plan?
7. What resources would be required to implement and ensure the long-term success of the plan?
8. What role should TILT play in the plan?

Responses to Questions:

1. **What competencies and knowledge do we want students to develop during their college career through service and community-based learning experiences?**

   - SEE DOCUMENT #1: "Students Competencies/Knowledge to Develop through Community-based Service-Learning Experiences"

2. **What is currently being done at CSU (range of services and programs) to encourage and support service and community-based learning experiences for students?**

   - CSU offers a diverse range of community involvement opportunities, from one-time service events to semester-long, academically-integrated capstone and internship experiences.

   - Two campus units are dedicated to facilitating and promoting community service and learning opportunities for students: (1) the Office of Student Leadership, Involvement, and Community Engagement (SLiCE) which hosts a range of volunteer, curricular and co-curricular service and learning programs and (2) the Service-Learning Office in the Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) which offers and supports academic service-learning programs across the disciplines at the university.

   - A wide range of community involvement initiatives and programs also exist at the unit- and academic departmental-levels that provide students with opportunities to be involved in the community (==SEE Appendix 1 for examples of these initiatives==).

   - Both SLiCE and TILT maintain a strong relationship with the United Way of Larimer County Volunteer Center to provide up-to-date information about the current service needs in the community and about a range of potential community placement opportunities for students.

3. **What is being done elsewhere to encourage and support service and community-based learning experiences for students?**

   - Service-Learning graduation requirements for undergraduate students
   - Formal identification of Service-Learning courses
   - "Engaged Department" Efforts (i.e., academic departments that have developed strategies for including community-based work in their teaching and scholarship, making community-based experiences a standard expectation for majors).
   - Promotion of Community-based Research (CBR) opportunities for students
   - Development of Learning Communities (LC) focused on service-learning
   - Tenure/promotion considerations related to faculty work in Service-Learning

4. **What isn't being done (that should be)?**

   Top Priorities
   - Formal identification of Service-Learning courses
   - Central "site" on campus that lists the full range of community-based service and learning opportunities available to CSU students across the disciplines

- Support and infrastructure for students to imagine a "pathway" of learning and professional development through community-based service and learning that extends from 1st year to graduation
- Certificate/Transcript Notation for students who participate through a range of Community-based service and learning experiences (ranging from volunteerism to more academically-integrated experiences)
- Development of Service-Learning capstone or thesis opportunities across the majors
- Tenure tied to efforts of faculty in areas of Service-Learning or experiential teaching and research
- Increased offerings/opportunities for Community-Based Research
  - Including potential creation of a library of books related to this topic that are easily accessible to students

Second-Tier Priorities
- Development of partnerships with TRIO programs to give back to those students and their communities (enhanced work with Reach Out?)
- Availability of International/Semester Abroad Service-Learning opportunities
- Development of Skill-based service network at CSU (working with United Way of Larimer County)
- Provision of information for students about Post-Graduate volunteer service opportunities

Other concrete program ideas:

- "Last lecture" series with faculty - choose people to start it with a passion for community involvement. E.g., something specific around voting, political involvement and policy work (e.g., "camp Wellstone" style thing on political involvement)
- Start a club where for 30 days students would try on a new lifestyle (30 without a car, 30 days vegan, 30 days eating local, etc)
- Get students on committees that make a difference (coalition building) - Pathways Past Poverty, UniverCity Connections, etc.
- Start task forces of students related to current issues---like sustainability at CSU
- More round table discussions around important issues topics

5. **What should be included in a plan designed to develop and maximize students' academic, professional, and socially-responsive skills through service and community-based learning?**

   - Mechanism to formally identify Service-Learning courses at CSU
   - Development of Service-Learning capstone or thesis opportunities across the majors
   - Development of a coordinated plan to support students on a "pathway" to deepen their community-based learning and skill development over time
   - Creation of a central "site" (online and/or published) that lists all available community-based service and learning opportunities available to CSU students. This site would require development and maintenance and would need to be supported by CSU staff who could counsel/consult with students about program elements and opportunities that best fit their needs and interests.
   - Service-Learning Scholars Certificate Program

- The Task Force suggests a new integrative program that would provide students with a clear pathway to progress through a range of community-based service and experiential learning opportunities The Task Force suggests a "Service-Learning Scholars Certificate Program"
- The Certificate Program would be competency-based and require that students participate in a qualitatively-diverse range of community-based experiences, from general volunteer service to academically-integrated Service-Learning
- Certificate program could be based loosely on TILT's Graduate Teaching Certificate Model (E-portfolio)
- To gain a certificate, students would be required to demonstrate evidence of achieving a categorical set of core competencies through participation in a range of service and learning opportunities. A preliminary list of core competencies have been developed, categorized and linked to existing curricular/co-curricular activities at CSU (==see Appendix B==)
- Some range of core program components (e.g., SL classes) will be required for students; other competencies could be meet by equivalent experiences, with student providing evidence of relevant learning (e.g., demonstrating achievement of required competencies through reflective assignments)
- It was proposed that students could fulfill categories of competencies through a point system – students would need to earn an overall amount of points in each category to earn their certificate – there would be a point limit in each category, but some flexibility to earn more points in one category than another (e.g., something like a SL capstone experience would be worth many more points than participation in RamServe).
- Program requirements will be flexible and broad enough to accommodate students across the majors
- *Key Questions Remaining re: Service-Learning Scholars Certificate Program*
    - How would students' achievement of competencies be assessed?
    - Should this be linked, in any way, to minimum hours of service?
    - How do we manage this program?
    - How should students be rewarded for completion?
    - Would student portfolio be completed as part of a capstone course? Or would portfolio be reviewed by an external committee – might help it move toward being transcriptable.

6. **What groundwork would need to be done to prepare for a successful implementation of the plan?**

   - Formal Identification of Service-Learning courses
      - Registrar's Office has offered the following two possibilities
          - ID the courses at the catalogue level in Aries
          - Include Service-Learning as part of the long title (similar to how GT pathways are handled)

- o Another idea is to have faculty report the class to TILT who will develop a way to flag the course in Aries and present it as part of a Service-Learning course listing on their website; faculty would receive reminders every semester to update.
  - o Provide a statement of minimum qualifications for course to be listed as a SL course (basic criteria already exist at CSU, but may not always be followed/monitored)
  - o *Future:* develop set of criteria for rating depth of service-learning experience (e.g., time commitment, level of academic integration)

- Service-Learning Scholars Certificate Program
  - o Organize and recruit review board for program development, refinement and oversight
  - o Start small with the involvement of key departments
  - o Grow number of options for students to take part in reflective service (SLiCE can only sponsor so many programs)
  - o Promote more broadly the benefits of/opportunities for community-based service-learning to 1st year students
  - o Articulate "pillars" of what is valued at CSU that includes community service-learning – e.g, saying that CSU values SL as a core experience for students and provide a sense of "here is how you do it"
  - o Continue to draw out model on which to base certificate program; continue to explore models that exist
  - o Many students enter the co-curricular service world (often via SLiCE) and stay there; how do we help them make the transition to the academic world?

- Development of central "site" offering comprehensive listing of community-based service and learning opportunities available to CSU students
  - o Develop and design of web interface and database of opportunities that is accessible to students and can be updated by organizations offering service opportunities (currently in development at TILT)
  - o Undertake comprehensive assessment of current community involvement opportunities offered through campus departments/units in order to populate database (curricular, co-curricular, volunteer programs)
  - o Develop counseling component to assist students in finding relevant service opportunities (will require collaboration between SLiCE and SL Office/TILT units and staff)

- Development of Service-Learning Capstone/Thesis Opportunities Across the Majors
  - o Provide structured support to students to help them imagine, design and carry out Service-Learning capstone or thesis experiences (currently being done on an interdisciplinary level via the Public Service Scholars Program sponsored by the SL Office/TILT); student demand may fuel faculty and department level support
  - o Develop interdisciplinary capstone experience tied to service-learning, perhaps at college level (social science capstone, business/accounting/management capstone)
    - Cross-list course; rotate teaching among SL-trained faculty in college – individual or team teaching; offer once or twice a year
    - Options for how to accomplish this? – create written proposal to present at meeting of department chairs; meet with SL faculty to lobby in own departments or in departments at large; tie course development to SL mini-grant funds support; provide course revision support through TILT.

7. **What resources would be required to implement and ensure the long-term success of the plan?**
   - Development of central "site" listing CSU service opportunities
     - o *On-going collaboration between staff in TILT and SLiCE offices to counsel students, monitor accuracy of the database, and refine the resource to be most effective
     - o *Web design and database set-up support (TILT)
     - o *Graduate student assistant whose work responsibilities would include helping set up and monitor the program (supervised by SL director)
   - Formal Identification of Service-Learning Courses
     - o Collaboration with Registrar's office and/or
     - o *Enlist TILT tech support to flag course in Aries, set up database to list courses, and provide semester-by-semester reminders to faculty to update course offerings
     - o *Monitoring of process by SL director
   - Service-Learning Scholars Certificate Program
     - o *(Re-)convening of a Service-Learning Advisory Committee to continue work on design of the program and to provide general direction to new initiatives outlined by the Task Force
     - o On-going collaboration between staff in TILT and SLiCE, and more broadly, a willingness on the part of Academic and Student Affairs units to cooperatively support the development and plans for the program

8. **What role should TILT play in the plan?**

   - *See "*"'s in Question #7 above*