

PART 3:
Benefits & Models of CBL/CBR

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Benefits of Community-Based Learning for Students

Many studies have been done to assess the impact of community-based learning and its benefits to students, faculty, colleges and universities, and the community. In 2001, faculty members from Vanderbilt University compiled the findings of service-learning research in higher education in "At A Glance: What We Know about The Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions, and Communities, 1993-2000: Third Edition." The following is a highlight of their findings:¹

Effects of Service-Learning on Students

Personal Outcomes

- Service-learning has a positive effect on student personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others, leadership and communication skills.

Social Outcomes

- Service-learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on commitment to service.

Learning Outcomes

- Students or faculty report that service-learning has a positive impact on students' academic learning.
- Students or faculty report that service-learning improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world".
- Service-learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development.

Relationship with Institution

- Students engaged in service-learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in service-learning.
- Service-learning improves student satisfaction with college.
- Students engaged in service-learning are more likely to graduate.

Benefits of Service-Learning for Faculty and Communitiesⁱⁱ

Not only does community-based learning and research benefit students, but it also has tremendous potential to benefit faculty, staff and communities. This information is adapted from University of Wisconsin-Madison Professor Emeritus Mona Wasow's description of "Service Learning as a Four-Way Win." Wasow defines this "Four-Way Win" as benefiting: 1) community agencies, 2) clients, 3) students and 4) faculty and staff.

Benefits for Faculty and Staff

- Strengthens and renews faculty because students are more engaged in learning.
- Serves as a catalyst for faculty to review their teaching methodologies and experiment with the progressive pedagogy of Service Learning and Community-Based Research.
- Extends the classroom into communities for the development of mutually beneficial knowledge, such as new community-based research projects which test current theories and practices.
- Demonstrates faculty commitment to the community by awarding academic credit for research and service directly related to course content.
- Increases opportunities for professional recognition and awards.
- Provides opportunities for faculty to introduce the latest research to the community.

Benefits for Communities

- Supports the work of agencies which are often understaffed and under-budgeted by providing resources and time given by students, faculty and staff.
- Creates new alliances and partnerships with the University; demystifies what may seem to be a large and complex institution.
- Creates opportunities to learn about the latest research in their areas and work to test that research.
- Creates opportunities to ask for/become involved with more research on practical questions for staff and clients.
- Garners wider support for the work that community agencies do.
- Allows agencies to work with students and decide whether there are future recruits among them.

Six Models of Community-Based Learning

While designing your course, remember that community-based learning can be implemented in various ways, depending on your course goals and preferred style of teaching. Below are the six most common methods of integrating service into the classroom. These methods are adapted from Kerrissa Heffernan's "Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction" published by Campus Compact in 2001. This book is also available for loan in the CEV office.

1. Discipline-Based Model

In this model, students are expected to have a presence in the community throughout the semester and reflect on their experiences on a regular basis. The link between course content and community experience must be made very clear to students.

2. Problem-Based Model

Students relate to the community much as "consultants" working for a "client." Students work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This model presumes that the students will have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community or develop a solution to the problem. Although it can be highly effective for some disciplines, caution is needed when using this model. Promoting the idea that students are "experts" and communities are "clients" can re-emphasize the disparities between universities and communities.

3. Capstone Course Model

These courses are generally for majors and minors in a given discipline and are offered almost exclusively to students in their final year. Capstone courses ask students to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their course work and combine it with relevant service work.

4. Service Internship

This approach is more intense than typical community-based learning courses, with students working as many as 10-20 hours per week in a community agency. Students are generally charged with producing a body of work that is of value to the community or site. Service internships focus on reciprocity: the idea that the community and the student benefit equally from the experience.

5. Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research Model

Community-based action research is similar to an independent study option for the student who is highly experienced in community work. This approach can be effective with small classes or groups of students. In this model, students work closely with faculty members to learn research methodology while serving as advocates for communities.

6. Independent Study Model

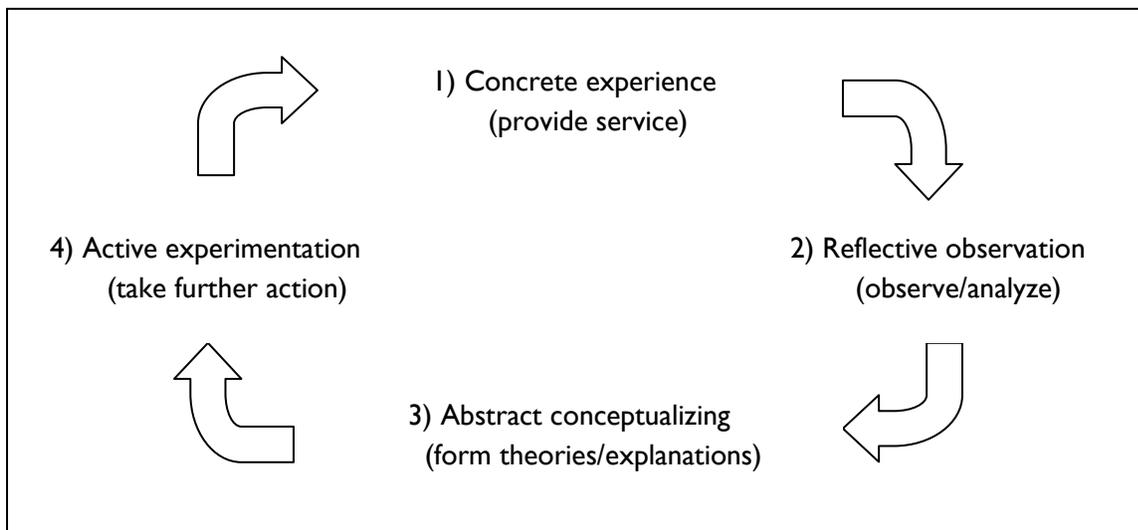
Students can register an additional course credit by making special arrangements with the instructor to complete additional work or explore a subject more in-depth. The course instructor serves as the advisor for this option. A student who speaks Spanish may want to work with a local Latino social service agency to develop a job training program for recovering addicts, for example, or another student may expand upon a prior experience serving food in a food pantry to investigate sources of locally grown produce for the agency. These are typically substantive efforts where the student, faculty, and community representatives work intensively to determine learning goals and community outcomes.



Experiential Learning Model

David A. Kolb, an American educational theorist whose work revolves around development of the Experiential Learning Theory (experience as the source of learning and development) and how it can enhance learning in higher education, is a professor of Organizational Behavior in the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” Kolb’s “Experiential Learning Model” provides a useful framework for integrating the experience and synthesizing elements of community-based learning.

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model



- 1) **Concrete experience** = doing something for someone in a community agency.
- 2) **Reflective observation** = observing and analyzing. (What happened? What did we see, hear, smell, think, and feel as we helped others?)
- 3) **Abstract conceptualizing** = forming theories or explanations for why events happened as they did. (How do our service experiences fit with what we have learned in class? What can we learn from this experience?)
- 4) **Active experimentation** = take further action. (How will this experience and our understanding of it affect our future actions?)

Given Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory, community-based learning provides a concrete experience that, paired with critical synthesis of how the service relates to key course ideas, can stimulate conceptual growth and learning in college students.

Community-Based Research: Best Practices

The following characteristics were identified by Barbara Israel of the University of Michigan School of Public Health as critical elements of successful university-community partnerships.^{iv}

1. Recognizes community as a unit of identity.

The concept of community as an aspect of collective and individual identity is central to community-based research. Community is characterized by a sense of identification and emotional connection to other members, and commitment to meeting shared needs. Communities of identity may be centered on a defined geographic neighborhood or a geographically dispersed ethnic group with a sense of common identity and shared fate. Community-based research attempts to identify and work with existing communities of identity and/or strengthen a sense of community through collective engagement.

2. Builds on strengths and resources within the community.

Community-based research seeks to identify and build on strengths, resources and relationships that exist within communities of identity, and seeks to support or expand social structures and social processes that contribute to the ability of community members to work together to improve health.

3. Responds to needs identified by the community itself.

Successful university-community research partnerships must address needs that the community sees as priority, rather than addressing questions developed within the university.

4. Facilitates collaborative, equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research.

Community-based research involves a collaborative partnership in which all parties participate as equal members and share control over all phases of the research process.

5. Integrates knowledge and intervention for mutual benefit of all partners.

Community-based research seeks to build a broad body of knowledge related to health and well being while also integrating that knowledge with intervention efforts that address the concerns of the communities involved. Information is gathered to inform interventions, and new understandings emerge as participants reflect on the interventions conducted.

6. Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities.

Community-based research is co-learning and an empowering process that facilitates that reciprocal transfer of knowledge, skills, capacity and power. This process involves giving explicit attention to the knowledge of community members, and an emphasis on sharing information, decision-making power, resources, and support among members of the partnership.

7. Involves a cyclical and iterative process.

Community-based learning involves a cyclical, iterative process that includes partnership development and maintenance, community assessment, problem definition, development of research methodology, data collection and analysis, interpretation of data, specification of learning, and establishment of mechanisms for sustainability.

8. Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners.

Community-based research seeks to disseminate findings and knowledge gained to all partners involved, in language that is understandable and respectful, and “where ownership of knowledge is acknowledged.”

9. Involves a long-term commitment by all partners.

Community-based research requires a long-term commitment by all the partners involved. Establishing trust and skills and infrastructure needed for conducting research and creating comprehensive interventions necessitates a long time frame. Furthermore, communities need to be assured that outside researchers are committed to the community for the long haul, after initial funding is over.

NOTES

ⁱ J.S. Eyler, D.E. Giles, C.J. Gray, C.M. Stenson, *At a Glance: What We Know About The Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000: Third Edition.* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 2001).

ⁱⁱ M. Wasow, published in *Service-Learning and Community-Based Research Manual for Community Partners*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, nd).

ⁱⁱⁱ DePaul University Irwin W. Steans Center, *Faculty Manual: Teaching a Community-based Service Learning Course at DePaul University*, (Chicago, IL: DePaul University, nd).

<http://cbsl.depaul.edu/faculty/developingACourse.asp>

^{iv} University of Wisconsin-Madison Morgridge Center for Public Service, *Service Learning and Community Based Research Manual for Community Partners*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, nd).