

October 10, 2008

To: Tom Sav, Chair,  
University Curriculum and Policy Committee

From: Cathy Sayer, Director of Service Learning  
Service Learning Advisory Council

Subject: Request for Feedback on Service Learning Definition and Criteria

The Service Learning Advisory Council has drafted a definition of service learning and criteria for service learning (SL) and service learning intensive (SLI) sections of courses. We request your feedback on this draft and your assistance in distributing it to the college curriculum committees so that we can negotiate any needed revisions and ultimately pursue approval by UCAP, the Faculty Senate, and the Provost.

The reasons the Council seeks approval of a definition and criteria are several.

Our new mission statement and strategic plan emphasize the University's engagement with the community. The mission statement notes not only that we will "transform the lives of our students," but also that we will transform "the **communities** we serve" and that we will do that by "Achieving learning outcomes through innovative, high quality programs for all students: undergraduate, graduate, and professional" and by "Engaging in **significant community service**." The first goal of the new strategic plan, Academic Distinctiveness and Quality, identifies "meaningful civic engagement" as one of the ways we will support our mission. Objective D under this goal notes that we will "Enhance the quantity and quality of dialogue with our various **communities** to ensure our **academic** relevance and distinctiveness." Objective A under Goal Four of the strategic plan, "Community Transformation," says that we will "Increase the opportunities within the curriculum for **community engagement**," and Objective B adds that we will "Enhance WSU presence within the Dayton/West Central Ohio regions and beyond in ways that are important to the community."

Service learning is one method of addressing this mission and its supporting plan. If Wright State University is to be effective and responsible in accomplishing this mission and achieving these goals and objectives, we will need to be able:

- ? to track how many service learning courses and sections we are offering and how many students have taken them,
- ? to identify where within our programs service learning is being used and where it is not being used in order to target where we can "increase opportunities" for community engagement "within the curriculum,"
- ? to assess the quality of our service learning offerings and the degree to which they are contributing to the transformation of our students and community.

In addition, for students to most efficiently plan their schedules, they need advance notice when they are registering for a course or section that might require them to spend time off campus in the community.

To satisfy all of these purposes, we will need broad consensus on the service learning definition and course criteria. Therefore, we covet UCAP's input and your assistance in gathering feedback from the college curriculum committees.

## Wright State University Definition of Service Learning

Service learning at Wright State University is a teaching and learning method that engages faculty, students, and community members in a partnership to:

- ? Achieve academic learning objectives
- ? Meet community needs
- ? Promote civic responsibility

## Criteria for Service Learning Sections of Courses

Courses may be designated with one of two types of service learning course designations

1. Service Learning (SL)
2. Service Learning Intensive (SLI)

**SL Designation:** To receive a designation of SL, the course section must include service learning work that:

- ? Meets course learning objectives
- ? Involves a reciprocal relationship with one or more community partners
- ? Includes reflection activities that integrate the learning from the service experience with the course content

**SLI Designation:** To receive a designation of SLI, the course section must include service learning work that:

- ? Meets course learning objectives
- ? Involves a reciprocal relationship with one or more community partners, engaging the community partner in all elements of the service learning work from planning to assessment
- ? Includes reflection activities that integrate the learning from the service experience with the course subject matter
- ? Is integral to the course with the majority of the course grade being linked to the service learning work