

Establishing the Foundations: Service-Learning as a Pedagogy

Dr. James M. Heffernan, Executive Director
New York Campus Compact
June 11-12, 2009
STEM Conference
Ithaca College

Today's topics

- A. What *Is* Service-Learning?
- B. Research Findings on Impacts; Key Ideas
- C. Constructing a Course
 - Learning objectives
 - Service projects and community partners
 - Reflection and Feedback
- D. Project Options

A. What Is Service-Learning?

“a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students

- (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and
- (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”

Source: Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, “A Service-Learning Curriculum for Faculty.” *Michigan Journal of Community Service.* (2) (1995): 112

What Is Service-Learning?

“ Service-Learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

What Is Service-Learning?

Community Service

If college students collect trash out of an urban streambed, they are providing a service to the community as volunteers; a service that is highly valued and important.

What Is Service-Learning?

Service-Learning

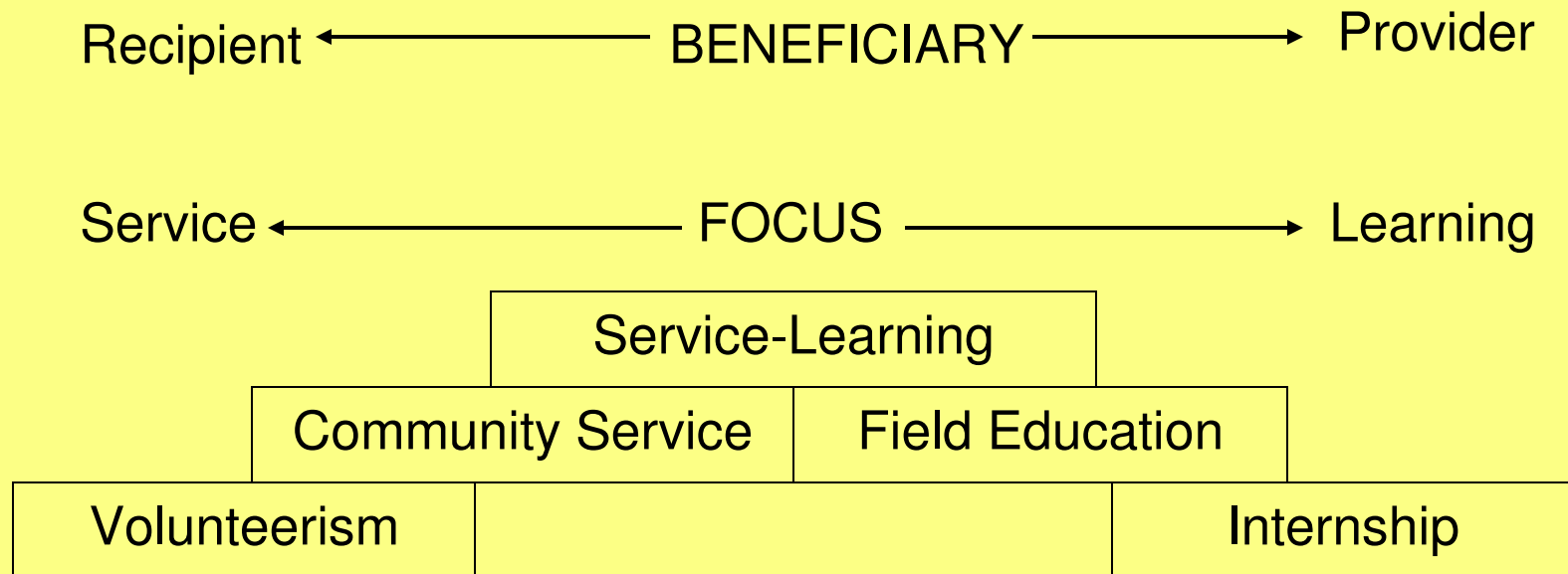
Students in a course work with an organization to collect trash from an urban streambed, then analyze possible sources so they can share the results with residents of the neighborhood along with suggestions for reducing pollution,

What Is Service-Learning?

The students are providing an important service to the community AND

- learning about water quality and laboratory analysis,
- developing an understanding of pollution issues,
- learning to interpret science issues to the public, and
- practicing communications skills by speaking to residents.
- They may also reflect on their personal and career interests in science, the environment, public policy or other related areas..

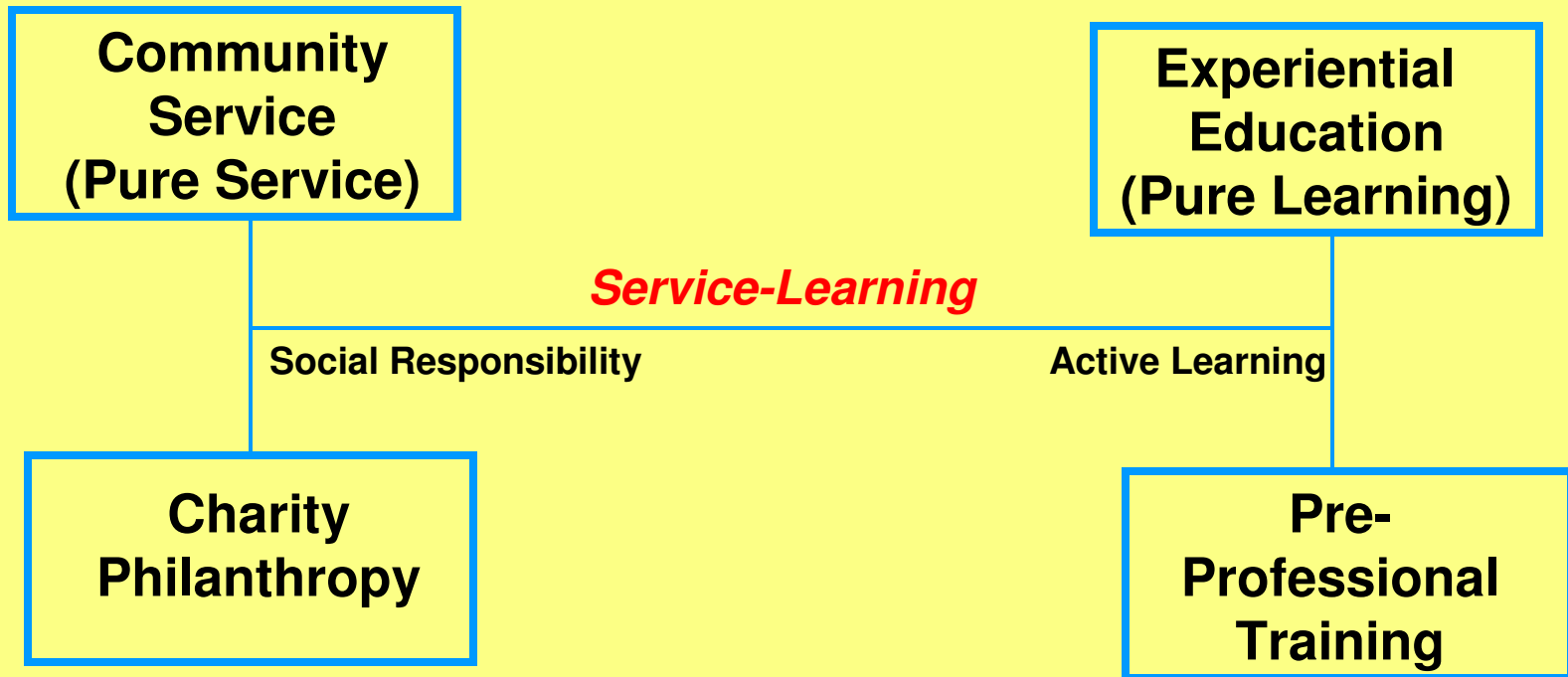
Distinctions Among Service Programs



Source: Furco, A. (2003). *Service-Learning: A Balanced approach to experiential education*. In Campus Compact, *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit*. (pp. 11-14). Providence, RI. Campus Compact. p. 12.

Adapted from Signmon, R. L. (1994). *Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve: Linking Service With Learning*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Independent Colleges.

Service-Learning Spectrum



B. Impacts of Service-Learning: Research Findings

- **Increased retention**
- **Increased content knowledge and skills**
- **•Improved higher order thinking skills; analysis, understanding complex problems**
- **•Civic responsibility, citizenship**
- **•Commitment to service**
- **•Career awareness/skills –awareness of options, clarity of choice, technical skills**
- **•Personal outcomes –self-esteem, empowerment**
- **•Social outcomes –pro-social behaviors, reduction of risky behaviors**

■ Barbara Holland, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

Key Ideas in Service-Learning Pedagogy

- Academic credit is for learning not for service
- Academic rigor is maintained
- Learning goals are specified for service activities
- Criteria are established for selection of community service placements/partnerships
- Supports are provided for students to learn in the community setting
- Faculty instructional role is more complex
- Student learning outcomes are varied, often uncertain

Key Ideas in Service-Learning

- Service project typically should not be more than 30% or less than 15% of the course grade.
- Service requirement of less than 15 hours makes it difficult to meet course objectives. Reciprocity and mutual benefits are questionable.
- Typically, if faculty assign a service-learning project, they will decrease the number of other assignments required for the course.

C. Constructing a Course

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Determine whether the course selected is appropriate in terms of achieving its objectives in a community setting.
- Establish learner outcomes and competencies (academic, personal, civic, pre-professional)

2. SERVICE PROJECTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Define a service-learning experience that will allow you to achieve course objectives and learner outcomes. (direct, indirect, advocacy)
- Identify a community partner and establish clear project goals, roles/responsibilities and communication processes.

Constructing a Course, Cont'd

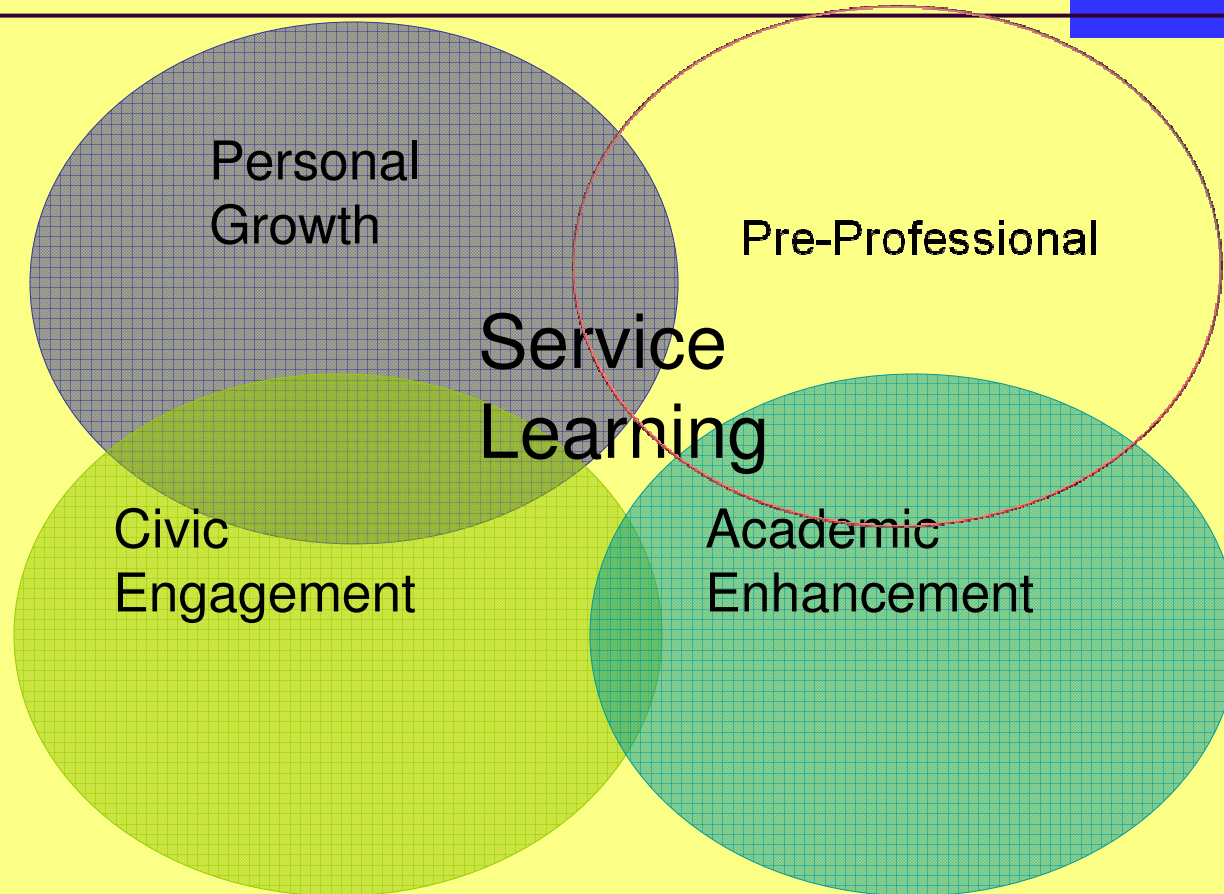
3. REFLECTION & FEEDBACK

- Determine the types of reflection activities that will allow students to “harvest” the learning from the service.
- Determine how reflection assignments will be graded and evaluated

4. COURSE CONSTRUCTION/SYLLABUS DESIGN

- Determine the appropriate structure and requirements for the service learning components, including the appropriate classroom workload for the course.
- Select appropriate media, text and other resources for the course.
- Identify the key components to include in course syllabus

1. Categories of Learning Objectives for S-L



Source: Ash, Clayton & Moses. Learning through critical reflection: A tutorial for service-learning students. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing. chpt.2, p. 1. Under Contract

1. Identify Learning Objectives

Academic

**Deeper understanding of course content
Connect course concepts to community-
based experiences**

Pre-Professional

**Explore interests and skills required for
specific careers;
Connect skills learned during service
assignment to future career**

Identify Learning Objectives, cont'd

■ Civic

**Understand community issues, resources
and strengths**

Identify and solve public problems

□ Personal Growth

**Understand own values, communication and
problem-solving skills**

Articulate unspoken beliefs, stereotypes

Source: Ash, Clayton, & Moses. *Teaching and Learning Through
Critical Reflection: An Instructors' Guide*. Sterling, VA: Stylus
Publishing. 2007.



2a. Service Projects

Types of Service

- **Direct**

Involves student action which fills the immediate needs of the community. Students learn from the experience of interaction and observation and not necessarily from the skills required for the service

- **Indirect**

Addresses community needs indirectly, typically through research, organizing, and/or administrative action

- **Advocacy**

Efforts result in eventual changes in the social, political or environmental conditions contributing to community needs

Source: Nitschke-Shaw D. & Ziesler, Y. *Faculty Guide to Service-Learning*. Campus Compact for New Hampshire

Service-Learning Project Types

- Personal Contact/ Direct Service
(Tutoring; Disaster Relief)
- Problem-Solving/ Asset-Creation
(Pollution Abatement; Coalition-Building)
- Research
(Needs and Asset Mapping)
- Advocacy
(Position Papers)





2.b Community Partnerships

Campus/Community Partnerships:

Ongoing Challenges

- Community distrust of academic institutions
- Insufficient respect for community knowledge and expertise
- Unequal power and distribution of funds
- The academic culture which looks at community problems and needs rather than assets and capabilities
- The conflict between scientific rigor and community acceptability/feasibility

On-Going Challenges.....

- Faculty review, promotion and tenure policies that do not value and honor community-engaged scholarship
- Institutional review board policies that do not consider community consent, participation and benefit
- Communities that do not speak with a unified voice, making it difficult to identify, understand and address community priorities.


Principles of Good Campus/Community Partnerships

(Summit 2007, Campus/Community Partners for Health-excerpts)

- Partnerships form to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.
- Partners have agreed upon mission, goals, measurable outcomes and accountability for the partnership.
- The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust and commitment.
- The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
- The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.

Principles of Good Partnerships, cont'd

- Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority, strive to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and develop a common language.
- Principles and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
- There is feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
- Partnerships may dissolve; plans for closure are as important as plans for starting up.



3. Reflection: the Sine Qua Non of Effective and Authentic Service-Learning

What is Reflection?

“.. structured reflection is used to refer to a thoughtfully constructed process that challenges and guides students in (1) examining critical issues related to their service-learning project, (2) connecting the service experience to coursework (3) enhancing the development of civic skills and values, and (4) assisting students in finding personal relevance in their work.”

Source: Rama V. Dasartha: *Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning from Service*.
Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/>

The 4C's of Reflection

- Continuous in time frame.
- Connected to the intellectual and academic needs of those involved.
- Challenging to assumptions and complacency.
- Contextualized in terms of design and setting.

Source: Eyler, Janet, & D.E. Giles. *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University, (1996)

Reflection Design Decisions

- 1.) Identify learning outcomes/objectives
- 2.) Identify reflection methods
- 3.) Choose question prompts
- 4.) Choose questions (academic, pre-professional, personal, civic)
- 5.) Decide on frequency and timing of reflection
- 6.) Build in feedback & evaluation

2.) Reflection Methods

Written Exercises

- Journals (personal, highlighted, dialogue, three-part.)
- Reflection essays
- Portfolios
- Blogs
- Grant proposals
- Press releases
- Drafting legislation/policy briefs
- Published articles (newspaper, newsletter)
- Agency training manuals or outreach materials

Reflection Methods, Cont'd

Oral Exercises

- Focus groups
- Informal discussions
- Presentations
- Individual conferences/interviews with faculty or community partner
- Legislative testimony
- Interviews/debriefing with agency staff

Projects & Activities

- Simulations/Role-playing
- Collecting photos or other material for collages, poster sessions or power point presentations
- Developing movies or videos
- Planning PR or fundraising events for an agency

3.) Question Prompts for Reflection

- **What? Describe:** The objective reporting or identification of the events surrounding the experience
- **So What? Examine:** The development of deeper understanding of the meaning of experience
- **Interpret:** Interpret the experience within the context of class readings, lectures, research in the field etc.
- **Now What? Extend learning:** The further re-consideration and re-framing of the learning to address both its broader as well as its experience-specific implication, producing a reasoned judgment based on sound arguments.

4.) Sample Questions

Academic:

Choose specific articles, chapters, theoretical concepts, themes from course.

- How does the service experience relate to class material? Did the experience contradict or reinforce class material?
- How did course material help you overcome obstacles or dilemmas in the service experience?
- What aspects of your learning may be due to your service experience?

Sample Questions, cont'd

Pre-professional

- Think of an [engineering] principle that can be applied to help understand a social problem. How does your thought process as a [engineer] affect the way you view social issues? Can social issues affect the way you do science?
- How can [engineers] work with other citizens together to solve problems? Why should they?
- What is the responsibility of a person in this field to address this issue?
- If you put this project on a resume, would you list it as community "service"? Does the [engineering] community value volunteer work? Why is this important?

professional questions are adapted from Decker, R. and Moffat, J. (2000). "Service-learning reflection for engineering: A faculty guide" in Tsang, E* "Pre-. (Ed.). Projects that matter: Concepts and models for service-learning in engineering. Washington , D.C. : AAHE.

Sample Questions, Cont'd

Personal

- In what ways is your involvement with your service program challenging? What about your personality helps you move past these challenges?
- What personal qualities (e.g. leadership, communication skills, compassion, etc.) have you developed through service-learning? How will these qualities help you in the future?
- What stereotypes are you confronting about the people you serve? Have you reconceptualized these stereotypes? What new information led you to do this?
- What happened that made you feel you would like to pursue this field as a career? Or not?

Sample Questions, Cont'd

Civic Engagement (Client Focused)

- What similarities do you share with the people you are serving? What differences?
- What are their strengths? What can you learn from them and their strengths?
- How are you perceived by the people you are serving?
- What do you think a typical day is like for the people you serve? What pressures do they confront?
- How does their situation impact their life socially, educationally, politically, recreationally, etc.?

Sample Questions, cont'd

Civic Engagement (Issue Focused)

- Why is there need of your service?
- What do you perceive as the underlying issue, and why does it exist?
- Who is involved in this issue? (in helping solve it, or perpetuating it)
- Do you see connections to public policy at the local, state, or national level?
- What social, economic, political and educational systems are maintaining and perpetuating it?
- What would it take to positively impact the situation (from individuals, communities, education, and government)?

Sample Questions, cont'd

Civic Engagement (Organization Focused)

- How did the organization evolve? What are the key points of development?
- What are the organization's programs? How do they help to drive the organization's mission?
- Who are the key players that both shape and interact with the organization? (organizational leaders, funders, board members, elected officials etc, population served etc.)
- What geographic areas does the organization serve? Are there boundaries?
- What challenges is the organization currently facing. Consider the following domains: resources, leadership, community input/involvement (or lack of), advocacy efforts etc.

5.) Timing and Frequency

	Before	During	After
Alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reflection journal with questions, expectations, fears etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structured journal with question prompts ■ Directed readings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Final reflective research paper ■ Final presentation
With Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large discussion on impending service, expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small group discussions ■ Large class discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Team presentations ■ Video/photo essays
With Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-Class or on-site orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check in's ■ Interviews with staff ■ Debriefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presentations to community groups

Source: Eyler, J. "Creating your reflection map": In Service-learning Practical Advice and Models. Ed. M. Canada. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass New Directions for Higher Education Series, 2001. 35-43.

6.) Feedback and Evaluation

- Link all assessments to course objectives
- Specify criteria—what constitutes A, B, or C?
- Choose appropriate instrument
 - Scoring rubrics for written or oral reports
 - Surveys/interviews with community partners
 - Peer-to-peer reviews

See Bradley's three-level model to evaluate reflection in service-learning, in Troppe, ed., *Connecting Cognition and Action: Evaluation of Student Performance in Service-Learning Courses*. Campus Compact, 1995

D. PROJECT OPTIONS

- **I. Extra credit project:** Instructors accept service work, including evidence of reflection on the service experience and its relation to core course concepts, of students seeking extra credit.
- **II. Optional project** (instead of final paper/exam/etc.): Instructors allow students to conduct service projects as alternatives to more traditional coursework (e.g., research papers). Instructors may weight requirements of project vs. research paper option so that the service project option is the most desirable alternative (e.g., “conduct a service project of 15-30 hours, keeping a journal and writing a final 3-5 page reflective paper or write a 20-page research paper”).
- **III. Required project—individual:** Students select a project from a list of options provided by instructor, or students design their own projects. Students relate academic course content to their personal project experiences either privately or during facilitated class discussions.

PROJECT OPTIONS

- **IV. Required project—group:** A focus project is selected by the class (or smaller groups within the class), and participation is mandatory. Activities of the project enhance and reinforce academic content covered during traditional class time. As all students are participating in the same project, it is efficient to spend some class time in preparation, training, and discussion of the project.
- **V. +1 Option:** Students who opt for an added service learning component to a course receive extra course credit. These students may meet for an additional hour weekly to prepare and reflect on their service experience.
- **VI. Course process:** The course curriculum is project-driven. Academic goals are met through student activities necessary for project preparation, implementation, evaluation, and celebration.

■ **[1]** Nitschke-Shaw, D & Ziesler, Y. *Faculty Guide to Service Learning*. New Hampshire Campus Compact.

For Further Information.....

- [National Campus Compact](http://www.compact.org) www.compact.org
- The national Campus Compact web site contains information about publications, journals, conferences, national initiatives, research, consulting services and funding opportunities, as well as links to each of the state Compacts. www.compact.org

- [National Service-Learning Clearinghouse](http://www.servicelearning.org) www.servicelearning.org
- Extensive collection of publications—research, best practices, syllabi, tool-kits, policy issues, program development—covering K-12 through higher education
- Lending library services
- Online information database
- Toll-free information and reference-desk service (1-866-245-SERV/7378)
- Listservs for discussion & information on service-learning