



Service Learning: A Model For Success

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A Need for Change

The purpose of this paper is to propose a new way of incorporating service learning into our institutions. The effects of this new model will lead to stronger partnerships with our community partners, increase in student experiential application, and an overall enhanced community college experience.

The integrated model proposed in this workshop includes housing the service learning program in the same department as the internship program at your college. This paper will expound on the proposal and review current service learning program models, advantages/disadvantages of various models, etc.

The service learning program offers widespread benefits across college campuses nationwide. The program has grown at different rates with use of different models. Opportunities, however, exist to facilitate growth and expand community impact. Some of these opportunities exist with marketing/PR efforts, instructor/administrator involvement, and structural/resource support.

In the next section, we will take a look at current service learning models in use, compare internship and service learning programs, review project samples from a business communication class, and break down the specifics of the proposed model.

A New Way

Two familiar service learning (SL) models include instructor placement or service learning office placement. In the former model, instructors are responsible for locating community partners, developing relationships, creating projects, and placing students. In the latter model, a service learning office exists and they create a list of community partners to work with, assist with student placement, and assist with administration related to the program.

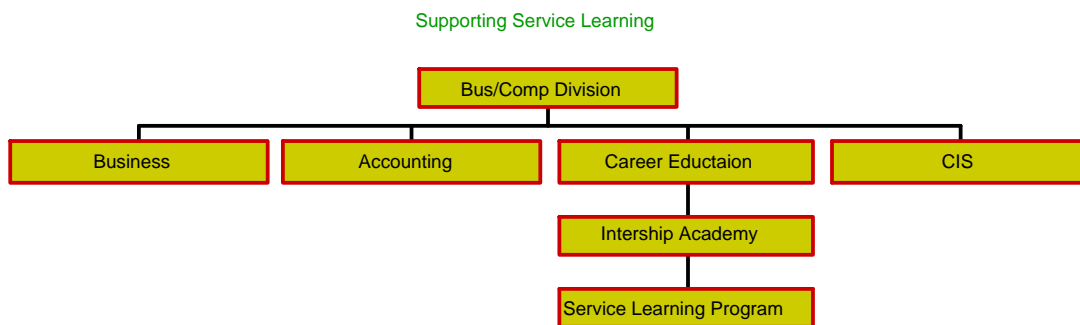
There are advantages and disadvantages to both programs. One advantage of the instructor placing students includes greater instructor involvement. However, other disadvantages include lack of resource assistance and limited growth potential. With a service learning office, you may have limited instructor involvement and growth is dependent on office marketing efforts.

I am proposing a combination of the two models mentioned above and an integrated effort with an existing program. The internship program offers structure and

administrative support. A symbiotic relationship exists between the internship and service learning programs. One offers short-term projects and the other longer-term projects. Projects from the SL program can feed or create projects for the internship program.

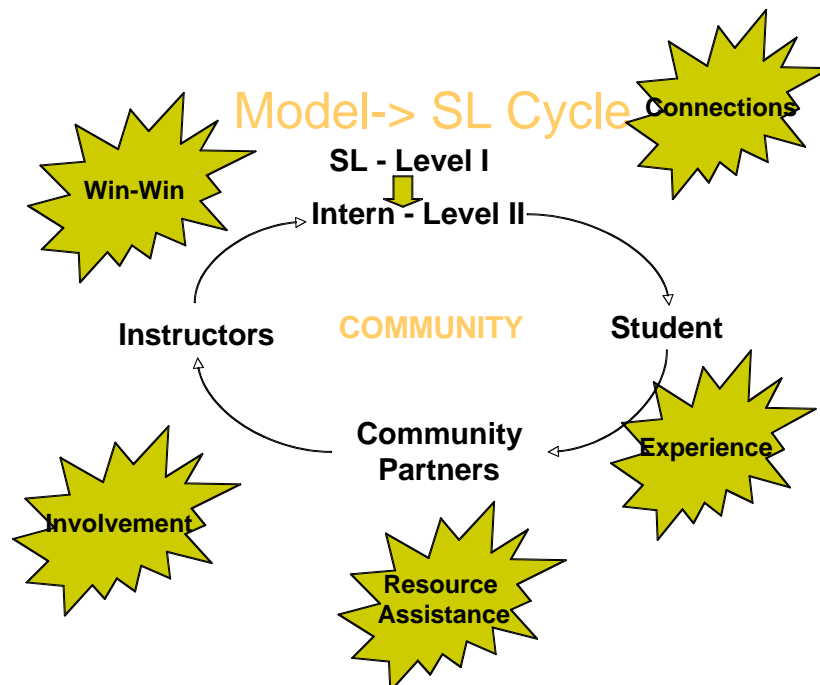
In my business communication classes, students gather data, organize, analyze, and make recommendations for a non-profit organization. The implementation efforts would benefit a student interested in doing a longer-term internship for the non-profit. Non-profits could use the additional commitment and support from a lengthier project and students would benefit as well. Instead of looking at our business partners for internships, we should also consider our non-profits as intern partners.

Combining these two programs in the same department is the first step towards expanding our community/business partner base and growing the service learning program. Below is an example of how the new structure could look.



Service learning and internship administration would come from the same office, yet there would be distinctions between them. Similarities in programs would exist with the balance of responsibility for all projects and for instructor compensation for application of experiential learning. Experiential learning under this new model includes internship and service learning related projects/activities.

The effects of this new model would impact our students, instructors, the college, community partners, and our community. The model below illustrates impacts visually.



Moving Forward

The natural evolution to service learning application seems to include an integration with similar programs. The first level of experiential learning will be service learning related projects, where the second level will be internships. The results of this integration effort will improve much needed experiential learning experiences for our students.

Next steps include:

Assessment of the internship and service learning program
Plan for fusion of programs
Marketing/Education plans
Pilot Program
Implement Program

Implementation considerations include:

Gathering input, benchmark
Administrative support
Instructor incentives
Roles and goals
Political considerations

Service learning program considerations should mimic other significant program considerations. Why reinvent “the wheel” when a natural fit exists with a current well-known program. The effects of this integration effort will prove beneficial to current programs in question and possibly future integration efforts when this effort paves the way for a new way of thinking on our campus.