

Capturing the Essence of True Service-Learning Projects in an Online Learning Environment: Experience-Driven Suggestions for Implementation

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Service-Learning courses continue to feature prominently in the curricula of many undergraduate institutions of higher learning. Recognized for providing students a means to gain valuable experience in applying what they learn while helping to work on important community issues and projects, well-designed Service-Learning courses effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice – often with an important social justice benefit to complement the learning gained. As undergraduate institutions continue to incorporate more online learning courses within their programs, faculty are faced with the issue of transitioning Service-Learning activities and projects to a learning environment that strongly favors independent work as opposed to traditional collaborative Service-Learning projects. This paper explores current thinking on the intersection of Service-Learning and online learning. Examples of problem areas and opportunities provide guidance for educators interested in online Service-Learning options.

While the majority of Service-Learning courses are taught in a traditional lecture-based format, there has been a recent trend toward incorporating Service-Learning into online courses as well. From a logistics point of view alone, online Service-Learning can appear to present formidable challenges. Students enrolled in online courses are frequently time- and space-bound with few opportunities to engage in traditional projects where face-to-face interactions with community partners are an essential part of the process. Students may be enrolled in online courses due to work and/or family responsibilities that make it very difficult to meet with community partners on any type of reasonable schedule or such students may actually reside in locations that are in different cities, states, or even countries, thereby making an in-person connection with their partners virtually impossible to achieve. In turn, community partners may be leery of working with online students who may be perceived, rightly or wrongly, of not being able to understand the true need at hand without seeing it in person. Logistical challenges aside, there are ways to make

online Service-Learning courses a success for all parties involved, thus affording online students the same, or a substantially similar, high-quality Service-Learning experience as that of their more traditional lecture-based course peers.

An added complication for both online Service-Learning students and for the instructors leading these courses is that most Service-Learning assignments and projects involve some form of team or group work – a type of activity that can be exceedingly difficult to manage when students are not collocated. There are ways to circumvent this type of problem, as evidenced by Al-Khasawneh and Hammad (2014/2015) in a study of a group-based Website creation for a Service-Learning partner. In this project example, the researchers assigned portions of the work to each student, thereby creating a loosely-structured team, but with individual student accountabilities. With good project coordination and a detailed communications strategy, the time and space differentials between various students on the team became a non-issue, resulting in no loss or productivity apparent to the Service-Learning partner.

This paper takes a different approach to online Service-Learning by primarily focusing on individual project opportunities that allow students to complete their Service-Learning objectives by working independently with a community partner of choice. Projects of this nature substantially reduce the complexity of offering Service-Learning in an online learning environment because they eliminate any need to bring multiple students together in one physical space at a single point in time. Some of the examples presented are based on local Service-Learning opportunities for online students who are able to meet directly with community partners while others take advantage of the Internet to allow students the freedom of completing all of their work from any location as long as they have the ability to connect online. In all cases, examples and suggestions presented here reflect a combination of what is known about online Service-Learning in the literature and the author's twenty-plus years of championing Service-Learning as a key academic opportunity in a rigorous undergraduate curriculum. Further study to bring additional clarity and specificity to the ideas described here is proposed under "Recommendations and Future Work."

Service-Learning

Service-Learning is considered to be a progressive method of instruction that affords students an opportunity to generate a deeper understanding of lecture topics by working on course-related issues that, when resolved, benefit their local communities (Williams, 2016, p. 64). Many researchers have explored the origins and evolution of Service-Learning in its various forms, and the literature is ripe with excellent reviews and position papers covering how fundamental Service-Learning theory and practice has changed with time. See, for example, Weigert (1998), Furco (2002), Kaye (2004), Cooper (2014), Lim and Bloomquist (2014), Bureau, Cole and McCormick (2014), Bennett, Sunderland, Bartleet and Power (2016), Bossaller (2016), and Fisher, Sharp and Bradley (2017).

Bennett, Sunderland, Bartleet and Power (2016) observed that many institutions of higher learning, especially within the United States, focus on the process of “institutionalizing” Service-Learning (p. 146). By “institutionalizing” they mean that the concepts of service and engagement within the community is promoted as an important cultural pillar by the organization as a whole, with opportunities for Service-Learning activities spread throughout the curriculum. Commensurate with such an approach are the underlying goals of providing sustainability to Service-Learning efforts that often transcend individual projects and result in more long-term benefits to the communities involved. Seemingly in contrast to this finding, the authors also note that many Service-Learning projects originate outside the scope of any direct overarching involvement by the college or university, but do transform into sustainable programs over the long run. Building of trust with community partners takes time, as does the development of programs where benefits are shared among all stakeholders involved (p. 147-148).

Institutions that have developed a strong Service-Learning culture tend to require student to participate in one or more such projects as part of their individual learning plans. This is the case at the author’s institution, THE University, where a minimum of one designated 3-credit Service-Learning course must be completed as a core requirement for graduation. As many degree programs at the university have developed or are considering the development of online offerings to attract a broader student base, the need to construct suitable online Service-Learning courses is increasing in importance. Online Service-Learning does, however, present

both opportunities and challenges to the historical norms of community partner-focused Service-Learning projects.

Introducing Service-Learning into a Leadership Course

Wagner and Pigza analyzed sources of potential congruence between leadership and Service-Learning, developing a series of five concepts worthy of discussion; intentionality, role of failure, participation, prerequisites of agency, and learning across cultures (Wagner & Pigza, 2016). Two of these concepts are particularly germane to the topic of designing meaningful Service-Learning opportunities for online learners.

First, concerning the authors' concept of intentionality, "the intention to contribute to the social good differentiates Service-Learning from other [leadership model] approaches (Wagner & Pigza, 2016, p. 11-12). Thus, a well-engineered Service-Learning project supplies added dimension to the theoretical study of leadership by providing a social relevance outcome that may be missing from other conceptual models under study. For online learners who often can be less engaged with their classmates and the instructor than their conventional lecture-based course peers, Service-Learning projects delivering a social-relevance outcome thereby offer distinct and well-framed opportunities to experience leadership in action.

Second, the authors' concept involving a prerequisite of agency as a necessary criterion for success serves as an essential warning that Service-Learning projects must not be entered into without establishing a proper context for the work (Wagner & Pigza, 2016, p. 12). Students must be prepared in advance to grasp the general conditions of the environment where they will perform their Service-Learning projects. Parameters including, but not limited to, an understanding of the history of the problem or issue to be addressed and the cultural norms and expectations of the community where the project work will occur must be carefully investigated and covered with students before projects begin. While certainly important for all students undertaking Service-Learning, this knowledge is of paramount importance to online learners who may, potentially, be less grounded in the communities where projects will take place. Without such knowledge learners may fail to engage effectively with their community partners, reducing the probability of successful project outcomes.

Wagner and Pigza provide an interesting sidebar to their five-concept model by stating that even when proper preparatory steps are well-

taken, students in traditional Service-Learning programs may not be involved in the critical preliminary steps of identifying a site for the project, learning how to build a partnership, and how to determine who should be involved in the overall project (Wagner & Pigza, 2016, p. 14). Leaving students out of these preliminary, but highly essential steps can result in a leader-centric approach being applied to the Service-Learning process as a whole. While possible to execute well, this approach can result in projects that appear to be too “canned” or “pre-arranged” to be satisfying to more inquisitive and self-motivated learners, such as many individuals that take courses online.

Where leadership-focused Service-Learning is highly successful, it is likely to involve a series of interrelated outcomes that center not only on fulfilling a critical community need, but also on developing an appreciation within students for some of the more strategic, long-term ideals of leadership. As observed by Wagner and Pigza, these ideal include an awareness of context, reciprocal participation with shared power among all project stakeholders, an examination of power and privilege that values multi-cultural perspectives, reflective practices through which participants strive to understand what has occurred in the program from a variety of viewpoints, and sustained engagement to offer elements of permanence and establish vested interest in long-term outcomes (Wagner & Pigza, 2016, p. 17). Readily differentiable from more tactical and executional aspects of most Service-Learning projects, these ideals underscore the desired characteristics of partnerships within the community as opposed to “one-time shot” projects that may be forgotten.

For maximum success in Service-Learning projects, instructors need to maintain a constant, but non-obstructive presence so that students remain focused on achieving the goals that were so carefully established at the beginning of project work. Failure to do so can result in a gradual eroding of project deliverables over time and the possibility of students transitioning from a collaborative, mutually beneficial learning relationship with their community partners to a situation where students are operating in a purely executional mode to accomplish discrete tasks and/or performing duties as “a pair of hands” as opposed to working as a contributing member of a beneficial project team.

One of the best ways to maintain an optimal Service-Learning environment, particularly for online learners where face-to-face communications are not the norm, is to require that students submit

informal project updates on a regular basis. As noted by Ricke (2008), submitting “field notes” on the Service-Learning experience provides a look at how well students are converting their classroom learnings into meaningful Service-Learning activities. Instructor-supplied feedback then offers an opportunity to provide project guidance through new questions to ask or data to seek out as part of the learning process (p. 14). If done with care and sensitivity to the important working relationship that the student has developed with his/her community partner, such feedback can correct small deviations in project progress before larger issues arise that could lead to frustration or even project abandonment.

The question of how frequently to request notes and assess progress has no uniform answer and is highly dependent on the nature of the project work involved and the normal communication streams occurring between students, community partners and the instructor. In her investigations that centered on helping students link a variety of theories to their Service-Learning work, Ricke found that collecting field notes midway through projects and at the end of projects was sufficient to provide the guidance and assessment needed to complement in-course discussions and other activities (p. 14-16). Her work involved traditional lecture-based course with Service-Learning components and was therefore well-structured to generate student comments on a routine basis. For online learning structures where direct contact and conversations between students and the instructor can be substantially less frequent, this author has found that specifically requesting and evaluating students’ progress on a more frequent basis adds considerable value. The exact number of contacts is variable in the context of the Service-Learning projects in progress, but a general guideline that has proven workable is to use a minimum of four-to-five checkpoints across a typical 14-15-week academic term. This level of contact is not intrusive to the student’s relationship with the community partner, but instead provides evidence of progress toward project goals plus a good indication of the student’s attitudes and engagement regarding the Service-Learning project as a whole.

The Issue of Academic Dishonesty

Situations involving academic dishonesty are far from foreign on university campuses. The degree to which students act in a dishonest manner regarding one or more of their course activities correlates with their perceptions of how such actions may or may not be tolerated by individual

professors and/or the institution as a whole (Tolman, 2017). If an institution is known as having a “cheating culture” with relatively few repercussions for students, instances of academic dishonesty, overall, tend to be more frequent (p. 580). That is not to say that individual professors are unable to establish and enforce policies that severely deal with academic dishonesty, but rather that taking a “zero tolerance” or “honor code” approach on an individual course basis may provide a greater deterrent to cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty than a general university policy that is weakly or inconsistently enforced (p. 583).

The prevalence of academic dishonesty in online courses is a topic of substantial current debate among educators. A majority of researchers agree that the opportunity for cheating is greater in online courses than in traditional lecture-based courses due to a number of factors such as less frequent direct contact between learners and instructors, the easy availability of “downloadable” papers and essays from the Internet, the ability of students to ask friends and relatives to take online exams for them and a variety of similar reasons (Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas & Davis, 2000; Lanier, 2006; Naude & Horne, 2006; Chiesl, 2007).

What is less clear from the literature is whether or not actual, demonstrable differences exist between cheating rates in the two course venues. Lanier (2006) provided a particularly comprehensive review of the topic as an introduction to his study comparing the prevalence of cheating between lecture-based and online courses at a large public university. Lanier’s results indicate that students in online course do cheat at a higher frequency than their lecture-based course peers, overall, and that the difference is statistically significant (pp. 251-252). Examining only the data from online learners, several demographic factors played important roles in determining a profile of students most likely to cheat. For example, Lanier determined that students with higher GPAs and older students are significantly less likely to cheat in online courses than their peers (pp. 253-256). Although not statistically significant, married students and female students as a whole were less likely to cheat than their male and/or single peers (p. 256). Similar results were reported by Naude and Horne (2006) when investigating the incidence of cheating in computer programming courses over a two-year period. Confining their investigations to self-reported thoughts on how easy it would be to cheat in an online course vs. a traditional lecture-based course, Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas

and Davis (2000) determined that both faculty and students believed that cheating online would be much easier.

These results are, however, not supported by other researchers such as Grijalva, Nowell and Kerkvliet (2006), Black, Greaser and Dawson (2008) and Spaulding (2009) all as analyzed and reported in the summary authored by Tolman (2017). The research conducted within these authors' works found no significant differences in the rate of cheating between online and lecture-based courses. While these discrepancies indicate that more research is needed to better understand actual instances and frequencies of cheating in online courses, it is safe to state that the *perception* of cheating as being of greater concern in online courses (as opposed to documented instances of cheating) is a popular, if anecdotal, position in the literature.

When Service-Learning Projects Go Bad....

An example from the author's experiences in offering online Service-Learning illustrates the importance of structuring projects to allow easy monitoring of progress and minimize the risk of academic dishonesty situations. In the early stages of offering online Service-Learning in a senior-level leadership course, students were allowed to propose their own projects. A team of two students suggested working with a local business to help collect donated goods within the community that would then be distributed through the business to people in need. The students provided a logical plan and paperwork from the manager of the business stating that he would be glad to serve as the community partner. Everything seemed fine, initially, with the students furnishing the required updates through a series of project memos. Statements from the business's manager corroborated the students' efforts. The problem was that no actual work was being accomplished. The plan unraveled when the instructor paid an unannounced visit to the business to deliver a thank-you card to the business's owner for allowing the students to participate in a Service-Learning project. The business's owner was totally surprised at the visit and stated that she knew nothing about the project. Upon investigation, it was determined that the manager was a close friend of the two students and had been "vouching" for work that never took place. While this situation could also have occurred in a lecture-based Service-Learning course, the fact that the course was online provided an added element of privacy for the students that facilitated their deception. The two students necessarily failed

the Service-Learning portion of their course grade as a result. This example underscores the importance of instructors being heavily involved in the development and origination of each Service-Learning project and the importance of frequent personal monitoring of project activities. Fortunately, the described situation represents an exception, rather than the norm, but it is still an indicator of the problems that can arise if online Service-Learning is not structured properly.

Where Online Learning and Service-Learning Come Together

The intersection of online learning and Service-Learning is an intriguing curricular space for study and development. On the one hand, offering Service-Learning to students in an online setting opens many opportunities for collaborative, community-focused learning that were largely reserved for their lecture-based course peers. It is congruent with the beliefs held by educators at many institutions that Service-Learning is a key aspect of students' development as engaged, contributing citizens of their communities and the world at large. On the other hand, the proper execution of online Service-Learning can fall victim not only to the difficulty of constructing projects suitable for online learners, but also to the added complication of the higher levels of academic dishonesty that tend to occur in an online environment.

Given these outwardly constraining factors, one might logically raise the question of whether or not online Service-Learning is worthwhile in today's collegiate setting. Based on a total of nearly fifteen years of experience in offering lecture-based students access to meaningful Service-Learning projects and six-plus years of doing so in online course sections, the position of this educator is an emphatic YES! The true issue is not whether or not to offer online Service-Learning, but rather how to do it in a manner that is meaningful to the students yet largely free from issues of academic dishonesty and related concerns that can permeate all forms of online learning to a lesser or greater degree. The guidelines presented here reflect twenty-plus years of creating, implementing, participating in, and evaluating Service-Learning projects, taking into account the needs and wants of community partners, students, and the university's administration. There is nothing even close to a "one-size-fits-all" approach, but there are "watch-outs" to avoid and fundamental practices to use that if carefully followed, will generate a high-quality mutually beneficial learning experience.

What Does Not Work Well

The list of “watch-outs” in online Service-Learning tends to be fairly short, but each bullet point below represents a possible source of difficulty.

- Attempting to have one Service-Learning project for all members of an online course section to perform concurrently. Students enroll in online courses for many reasons, but having the flexibility of time and/or place to complete all aspects of their studies tends to be critical. Requiring all students to coordinate their schedules to perform project activities together could have a significant impact on participation rates or even result in students dropping the course due to their inability to make a specific scheduling commitment.
- Allowing students to develop and pursue individual Service-Learning projects on their own. This approach is the diametric-opposite of the one immediately above. While key criteria for projects can be developed and shared with students ahead of time, the project ideas generated are not universally acceptable. Often, students select community partners based on what maybe convenient and do not focus their energy on selecting a situation amenable to true, collaborative Service-Learning. This approach even in the presence of great project ideas, is a huge logistical challenge for the instructor to manage. In a course of even modest enrollment, managing multiple Service-Learning opportunities at the same time can become a full-time job.
- Involving family, friends, and coworkers or supervisors. For best success, students involved in Service-Learning projects must be able to view them, participate in them, and respond to challenges that occur within them using a relatively unfiltered lens. Working with an organization where the student has prior personal relationships (friends and family) or work obligations (coworkers and supervisors) can provide inappropriate influences on project directions and outcomes. The possibility of academic dishonesty situations arising also increases when students work for or with people that they know well.

What Does Work Well

While successful online Service-Learning presents many challenges, there are fundamental practices to follow that can help ensure positive learning experience. Each item shown below, if applied correctly, can be highly beneficial.

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- All Service-Learning project opportunities should be thoroughly developed and vetted by the instructor, ideally in close collaboration with the proposed community partner. This is an important principle for successful Service-Learning in all situations, but it is particularly true for online Service-Learning where linkages between students and their community partners may be harder to manage. Community partners should be made aware that they will be working with online students if they choose to participate in a project and the potential difficulties in scheduling “in person” contact time with online students should be explained – not to scare away community partners, but rather to be realistic about students’ availability.
 - Students should be presented with a reasonable variety of Service-Learning projects and afforded the opportunity to select something that fits their interests and scheduling constraints in the best manner possible. While it is true that having multiple Service-Learning projects ready to go places an extra preparatory burden on the instructor, the end result of having online learners actively involved in projects that they have a choice in selecting substantially reduces the day-to-day stress and workload of managing students in project settings that are not amenable to their needs. To be clear, this is not to advocate setting up an unusually large number of concurrent projects, but there is value in offering, for example, three to four options, if feasible, so that students have a reasonable decision set from which to choose.
 - Offer an “off-site” Service-Learning option. If realistic to the course situation, it can be helpful to develop a Service-Learning project that does not require an online student to physically travel to a certain site to work with a community partner. For students living out of the immediate areas, students with severely inflexible work schedules, and/or disabled students that may find it virtually impossible to commute to any kind of community site, such options can mean the difference between being able to complete a Service-Learning course at all and having to otherwise alter their academic plans. (For an example of such an offering, see the Service-Learning course description provided below.)
 - Send details on the available Service-Learning projects before the course begins. Especially in situations where students are permitted to select between several different Service-Learning opportunities, there is merit in explaining the Service-Learning process and the available

choices a week or two before the course begins. Course rosters are typically available prior to the date that the course opens, so an explanatory e-mail from the instructor is a great way to broach the topic of Service-Learning and begin to get students thinking about what they would like to do. This is especially helpful in online courses where nearly all communications are electronic and students do not have the opportunity to listen to a Service-Learning project presentation by the instructor. Experience has shown that students frequently will correspond with the instructor ahead of the actual opening of the course to make their Service-Learning selections and obtain answers to any procedural questions that they may have.

- Be willing to monitor progress frequently, but unobtrusively. Service-Learning is a complex process and it is one that many students will be somewhat uncomfortable with at the initiation of a project. Some will view it as simply “putting in my hours” akin to a more conventional volunteer assignment that they may have had in another course. Similarly, some community partners new to the Service-Learning process may see student participants as “pairs of hands” rather than partners in solving important problems. Both situations are easier to address if identified early and that requires diligence on the part of the instructor to stay in communication with both students and community partners. Often, a bit of “coaching” will be needed on both sides to make sure that everyone is focused on goals and staying in alignment as the project move ahead. The time required, especially if initiated early in the project, will be well spent and will help to ensure not only the best learning outcome for the students involved, but also a highly satisfied community partner willing to participate again in the future.

Online Service-Learning in a Senior-Level Leadership Course

The online Service-Learning projects proposed and discussed here originated through the author’s efforts to upgrade a senior-level business course in fundamental leadership theory, skills, and practices to include a substantial Service-Learning component. The genesis of the course was a conventional lecture-based offering several years previous and it had been extensively modified in format, although not in deliverables, to fit an online delivery format as students’ needs and preferences for online instruction increased with time. The idea to include Service-Learning as part of the course curriculum was made in concert with THE University’s efforts to

increase Service-Learning opportunities for students across all disciplines of study. Additionally, no Service-Learning courses existed within the Commerce Department's programs of study. Thus, the challenge of incorporating Service-Learning into the leadership course involved not only moving toward Service-Learning in an online environment, but also establishing appropriate Service-Learning guidelines within a department where no such efforts were in place in either a traditional lecture-based or online setting.

As a matter of policy, the University requires all Service-Learning coursework to meet a set of strict criteria in order to earn an official Service-Learning designation. Originating from a slightly broader and less restrictive set of criteria for experiential learning courses in general, Service-Learning-designated courses include specific requirements to be met [insert link to Website after review]

Meeting these criteria for traditional lecture-based coursework requires time and effort, but it is a relatively straightforward process that is well-understood and frequently employed by faculty as part of their course design best practices. Such is not the case for faculty teaching online courses, however, where these same requirements necessitate some degree of re-interpretation to meet the different logistical challenges of the online learning environment.

At the time that work first began to introduce Service-Learning into the online leadership course, online Service-Learning coursework of any kind was virtually unknown at the University. Out of 49 officially designated Service-Learning course offerings, zero were taught online. Therefore, the rich learning experience offered by a well-thought-out Service-Learning project was unavailable to students taking their undergraduate degree programs online. Whether this situation resulted from a faculty perception of too many hurdles to jump to offer Service-Learning online, failed attempts to gain official status for online Service-Learning courses, or a combination of other factors is not known. However, the end result is that efforts described here represent the first successful attempt to produce a viable, THE University-approved Service-Learning course to be taught in a fully online format. As of the date of production of this manuscript, the online leadership course has been offered with a Service-Learning component a total of seven times. Qualitative data collected from students and from community-based Service-Learning partners, augmented by the personal observations of the author as course developer and instructor

serve to establish a detailed understanding of what challenges have arisen and how they were resolved to provide an optimized Service-Learning experience.

Overcoming Challenges Inherent in Online Service-Learning

The Primary challenge to success in online Service-Learning is the aforementioned issue of how to optimally connect learners with their Service-Learning partners when the former are geographically dispersed and, in many cases, are working a full-time job while attending school. The space and time hurdles can be formidable to cross using any form of standard Service-Learning approach. For example, creating projects that paired all students in a given course section with a community-based partner led to situations with scheduling meetings, scheduling actual work activities within the community, and overall difficulties in communications between all parties involved. Under circumstance of this type, satisfaction with both the process and the outcomes of a Service-Learning effort was understandably low for students and for community partners. This was, in turn, frustrating for the instructor as well since leading any form of a detailed Service-Learning effort requires substantial time investments at the planning stage and throughout the work. To end this effort with a dissatisfied community partner and/or students that believed their Service-Learning time to be of little tangible value reflects poorly on the university despite the best efforts of all parties involved.

Allowing the pendulum to swing fully to the other side of its arc, namely by giving online students permission and freedom to design their own Service-Learning projects from scratch proved equally problematic, but for very different reasons. Using this approach, even with carefully delineated instructions, online students had the tendency to seek out opportunities that aligned solely with their personal interests and/or were easy to set up and manage because they involved working with friends, family members, associates at their current places of employment, etc. This is not totally unexpected since the students were being exposed to Service-Learning theory and practice for the first time and did not necessarily grasp the true meaning of partnering with community organizations to identify and work on issues of importance to the greater good of the community as a whole.

Within the senior-level leadership course used as an example here, the Service-Learning project accounts for approximately 25% of the

students' grades. It is structured to take place across the academic term as a whole, beginning with a brief statement of understanding between the student and the community partner and ending with the student submitting a final report to the community partner in exchange for the partner's evaluation of the success of the project. After some initial experimentation, the author settled on offering a slate of four different Service-Learning opportunities each time that the course is taught, with one of the opportunities always being an option that could be completed entirely over the Internet – in alignment with the bulleted criteria previously discussed. In the current iteration of the course, the following community partners and projects are in play.

- “Animal Friends” in THE, Ohio. This is an animal rescue organization where students walk dogs, play with cats, and other animal-related activities. Students also work with potential pet adopters to collect and furnish information and to teach how to care for pets. The Animal Friends website is www.animalfriendshs.org.
- “Hamilton Urban Garden Systems or HUGS” in THE, Ohio. This is an organization that grows food to feed the low-income and homeless and where students will do manual labor planting food, cleaning garden plots, pulling weeds, etc. In past semesters, students doing an exceptional job for HUGS have been offered opportunities to chair fundraisers and also become members of the HUGS board. The HUGS website is www.hamiltonurbangardens.com.
- “An Association for Business Technology Educators.” This group of business technology educators needs students to create professional social media content libraries to assist with ongoing marketing and other similar activities. This project is possible to accomplish fully over the Internet, making it especially attractive to students who are unable to travel to the other Service-Learning sites. The Business Technology Educators website is www.obta-ohio.org.
- “Countryside YMCA,” THE, Ohio. Students work with YMCA staff to mentor and coach youth in the community, assist in program management and coordinate special events at Countryside, the country's largest YMCA. The Countryside YMCA website is <https://countrysideymca.org>.

Service-Learning Projects should be designed to be mutually beneficial for the community partner and for the leadership student(s). Typically, a well-structured Service-Learning project can assist a community partner in several ways. Over the semester, each student is expected (unless otherwise noted in the initial memo of understanding) to provide the community partner with written materials and photographs of the student team and/or individual student in action. The amount of time that each student will need for supervision will depend on the Service-Learning project selected.

In return for his/her time and effort of 15 hours minimum over the semester, each student comes away from the Service-Learning project with an evaluation form and a recommendation letter that must be turned in by the community partner prior to the end of the semester. Each student receives course points based on the content of the evaluation and letter, along with the instructor's personal evaluation of the work product generated.

Numerous possibilities exist related to the creation of Service-Learning projects. Service-Learning projects could involve ways that an organization can design and/or change a work process such as developing a new product/service, attracting new and/or retaining current customers, or even outlining a set of action plans to organize and implement new training needs/wants of existing employees or for new employees. Organizational events could involve activities such as conducting a small bench-marking study for a manager looking to start or expand a new business, planning an event to encourage team member bonding, planning a farewell party for a retiring employee, or a welcome get-together for the new boss or new employee, or even, hosting a meal for needy families and/or for others in the community. Some examples of past Service-Learning projects that have been successful in the leadership course are provided in the table below.

Successful Service-Learning Projects from a Senior-Level Leadership Course

Project	Suitable For		
	Single Students	Student Teams	Both
Survey of donor needs and wants for SPCA	Y		
Planning/execution of a large retirement dinner		Y	
Casual dinner/dance for home for disabled adults		Y	
Office of Diversity Affairs sponsored talent show		Y	
Food innovation study for a struggling restaurant			Y
Children’s Hosp. fundraiser and sports coaching			Y
Stress reduction activities for students during finals		Y	
Website creation for a community newspaper	Y		
Website and social media creation for business	Y		
Online menu creation for charitable food service	Y		
Website and social media for volunteer fire dept.	Y		
Social media content library for a local charity	Y		

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work

Service-Learning is a viable educational process for online learning situations, just as it is in traditional lecture-based course settings. With proper care, attention to procedural details, and a little extra diligence to minimize the risk of academic dishonesty, online instructors can provide a high-quality, community-focused learning experience to their students that meets the same goals and objectives as typically are found in traditional lecture-based Service-Learning courses. Due to the wide variability of schedules, locations and other factors affecting online learners, the

availability of Service-Learning projects that learners can complete individually and/or can complete via the Internet will help maximize student success.

In terms of future work, it should be stressed that the examples and guidelines presented here are based on twenty-plus years of practical experience in developing and implementing Service-Learning activities and projects within an undergraduate curriculum. Moving forward, it would be helpful to examine differences in traditional vs. online Service-Learning under carefully controlled conditions, such as parallel sections of a given course – one taught in a traditional lecture-based format and one taught online. Data collection over a two-to-three semester timeframe would likely provide a rich source of information that could include students' perceptions of their Service-Learning success, structured feedback from community partners, instructor evaluations of students' work product, etc. Such information would likely further assist instructors as they strive to optimize Service-Learning opportunities for students across all educational platforms.

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Biography

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