

Service Learning Certification (SLC) Summary

Introduction and Background

The Service Learning Certification (SLC) is one of the three Premiere Learning Experiences for KU undergraduates proposed to the Kansas Board of Regents Performance Indicators. These also include the Global Awareness Program (GAP) and Thematic Learning Communities (TLC), and the Research Experience Program (REP).

In 2001 the Office of the Provost appointed a Working Group for the Implementation of a University-wide Service Learning Program. This group outlined what an effective service learning program was and recommended the funding of a Center for Service Learning to support faculty efforts to include service as part of their teaching. In July of 2005, with the support of student representatives, the Center for Service Learning was funded and the search for a faculty director will begin shortly.

Service Learning Certification will be coordinated through the new Center for Service Learning, located at 704 W. 12th Street (Pinet House), and focuses on the following objectives:

- Increase the opportunities for students to explore community service as a method of gaining increased understanding of classroom material, with the primary emphasis being on learning and the vehicle for that learning is service.
- Provides a process by which a student who engages in significant service learning experiences can note that on the student's academic transcript via a formal process of certification by the Center for Service Learning and an academic department.
- Increase support and resources for faculty who want to use community service as a method of engagement in the teaching and learning of classroom material.

The Process of Certification in Service Learning

The Service Learning Certification experience outlined below includes four components designed to demonstrate that students have met the service learning experience criteria specified by the Working Group. The first component, *Classroom Experience*, emphasizes academic coursework that involves service learning as a method of engaging the course material. The second component, *Directed Readings* (assigned by the Center for Service Learning), focuses on basic knowledge of the principles of service learning and community engagement. The third component, *Independent Service Learning Experience*, emphasizes the application of principles of service learning to an independent project. The fourth component, *Integrated Reflection* is a major written piece, designed to integrate the directed experiences in the classroom, the Independent experience, and the directed theoretical reading. The goal is to ultimately make this learning public in the form of a student portfolio that is web based. These components follow the model of the Global Awareness Program (GAP) and the Research Experience Program (REP) in their inclusion of both coursework and independent projects /experiences outside the classroom.

On the completion of the final reflection a student will submit a portfolio of work documenting the four components of the certification process.

In order to complete a SLC, a KU undergraduate would be required to complete all four components.

Component 1: Classroom Experience

A student must complete a course that includes service learning as a specific component of the class. A list of approved classes may be found on the Center for Service Learning website.

Note: Since the list of classes change frequently, a student may petition the department or school to have a course included on the list. Upon recommendation of the department chair or dean, a class may be recognized as a service learning class.

Component 2: Directed Readings

The Center for Service Learning will assign a set of directed readings that address principles of service learning. The student will be expected to comment on those readings in the final reflection paper.

Component 3: Independent Project

The student must submit a *Project Proposal* to the Center for Service Learning. This could be for work completed within the 12 months prior to submitting the proposal or for work that is planned. Students will demonstrate that they have completed their project by compiling a portfolio of their work that documents their service.

The student must focus on:

- A community problem. The student will attempt to generate a substantive understanding of the problem and take action which may lead to a solution, or
- An underserved population. The student will attempt to generate a substantive contribution that will meet the needs of the population.

A student will show evidence of work in one of three ways and by filling out and submitting the Project Report.

Component 4: Reflection

A structured written reflection of 8-10 pages will be submitted with the Student Portfolio and Checklist by the last day of finals to be considered for certification in that semester. There are included in the Student Portfolio and Checklist a number of reflection questions to use as a guide.

Administration of SLC

- Center for Service Learning Director/Staff. This individual will work with departments/programs to identify SLC courses, maintain the approved SLC course list on the SLC web site, and certify completed SLCs to the Registrar's office for notation on students' transcripts.
- Departments/Programs. Departments/Programs will be responsible for: (1) designating a faculty member to serve as the unit's SLC Contact for the SLC Director, (2) identifying the courses in their curriculum which could be used to meet the Service Learning component of the SLC. The department SLC Contact should provide the SLC Coordinator with a list of the department's SLC courses.
- Students. Students will be responsible for planning and completing their SLC program in consultation with the Center for Service Learning. Students should submit the completed portfolio form and a transcript to the Center for Service Learning Office, Pinet House, 704 W. 12th Street, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66044.
- SLC Courses. Courses approved by departments for meeting the requirements of Component 1 will be posted on the Center for Service Learning web site. The Center for Service Learning will work with department SLC contacts to keep this list current.