Faculty Development for Service-Learning: One Size Does Not Fit All

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Abstract
This conference presentation describes the development of the professional development continuum currently being used at Virginia Commonwealth University to build the faculty’s capacity for teaching high-quality service-learning courses. Our professional development continuum was developed over the past 5 years by the staff of the VCU Service-Learning Office and was informed by program evaluation data, the principles of adult learning theory, and an “exposure-experience-expertise” developmental framework. The continuum targets instructors at varying levels of service-learning knowledge and experience so that faculty instructors with more service-learning experience participate in different professional development opportunities than do instructors who are new to the pedagogy.

Keywords
service-learning, community engagement, community, higher education, faculty, faculty development, VCU, service, community

Disciplines
Higher Education

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Faculty Development for Service-Learning: Once Size Does Not Fit All

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Theme I
Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

Theme II
Attain distinction as a fully integrated urban, public research university through contributions in human health, research, scholarship and creative expression that advance knowledge and enhance the quality of life.

Theme III
Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact.
• **Mission** – To mobilize university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepare the engaged citizens of tomorrow.

• **Vision** – VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together, changing lives.

• **Structure/Organization** –
  • Housed within the academic affairs arm of the university, in the Provost’s Office.
  • Led by a vice provost who reports directly to the university provost.
  • Employs 24 full-time staff members who are experts in community engagement.
  • Organized into program areas that work to improve both the quality and quantity of community-engaged research, community-engaged teaching/learning, and community-engaged service/outreach.
  • Community-engaged teaching/learning includes the Service-Learning Office and the VCU ASPiRE Living-Learning Program
VCU DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES

EXPOSURE
Strategies designed to introduce engagement concepts to individuals who are primarily involved in traditional research, teaching and service practices

EXPERIENCE
Strategies designed to support individuals and collaborations that are in the early stages of university-community partnership work

EXPERT
Strategies designed to deepen the work of individuals and collaborations that are experienced in university-community partnership work
Not Your Grandfather’s Professoriate!

**Traditionalists:** (born 1900 – 1945) ≥70 yrs old; ≈5% of work force; respect authority, hard work, company first, pay your dues, values family/community.

**Boomers:** (born 1946-1960) 55-69 yrs old; ≈45% of work force; workaholic; idealistic, competitive, multi-taskers, optimistic; values success.

**Gen Xers** (born 1961-1979) 36-54 yrs old; ≈40% of work force; strives for work-life balance, work smarter/not longer, skeptical, self-reliant, pragmatic, flexible, values time.

**Millenials** (born 1977-1998) 17-38 yrs old, ≈10% of work force; ambitious, tenacious, entrepreneurial, optimistic, sociable, want immediate results, values individuality.

A sea change in the workplace is underway!

For the next 15 years, Boomers will be turning 65 at a rate of 10,000/day.

Develop a continuum of professional development activities that...

- Take into account the faculty members’ motivations & previous experiences.
- Emphasize the ‘why’ of training at the outset, not just the ‘what’ and ‘how’.
- Encourage faculty members to support each other. Create allies not pupils!
- Include topics of immediate relevance to faculty members’ professional lives.
- Incorporate active and varied learning activities (e.g., group work, discussions)
- Are flexible in time and level of commitment (i.e., allow self-direction).
- Provide immediate feedback.
- Involve laughter and fun!

VCU SERVICE-LEARNING OFFICE

LEVEL ONE: EXPOSURE - ACTIVITIES THAT INTRODUCE

- **Website and Social Media Presence**
  - VCU has created engaging and informative websites that describe all service-learning funding and training programs; we collect high-quality photos and tell our success stories on multiple formats (Facebook, Twitter).

- **Two-Day Service-Learning Institute**
  - The VCU Service-Learning Office initially offered its 2-day institute twice a year, now only in May; open to administrators, faculty, and graduate students; no requirement to teach with SL.

- **New Partnerships Awards Program**
  - Funding to help new SL instructors build a sustained and deep relationship with one or more community partners; instructor and partner work together throughout the year with facilitation from SL Office staff.

- **Monthly Conversation Cafes**
  - Small gatherings of interested individuals; open to all; DCE staff lead a discussion of videos, magazine and journal articles of current interest (e.g., student advocacy).

- **Consultation with Service-Learning Office Staff**
  - Faculty and administrators may contact Service-Learning Office staff to meet face-to-face or receive advice by email anytime.

- **Service-Learning Lending Library**
  - Books, videos, and journals available for loan

- **Service-Learning Class T-Shirt Give Away Contest**
  - Free t-shirts, which show the SL tagline and website URL, are given to SL classes that are active during that semester; photo of class working in t-shirts required; used as a campus public awareness strategy.
VCU SERVICE-LEARNING OFFICE

LEVEL TWO: EXPERIENCE - ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT

- **Adjunct Faculty Support**
  - Financial support for VCU adjunct instructors to attend training activities such as the Institute and Spring Workshop.

- **Spring Service-Learning Workshop**
  - Free half-day training workshop for service-learning instructors on a service-learning related topic.

- **Project Small Grants**
  - Mini-grants to instructors of service-learning courses to support the implementation of the class; may be used for materials, equipment, etc.

- **New Service-Learning Instructor Mentoring**
  - All Institute participants are matched with an experienced SL instructor or SL Office staff member who checks in with them once a month for the next two semesters.

- **Orientation Videos for Students**
  - Series of four short videos that introduce VCU students to best practices for volunteering in the community; SL Office operates a Bb site to administer and quiz students if instructor wants to add these videos as a class requirement.

- **Service-Learning Teaching Assistant Program**
  - SL instructors may nominate a student to serve as their TA; student TAs receive course credit (no pay) to provide 5 hours/week TA assistance and receive monthly group supervision from the SL Office staff.
VCU SERVICE-LEARNING OFFICE

LEVEL THREE: EXPERT - ACTIVITIES THAT DEEPEN

- **Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program**
  - One- to two-year paid fellowship for experienced service-learning instructors; aims to support fellow’s scholarship; fellows assist with Institute and with expanding service-learning in their own or related academic units.

- **Conference Travel Grants**
  - Funding to support service-learning instructors’ attendance at professional conferences to present their research/scholarship related to service-learning.

- **Service-Learning Advisory Council**
  - Advisory group of faculty members, administrators, students and community partners; meets twice a year to provide advise to SL Office staff and to receive updates from the SL Office staff; members are required to provide at least one informational presentation about VCU service-learning to key audiences; SL Office staff provide a variety of ‘plug & play’ Powerpoint slide presentations to be used for these presentations.

- **Established Partnerships Awards Program**
  - Funding to help service-learning class instructors deepen their relationship with one or more community partners (e.g., community-engaged research); instructor and partner work together throughout the year with facilitation from SL Office staff.
Key Principles for Service-Learning Professional Development Success

**Adult Learners are Active Learners** – no ‘talking heads’ trainings!

**Evaluate and Assess What You Do** – collect actionable data every year on what’s working and what’s not working. Take time to link your findings to next year’s offerings!

**Read and Flex to Changing Circumstances** – be willing to increase/decrease the size of the budgets for each activity based on your assessment data and the level of service-learning institutionalization. Use your funding to incentivize faculty to move along the continuum (e.g., Project Grants available only once/course, Travel Grants available for scholarship)

**Partner and Collaborate with Others** – with campus administrative offices (social media/website, evaluation), with nearby Universities (institutes, workshops)

**Train and Retain Competent Student Workers** – good student workers can manage the administration of basic initiatives (e.g., T-shirt Give Away Contest, Lending Library, logistics for gatherings)
All of these activities are described on our websites.

www.servicelearning.vcu.edu
www.community.vcu.edu