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for Community-based Service Learning & Community Service Studies



# Community Partners Manual



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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS MANUAL

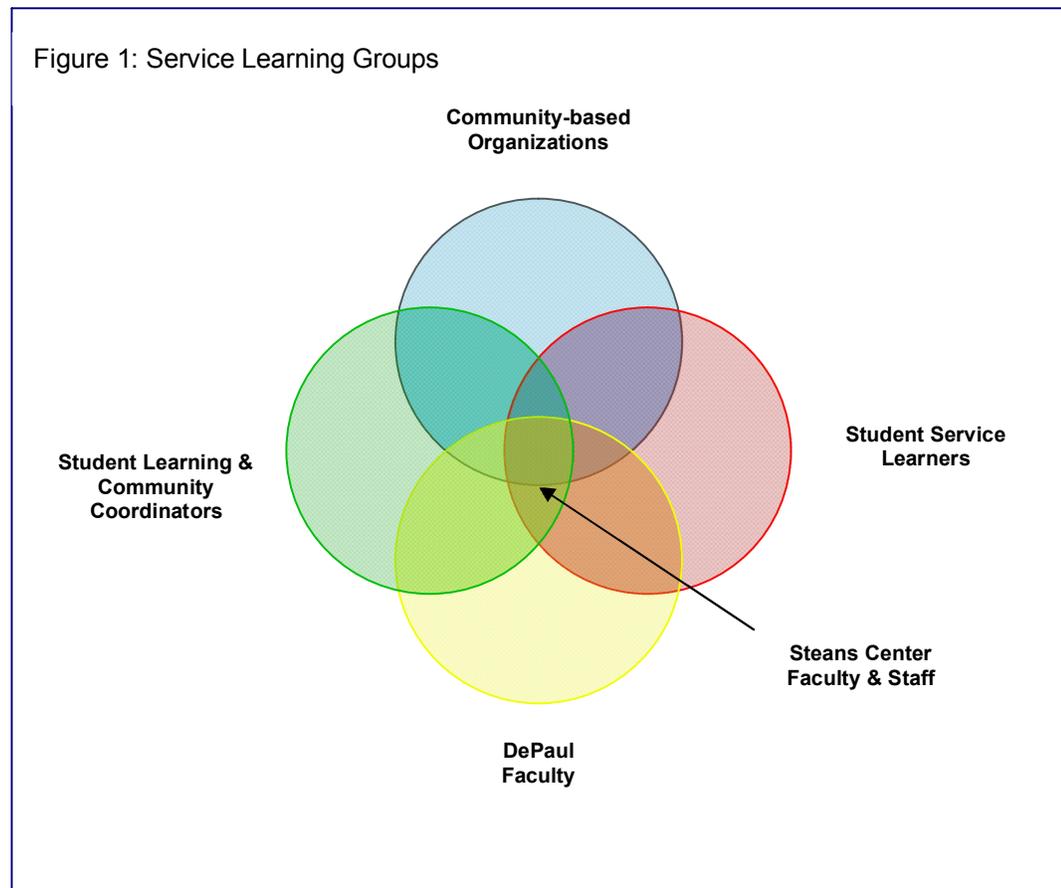
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## I. Executive Summary

Three words, “Engage, Partner and Reflect” explain our work at the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning. We engage organizations, faculty, student service learners and student coordinators in experiences directly linked to building social justice. We create partnerships between the campus and community-based organizations so DePaul University students may participate in service learning at the community level. We encourage reflection so students contemplate service and shift into action concerning community issues.

Chicago is rich with community organizations and agencies who achieve honorable work on a daily basis. This document is a tool for people within these organizations who consider entering a service learning partnership with DePaul University or already work within one. In Figure One below, the groups who participate in service learning collaboration and their interrelationships are represented.



## II. Steans Center Mission for Community-based Service Learning

### A. Mission Statement

The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides educational opportunities to DePaul students that are based in Vincentian community values. The Center seeks to develop mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships with community organizations. We believe these partnerships will foster a sense of social agency in our students through enrollment in Community-based Service Learning (CbSL) courses, community internships and placements and community-based student employment.

### B. Central Purposes and Objectives

Our mission is central to the Vincentian, Catholic and Urban mission of DePaul University. The Center has a preferential option for the poor, marginalized, excluded, oppressed, exploited, disenfranchised, ignored and under-served. This notion involves a focused choice on the part of faculty, staff, alumni and students to work with all groups of people who experience health, racial and ethnic, gender and class differences. Central purposes which guide work at the Steans Center include:

#### STEANS CENTER CENTRAL PURPOSES:

- ✘ Promoting changes in the quality of life of all people to ensure equal opportunity and fair access to resources that satisfy basic human needs of housing, health, education, employment, safety and a livable environment.
- ✘ Creating an intellectual and social environment where a plurality of world views, cultures and value systems are respected, understood, encouraged and appreciated.
- ✘ Encouraging an environment where students and community are empowered to become active participants in shaping a more equitable, egalitarian and livable world.
- ✘ Promoting the concept that with service and assistance, people can realize their own abilities to resolve issues that they thought themselves incapable of overcoming.
- ✘ Supporting education programs and practices that are egalitarian, equitable and effective for a diverse group of students, faculty, staff and communities.
- ✘ Addressing issues of personal and community empowerment, critical knowledge, ethical values and the realization of participatory democracy.
- ✘ Developing with students, faculty, staff, alumni and community a reciprocal, mutual and trusting process to understand community needs, cultures and resources within the broader social context that addresses power relations.

Objectives for community-based service learning involve creating an experience that includes supervision, monitoring, support, recognition and evaluation to meet the above purposes. Objectives should include:

**STEANS CENTER OBJECTIVES:**

- ✘ A non-classroom experience that provides needed service to individuals, organizations, schools or other entities in Chicago communities.
- ✘ A reflection of the values and commitments contained in the Community-based Service Learning Mission Statement.
- ✘ A relationship to the subject matter of the course and knowledge that informs the service practice.
- ✘ Basic expectations for the amount of service students must perform.
- ✘ Activities that incorporate reflecting critically on service experience.
- ✘ Recognition of the needs of service recipients and opportunity for community organization to participate in the evaluation of services.
- ✘ Opportunities aimed at civic responsibility development and consideration of individual and peer perspectives about the service involvement.

Desired outcomes associated with these purposes and objectives include but are not limited to students developing an appreciation of the socio-political and historical context of the community organization, relating course concepts to the service and appreciating the role of diversity within the community. Taking action toward achieving social justice plays a central role in these outcomes.

People define social justice in numerous ways. For purposes of this document, the concept of social justice has seven central themes:

- ✘ The Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- ✘ Call of Family, Community and Participation
- ✘ Rights and Responsibilities
- ✘ Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- ✘ The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- ✘ Solidarity
- ✘ Care for God’s Creation

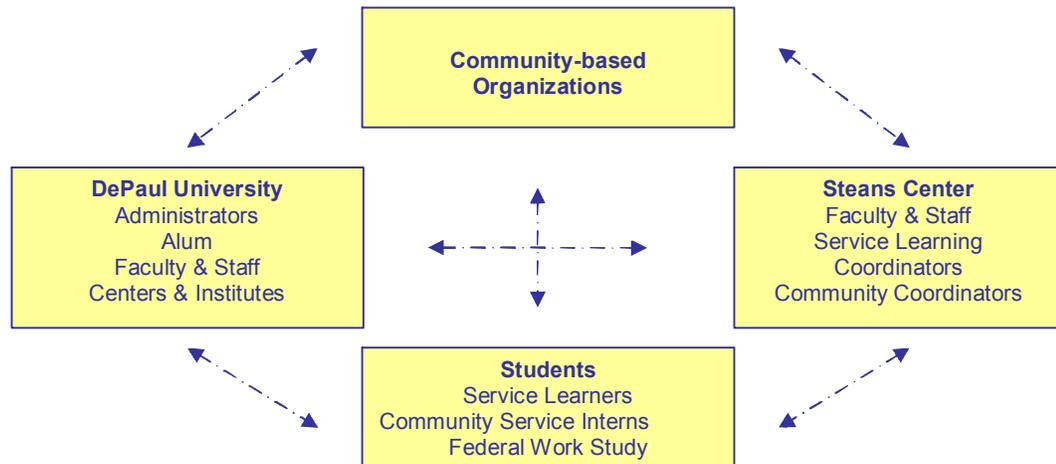
(Excerpt from a speech made by NCEA President Patricia A. McGuire, April 28, 2000 entitled “Whose ‘Broad Stripes and Bright Stars?’ Catholic Social Justice and Civic Engagement”)

### III. Context for Service Learning

#### A. Organizational Norms

Service learning involves students providing service that addresses community needs and social problems as a concrete basis for experiential education. Community-based service learning entails relationships between four key groups as shown in Figure 2. At the Steans Center, we believe partnership building with community-based organizations is essential to forming reciprocal service learning success stories. *Social justice* is the *most critical* element of our success. We search for common ground between service learners and community partners. We strive to see both groups benefit from the process and produce results furthering the social justice cause in Chicago communities.

Figure 2: Community-Campus Relationships



Work quality generated by service learners is a shared responsibility between these four groups. We value engagement work between faculty, students and community organizations and respect the resulting open dialogue. Shared norms at the Steans Center involve faculty, staff and coordinators placing foremost value in individual dignity, equality, community, freedom, justice, respect for differences and civility.

To reach common ground as a basis for our work we also seek to understand the expectations, norms, cultures and traditions of community members with whom we work. As we place significance upon individual dignity and respect for differences, matters of diversity naturally appear in situations that occur during service learning experiences. Consequently, another organizational norm includes encouragement of student curiosity rather than judgmental observation.

Cross-cultural work presents students with situations they may never have experienced prior to service involvement. Service learning positively has the potential to promote learning that is “Multicultural, Gender-Fair and Disability Aware” (Cairn 1993). In a negative sense, it also has the potential to reinforce stereotypes and biases. In Chicago, a place extremely rich in diversity, the Steans Center seeks to develop the positive side of service learning by keeping an honest dialogue with all groups involved. Instructors and community organization representatives alike are encouraged to maintain open discussions about race, gender, class, language barriers and other diversity issues.

In connecting the community and campus environments, contrasting normative perspectives emerge. *Shared* norms related to structural inequalities and equity issues may be rare. For example, Faculty members or students at DePaul may hold different views about power than do contacts and clients at community organizations. The Steans Center desires to propel service learning participants beyond the acknowledgement phase of these differences. We promote action in participants that transforms society in positive ways.

To successfully build campus and community organization partnerships, the Steans Center sees that we must first understand differences. Highlighted in Table 1 are some of these historical differences, identified as ‘sticking points’ in a paper titled “Education and Community Building: Connecting Two Worlds.” These points are neither positive nor negative judgments; rather normative differences that we acknowledge may exist.

Table 1: Connecting Education and Community

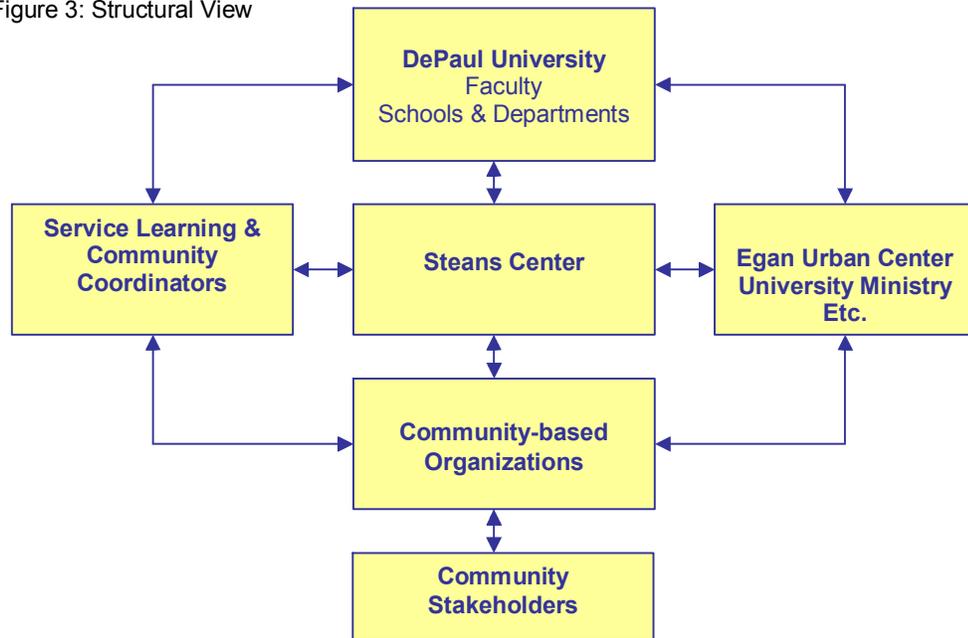
Sticking Points	Educational Campus	Community
<b>Organizational Culture</b>	Complex, hierarchical	Smaller, more fluid
<b>Leadership</b>	Authority vested in certain position; focus inside school	Relationship-based; beyond organization and in it.
<b>Perspective on Schooling</b>	Emphasize classroom based academic learning	Emphasize all competencies needed for success
<b>Accountability</b>	Most accountable public institution in society	Efforts not subject to routine scrutiny
<b>Power, race, class</b>	Focus on institutional sources of power	People as primary source of power
<b>Collaboration and Conflict</b>	Focus on collaboration; conflict means something has gone wrong	Use both collaboration and conflict to make change

## B. Structure, Roles and Definitions

Establishment of the Steans Center occurred so DePaul University could incorporate a service culture into the institutional infrastructure. The Center exists to support service learning incorporation into courses within any school of the University. Possible courses vary widely and may range in topics such as business ethics, art, computer technology, spirituality, English or peace studies.

A structural view of organizational relationships in Figure 3 provides insight into how we operate at the Steans Center. We serve in a coordinative role between community agencies and various groups on the DePaul campus in order to support service learning opportunities. Arrows represent the collaborative efforts that take place before, during and after course transitions in an academic year that is split into three 10-week quarters (Fall, Winter, Spring) and two five-week summer sessions.

Figure 3: Structural View



Organizationally, the Steans Center consists of a nine member full-time team: an Executive Director, an Associate Director, an Operations Director, two Assistant Directors, and four Program Coordinators. The Directors also serve as DePaul Faculty and instruct classes. Additional staff members include three graduate assistants for the Assistant Directors, approximately 15 service learning coordinators and five community coordinators. The primary collective role of all Steans Center faculty and staff is to support service learning development.

Specifically, the Executive Director is responsible for Center-University relationship and seeks funding for the Center; the Associate Director manages overall Center operations and ensures mission implementation. The Assistant Director for Academic Development oversees faculty involvement, academic requirements and schedule planning for each quarter. The Assistant Director for

Community Development primarily identifies existing opportunities for service learning and builds partnerships with community organizations. Two of the Program Coordinators, the Community Development Coordinator and the Student Development Coordinator assist with supporting the organizations and the students in their service learning relationship.

The Assistant Directors manage and mentor the Service Learning and Community Coordinators respectively. The Operations Director ensures smooth daily operations of the Center. Service Learning and Community Coordinators serve as links between course instructors, the community organizations and students engaged in service learning.

Roles that the Steans Center faculty and staff may assume in the service learning process include, but are not limited to the following definitions:

**Roles for Steans Center Faculty and Staff:**

- ✘ Recruiting new agencies to participate in service learning with DePaul University.
- ✘ Providing faculty, students and community agencies with guidelines to insure a clear understanding between the participants about their rights and responsibilities.
- ✘ Meeting with community agency contacts to negotiate student placements.
- ✘ Preparing informational databases that describe service learning sites and student service activities.
- ✘ Assisting in the orientation of students to the community setting.
- ✘ Acting as liaison between faculty members and agency contacts.
- ✘ Fielding difficulties that service learners encounter at their sites.
- ✘ Assisting with transportation for service learners.

**C. Parity**

Reflective of the norms we emphasize at the Steans Center, parity is a vital part of building and sustaining campus and community partnerships. Reciprocal sharing of resources, expertise and knowledge between faculty and our community partners benefits all involved. Therefore, we encourage respect for community contacts by seeing authentic value in their contributions to the service learning process. We respect the interests and capacities of communities involved and strive for equality in relationships between DePaul students, faculty, staff, agency contacts and service recipients.

In a Monologue from a Campus Compact Community Summit held in September 2002 called *Building Partnerships with College Campuses: Community Perspectives*, community partners stressed the significance of parity. According to some of the partners, negative effects of community/campus interactions “come from the inability or unwillingness to directly address issues of privilege, oppression and power as they play out in local and broader settings” (13). Unspoken issues related to privilege, class and race can create undercurrents that erode relationships. When these issues remain undisclosed, it is more likely that assumptions are made and stereotypes are reinforced. We hold ourselves, along with our community partners, responsible for including these issues in ongoing open discussions.

#### IV. Community-based Organization and Campus Partnerships

##### A. Civic Purpose of Higher Education

At the Steans Center we promote a civil society wherein students not only understand but also act upon civic responsibilities and social justice causes. In the Campus Compact Monograph mentioned previously, community partners “expressed a deep interest in the civic purposes of higher education” (2002, 10). Partners at this community summit clearly stated that demands placed on their organizations were less justifiable if the campus partnership was not aimed at the goal of civic education.

The four service categories that DePaul students engage in show a high level of civic purpose: advocacy, development, direct service and research. Examples of student and agency work in these categories may include community organizing (advocacy), grant writing (development), tutoring (direct service) and ethnographic surveying (research). These actions should not only facilitate knowledge, but emphasize action around making change occur. Critical issue areas wherein we focus service energy are included in the next section.

Through development of quality on-going relationships with community-based organizations, we create an environment where cumulative progress will occur in students and communities. Progress measurement involves the qualitative aspects of students’ civic contributions. Personal and professional development in terms of civic values and responsible behavior in the community context add considerable value to a DePaul student’s college education.

##### B. Partnership Goals in Community Focus

A Steans Center purpose as mentioned in Section II is to support people in realizing *their own abilities* to resolve issues. This purpose compels our aspiration to increase capacity at a community level. With increased capacity, a community itself may better address needs at a systemic level. We believe in the power of people working in their own communities. We also believe in the power of organizations’ advocating for local, regional, national and international causes. The definition of community widely varies and students may enter the spectrum at different points.

On May 14, 2004, the Steans Center hosted a Community Development Institute with ten local community partners. To highlight input received at this event, listed below are a few key points made by partners about relationship goals:

- ✘ Make results worth the work it takes and benefit the organization;
- ✘ Create a bilateral relationship, with respect and trust for both sides;
- ✘ Maintain a reciprocal partnership where community and campus members both learn from each other; and
- ✘ Provide opportunities for expanding the relationship.

In responding to this valuable input, our primary partnership goal involves respect for community-based organizations as equal partners and a desire to create reciprocal benefit resulting in community capacity building and student development. To create meaningful results from service learning partnerships, a few key elements require attention before beginning and also while sustaining relationships. The list below shows these elements:

**ELEMENTS OF A GOOD PARTNERSHIP:**

- These elements represent a minimum for successful partnership.
- ✘ Faculty and student participation in engagement activities.
  - ✘ An understanding of each partner’s assets and capacities to participate.
  - ✘ Shared decision making and resource allocation.
  - ✘ Realistic expectations.
  - ✘ Knowledge of community assets – understanding of how theoretical and macro issues (like homelessness and K-12 schooling) play out locally.
  - ✘ Diverse representation and participation from departments: including faculty, students, administration and staff.
  - ✘ An understanding of students’ capacities.
  - ✘ An understanding of different ways to work in communities.
  - ✘ Adherence to basic standards for planning, using another’s resources and interacting with another’s base of legitimacy.

Source: *Community Summit Monograph, 2002*

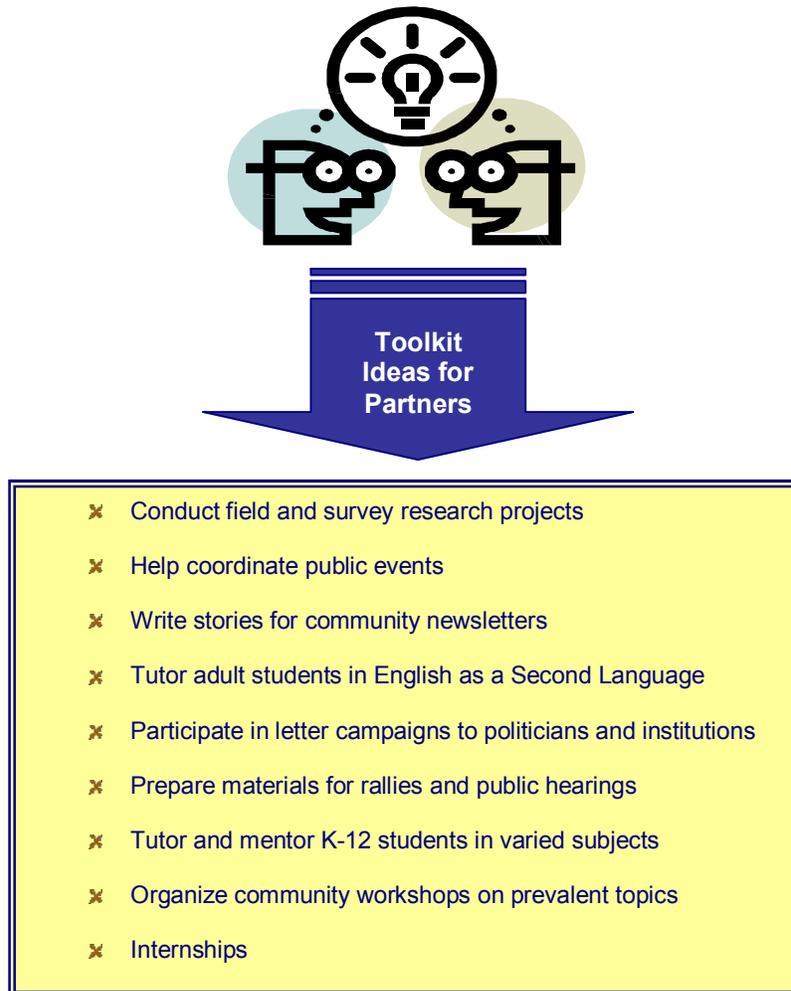
The community focus of our partnership work is evident in the list of issues around which we develop service learning opportunities. Critical issue areas we work to address with faculty, service learners and community partners include:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Housing and Gentrification        | Labor                            |
| Homelessness                      | Employment Training              |
| Youth and Education               | Digital Divide                   |
| Community Health Issues           | Justice and the Law              |
| Adult Education and Development   | Women and Violence               |
| Immigrants and Immigration        | Refugees and Resettlement Issues |
| Small Business/ Micro- Enterprise | Community Art                    |
| Community Environmental           | Animal Welfare                   |

### C. ‘Toolkit’ Examples

A toolkit may offer an in-depth look at methods for engaging service learners in community work or provide a broad brush stroke of activity ideas. This section provides the latter. A few generic examples of student activities within community-based organizations in the 2003-2004 academic year are shown below:

Figure 4: Student Activities



Through engagement in these activities together, students and partners develop tools that help organizations accomplish their mission. Planning and collaboration between Steans Center staff, faculty and our community partners prior to the beginning of class is vital to the success of overlapping course objectives with enhancing our partners’ missions. A group of service learners’ experience and knowledge levels must also be taken into account before activities are developed. The tools needed for implementing these activities may include simple steps, templates and resources which Steans Center staff can provide for organizations.

#### D. Benefit and Cost Acknowledgement

Many important considerations are involved for a community organization to enter a community-campus partnership. The Steans Center acknowledges that benefits and costs are associated with facilitating service learning at the community level. Non-profit agencies often deal in a realm of scarce resources. The question of resource allocation is definitely a serious one. The following checklist functions as a good mental consideration about organizational capacity and resources as related to entering a service learning partnership.

#### SERVICE LEARNING CAPACITY CHECKLIST:

- ✗ Do you provide service for the underserved?
- ✗ Do you have a respectable reputation among the community that they are in or within the service industry that they work?
- ✗ Is the organization willing to support students within DePaul's academic quarter system?
- ✗ Is the organization accessible via public transportation?
- ✗ Do you desire to have students working with you?
- ✗ Do you have a specific site representative that will supervise the students?
- ✗ Will the students' work involve human interaction?
- ✗ How many students can the organization effectively work with?
- ✗ Are there confidentiality issues of which the students need awareness?
- ✗ Do you have a dress code?
- ✗ Will the students need background checks, TB shots, etc?
- ✗ Where within your organization will the students provide service?
- ✗ Have you detailed the specific tasks the students will perform?
- ✗ Is the organization willing to have a staff representative come to DePaul for placement?
- ✗ Are there safety concerns of which the student need to be aware?
- ✗ Is there a potential for multiple service experiences or projects within the organization?

We developed this manual to help existing partners and potential partners further understand service learning and hopefully see inherent benefits in the process. From experience working in long-term Steans Center community partnerships, we may briefly summarize partner benefits as:

- ✘ increased assistance in serving client needs directly;
- ✘ added depth and breadth to development efforts;
- ✘ improved access to research efforts that improve communities;
- ✘ amplified advocacy programs; and
- ✘ links to new allies that may outlast local politics or foundation support.

Steans Center staff would welcome any questions or dialogue about benefit and cost considerations.

Additionally, four main questions for weighing the benefits and costs of your organization’s participation in a partnership with a college could include:

- 1) How well does this engagement activity align with my broad goals for partnering with campuses?
- 2) To what extent will this engagement activity contribute to achieving my organization’s mission, or improving outcomes for the constituencies to whom our organization holds itself accountable?
- 3) What is the risk or potential harm of engagement activity in terms of my organization’s credibility, capability to produce quality services and products and ability to maintain respectful and trusting relationships with community residents; and
- 4) What are the actual and opportunity costs of participation – in terms of time, money, redirected staff resources or foregone relationships, activities, and opportunities?

*Source: Campus Compact Community Summit Monograph (2002)*

## V. Logistics

### A. Exemplar Timeline for Service Learning Courses

The academic calendar guides sequential flow of events for service learning. Partnership involves cyclical phases that relate to the academic schedule. An academic year includes three ten-week quarters (fall, winter and spring), two five-week summer sessions and one winter session. Figure 8 shows the student service learning process during a ten-week quarter.

#### Phase One: Start Up

For new and existing Steans Center partners, this phase involves exploratory work. Up to a month before a new quarter begins, Steans Center staff or faculty will work with you to see how course objectives and community needs harmonize. Service learning opportunities exist at many levels of community-based work. We hope to facilitate clear dialogue about the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the equation.

Types of service learning work evolving from this process depend largely upon shared creativity during this phase. We will not give a prescription for *what* community needs to address and *how* to address them. The goal of this phase is to collaborate and integrate service learning into your agency. Matches between agencies and courses become final at the end of this phase as we jointly identify service learning projects. Community contacts receive a copy of course syllabi and instructors receive community organization information packets. Service Learning Coordinators are assigned to organizations and their communication begins.

#### Phase Two: Placement and Orientation

During the first two weeks of a quarter, the focus is on student placement and orientation. As a community partner, you will need to ensure that a representative from your organization will attend the first class to introduce your agency’s mission to students. The instructors work with students to achieve placement during the first or second class. On-site orientations may begin as early as the first week or into the second week. Students must confirm their service learning schedules at this time for work to occur consistently over the quarter. Students participate in orientation and fill out daily time forms.

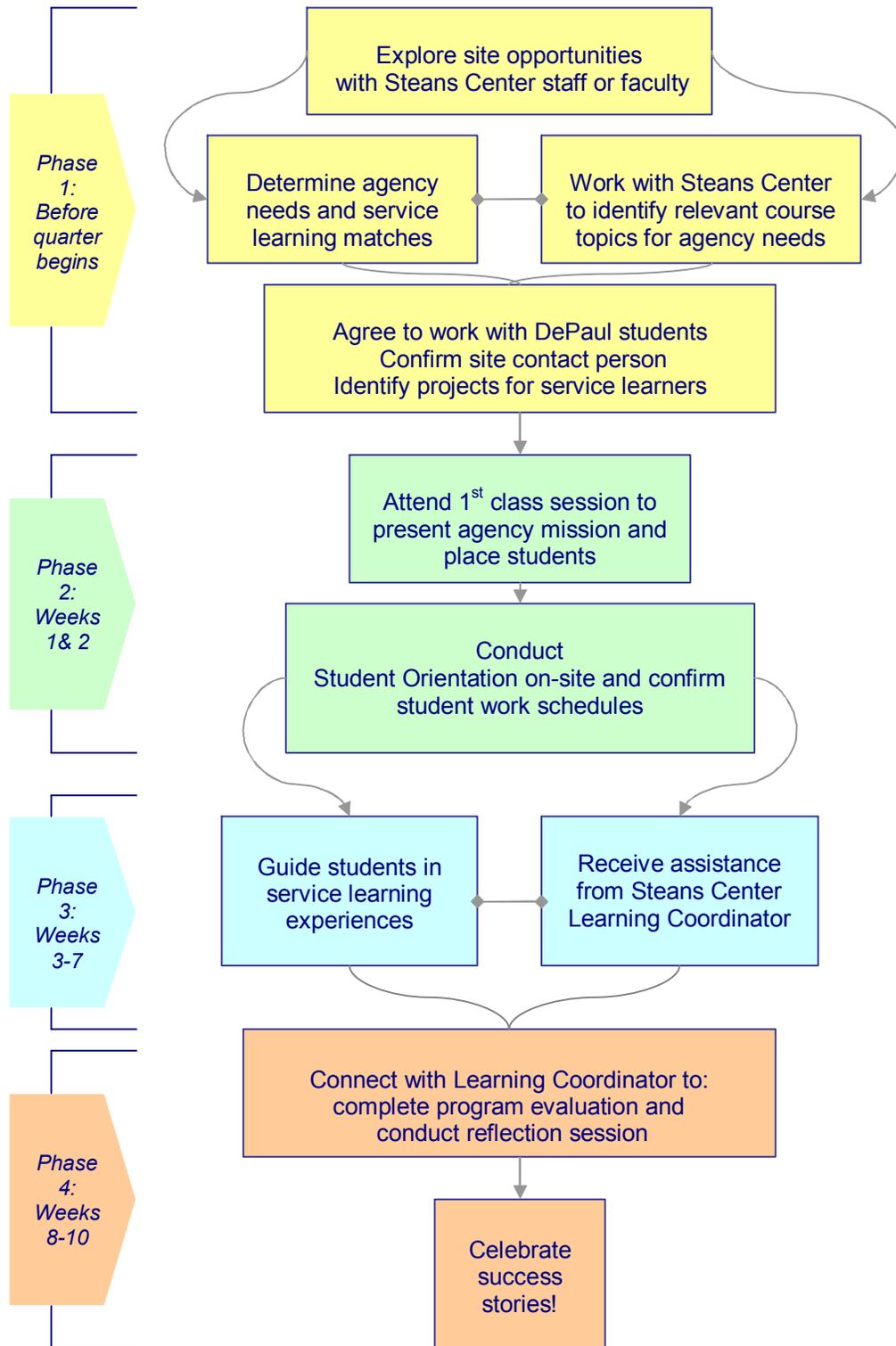
#### Phase Three: Service Learning

The middle section of the quarter (weeks three through seven) involves the core of the service learning routine. During this time, service learning coordinators provide support to students and site supervisors.

#### Phase Four: Reflection

Community organizations are invited to participate in reflection sessions for the service learners that tie overall experiences into class materials. Program Evaluations also occur for students and organizations. This year we are instituting a two-way evaluation, where the sites can evaluate the overall effectiveness of the service as well as the individual service of the students and where the students can provide feedback to the agency on their service experience.

Figure 5: Service Learning Timeline



## **B. Liability Issues**

The best measures to take for avoiding liability issues involve risk prevention. Here are some helpful points to consider when including service learners in your organizational activities.

- ✘ **Prevention:** At orientation, please take time to clarify rules and expectations so students are prepared for any “foreseeable” dangers. Students should be aware of precautions they can take. The best policy is prevention. Please discuss with students applicable safety precautions based on the service situation.
- ✘ **Reduce chances for student injury:** Please make sure students are not at risk when they are performing the service.
- ✘ **Pairs and trios:** Students should work in pairs or trios when situations could pose unpredictable danger. In general, it is good practice not to send students out alone.
- ✘ **Supervision:** It is important that an agency representative be present at all times to handle emergencies, provide guidance, and to help students learn the skills of the job.
- ✘ **Release Form:** All students must complete a Steans Center Service Learning’s release form.
- ✘ **The Fair Labor Standards Act:** It is important to make sure that students do not receive any type of compensation and are not in any way economically dependent on your organization.