Chapter 5
Incorporating Service-Learning in People-Centered Sciences: Three Instructional Approaches

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ABSTRACT

For an instructor in higher education, implementing service-learning (S-L) into a new or existing course can simultaneously be an exciting but potentially challenging experience. While S-L has the potential to make positive impacts on both the community of interest and subsequent students, instructors implementing S-L may face challenges such as project and partner identification. Another potential challenge for the instructor is determining which type of instructional approach they should select to implement S-L. To help guide higher education instructors in this selection process, this chapter features a collective case study of S-L projects conducted within three different undergraduate courses, using three different instructional approaches, at the University of Central Arkansas. Each of these courses has successfully utilized a different instructional approach: 1) collaborative consultation, 2) guided discovery, and 3) learner-centered. Using a collective case study of S-L courses, this chapter discusses in detail the implementation of each S-L project from start to finish.

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Service-learning (S-L) was popularized in many American educational contexts in the 1990s, with scholars at that time calling for rigorous study of the pedagogy's outcomes, impacts, and mechanisms (Driscoll et al., 1996; Eyler et al., 1997). S-L scholarship in more recent decades has included multiple large-scale and meta-analytic studies (Celio et al., 2011; Keen & Hall, 2009; Kilgo et al., 2015) and has revealed that students who participate in service-learning in higher education experience a multitude of positive outcomes ranging from academic learning to professional and personal development. The study of community-engaged learning has further experienced a global critical turn, with scholars questioning a "pedagogy of whiteness" (Mitchell et al., 2012) and the dangers of paternalism (Mtawa & Wilson-Strydom, 2018). Both the application and the study of service-learning today thus require nuanced attention to how S-L is implemented.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of S-L for students' academic and career outcomes. Examples include improved academic achievement (Celio et al., 2011; Mungo, 2017; Strange, 2000; Yue & Hart, 2017), critical thinking and writing skills (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000), and attitudes toward school and learning (Celio et al., 2011). Large-scale research using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) found that employment and community service during the undergraduate years help students bridge the gap between college and career. S-L students, for example, were 30% more likely to secure new employment after graduation than those without community engagement experience (Miller et al., 2018). Additional studies have documented S-L students' greater employability (Barton et al., 2019; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019), a greater understanding of career decision-making (Coulter-Kern et al., 2013), increased confidence in entering their chosen career (Strange, 2000), and improved leadership skills (Groh et al., 2011).

Furthermore, S-L has been found to have lasting personal and cultural benefits for students. S-L students have reported improved self-concept and self-efficacy (Celio et al., 2011; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Knapp, et al., 2010), self-awareness (Furze et al., 2011), interpersonal skills (Hebert & Hauf, 2015), cultural awareness (Desmond et al., 2011; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019), adaptability (Desmond et al., 2011; Furze et al., 2011), and ability to communicate and collaborate effectively across differences (Kilgo et al., 2015; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Wozencraft et al., 2014). Undergraduate students who get involved in service develop a sense of civic belonging and commitment to community problem-solving and leadership that they carry with them after graduation (Myers et al., 2019; Wagner & Mathison, 2015). Extended community engagement experiences further offer students skills in reflective practice that persist into adulthood (Mitchell et al., 2015), with community-based experiences becoming formative experiences that students draw upon years later in their values and decisions (Fullerton et al., 2015).

While the demonstrated benefits of S-L are many, for an instructor, implementing S-L into a new or existing course for the first time can be an exciting but potentially challenging experience. While S-L has the potential to make positive impacts on both the community of interest and subsequent students, instructors with limited experience implementing S-L may face challenges such as project and partner identification. Another of these potential challenges for the instructor is determining which type of instructional approach they should select to implement S-L in their classroom. To help guide higher education instructors in making this selection process, this chapter features a collective case study of S-L projects conducted within three different undergraduate courses, using three different instructional approaches, at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). All three of these courses are part of an undergraduate degree program in family and consumer sciences (FCS), that prepares students for careers in the nonprofit sector, community outreach, and cooperative extension. This degree program typically has between 130-150 undergraduate majors, and anywhere from 180-200 minors. Students in this degree