Community Partnerships: An Introduction

Finding, building and sustaining community partnerships to teach your course objectives.
A Great Way to Think of Your Partnership

Co-teachers:

- Faculty = the classroom teacher
- Community Partner = lab instructor

*Know also that your partner’s clients, as individuals, are also teachers. Their experiences shape your students’ service, experience, and outlook.*
Topics:

• How to find a partner.
• First communications.
• What does a healthy partnership look like?
• How to sustain a partnership.
• Is there anything else you would like to know?
What characteristics are important in a partnership?

How have/will you found/find your partners?
What to look for in a Community Partner:

- **Promotes learning**
  - Has needs that directly relate to your course objectives which students can address.
  - Willing collaborator & communicator.
  - Able to mentor students.
  - Provides a safe learning environment.

- **Logistically works**
  - Open during hours that work with students’ schedules.
  - Willing to work with students’ schedules.
  - Location accessible to students.
  - Can accommodate the number of students in your course.
Methods to find a match:

- Miscellaneous: Phonebook, Billboard, Other Internet Resources
- Student Proposals
- Previous Personal Experience / Faculty Interest
- Personal Assistance from CIC or Service-Learning Staff
- Service-Learning Database.
The CIC Recommends:

- Service-learning database of some form
- The CIC’s database is the **Service Opportunity Directory (SOD)**
- Over 200 partners listed
- Listed by type of organization/mission (i.e. Hospice/Youth/Domestic Violence etc.)
- [www.weber.edu/CommunityInvolvement](http://www.weber.edu/CommunityInvolvement)

The SOD is in the upper left hand corner.
How do you start communicating with your prospective partners?
First Communications

• If the partner is unfamiliar with the concept of service-learning, provide a brief summation. What is it?
  ▫ Examples:
    • A teaching style where students work in the community to learn classroom concepts
    • Students gain insight into citizenship

• Highlight why you think your class and their organization might be a great partnership.

• What needs do they have that might integrate with the course’s objectives?
  ▫ Ask about their “to do” list.
Questions to Ask

- Contact Information?
  - Preferred method of contact?
- Hours of project (time and amount)?
- Number of students needed?
- Mission Statement/Agency Objectives?
- Project information - details?
- Course objective relevance?
- Additional information not previously listed?
- Do they have a partnership with the Community Involvement Center?
What Next?

• Send Course Materials
  ▫ Syllabi is the minimum
  ▫ Consider other items that might help partners
    • Faculty contact information
    • SL assignments
    • SL readings
    • Links to SL sites
    • Student Contact Information (voluntary)

• Welcome materials from community partners
  ▫ Organizational Handouts
  ▫ Announcement, flyers, etc. on project details

• If possible, offer partners the opportunity to come present to your students

• If possible, schedule a class tour of your partner’s space
A Look at Who Gets What: Positives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Partner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A line for CV</td>
<td>• Long and short term projects begun, continued or completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A more rounded experience as a teacher</td>
<td>• Experience dealing with a budding type of volunteer base</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More effective lessons through service-learning for students</td>
<td>• If partnerships are sustained, strong programs can be established and may succeed</td>
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<td>• Grant writing material and other forms of funding and recognition</td>
<td>• With more volunteers, organizations can serve a larger clientele</td>
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<td>• Finding satisfaction in professionally contributing to your own community</td>
<td>• May receive fund matching for volunteer hours and/or material for grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Testing new ways to reach students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Addressing local concerns and problems</td>
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<td>• Desirable experience for tenure consideration</td>
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</tbody>
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# A Look at Who Gets What: Negatives

## Faculty
- Extra time spent creating and nurturing partnerships
- Unhappy students coming out of failing partnerships
- Complications in reaching desired outcomes

## Partners
- Long and short term projects begun, continued or completed
- Students not showing up or not completing hours (inconsistency is NEVER o.k.)
- Spending valuable time training and supervising students who do not produce meaningful work
- Feeling like babysitters who are just asked to sign off on a time sheet
What are your tips on making partnerships work?

How do you make it work through the thick and the thin?
Communication and Collaboration

• Be aware that there may be complications in communication. If you have a hard time reaching partners, remember that they are often addressing the immediate needs of their clientele (this is their primary objective).

• Open Dialogue about Needs
  ▫ Needs of the organization may change over time.
  ▫ Your needs may change over time.
  ▫ Consider a community partner evaluation form

• Follow through on their requests for assistance
  ▫ Letters of support on grants

• Plan Ahead
  ▫ Discuss changes and continuances for the next term
    • Review the community partner contact and project information form
    • Inquire about their current needs and objectives.
Look at Outcomes

• Be sure to do evaluations throughout the semester. Consider what should happen next week, next month, or next semester to improve the partnership.

• Find out: What worked? What didn’t? Were there students who caused problems? Students who were particularly great? What are the long and short term benefits from the partnership?
Call it quits if...

- the majority of your students are regularly reporting bad experiences and this issue is not addressed by your partner.

- you are uncomfortable with changing staff, policies, or procedures that may endanger your students or provide hassles for the smooth running of your course.
Expect the Unexpected

- Expect partners to want more. Be very clear up front about what your students can provide.
- Expect that partners will be intimidated by your status as faculty. Please be conscious of this, and work to establish a rapport with them that promotes: **openness, honesty, and realistic goals.**
- Expect that some partnerships may not work out.
Expect the Unexpected, Continued

- Expect that partners may have issues with you or your students, or visa versa. Always investigate and resolve the miscommunication or issue.
- Expect that some of our non-profits may **not** want to partner with a CBL course.
- Expect that in a healthy partnership you can go above and beyond your course objectives, teach your students more effectively, and make real, meaningful change in your community with students and partner(s).
What is Synergy? It’s what we want!

“My hope is that the synergy of community partners, teachers, and students will create a pinnacle experience for all.”

–Carolee Stout, former coordinator of Volunteer Services at This is the Place Heritage Park