**College-Wide Definition of *Service-Learning* at Ithaca College**

Proposed by: Service-Learning Design & Implementation Workgroup (SLDIW), a faculty committee representing all five schools, sponsored by the Office of Civic Engagement –**Dec. 16, 2013**

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*This definition is based on the work of Service-Learning scholars, Bringle and Hatcher.*

**Service-Learning** at Ithaca College is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students **participate** in an *organized service activity* that meaningfully addresses *community-identified needs* and then critically **reflect** on this service activity to further understand course content, more broadly appreciate the academic discipline, and significantly enhance their sense of *civic responsibility*.

There are several critical criteria, listed below, that a course should demonstrate to achieve a **Service-Learning (SL) designation** at Ithaca College.

1.         ***Should adhere to the Institution’s recognized service-learning definition.***

2.         ***Disciplinary Skills are Applied and Practiced***: The experience involves the application of concepts and knowledge learned in the students’ regular coursework, in a real-world environment.

3.         ***Faculty mentoring is consistent****:* The experience involves significant, on-going mentoring by faculty throughout the experience. The evolutionary nature of experiential learning requires consistent faculty involvement in order to remain focused on the predetermined learning objectives.

4.         ***Learning is purposeful and measurable***: The experience is purposeful, designed in advance with clear goals and explicit, measurable learning outcomes. The pressures and unpredictability of the real-world environment are likely to produce unexpected results, and of course, goals may change in the process of the experience. Clear goals from the outset will enhance the likelihood that both the instructor and the students can adapt to the unexpected while maintaining intended outcomes, and that shifts in goals will be deliberate and productive for student learning.

5.        ***Critical reflection is an essential component***:  The experience provides opportunities for reflection about *what* and *how* the student is learning. Examples of such opportunities include journaling and systematic recording of the experience, thorough post-experience analysis of the process and the outcomes, and structured discussion throughout with the faculty mentor. These opportunities for reflection can enhance students’ ability to apply knowledge, and to evaluate their intellectual growth, metacognitive understanding, and implications for future experiences. Critical *civic* reflections can also encourage students to connect their service to a public policy issue, or to analyze the public policy dimensions of the community work done by their partnering organization—connecting their service to deeper social or political issues.

6.        ***Student responsibility moves beyond a course grade in a way that can be measured****:* The experience requires students to be responsible for more than a course grade, and to be responsible to people other than the professor. That is, the outcomes of these experiences should have a life outside the context of the course.

***7.        Community voice and perspective must be integrated into each criterion:*** The quality and longevity of service learning necessitates ongoing and responsive inclusion of community partners’ perspectives and voices throughout the processes of design, execution, and outcome assessment.

Within the context of **student learning outcomes**, *Service Learning* opportunities will enable students to:

* Connect academic knowledge, theory, and skills to the experiential learning context—practicing ***Integrative learning***
* Identify challenges and opportunities that arise in the experiential learning environment, and respond constructively to them— practicing ***Problem Solving***
* Develop written, verbal, and non-verbal competencies to effectively communicate with diverse audiences—practicing ***Communication Skills***
* Understand their roles and responsibilities within the experiential learning context, and act appropriately—practicing ***Professionalism***