



Service Learning Faculty Seminars Explore Student Reflection Strategies and More...

By Robert G. Bringle, Center for Service and Learning



Over 300 service learning courses are taught annually at IUPUI at all levels of the curriculum and in almost all schools. This is an extraordinary growth from four service learning courses of which we were aware when Julie Hatcher opened the Office of Service Learning in the fall of 1993. This semester I organized a series of [Service Learning Scholars Seminars](#) to discuss with service learning course instructors various topics related to their service learning courses. At the first seminars, I surveyed the 25 seminar participants about what topics they were most interested in. What do you think they indicated as their highest priorities?

The highest rated interest was to discuss **reflection** in the seminar meetings. The main way that students benefit from the community service activities in a service learning course is through reflection. Carefully designed reflection activities allow the students to connect the service with the academic content, provide information to the instructor on the integration of service and learning, and provide a basis for assessment (and grading). We will be sharing approaches to reflection that are being used in service learning courses and sharing information about Patti Clayton's DEAL (**D**escribe, **E**xamine, **A**rticulate **L**earning) model of reflection that uses Bloom's taxonomy as a basis for evaluation. We will also be examining reflection activities to determine how they align with learning objectives (and vice versa). And we will be exploring how reflection can be improved (Note: Reflection can always be improved!).

The next highest rated topic was **partnerships**. One of the key elements in service learning (and good civic engagement) is the nature of the partnership. We will be looking at the relationships in service learning courses, including what they are like and how they can be improved. We will be using some tools developed by CSL staff to analyze and evaluate relationships.

Closely following these two topics were (a) how to improve existing service learning courses (e.g., major or minor obstacles, orienting students to the site, preparation, monitoring their participation, grading their performance); (b) having the civic development of students as a more intentional educational goal and how assessment tools developed by CSL staff can provide feedback to instructors; and (c) the development of intercultural skills in both domestic and international service learning.

Our CSL staff is enthusiastic about broadening these discussions. We can repeat the seminars in the spring semester with a new group of instructors (let me know if you are interested). We can also plan meetings with service learning instructors in departments and schools to explore these topics. And we are very willing to meet one-on-one with instructors to determine ways in which we can work together to make service learning a more educationally-meaningful experience for students and a more fulfilling activity for faculty. It can be as simple as contacting me (rbringle@iupui.edu) or Mary Price (mprice6@iupui.edu) and letting either of us know what priorities you have for improving your service learning course. We look forward to working with you!