

DRAFT

Evaluating Service-Learning as a Component of Teaching in the Tenure Process

Purpose:

This document suggests criteria by which an interested department could effectively evaluate a faculty member's service-learning contributions in the teaching component of the tenure process.

Rationale:

Service-learning is a teaching methodology which links classroom learning and community service to enrich learning experiences and emphasize civic responsibility. Through service-learning experiences, students develop a sense of responsibility for their community and help to meet un-met societal needs. This document suggests criteria and documentation for service-learning in the evaluation of teaching.

Suggested criteria for evaluating a faculty member's Service-Learning teaching contributions:

- 1 The service-learning contributions relate to the faculty member's area of scholarship.
- 2 The faculty member's service-learning contributions are responsive to a recognized need of individuals, organizations or other entities on campus and/or in the community and have significant and lasting impact.
- 3 Service-learning interactions are carried out in partnership with the community being served.
- 4 The faculty member demonstrates that his/her students have provided a needed service to members of the community at large, rather than an exclusionary group.
- 5 The service-learning methodology used provides a way for students to process and synthesize the impact of service-learning experiences on their understanding of the subject matter of the class.
- 6 The faculty member demonstrates that he/she has broadened students understanding of civic involvement, even though students may also focus on career preparation.
- 7 The faculty member acts as role model for students and other faculty, especially in developing the student's understanding of the importance of community involvement.

In addition to thinking conceptually about service-learning in the tenure process, the faculty member may want to consider the following when compiling a self-statement.

- 1 Highlight the effects of service-learning on teaching and research.
- 2 Describe a new or revised service-learning class as a teaching innovation.
- 3 Note publications arising from service-learning course(s).
- 4 Describe presentations on service-learning.
- 5 Highlight innovations in teaching derived from service-learning.
- 6 Include excerpts from student reflection journals (with student permission) that detail what students have learned.
- 7 Solicit external letters from students and/or community leaders describing how the professor's work *changed* or *impacted* the community.

Evaluation of Service-Learning

Evaluating your service-learning class may help you in determining what is working well and what could be improved as well as be important in your Retention, Promotion and Tenure processes. Information of course class is best gathered at the time of the class, so plan ahead when anticipating evaluating your class.

In preparing to evaluate your class, a critical starting point is defining your goals of the class. It is likely you have goals that affect the participants, the institution, and the community. *Participant goals* refer to what you want the student to gain from the service-learning experience. These could be civic development, academic achievement or personal/social development. *Institutional goals* might be for your department or the university as a whole. *Community goals* usually involve meeting a need in the community, but may also include improved an relationship between the university and the community.

After thinking about these three areas, think about what your class is designed and intended to achieve. Is the primary focus on citizenship, academic achievement, or social or personal development? Are you primarily concerned with institutional or community impacts as the major measure of success? If the primary goal is citizenship, what exactly do you mean: knowledge of community issues or interest in volunteering? Would you consider your effort successful if students increased their knowledge of the community, but didn't increase the number of hours they volunteered in the community? 1

Rank your goals and focus on a limited number that represent the highest priorities. Determine how to measure progress toward the goal, including what questions could be asked of students or the community that would show if you are meeting your goals. By distilling what you are trying to evaluate, you can gain a clearer understanding of how to evaluate it.

Realistic expectations of your results is important in an effective evaluation. Expectations should be ambitious, but not so high that they are unattainable. For example, expecting service-learning to increase attendance for the class to 100% is unrealistic; measuring if it increased attendance is more attainable.

Don't forget to look at information or documentation you already have. The number of hours served and where may not need to be obtained from a survey. Student journals, comments from reflections, site evaluations may include relevant information that may be just what you need.

Document what *you* do as a coordinator and facilitator of the service. This can be particularly important for your RPT review. Describe in your documentation the class itself — what levels of students were in the class; what agencies were initially contacted and which were ultimately used; what type of service was performed; what activities took place in class relevant to the service. If the results of a survey are not what you hoped, knowing what was done can be useful in determining what should be done in future classes.

Remember the University of Utah requires that all research involving living human subjects be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to its initiation. However, we anticipate most studies of service-learning classes would fall under the exempt category *Normal Educational Practices*. "Research may be declared exempt if it is conducted in an established educational setting and involves normal educational practices in order to evaluate or compare instructional strategies, curricula, or methods. Here, the focus must be on the instructional strategy, method or curriculum, rather than on characteristics of the students. Note that the methods being studied must be considered "normal", typical or well-accepted in the field" (General University Institutional Review Board Application Kit, 16 May, 1996).

For a information on IRB or securing an "exempt" category, contact the Secretary of the General University Institutional Review Board, who at time of the printing of this manual is Jean Hansen, at 581-5382.

1 A. Melchior and L. Bailis. "Assessing Service Learning," *Network*, v 5, n 4 Constitutional Rights Foundation. (Spring 1996)