



## Public Service Workshop 2011

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### Service-Learning – Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is Service-learning?

Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful public service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service-learning provides students with a community context to their education, allowing them to connect their academic coursework to their roles as citizens.

#### Does service-learning enhance my education?

Yes. In addition to helping students better connect the theories of their academic discipline with concrete experiences, students gain important transferable skills such as reciprocal learning and reflection, enhanced problem analysis, critical thinking, logical reasoning, detailed observation, collaborative problem solving skills and issue identification. Students also can increase their knowledge of both local and global issues and often experience interdisciplinary benefits since many service-learning activities cut across academic disciplines. Finally, studies show that students who engage in service-learning activities tend to have higher GPAs and are more likely to graduate.

### **Does service-learning help in obtaining employment after college?**

Yes, and in various ways. First, by enhancing your skill set (see prior response), service-learning makes you more attractive to employers looking for individuals with such skills. Second, service-learning provides practical experience comparable to work experience and, in fact, may be in areas of greater interest to potential employers. Finally, service-learning helps you establish contacts and network. These are often important in identifying and securing employment, particularly in the public arena.

### **What service-learning classes are available?**

The Department of Political Science offers an 18 credit hour minor in *Political and Civic Engagement* that encompasses a range of public service courses and activities. These include: EXL 2030 and 3030: Civic Engagement Practicum; PS 4290 Public Service Internship; and PS 4950: Community-Based Research Practicum. For information on the requirements for the minor, visit the Department's web site: [www.mtsu.edu/politicalscience/minors.shtml](http://www.mtsu.edu/politicalscience/minors.shtml)

In addition, some of our classes provide a service-learning component, such as PS 3550 Democratic Participation and Civic Advocacy as well as sections of PS 4800 Senior Seminar. You may also find service-learning classes as part of the University's EXL Scholars Program ([frank.mtsu.edu/~exl/](http://frank.mtsu.edu/~exl/)) and in other Departments.

### **What kinds of activities will I be doing?**

Service-learning can take on many different forms depending on the kind of class in which the activity occurs. In many cases students will be volunteering with a non-profit service organization or a government office for a set number of hours over the course of the semester. The actual activities that you will engage in will in large part depend on the kind of organization you volunteer with. For example, if you volunteer with Habitat for Humanity you will likely be helping build a house. If you volunteer with an animal welfare agency you will likely be working not only with the office staff, but with animals. If you volunteer for a local government agency like Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Office you

may be helping to maintain the greenway or planning a special event for kids.

### **So, I just volunteer somewhere and that is it?**

No, since service learning is a specific kind of activity designed to reinforce and supplement your academic studies you will often be asked to undertake a formal assessed assignment. In many cases this will be some kind of essay or log that asks you to reflect on your experiences in a critical fashion. This element gives you the opportunity to connect many of the theoretical elements of your class with the practical experiences of giving back to your community and hopefully learning something about yourself.

### **Where can I find volunteer opportunities?**

#### MTSU Volunteer Opportunities:

- Up Till Dawn ([www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/utd\\_service.shtml](http://www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/utd_service.shtml))
- Habitat Blitz Build ([www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/habitat\\_service.shtml](http://www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/habitat_service.shtml))
- See more opportunities at MTSU's Office of Leadership and Service (898-5812, KUC 326, [www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/](http://www.mtsu.edu/mtleader/service/))

#### Examples of local Agencies that may have volunteer opportunities:

- Hands on Nashville ([hon.org](http://hon.org))
- American Red Cross ([www.midtnredcross.org/index.html](http://www.midtnredcross.org/index.html))
- Boys and Girls Club ([www.bgcrc.net/](http://www.bgcrc.net/))
- Girl Scouts ([gsmidtn.org/](http://gsmidtn.org/))
- Boy Scouts ([www.mtcbsa.org/index.html](http://www.mtcbsa.org/index.html))
- St. Clair Street Senior Center – Murfreesboro ([www.murfreesborotn.gov/default.aspx?ekmenu=136&id=2638](http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/default.aspx?ekmenu=136&id=2638))
- Cannon County Senior Citizen's Center ([www.cannontimes.com/](http://www.cannontimes.com/))
- Domestic Violence Program ([www.dvpshelter.org/](http://www.dvpshelter.org/))
- Habitat for Humanity ([www.rchfh.org/](http://www.rchfh.org/))
- Local long-term Care Facilities
- United Way ([www.uwrutherford.org/](http://www.uwrutherford.org/))
- Rutherford County Emergency Food Bank
- Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency ([www.mid-cumberlandcaa.com/aboutus.html](http://www.mid-cumberlandcaa.com/aboutus.html))
- Linebaugh Library (Murfreesboro's public library) ([www.linebaugh.org](http://www.linebaugh.org))
- Middle Tennessee Medical Center ([www.mtmc.org/volunteer.php](http://www.mtmc.org/volunteer.php))
- Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation ([www.murfreesborotn.gov/default.aspx?ekmenu=126&id=3186](http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/default.aspx?ekmenu=126&id=3186))
- Rutherford County Pet Adoption & Welfare Services ([www.rutherfordcounty.org/pets/](http://www.rutherfordcounty.org/pets/))