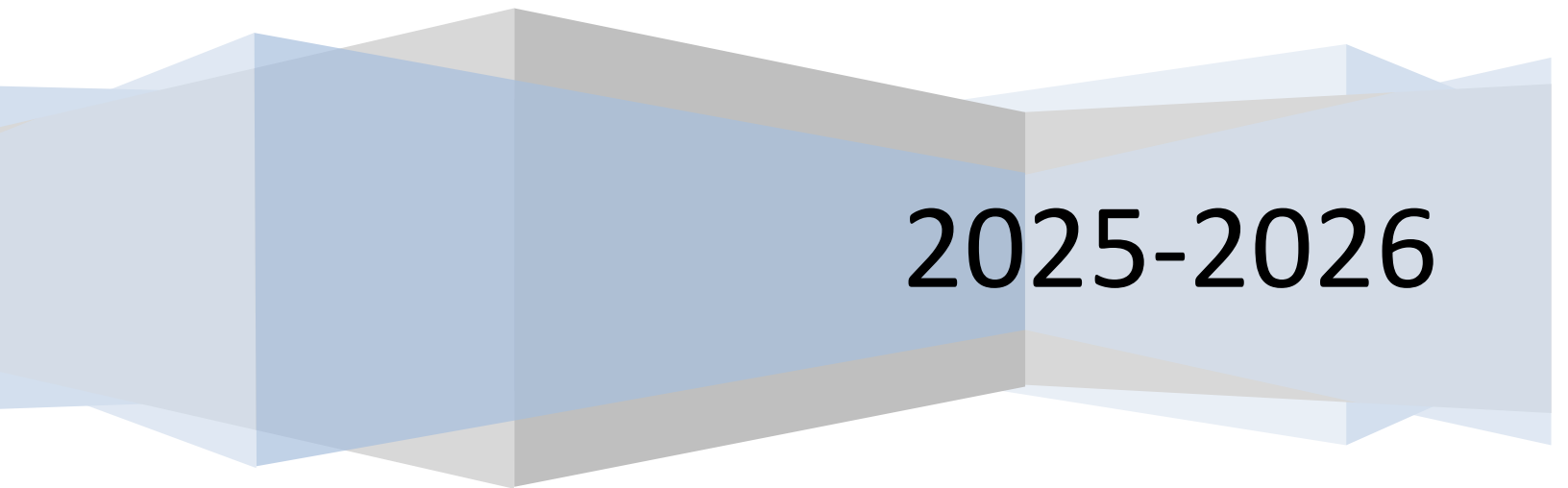




NJIT Faculty Service-Learning Handbook

A large, abstract geometric graphic composed of overlapping translucent blue and grey polygons, creating a sense of depth and movement. It spans the width of the page and is positioned behind the year text.

2025-2026

**Career Development Services
Civic Engagement**

Mission

NJIT advances the state of New Jersey, the nation, and the world through its contributions as an Innovation Nexus:

Public Polytechnic University—by harnessing the power of experiential learning to transform a diverse community of students into leaders, innovators, and global citizens.

Research Leader—by advancing knowledge through high-impact basic, applied, and transdisciplinary research, and by developing technological solutions that advance the state-of-the-art and drive economic growth.

Innovation Partner—by anticipating the needs of industry, government, and civic organizations to spur growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Inclusive Workplace—by engaging diverse colleagues whose differences build a strong community dedicated to accomplishing our vision.

Community Member—by applying our technological expertise to serve and elevate the communities that NJIT calls home.

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What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a significant pedagogy that enhances the university's mission of teaching, research, and service. It is a method of learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service. Service Learning is a process whereby students learn and develop through active participation in organized service experiences that meet community needs.

Successful involvement in community-based service experiences not only enhance the academic experience, but also provide opportunities for students to develop leadership, project management and communication skills. Faculty can integrate service learning into a course in many ways, some extensive and others not.

Examples range from a writing assignment on a one-time service activity to involving students in a weekly civic engagement project throughout the semester. Service as a required course component engages students in some form of community service and complete one or more reflective essays or other activities related to the service experience. As an independent study, the scope of the projects is carried out under the supervision of a designated faculty member. Service as an optional course component can be offered as an alternative to a quiz, particular readings, other experiential learning activity, or a research assignment.

Service-Learning course curricula addresses how

- a) the service component reinforces the course objective;
- b) what mechanisms/assignments will be employed to encourage students to critically reflect on the link between course content and their service experiences; and
- c) a structured-criteria for grading service learning outcomes for the course.

Service Learning at NJIT

Since 1990, Career Development Services has long provided service-learning support for a number of faculty members who recognized the added benefit of learning through engagement. At NJIT, Service Learning offers a connection between technology focused academics and engagement-based experiences in the surrounding communities. NJIT students complete a 30-hour community service project for courses that include a service-related component.

Projects are designed to offer practical experience in a social service setting, which reinforces academic and career goals. Career Development Services in collaboration with the instructor will facilitate and arrange service projects between students and service initiatives to meet the course needs as defined by faculty members.

Common Criteria for Designating a Course as a Service-Learning Course

Faculty electing to include a service-learning component in their course curriculum, typically do so in consultation with their department chairperson. Below are common criteria that faculty typically meet to receive service-learning designation for their courses:

- The syllabus must reflect incorporation of service experience into teaching and learning objectives for the course, as well as an explanation of the service-learning component and pedagogy.
- Academic course credit is earned for learning gained from the experience, not for the service itself. Credit within the course may be in the form of extra grade points; points in lieu of a research paper; etc.
- The service experience is enhanced by knowledge from the discipline and is integrated into the course through readings, project papers, or class presentations.
- The course must offer opportunities for meaningful and on-going reflection. The service opportunities are designed to further students' civic education and experiential learning (including dialogues about community issues and the need for service) will augment continued engagement beyond the classroom experience.
- The course must offer students an opportunity to learn from each other in addition to learning from the instructor.
- Students must complete a minimum number of hours of service and the community service component must comprise a minimum/maximum (i.e. no less than 15% and no more than 30%) percentage of the total course grade.

Integrating Service-Learning as an Optional Course Component

Faculty at NJIT have traditionally used Service-Learning as an option component. Twenty – five hours of service and accompanying reflection summary are offered as an alternative to a research assignment or term paper; service-learning accounts for 15% - 30% of their class grade.

Advantage: Students can choose service-learning, or the more “typical” assignment based on their preferred learning styles.

Example: In a Computer Ethics class, students have the option to conduct their service at a community-based organization’s technology department. All service is performed in the field of technology observing and implementing the ethical practices studied in the course. A three-page summary of service will serve as the reflection.

Integrating Service-Learning as a Required Course Component

A course that requires students to participate in some form of civic engagement (one-time or ongoing, individually or with a group) and complete one or more reflective essays or other activities related to the service experience.

Advantage: Having all students in the course participate in the service establishes a common ground for class discussions and for the synthesis of lectures, readings and observations at the service site.

Example: A course on strategic or business management sends students to different agencies to do various tasks with managers related to a business plan. The faculty member may ask students to present their findings to the class and to write a paper comparing several of the various settings studied.

Tips for faculty:

It is important that students understand the “why” of service –learning, therefore faculty need to consider whether or not they will allow a substitution for the service component. Clarify the requirement in the course schedule, syllabus, and on the first week of class clearly explain the rationale for requiring service.

Models of Service-Learning Components

Service-Learning Components can be:

- ❖ *Disciplined based* – service learners’ presence in the community throughout the semester use course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding of service.

Sample projects:

A student majoring in information systems can assist a non-profit organization by designing a website or creating a database management system.

A student majoring in chemical engineering can teach students about lead poisoning avoidance while assessing and analyzing lead content in the paint of older homes; they can mentor “at-risk” students in chemistry; leading hands-on science projects at middle and high-schools; and monitoring environmental quality as a component of environmental improvement projects.

In an engineering design course, students design and build mechanical devices to assist people with physical, developmental or learning disabilities.

- ❖ *Problem based* – service learners relate to the assigned community to understand a problem or a need. It is presumed that assigned service learners have some knowledge they can draw upon to make recommendations to the community or develop a solution to the problem.

Sample projects:

A student majoring in business management w/ a concentration in marketing might design a marketing plan for a non-profit organization.

A student majoring in architecture can partner with a Housing Authority or Play Works Inc. to design a play or recreation place for its residents.

Setting priorities for learning helps students focus on intended learning objectives and take full advantage of the rich learning opportunities offered by service-learning. The focus provided by specific course objectives could also help them deepen their learning. Therefore, establishing and emphasizing course objectives and relating them to the service experience increases the likelihood that students will benefit intellectually from the service.

What are the Benefits of Service-Learning?

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn."

Benjamin Franklin

For Students

- Engages students in active learning that demonstrates the relevance and importance of academic work for their life experience and career choices.
- Increase students understanding of the class subject, bringing books to life and life to books.
- Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Facilitates the exploration of skills, interests, and values in a potential career path.
- Offers valuable and competitive career guidance and experience.
- Prepares students for civic responsibility locally and globally.

Faculty Handbook

For Faculty

Benefits of Service-Learning

- provides increased student contact while contributing to student development.
Enhancing the connection between faculty and students
- extends campus resources into the community and reinforces the value of the scholarship of engagement
- supports NJIT's 2025 Vision:
 - **NJIT**, the state's public polytechnic research university, is committed to excellence and global impact through: Engagement—applying our expertise to build partnerships, serve our community, and benefit society as a whole.

- initiates community building projects and prepare our students for civic responsibility locally and globally
- invigoration of teaching methods
- enhance opportunities for research and publication
- connects the community with curriculum, becoming more aware of current societal issues as they relate to academic areas of interest

For the Community

- Access to university resources.
- Affordable access to professional development.
- Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation in students who will be tomorrow's volunteers and civic leaders.
- Opportunity to educate students on social justice and community issues
- Access to specific products that students produce (for example, resource guides or database and web design).

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has!"

Margaret Mead

Additional Options

Fourth Credit Option

Students enrolled in a three-credit course have the option to earn a fourth credit by performing service in an area related to the course and by demonstrating learning based on the service experience. Similar to the Co-op experience, a learning contract agreed upon in advance between the faculty member and the student specifies the number of service hours required and the reflection activities (e.g., journal, project, paper) that link the service experience with the course content.

Advantages: This option can be student-initiated, if the student takes the responsibility to approach the faculty member and identify the service site. Potentially, a student could link

service to any course. This option is a great way to introduce faculty members to service-learning.

Example: A student majoring in chemical engineering can perform their service hours at a public school working with the science teachers in the lab and on the curriculum. A win-win situation for all parties involved. NJIT students are now being exposed to another career as a possible teacher and public school students are being exposed to the field of Chemical Engineering and the teacher involved is being assisted and exposed to new methods.

From a Career Development perspective Service Learning as a capstone course or project can be advantageous because NJIT students are provided with the opportunity to integrate service-learning into their major fields at a higher level. They can integrate knowledge from various courses and prepare themselves to transfer knowledge to the world of work.

Disciplinary Capstone Courses/Projects

In the form of a capstone seminar, a senior paper or another culminating course, students design and carry out service projects that demonstrate their fluency in the knowledge base of their disciplines, test their capacity for scholarship in their chosen fields, and enable them to integrate theory and practice.

Example: An NJIT senior or team can design a tracking database that will assist the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) on the progression of children and families that come through the DYFS system.

Tip for faculty:

Community members such as the CEO/Presidents or Technology Directors of community based organizations considered experts in their fields may be willing to guide students into increasingly higher levels of critical thinking and analysis. Since they work alongside the students at the site, they are able to extend the influence of the faculty member in shaping and interpreting the experiences of the students.

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer to neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Mahatma Gandhi

Determine what curricular option you will want to use in your service-learning course. Consider the course objectives and how the service experience might help your students meet those objectives.

Example of a Service-Learning Course

Course description: NJIT IS 350—Computers and Society

Examines the historical evolution of computer and information systems and explores their implications in the home, business, government, medicine and education. Topics include automation and job impact, privacy, and legal and ethical issues. Co-listed as STS 350.

Course goals:

- **Know the good and bad ways computers affect people.** You will be familiar with the variety of topics and studies in the area of Computers and Society.
- **Understand theories of ethical decision making.** You will know the types of ethical and legal dilemmas that you will face as a computer professional, and you will understand your responsibility as a professional in those situations.
- **Be able to read critically and understand the professional literature in the field.** Whenever you read new information you will learn to ask the questions: How valid and general are these observations or results? Might they be limited to a specific type of computer system, a specific social context, or a specific type of implementation? Was the author biased in any way?
- **Improve your ability to communicate** about social and ethical issues in the computing sciences, in writing and orally.

- **Realize a permanent change in your professional attitude towards computers.** In the future, whenever you are in the position of designing, implementing, or managing a computer system or working with other computer professionals you will understand your responsibilities and the impacts your work has on society.

Course Methods: In addition to journal entries, class presentations, and class participation, this course also requires an integrated original research and a service component. Students will have the opportunity to spend 25 hours during the semester at a non-profit organization using their computer/technical skills to help that organization achieve its goals.

Typically non-profit organizations have very limited resources and cannot afford to hire professional computer programmers or consultants to build and maintain their systems.

Syllabus Guidelines:

- Identify the objectives of the service
- Link the service course content (discussions, projects, writing assignments, readings and other activities)
- Describe how the student will be assessed on the experience, (clarify the grading process: papers, discussions, journals, presentations)not for the service hours
- List the minimum hours required for student's service hours
- List what methods of reflection will be used throughout the semester, (Journals, reflection papers, group discussions, etc.)
- Provide contact information for CDS for agency referral. CDS will provide the guidelines for contacting agency and meeting with supervisor.

Recommended Time-Line for Service-Learning Orientation and Implementation

- First week of class Service Learning option is discussed
 1. Address student concerns, fears and expectations
- Second week CDS Staff presents policy and procedures
 1. Discuss appropriate skills and student responsibility regarding communication, follow through and professionalism.
- Third week deadline for students to register for service option with CDS
 1. Submission of registration form and contractual agreement

- Next five weeks students complete their service
 1. All students who are performing service are required to participate in some form of reflection activity.
- Ninth week evaluations are submitted to site supervisor and participating students by CDS staff
- Tenth week completed evaluations are submitted to Instructor prior to Finals.

Reflection

Structured reflection connects and reinforces class work, text book readings and service learning experiences. Reflection provides an opportunity to think critically about civic experiences, examine and challenge personal values, beliefs, and opinions.

Structured reflection is important because it facilitates a deeper understanding of course subject matter outside of the traditional classroom environment for the students.

Addendum

NJIT Service Learning Contract

To the Student: Complete Section 1 of this form and ask your site supervisor to fill out Section 2. When this form is completely filled out, give a copy to your instructor, to the Service Learning Coordinator, your site supervisor, and keep a copy for yourself.

Section 1 *(Please type or print clearly.)*

Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Instructor's Name: _____

Course Title & Section: _____

Instructor's Email Address & Phone: _____

Service Project: *(Please attach a description your service work and include specific learning objectives for which you intend to become competent during this period).*

I agree to devote at least _____ hours this semester between the dates of _____
and _____ at (community agency/organization) _____.

I will provide services to the above named agency /organization on (days of the week)
_____ between the hours of _____. I also agree to abide by the rules
and regulations of my service-learning placement site and to notify my site supervisor of any changes in my
agreed upon work schedule. I also agree to complete the service-learning related assignments or
requirements that my professor has indicated in the syllabus to receive credit for this service-learning
experience.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Section 2

To the Site Supervisor: Please sign below if you agree to the terms specified above.

I agree with the work schedule and service activities on the attached sheet. I also agree to provide the student named above with the appropriate training, orientation, and supervision required to perform the service activities. I will review with the student the expectations, policies, and procedures related to the assignment and the workplace. I will report any concerns to the instructor immediately, and will evaluate the student's performance and the program's effectiveness at the end of the assignment.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Frequently Asked Questions

How is Service-Learning Different from Other Forms of Experiential Education?

Service learning includes an integration of theory and practice, with an emphasis on civic responsibility. Service learning classes are designed to involve students in community service activities that are linked to specific learning objectives of a course. Clinicals, internships, fieldwork, and co-op programs are designed to provide students with experiences in the community in order to develop professional skills.

How do I go about integrating service learning into my course?

Faculty can integrate service learning extensively or not so extensively. Determine the student's learning objectives and ask yourself the following questions: In what ways will service-learning strengthen my course(s)? What possibilities does service-learning offer for energizing or motivating my students in new and different ways? How will it benefit my students to volunteer in the community while simultaneously doing the work in my course(s)? Career Development Services will assist you in choosing the best service opportunities for presentations to your students

Can faculty from all Schools and disciplines participate?

Yes, service learning can cross disciplines and transcend them while reinforcing a commitment to learning itself as well as encouraging a lifelong commitment to the common good.

How can I fit something new into an already cramped curriculum?

Service-Learning is not an add-on to your current course requirements. It does not change or add to what you teach; it only changes how you will teach it. The traditional classroom content

accumulation activity is replaced with more dynamic information processing activity. Some “seat time” is replaced with action and meaningful involvement of students in experiential learning.

"A good college affirms that service to others is a central part of education."

The Carnegie Foundation, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America

What More Can We Add?

It is highly recommended that student preparation can begin even before the first day of the course by including service-learning in the course listing in the schedule of classes and in the description that appears in the course catalog. It will prepare the student for options in the course leading to little resistance.

Setting the context for the service experience by outlining logistical considerations, providing background on the population or issue at hand, and explaining why you are using service-learning as a course method will have a significant impact on the quality of students' learning.

For more information contact

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