Service Learning Capstone

Honors Service Learning is one of the three types of capstone projects that Honors majors may choose to complete their B.A. in Honors Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts (HILA). This capstone provides the opportunity for Honors majors to work on a community-engaged project. Non-majors may also choose to engage in Service Learning as part of their Honors commitment.

Service learning goes beyond volunteering or charity; the goal is that service-learning a project will have transformational effects on both the student’s learning and the communities they are working with. During a service-learning capstone, students will work closely with a community partner to identify needs, propose a project, and execute the project. Students will document all activities as well as participate in an ongoing process of critical reflection on the project, the problem, and the communities served.

Service learning is a teaching and learning method that integrates meaningful service in the community with academic learning in order to enrich the learning experience, engender personal growth, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Students engaged in a service learning capstone will expand their academic skills and knowledge, applying them to address real-life needs in communities where they work.

Service learning is reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the students. It offers unique opportunities to engage in problem solving and invites cooperative experiences that promote skills associated with teamwork. Service learning is not simple volunteerism; because the needs and problems addressed are immediate and emergent, service learning provides opportunities for deep learning where solutions are unique and relevant. Service learning students make decisions that have real, not hypothetical, results and thus develop as leaders within the community.

The goals of service learning are:

1) To enhance student learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action.
2) To fill unmet needs in the community through meaningful direct, indirect, or advocacy service.
3) To help students discover the relevance that academic studies have for real-world problems.
4) To enhance the civic and citizenship skills of students.
5) To promote understanding about societal inequalities, inadequacies, and injustices in the United States, and how they are inherent in the social structure of American society.
6) To empower students to find ways to impact local issues and needs.
7) To better prepare students for careers and for lifelong learning.

There are three components to a Service Learning Capstone: 1) Background and Preparatory Work; 2) Project Execution; and 3) Portfolio and Presentation. The student and a HC faculty member work together to identify a community partner and develop and implement a project proposal intended to aid the community partner. Students have additional independent responsibilities that they review with their faculty advisor or Capstone Committee. This process
usually fills three consecutive semesters and 7 CH, and is never done in less than a year and 6 CH.

1. Anticipatory planning and proposal, UHON 499 Individual Study (recommended)
2. For the preparation semester, UHON 495: Honors Senior Service Learning Prep. (required)
3. For the teaching semester, students register for UHON 496: Honors Senior Service Learning (required)

Why undertake a Senior Service Learning Project in the Honors College?
Service Learning is especially appropriate for students who want to develop as leaders in the community after they graduate from Honors. This could include students who are going to graduate school in a number or fields or preparing for careers as civic leaders.

Service Learning Process

General Considerations

Significant planning. Service learning, besides being a strong commitment, entails a long lead time and lots of coordination and collaboration. Thinking backwards from the semester in which the community project would take place, the previous semester is spent understanding service learning and identifying a community partner with your faculty instructor.

Communication and risk. To do service learning, a student needs to find and explicitly plan with a willing and available Honors faculty member, well in advance of the actual credit-bearing semesters. There is additional risk in working with a community partner. The Honors College will try their best to help things work out for students who are earnestly engaged with their project, but contingency plans should be made along the way, particularly for HILA majors who may be depending on service learning as their required capstone.

Being Proactive. The student will be expected to be highly active in everything about the project: from designing and planning to corresponding with their community partner. If a student has concerns about their willingness or ability to perform any of these roles, they need to work these issues out with their faculty advisor before signing up for any credits.

TIMELINE

Capstone Declaration – Students must declare their capstone option, solidify their Capstone Committee (comprised of two faculty members in honors and one outside member (either from UNM or the larger community), and sketch the expected project by April 15 or November 15 of the second semester of the junior year.

Register Honors Service Learning is a year-long course. Students must register for UHON 495 in the first semester of the senior year, followed by UHON 496 in the second semester of the senior year.

Semester 1 – Background and Preparatory Work – UHON 495 (3 CH) – Required
The service learning preparation semester involves developing a firm understanding of service learning, understanding community problems, identifying a community partner, and developing a project proposal. With guidance from the student’s Capstone Committee, students will complete preparatory work in advance of executing the service-learning project. It is recommended that they meet once a week for an hour or more.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course the student will:
1) Demonstrate familiarity with relevant research on service learning
2) Evaluate effective service learning examples as “case studies”
3) Create community connections and interview community members (applicable to your service learning community topic) regarding their needs.
4) Develop a project proposal for your community partner.

Details of activities and potential requirements
Assignments that are required of students to complete the preparation semester are largely up to the faculty member serving as the capstone advisor. However, required assignments must adequately reflect the kind of workload and expectations for any other 400-level Honors course. Generally, most faculty require at minimum:

- Weekly or bi-weekly meetings with the faculty advisor or committee.
- Understanding Service Learning: Research and write a discussion of service-learning goals, pedagogies, and approaches (3-5 page essay)
- Excavate the problem: What is the problem that you seek to address in your service-learning project? What is the underlying historical, political, economic or environmental context of this problem (7-10 page essay)
- Case Study: How has this problem been addressed in the past? What organizations (local, national, or international) address this problem, and how do they do it? (3-5 page case study)
- Identify community partner & develop project proposal: The proposal must be presented to the partner and revised based on their feedback. The proposal should include:
  - Outline of needs
  - Outline of project and how it addresses needs
  - Timeline
  - Resources required and who will provide them
  - How the success of the project will be evaluated (ie, how will you know if your project was successful?)
  - Deliverables
  - Mutual Expectations Agreement – must be signed by both parties (See template, Appendix)

Semester 2 – Execute Project, Compile Portfolio & Public Presentation – UHON 496 (3 CH) – Required
In the second semester, students will execute their service project, compile a portfolio/draft a final report, and present their project publicly.
Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course the student will:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of best practices of service learning;
2. Articulate and chronicle the stages of a service learning project;
3. Reflect on the strengths and weakness of the service learning project;
4. Demonstrate interview skills;
5. Demonstrate visual and oral presentation skills to publicly articulate the project findings.

Requirements
Assignments that are required of students to complete the preparation semester are largely up to the faculty member serving as the capstone advisor. However, required assignments must adequately reflect the kind of workload and expectations for any other 400-level Honors course. Generally, most faculty require at minimum:

● Project Execution
  ○ Projects must include at least 50 hours of direct, indirect, or advocacy service
  ○ All activities must be documented (see Appendix)
  ○ Critical reflection must be completed at a minimum every week (see suggestions in the Appendix)
  ○ Mid-project evaluation from community partner with face-to-face meeting (see template in the Appendix)
  ○ Reflection on mid-project evaluation, and documentation of adjustments/changes made after mid-project evaluation
  ○ Evaluation from stakeholders
  ○ Presentation of results and report to community partner

● Service Learning Capstone Portfolio: the materials from the entire experience will be collected into a Capstone Portfolio, which must include a final report. The report should draw upon the materials generated throughout the Capstone Project.
  ○ Suggested contents for the Capstone Report:
    ○ Introduction and synopsis of the full project
    ○ Overview of service learning
    ○ Context/background of problem, how it has been addressed and solutions, case studies, overview of institutions served, partner needs assessment
    ○ Description of service project and how it changed during execution
    ○ Results of the project, including a discussion of evaluations
    ○ Discussion of interdisciplinary integration
    ○ Process reflection – how the process worked.
    ○ Final critical reflection (see prompts in the Appendix)
    ○ Capstone approval form signed by all members of the BA committee
    ○ It is expected that this report will be revised from the materials from throughout the capstone experience that are compiled in the portfolio.

● Public presentation about the project and its results
  ○ Coordinate with Discovery Series coordinator to schedule a presentation for the last month of your senior year.
**Important Dates**
Capstone Declaration due: April 15 or November 15 (semester 2 of junior year)
Capstone Portfolio due: April 15
Presentation must be completed before May 1

**Resources for Service Learning**

UNM’s Community Engagement Center
http://communityengagement.unm.edu

UNM’s Community Engaged Scholarship Library Guide
http://libguides.unm.edu/communityengagedscholarship/Home

Randy Stoekner & Elizabeth A. Tryon with Amy Hilgendorf (eds.). *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning*. (e-book at UNM library).


Adam Davis. *The Civically Engaged Reader: A Diverse Collection of Short Provocative Readings on Civic Activity*.


**Appendices (see the content below for the specific forms):**
Capstone Declaration Form
Mutual Expectations Agreement
Activity documentation and timesheet
Critical reflection suggestions
Evaluation from Community Partner
Capstone Approval Form
Mutual Expectations Agreement
This document ensures that both parties, the student pursuing the service learning project and the partnering organization, are clear about the scope and expectations of the partnership and have outlined the scope of the work that will be completed.

Provide a Summary of the Goals of the Service Learning Project:

Project Deliverables:
Please list the specific aspects that will be completed by the end of the service learning project at the end of the semester.

Community Partner -- we commit to the following:
- To provide orientation/training and assistance to the student service-learner.
- To provide supervision, feedback, and evaluation on student performance.
- To respect the individual and learning needs of the student.
- To provide appreciation and recognition of the student's contributions.
- To provide a safe and appropriate working environment.
- We authorize the service-learner to gather materials (e.g. images, data) to document this project. Yes/No

Community Service-Learner -- I commit to the following:
- To perform my respective duties to the best of my ability.
- To adhere to organizational rules, procedures, and policies, including the confidentiality of organization and client information.
- To be open to supervision with mutual feedback that will facilitate service-learning growth.
- To meet time and duty commitments or, if I cannot, to provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Evaluation Dates:
Please set the following evaluation dates:

Mid-point review (Evaluation from community partner with face-to-face meeting)
Date:

Final Presentation (Presentation of results and report to community partner)
Date:

Final Evaluation form (The community partner agrees to complete the student service learning evaluation form)
Date:
By signing below, both parties agree to the goals and scope of work that will be completed during the service learning project. The service learner agrees to complete these deliverables and the partnering organization agrees to help facilitate this effort by participating in a face-to-face mid-point review meeting, a final presentation of results, and by completing a final student service learning evaluation form at the end of the project.

Student Service Learning Representative: ________________________________

Partnering Organization: _____________________________________________

Primary contact person at the partnering organization: _____________________

Contact information: email: _________________ and phone number: ____________
Appendix A: Activity Documentation and Timesheet

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<th>Scope of Work</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
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Appendix B: Critical Reflection

An integral component of service learning is the use of frequent written reflections as a tool to help contextualize one’s work. This ongoing process of critical reflection should address the project, the problem, and the communities served. The act of reflecting can help forge a connection between prior academic research and the realities of service learning work, serve as a tool to assess the strengths and weaknesses of one’s approach and document the problem-solving process throughout the project. At minimum a student pursuing a service learning project should reflect on the work they are doing once a week. It is recommended to include visual documentation (photographs, video, or sketches) along with these weekly written reflections. One platform that has worked well is to create an online blog where these materials can be housed. This route makes it easy to share your reflections with your faculty advisor and community partner (if so desired). Additionally, weekly reflections function as an important tool to assist each student in the construction of the final service learning report. Reflective practice can be difficult to get into. The scaffold below should help you begin that process.

Weekly Progress Reflection Considerations:

Students will document all activities as well as participate in an ongoing process of critical reflection on the project, the problem, and the communities served. Written reflections can address a variety of issues based on the student’s own experience, but should also consider the following:

Preparatory reflections:
1. What are the needs of your partner organization?
2. How can your skills and interest best serve the organization?
3. Describe how you developed the scope of your project and your goals.

Executing your project:
1. What were your first impressions of the service site?
2. How was the setting similar or different from what you expected?
3. Discuss your experience working with people of different backgrounds: economic status, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, or health status. How has your perspective changed because of your service-learning experience?
4. What was most challenging or difficult about the experience? What did you learn from the experience?
5. Document the steps (through written and visual means) you are taking in the project and how they are helping you fulfill your project goals.
6. Address how the process is working (project implementation, communication, feedback). Are things running smoothly or do some things need to change?
7. Document the exchanges you have with your community partners and members. How are these exchanges shaping the direction of your work?
8. How are community members being benefited from your project? What supports your findings? Hard data? Personal interviews?
9. As you prepare for your mid-point review session, take a moment to gather your documentation and create a list of project highlights and questions to pose to your community partner.

**Mid-Point Community Partner Reflection:**
1. Reflect on your mid-project evaluation. What suggestions were made?
2. Which suggestions are most important in relation to your project goals, the perspective of your organization, and the people that they assist?
3. Create a plan to address and actualize these suggestions.
4. Did you receive the feedback you needed during the mid-point review?
5. If not, what information were you seeking that wasn’t addressed?
6. Is there any aspect of your working methodology that you would like to change (such as better communication, more specific deadlines, more regular community partner feedback, etc.) moving forward? If so, develop a plan to do so.

**Final Critical Reflection:**

**Big picture reflections:**
1. What changes would you recommend in your service placement/project?
2. How have you benefited overall?
3. How does your service experience relate to your Honors coursework?
4. Has this service-learning experience changed your concept of civic responsibility and your desire to help others? How?
5. How has your service-learning experience changed how you think about American society?
6. How has your service-learning experience prompted you to think differently about equity/inequality in the United States?
7. How can the work that you started be continued? How can other students or community partners get involved? How can you remain involved or continue this type of work?

**Reflect on the process (development and implementation) of the service learning project.**

1. What worked well in the process of developing and implementing the project? What worked well in actualizing your service learning project?
2. Was there a pivotal point in the project? If so, describe it and what decisions you reached in moving forward with the project.
3. Did anything occur unexpectedly? If so, how did you problem solve the situation?
4. Describe and reflect on the communication with your community partner.
5. Reflect on your mid-project evaluation. Document and outline the adjustments/changes you made after your mid-project evaluation. Were the changes beneficial? Why? How?

**Reflect on the resulting deliverables for the project.**
1. Overall, what particular deliverables were most successful (from the perspective of the organization, those helped by the organization, and you) within the project?
2. What was the least successful aspect of the project?
3. If you could change anything from the experience, what would it be and why?
Appendix C: Mid-project Evaluation from Community Partner

Please fill out the evaluation form in order to help the student, who is partnering with you on a service learning project, know where their strengths and weaknesses reside. The scale ranges from 10-1. A score of 10 represents excellent work and 1 represents dismal performance. Please share this evaluation with students in a meeting and discuss with students how they can improve their performance.

SEEKS/LISTENS TO IDEAS/NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

CONTRIBUTING IDEAS
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

ABILITY TO WORK WELL WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

PREPARED WITH IDEAS, INFORMATION, AND MATERIALS DURING MEETINGS AND WHEN ON SITE.
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

QUALITY OF SERVICE LEARNING DELIVERABLES
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

TIMELINESS OF PROJECT DELIVERABLES
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

Please address the following questions:
1. How well is the student’s service learning project meeting the needs of your organization?
2. Is the project progressing according to the timeline set at the beginning of the project?
3. Address how the process is working (project development, implementation and communication) with the service learning project as a whole. Are things running smoothly or do some things need to change?
4. How are the community members you serve being benefited from this project? Are there ways for the student to document these findings?
5. Each student will prepare a list of additional questions to pose to you during the meeting.

In signing below, both parties have met and evaluated the service learning project and the progress of the student service learning representative:

Name of Student Service Learning Representative:_________________________________
Primary contact person at the partnering organization:_______________________________

Name of Partnering Organization:_______________________________________________
Appendix D Final Evaluation from Community Partner

Please fill out the evaluation form in order to assess the student service learning representative’s final performance at the completion of their project. The scale ranges from 10-1. A score of 10 represents excellent work and 1 represents dismal performance.

QUALITY OF FINAL SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT DELIVERABLES
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

TIMELINESS OF PROJECT DELIVERABLES
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

STUDENT TOOK AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

QUALITY OF FINAL ORAL PRESENTATION
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

ABILITY TO WORK WELL WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

PREPARED WITH IDEAS, INFORMATION, AND MATERIALS DURING MEETINGS AND WHEN ON SITE.
10  9  8  7  6  5  4  3  2  1  N/A

Please address the following questions:

1. How well did the student’s service learning project meet the needs of your organization? Overall, what particular deliverables were most successful (from the perspective of the organization and those helped by the organization) within the project?
2. Did the student address suggestions or concerns from the organization following the mid-point review?
3. How did community members you serve benefit from this project?
4. Did the process (development and implementation) of the service learning project run smoothly? If so, what aspects contributed to the success of the process? If not, why?
5. How was the communication with your student service-learner? Did they make an effort to reach out for feedback, and did they address suggestions from the organization?
6. What could have been changed to make the project more successful?
7. Please provide any additional comments you may have.
8. Please send comments that you wish to remain private and which will not be shared with the student service-learner directly to the service-learner’s faculty advisor

Evaluation performed by:___________________________________________________
DRAFT: Capstone Approval Form

All required materials for ___________________________________________ have been submitted for the Honors College Capstone and have met the expectations of the committee.

I verify that this capstone meets the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts for Honors Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree:

Signature of Honors College Faculty Chair _________________________________________

Signature of Honors College Faculty Member _______________________________________