



*Iowa Western Community College*

***LEARNING INITIATIVES CENTER  
SERVICE-LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTNER  
HANDBOOK***

*"No doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, caring citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."*

*-Margaret Mead-*

# *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

Why This Handbook.....	3
What Is Service-Learnig.....	4-6
Service-Learning vs. Volunteerism: A Definition of Service-Learning .....	7
Defining Characteristics of Service-Learning.....	8
The Mechanics of Service-Learning.....	9
Expectations of Participating Community Partners.....	10
Practical Tips for Success.....	11
Steps to Becoming an IWCC Service-Learning Placement Site.....	12
Role of the Site Supervisor.....	13
Service-Learning Essential Elements.....	14
Student Rights and Responsibilities.....	15
Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning.....	16
Letter of Understanding.....	17
Appendices and Contact Information.....	18





## ***WHY THIS HANDBOOK?***

---

Service-learning is receiving unprecedented recognition for its value to students, higher education, and community. Service-learning programs consist of four main roles: the student, the college instructor, the service-learning program staff, and the community. The importance of the community service site cannot be underestimated. In fact, successful service-learning is largely dependent on the level of partnership and collaboration between community agency and educational institution.

This handbook is about understanding and developing this critical partnership. This requires a considerable commitment of time, resources, and effort on your part; however, the results for your agency, the service-learning students, and our community can be dramatic and transformational. Please review this handbook carefully as it is the first step in the process of becoming a service-learning partner and placement site.

### **WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?**

***Service-learning is a teaching strategy that combines course related service projects with guided reflection (processing the service experience) to 1) enrich and enhance student learning of course material, 2) help meet community needs, and 3) foster civic responsibility and a sense of caring for others.***

### **GOALS:**

- √ **Enhance Classroom Learning**
- √ **Meet Community Needs**
- √ **Foster Civic Responsibility and a Sense of Caring for Others**

## *WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?*

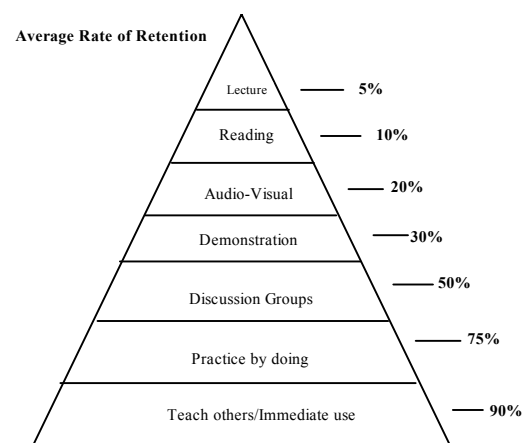
Service-learning is the process of integrating volunteer community service combined with active guided reflection into the curriculum to enhance and enrich student learning of course material.

It builds on a tradition of activism and volunteerism which was popular in the sixties but which greatly subsided during the seventies and eighties. The tradition of volunteer service saw a rebirth in the late eighties as cultural, educational, and civic leaders challenged higher education to fulfill its historic mission to promote civic responsibility. Many colleges accepted this challenge and created a support network (Campus Compact) to develop and promote service-learning as a pedagogical strategy. Service-learning is now a national movement and is utilized in the majority of colleges and universities in the United States.

The philosophical antecedent and academic parent of service-learning is experiential learning. As in all types of experiential learning such as cooperative education, internships, and field placements, service-learning directly engages the learner in the phenomena being studied with the hope that richer learning will result. The critical difference and distinguishing characteristic of service-learning is its twofold emphasis on both enriching student learning and revitalizing the community.

To accomplish this, effective service-learning initiatives involve students in course-relevant activities which address the real human, safety, educational, and environmental needs of the community. Students' course materials such as texts, lectures, discussions, and reflection inform their service, and the service experience is brought back to the classroom to inform the academic dialogue and the quest for knowledge. This reciprocal process is based on the logical continuity between experience and knowledge.

The pedagogy of service-learning represents a substantial change from the traditional lecture driven, content based, and faculty centered curriculum. Despite the fact that research has shown that we remember only 10% of what we hear, 15% of what we see, and a mere 20% of what we see and hear, these remain the basic sense modalities stimulated in most educational



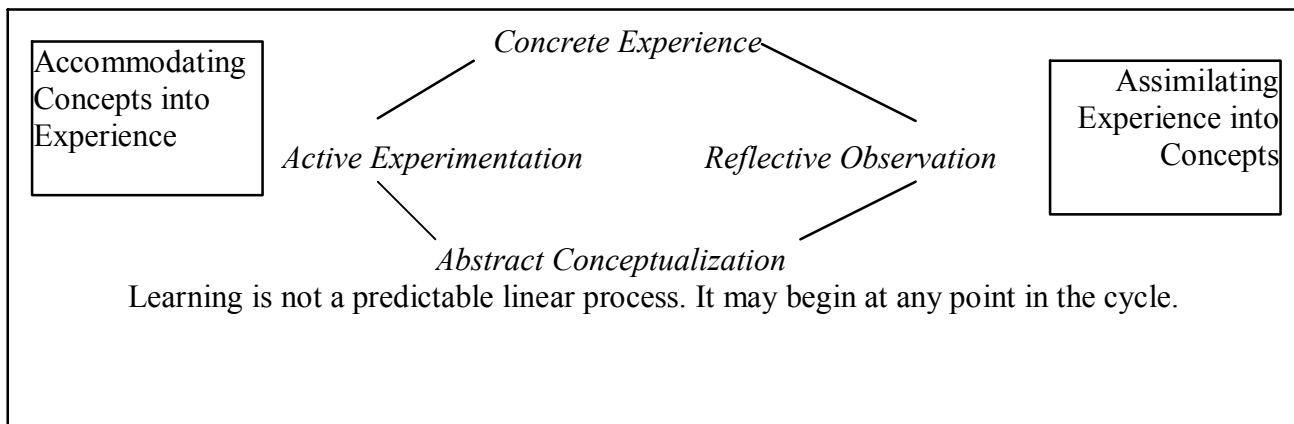
Source:  
National Training Laboratory, Bethel, MA

experiences. Service-learning strategies recognize that we retain 60% of what we do, 80% of what we do with active guided reflection, and 90% of what we teach or give to others. It views education as a process of living, not a preparation for life. It also rejects the notion that students are empty vessels waiting to be filled. In a culture characterized by information overload, effective teaching must encourage information processing as well as accumulation. In a complex society, it is almost impossible to determine what information will be necessary to solve particular problems. All too often, the content students learn in class is obsolete by the time they finished their degree. With this in mind, it seems much more important to "light the fire than to fill the bucket."

Service-learning does this by providing students with real-life, meaningful experiences which by their very nature force critical thinking. In service, students encounter events which conflict with their assumptions. They deal with issues or incidents which challenge their competency or understanding. These experiences create perplexity or dissonance, which is often the beginning of learning. In service-learning courses, real life comes tumbling into the classroom as students' service experiences provide the content for purposeful dialogue leading to real understanding of academic concepts. Unlike most pedagogies which are deductive, relying on presenting theory and then encouraging application to specifics, service-learning is more inductive, using experience provided by students to lead to conceptual or theoretical understanding.

Service-learning is best understood in the context a continuous learning cycle where meaning is created through concrete experience, reflection or assimilation, abstract conceptualization or theory building, and active experimentation or problem solving.

### The Learning Cycle



Students may have to apply their limited knowledge in a service situation before consciously setting out to gain or comprehend a body of facts related to that situation. The discomfort experienced from the lack of knowledge may encourage further accumulation of facts or the development or changing of a personal theory for future application. To assure that this kind of learning takes place however, skilled guidance in reflection on the experience must occur. This facilitation of reflection is the critical responsibility of the service-learning teacher.

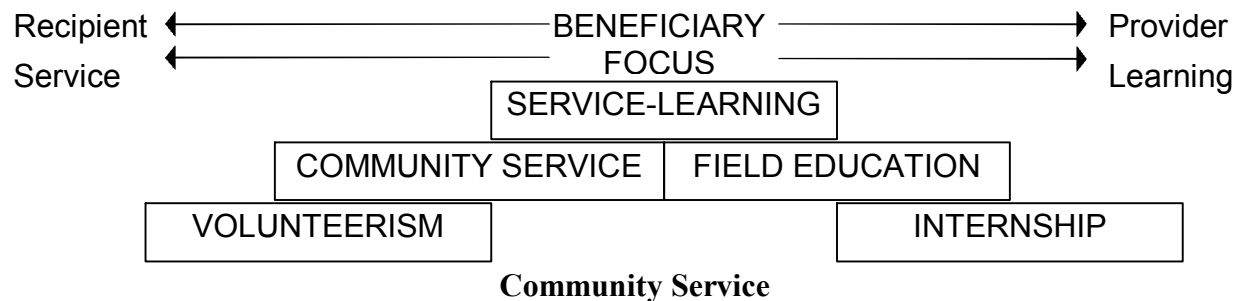
Based on the belief that learning is the constant restructuring of experience, service-learning exemplifies the continuity that exists between experience and knowledge. By providing students the opportunity to have a concrete experience and then assisting them in the intellectual processing of this experience, service-learning not only takes advantage of the natural learning cycle, but also allows students to provide a meaningful contribution to the community. This twofold emphasis on both learning and civic responsibility is the overall objective of the strategy, and our success in meeting this objective leads to the fulfillment of the general mission of higher education.



# SERVICE LEARNING - vs - VOLUNTEERISM:

## A DEFINITION OF SERVICE-LEARNING

**S**ervice Learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential learning in that they are intended to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service. They also involve an equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. There is a deliberate and explicit connection made between service and learning experiences with conscious and thoughtful preparation for, and reflection of, the experience.



Community service is the engagement of students in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients (e.g., providing food to the homeless during the holidays). The students receive some benefits by learning more about how their service makes a difference in the lives of the service recipients.

### Volunteerism

Volunteerism is the engagement of students in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the recipient.

### Field Education

Field education programs provide students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related, but not fully integrated, with their academic studies. Students perform the service as part of a program that is designed primarily to enhance students' understanding of a field of study, while also providing substantial emphasis on the service being provided.

### Internship

Internship programs engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study

## ***DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE-LEARNING***

**THE COMBINATION OF FOCUSING ON MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS, IDENTIFYING LEARNING OBJECTIVES, AND INTENTIONALLY REFLECTING ON WHAT IS BEING LEARNED, MAKES SERVICE-LEARNING UNIQUE AND FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE, VOLUNTEERISM, AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION.**

- *Community Service* helps meet community needs through volunteer efforts.
- *Service-learning* also meets those needs, but students use the service experience as a foundation to examine themselves, their society, and their future.
- The *goal* of service-learning is to **empower** those being served and those who serve. This is not necessarily the goal of volunteerism, community service, or experiential education.

### *Service Learning:*

- Uses community service as the vehicle for students to reach their academic goals and objectives by integrating teaching objectives with community needs.
- Is based on a reciprocal relationship in which the service reinforces and strengthens the learning, and the learning reinforces and strengthens the service.
- Is integrated into the academic curriculum and provides structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their experience through a mix of writing, reading, speaking, listening, and group discussions.
- Identifies and tracks specific learning objectives and goals.
- Provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities.
- Fosters a sense of caring for others and a commitment to civic responsibility.
- Gives academic credit for **demonstrating** learning achieved through the service, not just for putting in hours.



# THE MECHANICS OF SERVICE-LEARNING



## FACULTY BUILD SERVICE INTO THEIR COURSE

Typically, faculty members incorporate a service-learning component within their class curriculum, either as an option or as a requirement. Service-learning offers a continuum of possibilities ranging from a one time service experience (e.g., a half day beach clean-up), to working with the same agency for 1-4 hours a week over the course of a semester (e.g., tutoring at-risk youth one afternoon a week for 12-13 weeks). The range of appropriate placements is circumscribed by the specific content of the particular course. Helping a YMCA increase the number of children served would be a very appropriate placement for a marketing class, while tutoring at-risk youth would not.

The faculty member works with the Learning Initiatives Center to carefully choose a limited number of agencies whose needs are related to his or her teaching objectives. The faculty member also sets a minimum number of hours to be completed and develops a reflective component that may include assignments such as journals, readings, class discussions, writing assignments, and class presentations about the service experience.



## ADJUSTING TO THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Because the service is integrated into the class structure, students must be able to complete their placement within the semester time frame (12-14 weeks, maximum). Although the Fall and Spring semesters are 16 weeks long, it takes a couple of weeks to get students assigned, oriented, and started. In addition, the last week is devoted to exams. Agencies are asked to adjust by scheduling orientations and trainings at the beginning of each semester and by developing placements that can be completed in one semester. Below is an overview of the IWCC academic calendar indicating when classes begin and end. (Remember, student placements generally begin during the second and third weeks of the semester, and end one week prior to the completion of the semester.)

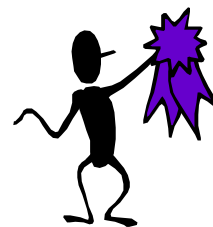
***Fall Semester: 3<sup>RD</sup> WEEK OF AUGUST - MID-DECEMBER***

***Spring Semester: 3<sup>RD</sup> WEEK OF JANUARY – 2<sup>ND</sup> WEEK OF MAY***

## ***EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY SITES***

**Service-learning sites should be willing to do the following:**

- 1.) Complete the Community Partner Information Form (pg.20-21) and Letter of Understanding (pg.19).
- 2.) Conduct an interview/orientation with prospective service-learning students to clarify the responsibilities of the specific placement, and to evaluate the student's abilities with respect to these responsibilities.
- 3.) Authorize the placement by signing the Service-Learning Placement Confirmation Agreement form that will be brought by the student. This form will be returned to us by the student as notification of your acceptance.
- 4.) Complete the Service-Learning Student Log provided by the student weekly so that we can accurately track students' completion of requirements.
- 5.) Provide necessary resources for students to perform their responsibilities (examples: orientation, training, uniforms, activity supplies, office space, parking, etc.). If extra costs are incurred by any of these, please inform students ahead of time.
- 6.) Supervise and monitor student activities to ensure progress toward completion of goals outlined in learning plan.
- 7.) There is a mid-term and final evaluation (Community Partner Evaluation of Student, pg. 22) form which you will be asked to complete on each student. Please submit to the faculty supervisor for student evaluation and grade. If the site supervisor has questions or concerns at any time, call the faculty supervisor, or the director of Learning Initiatives Center.
- 8.) Comply with college policies on affirmative action, Americans with Disabilities Act and sexual harassment since the student's work is considered to be an extension of his/her education, sponsored and supported by the college.



## ***PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS***

---

### **1. REMEMBER, SERVICE-LEARNERS ARE STUDENTS, NOT VOLUNTEERS!**

Supervisors must always keep in mind that not only do service-learning students want to help meet important community needs, but they are also using the experience as the basis for understanding their college course. Students are receiving academic credit for learning through their service efforts. Help students think about what the experience means to them, the organizational context, and overall societal issues and impacts.

### **2. PLAN AHEAD!**

Clear, well thought-out service-learning placement descriptions outlining tasks, responsibilities, and skills needed must be prepared and given to the Learning Initiatives Center and student. Are there tasks that you and your staff are now doing that could be divided up and given to one or several students? Is there a project that you've always wanted to do but never had the time to organize? Positions that carry some degree of responsibility and involve client contact are ideal.

### **3. ORIENT . . . TRAIN . . . SUPERVISE!**

**Students require carefully structured orientation to your agency, staff, and clients.** This should answer such questions as "Where do I fit in? How do I get things done? What do I need to be aware of? What is expected of me? How do I get information/support if my supervisor is not available? What do I have to learn?" Introduce them to other staff, give them a tour of the facility, and make sure they feel comfortable and welcome. Students should also be familiarized with your mission and key community and societal issues facing your agency (i.e., "the bigger picture"-- why you do what you do, and how the student can contribute to this end).

### **5. BE REALISTIC WITH YOUR TIME COMMITMENT EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS. THINK SEMESTER!**

Remember that you will have to be aware of the semester schedule and adapt accordingly (offer training sessions during the early part of the semester and expect students for only 12-14 weeks at the most).

### **6. BE AN INVOLVED TEACHER AND MENTOR FOR OUR STUDENTS !**

Throughout the assignment the supervisor should help the student interpret the experience and the relationship between what he/she is doing and the work of the agency and others. The student-supervisor relationship is one of the most significant parts of the student's experience and often determines the success of the placement. The supervisor is truly a partner in the student's education and should view him or herself as an "educator."

### **7. SAY THANKS!**

Like everyone, students want to be welcomed and appreciated. This may take many forms from recognition, to a thank you note, to a simple acknowledgment of a job well done. Students also need to see how their work is important to your agency's mission. Ask the students how they're doing and what can be improved upon.

### **8. TALK TO US!**

Keep the Learning Initiatives Center staff informed of any concerns, problems, successes, or other pertinent issues related to the placement and/or student. We are here to facilitate the entire process and ensure that all parties are satisfied.



## ***STEPS TO BECOMING AN IWCC SERVICE-LEARNING PLACEMENT SITE***

---

### **SERVICE-LEARNING SITES SHOULD BE WILLING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1.) Become familiar with this IWCC Service-Learning Community Partner Handbook.
- 2.) Attend a Community Partner Service-Learning Workshop or meet with a Learning Initiatives Center staff member.
- 3.) Complete the Letter Of Understanding and return it to the Learning Initiatives Center (see Page 19).
- 4.) Prepare the "Community Partner Information Form" that includes your agency's mission, specific service-learning opportunities and hours, orientation/training procedures, and any special conditions or requirements (see pg. 20-21).
- 5.) Review the opportunities you have developed to **ensure that you have a plan in place to foster student learning at your agency** (how thorough is your orientation, are you providing any training, what type of "on-going support" do you offer to the student, do you meet regularly with the student to process and debrief the experience, what are you doing to recognize and say thank you to the student, etc.?)
- 6.) Interview service-learning student candidates to clarify the responsibilities of the placement and to evaluate the students' abilities and appropriateness with respect to these responsibilities. Ask them who their IWCC instructor is and make a note of this (this will prove helpful if you have to call our office about a student).
- 7.) Authorize the placement by signing the "Service-Learning Placement Confirmation Agreement" which will be brought in by the student. The student will then return this form to the Center as notification of your acceptance.
- 8.) Provide the service-learning student with appropriate orientation, training, on-going supervision, and recognition.
- 9.) Report any problems, concerns, or issues to the Learning Initiatives Center.
- 10.) Sign off on the student's hour log and complete a brief evaluation of the student (the student will bring you both of these forms).



## *ROLE OF THE SITE SUPERVISOR*

**The site supervisor plays a crucial role in determining the value of the service experience to the student's learning. The site supervisor's role includes:**

- ⇒ **Planning**: As soon as the student has been interviewed, and accepted the student's position and assignments should be carefully defined. All parties should have a clear understanding of expectations in terms of productivity and educational growth. Participation in the student's learning plan will facilitate this.
- ⇒ **Orientation**: This should answer such questions as : "Where do I fit in? How do I get things done? What is expected of me? How do I get information? Who can assist me if my site supervisor is not available?"
- ⇒ **Training**: Inform the student of any prerequisites and training that will be necessary.
- ⇒ **Scheduling**: The student's time at the site must take into account the needs of the site, availability of supervision and the student's schedule. Procedures for tracking service hours should be clarified.
- ⇒ **Supervision**: Ensure that student has guidance available as necessary from a paid employee, with opportunities for questions and sharing of ideas.
- ⇒ **Evaluation**: Complete, sign, and obtain student's signature on Community Partner Evaluation of Student forms at mid-semester and at the end of the student's service placement and return to faculty supervisor. Any perceived inadequacy in student performance should be considered whenever possible as opportunities for growth. Unresolved conflicts should be discussed with faculty supervisor, and if they are unavailable, the Learning Initiatives Center.
- ⇒ **Comply**: with college policies on affirmative action, sexual harassment and the Americans with Disabilities Act, since the student's work is considered to be an extension of his/her education, sponsored and supported by the college.

## *SERVICE-LEARNING: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS*



**RECIPROCITY:** The service and learning must be worthwhile and valuable for both the student and the community. There must be reciprocity between the server and those served.

**REFLECTION:** Intentional, systematic reflection about the experience must take place in order to draw meaning and make connections between service and learning. Reflection within the context of the volunteer experience encourages introspection of other aspects of the student's life.

**DEVELOPMENT:** Service-learning occurs in different stages: beginning with serving, to enabling, to empowering; from observation, to experience, to leadership.

**MEANINGFUL SERVICE:** Service tasks need to be worthwhile and challenging in order to strengthen students' critical thinking.

**DIVERSITY:** A priority is placed on involving a broad cross-section of students working in diverse settings and with a diverse population within the community.

***“MEANINGFUL SERVICE IS NOT ABOUT DOING GOOD TO SOMEONE; IT IS ABOUT THE DIGNITY AND GROWTH OF THE GIVER AND THE RECEIVER.”***

*-Harry C. Silcox-*

## **STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

(What are students' rights and responsibilities as service providers?)

### **Rights**

1. To be interviewed and, once accepted to be assigned specific, varied, and appropriate tasks.
2. To know as much as possible about site organization - - policy, people, programs, and activities.
3. To receive orientation, training and ongoing supervision for the job expected.
4. To do meaningful and satisfying work.
5. To be treated as a co-worker.
6. To be given an opportunity to voice opinions and ideas.
7. To be given opportunities to pursue leadership roles.
8. To be evaluated and to receive letters of commendation based on quality of service.

### **Responsibilities to Community Site**

1. To be open and honest at the site from the beginning.
2. To respect confidentiality.
3. Maintain professionalism: observe dress code, avoid gossip, etc.
4. To understand commitments of time and tasks and to fulfill them.
5. To share the learning objectives with the people with whom the student works.
6. To seek honest feedback.
7. If in doubt, seek advice.
8. To serve as ambassadors of goodwill for the project.
9. To be effective advocates for change as needed.
10. To enter into service with enthusiasm and commitment.
11. To participate in evaluation when asked to do so

## **PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

### **IN COMBINING SERVICE- AND- LEARNING\***

The principles that follow are a statement of what we believe are essential components of good practice that should guide all service-learning programs.

- 1.) An effective program engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
- 2.) An effective program provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
- 3.) An effective program articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved. From the outset of the project, participants and service recipients alike must have a clear sense of : (1) what is to be accomplished and (2) what is to be learned.
- 4.) An effective program allows for those with needs to define those needs.
- 5.) An effective program clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
- 6.) An effective program matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
- 7.) An effective program expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
- 8.) An effective program includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
- 9.) An effective program insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved.
- 10.) An effective program is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

\* from the Wingspread Special Report (1989)



## ***LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING***

Dear Community Partner Supervisor:

On behalf of the Iowa Western Community College Learning Initiatives Center we would like to thank you for entering into a partnership with us to provide richer educational opportunities for our students. By accepting and supervising our service-learners, you are helping these students join classroom theory with real-life experience. Ultimately you are also contributing to education's mission of promoting civic responsibility.

As an agency supervising Iowa Western Community College students involved in a service-learning project, you will ensure that these students are provided with the following:

- Orientation, training, and supervision
- A description of the skills needed to complete the assigned project
- A clear description of the assigned service-learning project including expectations, requirements and responsibilities
- A safe and appropriate working environment

**The Learning Initiatives Center at Iowa Western Community College will ensure that your agency is provided with the following:**

- Direct consultation for identifying appropriate tasks for students
- Orientation for agency supervisors regarding student needs and capabilities
- Student candidates for service-learning placements
- On-going follow-up and support regarding student developmental issues

If you wish to become a partner in education with Iowa Western Community College and agree to the listed provisions, complete the agency information below and return it to: Iowa Western Community College, Learning Initiatives Center, 2700 College Rd, Council Bluffs, IA 51503 (Ph:712-256-6539/1-800-432-5852, ext. 6539/Fax: 712-388-6803).



Name of Agency \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

IWCC Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ***APPENDICES***

The appendices are copies of forms that will be brought to you by the service-learning students placed at your site.

- **Appendix 1:** Service-Learning Placement Confirmation Agreement
- **Appendix 2:** Service-Learning Student Log
- **Appendix 3:** Community Partner Evaluation of Student
- **Appendix 4:** Student Evaluation of Service-Learning Experience

### *Questions?*

Please Contact Us If There is ANYTHING We Can Help You With!

Jill Connor  
Learning Initiatives Coordinator  
Iowa Western Community College  
2700 College Road  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 256-6539 or 1-800-432-5852 ext. 6539  
[jconnor@iwcc.edu](mailto:jconnor@iwcc.edu)

Without your help, Service-Learning would not be possible!

*Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You*