

Implementing service-learning: Best practices from agricultural leadership education

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Service-Learning Implementation

- Leadership course taught in the context of agricultural education.
- Application of team leadership knowledge and skills.
- Students assigned to teams, which then chose a community partner.
- Team works with community partner to identify a project .
- Students completed 8 hours of service with their team members.
- Teams created a project portfolio documenting the stages of their service-learning project.
- Teams developed and delivered a presentation about their service-learning project.
- Students completed reflection assignments at the mid-point of the service-learning project and the end of the project.
- Students evaluated their own performance and the performance of their teammates.

Why Service-Learning?

- Pedagogy linking meaningful community service with instruction and reflection
- Creates solutions for the community organization
- Enriches students' learning experience
- Promotes civic responsibility while teaching critical thinking
- Taps community agencies' expertise
- Builds partnerships between the university and community organizations
- Enhances university engagement in community issues



Students sold cooked-to-order briskets, racks of ribs and whole chickens to raise money for the Staurolite Foundation to support Wounded Warriors.

Assignments

- Community Partner Description and Contract
- Service-learning project proposal with goal statement and action steps
- Mid-project and post-project reflections
- Service-learning project portfolio
- Service-learning project presentation
- Service-learning self & team evaluation



Students partnered with local agricultural education programs to host a workshop to teach students how to select, feed, fit and show a steer.

Best Practices

- Identify your goals and motives for implementing a service-learning project in your course
- Develop specific service-learning objectives for student experiences
- Prepare a list of "potential" community partners"
- Provide examples of previous successful projects
- Meet and maintain contact with community partner
- Create a written agreement with community partners
- Monitor service-learning groups' progress and completion of their project
- Guide students' reflection to ensure connection of service-learning activity and course content
- Celebrate and publicize your student teams' service-learning projects
- Thank community partners
- Evaluate your outcomes



Pit Falls

- Student teams choosing community partners unprepared to work with a team
- Not enough instructor contact with community partners
- Choosing projects that did not meet the minimum time requirement



Students help out with a clean-up day at the local wildlife refuge.

Results

- All student teams completed a service-learning project
- Most students completed the reflection assignments
- All teams developed a portfolio and delivered a presentation about their project to their classmates
- All community partners honored their written agreement, allowing student teams to achieve their service-learning project goals



Students refurbished a gazebo for the Texas Tech Therapeutic Riding center.

