

# Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

## Service-Learning Guidelines for Course Development



Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
University of Southern Maine  
Portland, Maine



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MAINE

Part 1: General Information on Service-Learning

Part 2: Service Learning at OLLI

Proposal Form

## **Part 1: General Information on Service-Learning**

“Service-Learning” has become popular in high schools and colleges partly as a way to apply classroom learning to the “real world,” and partly to teach young people to be more like older people, i.e. to take some civic responsibility and participate in their communities. Typically this has meant adding a service component to academic courses.

While there are many opportunities for older adults to volunteer their time and energy in service to organizations and communities, there are very few programs that offer service-learning opportunities to older adults in an academic setting. In fact, older adults are quite often the recipients of services in service-learning programs, not the providers.

### **Service-Learning:**<sup>\*</sup>

- Links service to academic content and standards
- Involves students in helping determine and meet real, defined community needs
- Benefits both the community and the students
- Can be used in any subject area in ways that are appropriate to the learning goals
- Works at all ages

### **Service-Learning is NOT:**<sup>\*</sup>

- An episodic volunteer program
- Restricted to solving social problems
- An add-on to an existing curriculum
- Logging a set number of community service hours in order to meet an award goal
- Only for high school and college students
- One-sided: benefiting only the students or only the community

### **Authentic service-learning experiences have some common characteristics**<sup>∇</sup>:

- They are positive, meaningful and real to the participants
- They involve cooperative rather than competitive or isolating experiences
- They address complex problems in complex settings
- They offer opportunities for creative problem-solving and critical-thinking: i.e. the ability to identify the important questions or issues within a real-world situation
- They promote deeper learning because the results are immediate and uncontrived
- Service-learning is more likely than classroom-learning to be personally meaningful to participants and generate emotional consequences, to challenge values as well as ideas, and hence to support social, emotional, and cognitive learning and development.

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<sup>\*</sup>Adapted from National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. <http://www.servicelearning.org>

<sup>∇</sup> Adapted from Eyler, J., & D.E. Giles, J. (1999) *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## The Three Pillars Of Service-Learning

1. Service
  - A. Engaging students in responsible and challenging actions for the common good
  - B. Utilizing skills and energy of students to address a demonstrated need
  
2. Learning
  - A. Engaging the students in critical thought about the larger issues connected to their service work. Or learning the context or history that surrounds the elements of the service project
  - B. Learning takes place in a participatory or “hands-on” manner through discussion with community members, classroom instruction, sessions with project staff members, visits to relevant sites, slides, videos, etc.
  
3. Reflection
  - A. **The critical component of successful service-learning programs is “reflection”.**
  - B. Reflection describes the process of deriving meaning and knowledge from experience and occurs before, during and after a service-learning project. Effective reflection engages both teachers and students in a thoughtful and thought-provoking process that consciously connects learning with experience. It is the use of critical thinking skills to prepare for and learn from service experiences.
  - C. Thinking critically about the experience can happen through writing (as in a journal kept by the individual or the team), speaking, listening, or reading about the service experience.
  - D. Discussion among students helps the group process its experience and support each other throughout the project, and consider the “larger issues” and the context within which their particular project exists.
  - E. Learning happens through a mix of theory and practice, thought and action, observation and interaction. Reflection allows students to learn from themselves.

## **Part 2: Service Learning At Osher Lifelong Learning Institute**

Guidelines – November 26, 2003

- 1. OLLI service-learning courses may be developed by**
  - OLLI faculty members who want to add a service component to a course,
  - community organizations (or possibly university departments) that want to add education/training to a request for volunteer help,
  - by an OLLI faculty member and community organization working together to develop a service-learning experience.
- 2. Our pilot service-learning experiences have been 8-week courses within the context of our regular curriculum.** In this context, while the service project itself may be ongoing it should have a satisfying 8-week component that can be “completed” by the class members who may or may not then choose to continue to volunteer once the semester is over.
- 3. Perhaps the most important criterion is that the Service-Learning course should be designed to fill an existing need rather than inventing a need. The project itself might be something that is a brand-new way to fill the need, or an existing service that can be reshaped to fit these Service-Learning course criteria.**
- 4. The service project should be meaningful to the learner with significant growth potential for the individual.** A member of the Service-Learning Committee suggested that the progression should be experienced as “learn, reflect, grow.”
- 5. Each project should involve about 50% learning activities and 50% service, with an added component of reflection.** Reflection can be accomplished in a number of ways including individual and group journaling, a group evaluation at the end of the project, or a group portfolio, a video, a tea, a book.... For other ideas, see the monograph: “Reflection: A Guide to Effective Service Learning,” put out by the National Dropout Prevention Center, [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org), phone 864-656-2599.
- 6. It is important to remember that our service-learning takes place in the context of OLLI courses and thus each volunteer project must be able to accommodate groups of volunteers numbering at least 10 people.** The students don’t all have to work together at one time, but there has to be meaningful work for everybody in the group over the course of the semester. Many volunteer organizations and projects will not be appropriate for our service-learning courses because they would be overwhelmed by groups of volunteers, resulting in unsatisfying experiences for everyone concerned.
- 7. Because of the number of people involved there is often an element of group dynamics or team-building involved in successful OLLI Service-Learning courses.** The course leader and host organization should be aware of this and be prepared to build esprit de corps and work with “group process” where appropriate.
- 8. In every case, the project must include defined job descriptions for the student volunteers, as well as a responsible person as coordinator of them.**

9. **Prior to the start of the semester** there will be two **orientation sessions**, one for the staff of the service organizations who will be working with the OLLI students, and one for the students themselves. Both will cover the concept of service learning as well as specifics of the current projects themselves, and will clarify the “expectations” of OLLI, of the students, and of the participating organizations.
10. **Examples** of proto-service-learning experiences that OLLI was involved with prior to organizing actual Service Learning courses:
  - Health mentor training (OLLI members received training and provided service as mentors in the Health Enhancement Program at Partnership for Healthy Aging – this was not an OLLI course, but was a very positive experience and formed some of the impetus for wanting to create more such opportunities.)
  - Cross-cultural conversations (OLLI has provided English speakers to converse with students learning English. This was only a service project, a “learning” portion of this might involve some cross-cultural or language training for the volunteers)
11. **Examples** of service-learning experiences that organizations for younger people have created in other parts of the country:
  - Creating promotional or public service videos
  - Working as guides or animal handlers at non-profit nature center
  - Conducting wildlife counts or surveys
  - Students in children’s lit classes writing (or reading) books with elementary school students.
  - Musical or theater groups (free concerts/plays for public schools or other populations)

**The possibilities are endless** and limited only by the creativity of the faculty, students and community organizations involved.

12. **Examples of actual OLLI Service Learning Projects:**

Below are the three model courses that the Service Learning Committee identified as pilot projects for Fall, 2003. These three were chosen because they represented different skill areas and partnering possibilities:

Project #1: Teachers’ Aides and Tutors in Portland Adult Education Basic English classes.

Project #2: Portland Trails Association. Working on increasing involvement by “seniors.”

Project #3: Maine Historical Society. Working on transferring documents to the Web.

Spring, 2004 projects:

Project #1: Teachers’ Aides and Tutors in Portland Adult Education Basic English classes.

Project #2: University of Southern Maine Planetarium. Training to assist in all aspects of the planetarium programs.

13. **Funding.** Service-Learning courses cost the same as OLLI’s regular 8-week courses. A portion of the tuition is given to the host organization to support the project. Some projects may provide opportunities for writing grants to organizations that fund such things.

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute**  
**Course Proposal – SERVICE LEARNING**  
*(Please fill out completely for each course)*

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructors/Facilitators: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the following components of the Service Learning project. See “Guidelines” for further information/instruction and examples. This information will form the basis for the description in OLLI’s course brochure. (Use separate page if necessary or more convenient).

*The Need:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Service Project:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Learning:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Logistics(day,time,location,etc.):* \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum number of students in class: \_

Spring semester \_\_\_\_\_ Fall semester \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:**

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
University of Southern Maine  
PO Box 9300  
Portland ME 04104-9300

*We appreciate your willingness to partner with us*

## **Full Brochure Descriptions of Past or Present OLLI Service Learning Courses**

### **Fall 2003**

#### **Portland Trails**

*The Need:* Portland Trails (a non-profit organization that manages a 30-mile network of trails in Greater Portland) is interested in promoting more involvement by seniors.

*The Service Project:* The class will work together to create a training program for “senior ambassadors” who will speak about Portland Trails and staff Health Fairs and other venues. The class will also plan a series of “Senior Strolls” for members of the community.

*The Learning:* In order to create the training program, the OLLI students will learn about Portland Trails as an organization, and will learn parts of the trail system by foot as well as by maps. The group will then work together as a study group to create a training module for the ambassadors.

*Logistics:* The course will meet at Portland Trails office (1 India Street), Wednesdays from 9:30-11:30, September 10 -October 29. Free parking available on site.

#### **Portland Adult Education: Aides in ESOL Classes**

*The Need:* Adult students in introductory English classes need special support but there are few volunteers for this kind of work.

*The Service Project:* OLLI volunteers will learn strategies for working with adult English students while they gain experience by serving as aides in English classes.

*The Learning:* OLLI volunteers will meet for two hours each week as a group with an instructor to discuss techniques for teaching English. As soon as possible they will spend an additional hour each week volunteering individually in an ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) classroom. At the end of the course, volunteers will be encouraged but not required to commit to tutoring one-on-one for the rest of the academic year

*Logistics:* The group will meet at 57 Douglass St, (Portland Adult Ed.) from 9:30-11:30 am on Fridays, September 12-October 31. Free parking available on site.

#### **Maine Historical Society**

*The Need:* The Maine Historical Society is making digital versions of historic documents and museum items available on the internet, through the Maine Memory Network ([www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net))

*The Service Project:* This hands-on internship will work closely with historical materials such as letters, photographs, maps, paintings and museum items. Interns will scan and photograph historic materials and edit digital versions with Photoshop, transcribe manuscripts and help interpret materials that will appear on the site.

*The Learning:* Students will learn how to properly handle historical materials, to accurately transcribe letters and journals, to scan and digitally photograph historic items, to edit images with a computer and to research and write for the web.

*Logistics:* The internship will meet for 8 weeks, for 4 hours per week, on either Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays from 10 am to 2 pm. All work will be conducted at the Maine Historical Society Research Library, Congress Street. Parking is available on the street and in nearby parking lots

### **Spring 2003**

#### **Southworth Planetarium**

*The Need:* The Southworth Planetarium is producing new programs, presenting shows to schools/public, teaching courses, conducting workshops and expanding in other areas.

***The Service:* Students will have a choice of one or any of the following projects: Show Production, Show Presentation, Telescope Operation, Gallery Docent Work, Web-site Work, Workshop Preparation and More.**

***The Learning:*** Students will learn about show presentation, show production, basic astronomy, telescope operation and about working in a planetarium.

***Logistics:*** Students will meet one day a week, either Monday, Wednesday, or Friday from 12:00 noon -2:30 pm

### **Portland Adult Education: Aides in ESOL Classes**

***The Need:*** Adult students in introductory English classes need special support but few volunteer for this kind of work.

***The Service Project:*** OLLI volunteers will learn strategies for working with adult English students while they gain experience by serving as aides in English classes.

***The Learning:*** OLLI volunteers will meet for two hours each week as a group with an instructor to discuss techniques for teaching English. As soon as possible they will spend an additional hour each week volunteering individually in an ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) classroom. At the end of the course, volunteers will be encouraged but not required to commit to tutoring one-on-one for the rest of the academic year

***Logistics:*** The group will meet at 57 Douglass St, (Portland Adult Ed.) from 3:00 - 5:00 pm on Thursdays, March 18 - May 6. Free parking available on site.

Spring 2005

### **Service Learning**

### **ESL-Intensive Language Program**

***Instructor:*** USM's ESL Staff

***The Need:*** Students in USM's Intensive English Language Program need to converse with native English speakers to improve their English conversational skills

***The Project:*** OLLI students will engage in conversations with ESL students, interacting in ways which effectively build speaking fluency in the ESL students.

***The Learning:*** OLLI students will first meet with ESL instructors, Barbara Trentascosta, Bart Weyand, and Lisa Flanagan, twice for 2 hours to learn effective techniques for assisting ESL students in speaking. Then, for 6 weeks, OLLI students, guided by ESL instructors, will engage in one-on-one conversations with ESL students one afternoon a week.

***Logistics:*** The group will meet on Thursdays 1:15-3:15 pm for 8 weeks in Payson Smith Hall.