

### Academic Service Learning Project –

The bulk of the work – and the biggest part of the grade for this course – is the Academic Service Learning (ASL) project. You are required to work at least 30 hours on this project.

**The Academic Service-Learning project requires you to use strong communication skills in order to identify a community need and then plan and execute a project to fill that need. The project must be significant and meaningful – you are NOT doing “community service” or “volunteering to help out.” You are planning, developing, designing, recruiting, creating, implementing, executing, assessing, researching, etc....you are NOT cooking, cleaning, sorting, coaching, serving, handing out, signing in, etc...**

You will need to determine early in the semester a non-profit organization and need that you can fill for that organization; then, by yourself or with a partner (your choice) you will develop and execute an appropriate project and then make “visible” that project via a professional portfolio and presentation. All projects must be approved by the professor in advance. Remember, the project should be something significant and cannot be strictly “volunteering” for the agency!

What can you do for a non-profit agency? Here are a few ideas...

- Identify something tangible the organization needs and create it for them, like a training manual, resource book, web site, or public relations materials.
- Gather information and data the organization needs in order to fulfill its mission (external research, survey data from employees or clients, etc.) and then prepare a comprehensive report.
- Coordinate an event or a fundraiser for the organization (involves planning, communication, implementation) and then prepare a report/guidebook or portfolio that describes the event and the planning process.

The key is to first find out the particular NEEDS the non-profit has. In other words, don't offer to do something you think you'd like to do, see what it is they actually NEED you to do. This will involve some negotiation, however, because what they need may or may not be something you can competently do (in other words, if an agency needs a new web site, but you have no idea how to do that, then this would not be an ideal project!). The economy is rough right now, and non-profits are scraping by with limited people. I imagine there are several non-profits that have “projects” they would like to undertake but just don't have the manpower...here's where you can really help!!

This project contains several parts:

1. Project Proposal and Contract – 10%

The proposal/contract includes information on the organization, a description of the project, goals for the project, a timeline for completion of the project, and roles, responsibilities and expectations of the faculty, student and the agency representative. The professor, the student and the agency representative will all sign the contract.

2. Learning Objectives – 5%

Drawing on information you learned about yourself in the first few online discussions, as well as information from the project proposal, you will establish at least 5 *learning objectives*. These will be the learning objectives you write about in the Learning Assessment paper. I will meet with you individually to discuss your learning objectives. After the meeting, you will submit a 2-page written description of your learning objectives and a description of how you will utilize your AS-L project to work on those learning objectives.

3. Portfolio – 30%

This is the *overall documentation of your project*. It will include your proposal, hours log, description of the project and process, description of the organization and the need, background information on the agency, an assessment of the work done for the agency, and any supporting materials. The portfolio will also include the specific “tangibles” you developed for your agency. It is important to find out if the agency wants something specific from you (such as a research report, web site, training manual, “how to” guidebook, marketing and promotional materials, etc). If there is nothing “tangible” created, then you will need to document and make your project “visible” in some way (via pictures, essays, e-mails, calendars, etc). Based on feedback from the agency, and the detail, effort and care put into your portfolio I can get a real sense of the work you did on the ASL project overall. I will also be looking to see if you met the goals and guidelines as set forth in the project proposal.

4. Learning Assessment - 10%

Now that the project is completed, what did you learn? In a comprehensive 5 – 7 page paper, assess how your learning objectives were or were not met. Discuss what knowledge you could still gain, what skills you could still learn, etc. In this detailed and reflective paper, you will address affective, behavioral and cognitive learning, citing appropriate communication concepts to illustrate the learning gained through the ASL project.

5. Presentation – 10%

You will present your project in a public forum at the end of the semester. Students, faculty, agency representatives, and your family and friends will be encouraged to attend! Presentations may take place on campus or at the non-profit organization itself. Times and places of presentations will be determined later in the semester. Assessment here will be based on content, organization and delivery outcomes of public speaking. Again, based on the detail, care and effort put into the presentation, I can get a real sense of the work you did on the ASL project.

6. Peer Support and Critiques – 5%

During several of our in-class meetings, you will be asked to provide updates of your project and listen to and provide insight/advice/suggestions to your fellow classmates’ project updates. In addition, you will at times be asked to provide constructive criticism on the tangible work your classmates are doing for their projects. These critiques provide students with opportunities to engage in critical thinking and to use their communication abilities to convey feedback and constructive criticism in a rhetorically sensitive manner.

7. Hours Log – Not Graded

Because this course will be counted as LBC (Learning Beyond the Classroom), and because you need to put in at least 30 hours on the project, you need to keep track of the hours you work on the project. The journal space at the course web site will be used for this purpose; you will also document your hours in your portfolio. Hours worked will also be verified with your agency representative.

**\*Note: I HIGHLY encourage you to work with a partner on your project. If you work with a partner, the scope of the project must be significant enough two people are warranted. If you work with a partner, #1, #3, and #5 above will be a team product/grade; #2, #4, and #6 will be an individual product/grade.**