



## Considerations for Supporting Community Engaged Courses via Remote Learning

As faculty prepare to augment their courses to fully accommodate remote learning for the remainder of the spring semester, the Eigel Center is providing a series of resources to support faculty currently offering courses that have integrated immersive (ILE) or service (SERL) learning this semester. Depending on the scope and breadth of your community engagement, some community engaged projects may be able to continue in an online or modified format as discussed below. Others may need to be postponed or reimaged. [Eigel Center](#) staff are available for individual consultation and to support ongoing integration and assessment of these experiences. Please also consider us a resource for your students as they work to continue their engagement with your course and our communities.

### What to Consider When Implementing Community Engaged Learning in Online Courses

While it might seem less than ideal, the introduction of online technologies in community engaged and experiential curricula is a developing, but well supported pedagogy that can enhance course outcomes and expand the effect of engagement well beyond the classroom (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010). Online education has the power to bring students and ideas together from diverse geographic, cultural, social, and economic areas and utilizing it in support of community-engaged courses is growing in popularity with faculty.

If you are currently teaching a course that integrates immersive or service learning, the following provides some considerations for implementation of this important aspect of your course while teaching remotely, suggested assignments to promote online engagement and strategic reflection, and virtual opportunities and resources.

- Rest assured, the **four primary components of service learning pedagogy**— preparation, action, reflection and evaluation—can be adapted to online environments;
- **Communicate with your community partners**, set up a time to talk through possibilities and ask how it would affect their work. Also ask how the current crisis is affecting the services they provide and consider shifting your resources to the areas where they most need support. You might find inspiration in how your students might alter their engagement in response.
- **Immersive Learning Canvas Modules** are a great way to prepare students for immersive and community based experiences, but also continue conversations online. Four adaptable modules are utilized to prompt critical reflection of issues related to immersion, including immersive learning terminology, identity and self-awareness, and an overview of frameworks that reinforce inequity. A faculty guide is available as a resource for ease of integration and inclusion of these modules in an existing course, as well as a pre- and post-assessment to provide an indirect measure of students' growth. Contact the Eigel Center for access to this resource!
- **E-service-learning** (electronic service-learning) holds massive potential to transform both service-learning and online learning by freeing service-learning from geographical constraints and by equipping online learning with a powerful and much-needed tool to promote engagement. Existing mentoring/tutoring partnerships can move online, or one on one with technology. "Placements" may include those service opportunities that can be completed exclusively in a virtual environment;
- **Canvas** provides a number of existing resources for collaboration, giving students a shared space that enables them to collaborate on assignments, projects, discussions, files, and more. Zoom and Big Blue Button features

allow students to start their own videoconferencing meetings within Canvas. Students are familiar with and can share Google documents with community partners for feedback and information exchanges.

- **“Indirect” service learning** assignments allow student related course work to happen outside of the service site, remotely, to deliver tangible work product that benefits the work of the nonprofit or community partner. Often these can be capstone or project based experiences already integrated into your syllabus, or take the form of a research and writing assignment.
- **Provide students with options:** If your course previously integrated a localized direct service or immersive experience, allow students to choose from a variety of projects and offer options that can be completed individually as well as virtually with partners or in groups. This helps to reduce barriers for students whose current location, work, health and/or life situations might otherwise prevent them from participating. If direct, local service was a required component of your course, have students identify and develop individual action plans to complete any remaining hours of service in their current (permanent) location with a similarly situated partner. (Insure they observe and follow proper health and location protocols);
- **Reflection Journals** are powerful tools to document student progress and experiences, as well as personal insight and self-evaluation towards learning outcomes. Students can include analyses related to course content and materials, previous community service experiences, and chart personal growth throughout the semester.
- **Good communication** with students is vital to ensure there is reciprocity and to work through unexpected situations. Keep open lines of communication with community partners as well, and schedule check-in phone calls, Canvas Chats/Discussions, or virtual meetings regularly.
- **Leverage the internet** to expand the localized scope of the community engaged work to working in a global community. Learnings from global communities can be benchmarked and shared with a local partner to heighten or benefit existing community outcomes, and demonstrate connectivity of issues and problem solving strategies to students. For example, have students identify global nonprofit, NGO, or community facing similar issues (employment, safety, literacy, youth engagement and mentoring, health conditions, and environment).
- **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)** is already a powerful tool that pairs students with peers internationally for dialogue around salient, course related issues. In light of the global reach of this pandemic, it can also be utilized to bring students together for reflection and discussion about how the current crisis is affecting service and immersion issues in diverse settings.
- **Consult [Xavier](#)** and health authorities first for the best information on risk and recommended precautionary steps. Updates are available from local and state public health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

It is important to remember that students have their own individual challenges, and in addition to adapting to online learning – a pedagogy they may be unfamiliar with – they are also dealing with the possible loss of an on or off campus job, access to housing and meals, lack of peer support, and socialization which could lead to additional wellness concerns. Do not hesitate to direct your students to Xavier’s excellent [health and wellbeing counseling](#) services remotely. The good news is integrating community-based learning within an online course can serve as motivation for students and reduce their feelings of isolation. Community engaged learning is well documented in the literature for supporting a sense of belonging and purpose, student retention, and increased academic gains.

## **Virtual Assignments to Support Ongoing Community Engaged Learning and Reflection:**

- Leverage the recorded knowledge of community partners and leaders to heighten students' consciousness about their service partner's work and its challenges – review newspaper accounts, community messaging, websites, social media posts, community council minutes, television interviews, etc.,
- Explore online University, State, and Federal resources that may examine community issues addressed in the course and community – prepare a list to share with your community partner(s);
- Utilize nonprofit annual reports, neighborhood development plans, oral history projects, and websites to expose students to community originated strategies and tactics that address issues supported by the course. Have them reflect on how their service can support these strategies and tactics;
- Examine student's personal definitions of community service through the development of reflective papers and other exploratory assignments that encourage them to contemplate overall civic and community engagement within an emergency setting;
- Create a listing of grant opportunities that may be applicable for their organization;
- Support organizations to remain connected to the clients and communities they serve. Have students conduct remote interviewing current/past clients about their experiences, impact of the organization on where they are today;
- Create a resource folder of activities for after-school programming for K-12 graders;
- Have students create "How To" videos to assist older residents with using technology to stay connected and support well-being during isolation.

## **"Solidarity" Assignments Related to COVID-19.**

The following are suggested as Canvas writing or reflective prompts to support course outcomes related to social justice, civic responsibility, solidarity, and the "whole person."

- Students are well aware of their own challenges related to this unprecedented health emergency, but assign them to research and reflect how this current state of emergency might be impacting the population the class was engaged with as part of its service or immersion. Results can be shared with partners via an online chat or Skype/Zoom meeting.
- Analyze the COVID-19 outbreak and public responses to it (including changes in university policy) through a lens that is attentive to underlying structures of power and inequality, i.e., how might this impact someone with a disability, financial constraints, family or other challenges.
- Create a public service announcement for your local community about Covid-19. Research the facts, learn your community audience, engage appropriate sources of information. Choose language and a platform appropriate to the community you were engaging to support awareness.
- Sadly, this public health emergency has brought out incidences of bias and discrimination including racist attacks against Asians. Have your students examine historical examples of crisis-related racism and discuss how service, engagement and immersion can address discrimination against marginalized groups.

For more ideas, consult [#coronavirussyllabus](#) - a crowdsourced cross-disciplinary resource that includes syllabi specifically addressing the current health crisis, an extensive reading list of academic and other articles addressing past pandemic and global crises, and links to topical podcasts, films, and more.

**Suggested Reading Assignments** that animate social justice challenges related to the pandemic through the lens of social services, the prison system, poverty, and healthcare:

- [The Coronavirus's Impact on Homeless Services - The Atlantic](#)
- [Coronavirus Is the Perfect Disaster for 'Disaster Capitalism'](#)
- [How we can minimize harm and save lives during a pandemic - Ohio Justice & Policy Center](#)
- [Detroit Activist, Philosopher Grace Lee Boggs: "The Only Way to Survive Is by Taking Care of One Another"](#)
- [DECOLONIZING COMMUNITY CARE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19](#)

**Other Resources for Faculty** that support existing civic and course outcomes tied to the pandemic in your community engaged course:

- [Teaching Social Action Online](#), produced in response to the health crisis by Harvard's program on Public Narrative: Leadership, Storytelling, and Action.
- [Teaching in Times of Crisis](#) is an online guide prepared by Vanderbilt's Center for Teaching, that offers insights into assigning relevant content, facilitating discussions, and staying attuned to student well being following traumatic events.

### **Opportunities for students to volunteer virtually**

Virtual Volunteering: If your class involved service learning, there are still many ways to do meaningful things for the common good or directly with others in a virtual way. Have students read [How to Get Involved with Virtual Volunteering](#) (includes opportunities with the Red Cross, United Nations, and the Smithsonian) and check out this [collected list of opportunities](#) from Portland State University.

- [Eigel Center's Community Partner Database](#)
- [Build Your Career by Volunteering Online – Goodwill Industries](#)
- [9 Places to Volunteer Online – Do Something.org](#)
- [25 volunteer jobs to do online – Operation Warm](#)

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### **Resources Consulted**

1. Leora S. Waldner, Sue Y. McGorry, and Murray C. Widener (2012). E-Service-Learning: The Evolution of Service-Learning to Engage a Growing Online Student Population, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 16, Number 2, p. 123.
2. Kathy L. Guthrie & Holly McCracken (2010). Teaching and Learning Social Justice through Online Service-Learning Courses. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 11(3).
3. [COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR ENGAGED CAMPUSES](#), Ohio Campus Compact. This resource page also includes a [spreadsheet](#) with other institutions' resources for online teaching.
4. Consult the Center for Teaching Excellence's [Instructional Continuity](#) site for guidance about all of your remote learning questions.