



Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning  
l'Alliance canadienne pour l'apprentissage par le service communautaire

# Community Service-Learning Overview Sheet

## What is Community Service-Learning?

- Community Service-Learning (CSL) is a powerful vehicle for experiential education that has clear objectives for both the learning that occurs by the involved students and the service being provided in the community organization setting.
- There is a strong emphasis on inclusive partnerships with non-profit agencies through their direct involvement as co-educators, providing community expertise in all phases of the learning process from planning through to the experiential and evaluation stages.
- CSL programs place a high priority on ensuring that the service being provided significantly addresses real needs identified by the community itself.
- CSL programs are most effective when including key elements drawn from experiential education theory, especially developing critical thinking tools and implementing intentional reflection components.
- Carefully designed and implemented CSL programs and courses assist students to make meaning from their community experiences, to connect real-life experience to more theoretical classroom study, and to develop as individuals, in relation to their values, their sense of social responsibility and their leadership skills.
- Community service-learning is relatively new to Canadian universities and colleges but has been extensively implemented in the United States over the past two decade, where it is most commonly referred to as service-learning.

## Key Characteristics of Community Service-Learning

- Within curricular CSL, service links to academic content and standards, and is appropriate to student learning goals
- In extra-curricular CSL programs, service links to student learning and development goals
- Involves collaboration between faculty/staff, students and community organizations to determine and meet real, defined community needs
- Reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the service providers by combining a service experience with a learning experience
- Integrates a strong reflective element in order to maximize meaningful learning
- Can be used in any subject or program area so long as it is appropriate to identified learning and/or development goals

For more information, including a glossary of terms and definitions, historical timelines, roles and responsibilities for CSL partnerships, and other resources and information visit:

**[www.communityservicelearning.ca](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca)**

For more information on the work of CACSL, or this research, contact:

Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning

c/o University of Guelph · Level 3, University Centre · Guelph, ON, Canada · N1G 2W1  
[info@communityservicelearning.ca](mailto:info@communityservicelearning.ca)

Phone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 53900 · Fax: (519) 824-3432