

Teaching outside the Classroom: Collaboration in Service Learning

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Abstract

Too often instructors become overly comfortable in the classroom routines established to accommodate hectic academic schedules. Break out of your classroom routine by exploring service learning or community engagement opportunities for your students. In the words of the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, service learning also referred to as community engagement is “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

This paper is based on combining course content with experiential, hands-on learning, and community action goals that open the doors for service collaboration and a better relationship with your local and campus community. It takes textbook topics beyond case studies and into the real world. The paper describes several collaborations between instructors, interdisciplinary fields, institutions and the local community.

Service learning components support Bemidji State University’s strategic plan and have become requirements in several of the School of Technology, Art & Design technology courses including: Project Management, Sustainability, Construction Technology, Engineering Problem Solving, etc. Bemidji State University is supportive and has assisted in overcoming some of the challenges and problems encountered in the process, such as providing service learning opportunities within the community, while assisting with financial and logistic needs.

Some of the main challenges are finding opportunities so everyone enrolled in a course can participate, coordinating those opportunities with course content, group schedules, materials required, and time to reflect on lessons learned, while documenting and coordinating public relations with the university. This paper discusses the problems faced by faculty as teaching is taken outside the classroom and into the community.

Biographies

DR. TIM BROCKMAN is currently a full professor and coordinator of four technology degrees in the School of Technology, Art & Design at Bemidji State University. He has his Doctorate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education from the University of North Dakota. He has been teaching technology related courses in the School of Technology, Art & Design at Bemidji State University for the last fifteen years. His research is based in the personality characteristics of technology students, their learning styles and career choices. He has seven years' experience as an adult educator in secondary education. He may be reached at tbrockman@bemidjistate.edu.

DAVID TOWLEY is an assistant professor in the School of Technology, Art & Design where he has shared his industrial experience for the past five years. While Dave holds a Masters in Business Administration from Bemidji State University, he comes to academia from the private sector following a 30 plus year career working in the automotive industry for the Ford Motor Company. Mr. Towley's corporate expertise includes operations management and [quality methodology](#), lean principles and practices, safety and risk management as well as project management. Dave may be reached directly at dtowley@bemidjistate.edu.