Service Learning – it's easier than you think and we all benefit

Benefits:

Reinforce concepts taught in class
Demonstrate theories with practical experiences
Motivate students to engage with their communities
Improve services to underserved populations and enhance community capacity-building
Enhance your tenure/promotion portfolio or full time application prospects
Reinvigorate your courses
Facilitate positive "town and gown" relationship

I -- Is service learning the same as community service/volunteerism? Not quite.

*service learning should be "academic" – connect the project back to your course SLOs;

*voluntary aspect of service learning should *help students understand the impact of public policy decisions or troubling situations in our society* where people have demonstrated, unmet needs;

*the orientation of service learning is meant to be *focused on 'giving back' to our community* in some way, but students should feel free to include the *experience in resumes, portfolios*, etc. and they may be thrilled to expand their professional networks in a way that could benefit them in the future;

*service learning should not be an onerous addition to faculty duties: adapt a project you already use and be sure you have a "reflective" component as part of an assessment; a variety of methods can be used.

II –Steps to embed service learning into your own course(s): moving from abstract idea to concrete project

A. You already know what your course goals and SLOs are; how might service learning work for you? **Determine community/public programs or unmet needs that relate to your discipline and/or specific course goals and objectives.**

B. ***Talk with a member of an organization** whose work relates to your course; explain your course and goals, how students could volunteer, etc. Determine their willingness to participate.