

Academic Service – Learning Pedagogy to Enhance Student Learning and Student Civic Engagement

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Service learning must be viewed as a mechanism wherein the student learners shall mentor and guide so as to empower others to help themselves. Furthermore, service learning relieves the students of the monotony of routine classroom work and learning disengagement. In addition, service learning helps to rekindle the social consciousness of the student learner. The author promotes designing of service-learning programs that can make a significant impact in the area of social activism and provides an overview of the service learning class he teaches.

In this paper, the author will describe the way in which service learning has been successfully utilized by a select group of students enrolled in the Senior Design Project Course at Miami University. The author has expanded and *stretched* the word *service* to incorporate to mean more than mere *social-service*. The author has shown that service also may be to empower young minds with technical knowledge and expertise and creating an interest and enthusiasm in young high school juniors and seniors. Furthermore, the author believes that instructors can facilitate service learning by providing a metacognitive framework for the students to operate in. The term metacognition was used by Craig E. Nelson to signify thinking about thinking. (Nelson, 1989, 1991 November). In other words, Nelson says that to learn *how to think critically* one must reflect on one's own thought processes. Students need to recognize that some selected ideas and theories may have distinct advantages over others, depending on the context with which they are presented to the reader. Nelson further recommends that students should be encouraged to understand and learn to navigate through the *Perry* scheme.(Perry, 1970, 1981, 1984). The scheme proposed by W.G. Perry Jr. contends that students can apply knowledge and progress with greater ease if the learners are initially provided with a rough road map of the intellectual terrain along which they can begin their journey towards life long learning. (Narayanan, 2003).

The Senior Design Capstone Experience is not just a project that occupies a table in an engineering laboratory. This is a major event that brings the college, the community and the schools together to experience a technological accomplishment of young minds. The

department of engineering technology considers this to be a very important service contribution to the community as a whole. The knowledge gained through this collaboration between Miami University, the community, local area high schools, industry mentors and national sponsors is extremely valuable. Miami University's seniors, the high school students as well as their mentors and sponsors experience a bliss of technological excellence. (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989; Eyler and Giles, 1999).

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