Through the Field Work in Leadership Studies (LDRS 310) course, students are asked to serve as leaders in their communities by conducting a semester-long community project of their choice with an organization in their respective community.

The course is taught on campus, online, and internationally by both full-time and adjunct faculty in Leadership Studies. The field work course follows the preparation, action, reflection, and assessment components outlined as being critical to service-learning. During the first week of the course students engage in a preparation stage discussion with the instructor about service-learning and why it is a critical component of their leadership education. Students typically think of service-learning as simply volunteerism or community service; however, upon conclusion of this week-long discussion, students see the impact of connecting their service to the leadership theories they had learned in previous courses.

Students (individually or in teams depending on the modality) are required to find a project in their respective community that deals with a local problem or issue. These projects range from creating a neighborhood watch program, to coordinating blood drives, to fundraising for a local animal shelter, to creating a mentor program for children, to starting a youth program for young women, to HIV/AIDS awareness and education. Students write a detailed strategic plan outlining the problem/issue to be addressed, their vision for the project, and objectives and action steps needed to carry out the change project. Throughout the semester, each student and their respective community team carry out the strategic change plan.

Reflection is the most critical piece of the service-learning experience. Reflection is often neglected, but in order for the experience to be truly service-learning orientated, the reflection must occur concurrently with the service project (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby & Associates, 1996). Through guided reflection, the true learning occurs because students deepen their learning through asking questions of other students, connecting their own experiences to theory, and seeing the world from multiple perspectives.

Between 2012-2017, we completed over 800 Field Work in Leadership Studies service-learning projects all over the world. Some examples of these semester-long service-learning projects can be found at http://www.fhsu.edu/leadership/310-projects/index.html.