

Conceptualizing Service-Learning (SL / SLCE) as Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning

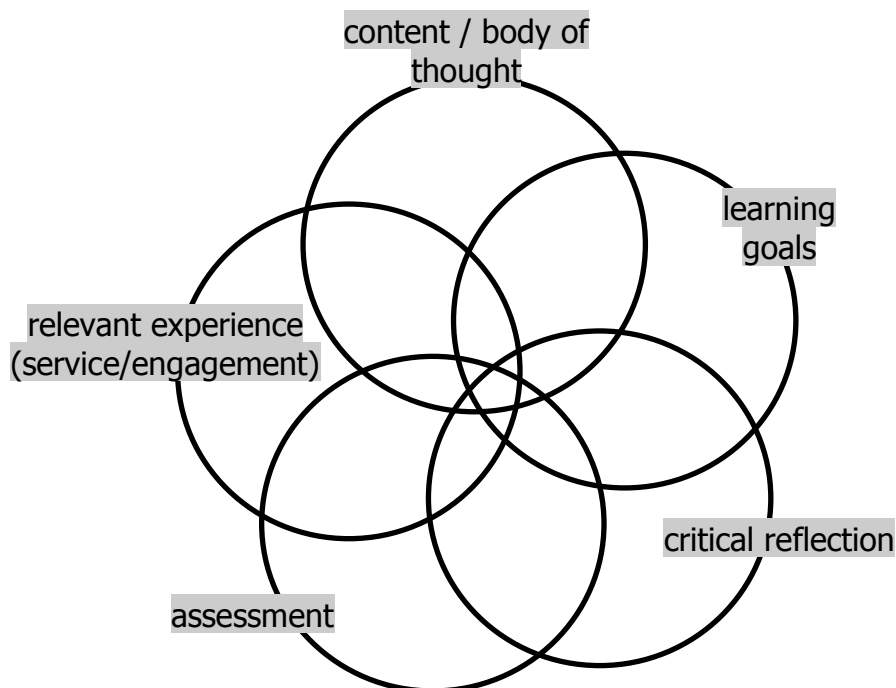
"Experience is the best teacher – Or is it?" (Conrad & Hedin)

"We had the experience but missed the meaning" [Eliot, T. S. (1943) The Four Quartets]

Framework for Experiential Learning (modified from IUPUI)

1. Learning goals/objectives
2. Content/body of thought (related to learning goals/objectives)
3. Experience/activity (related to the content and learning goals/objectives)
4. Critical reflection (on the experience and the content, oriented toward the learning goals/objectives)
5. Assessment (at least of the learning, including as generated through critical reflection on the experience and content)

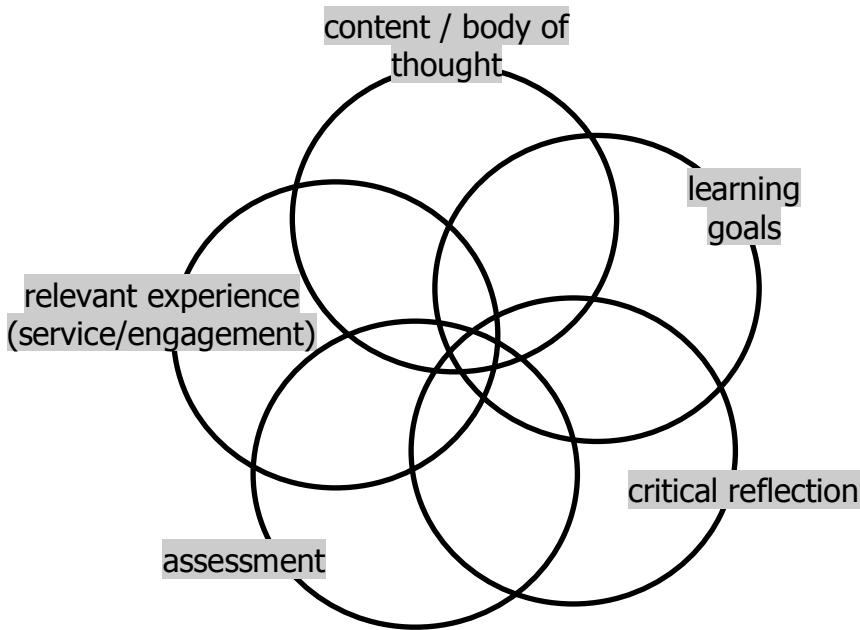
Components (integrated)



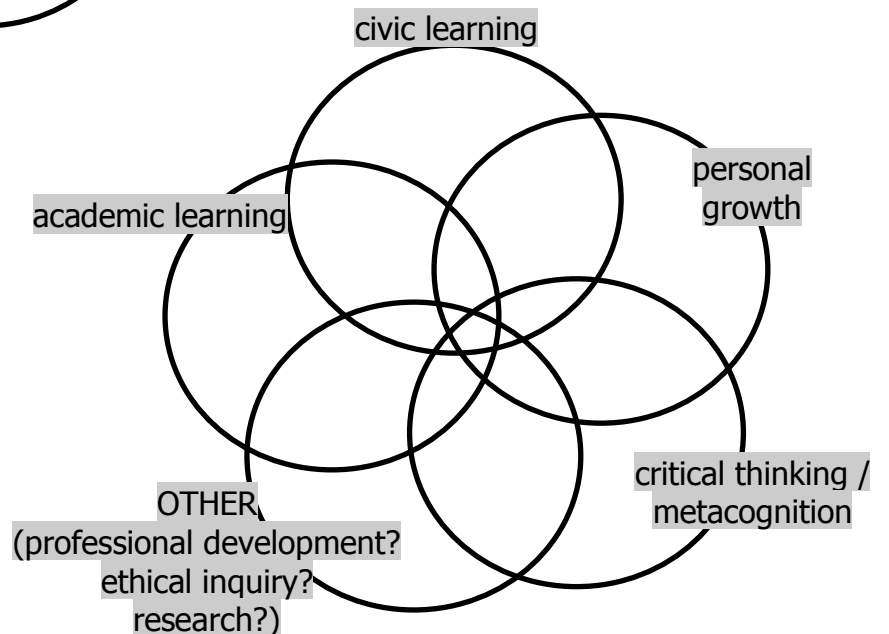
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"the integration of academic material, relevant service [engagement] activities, and critical reflection in a reciprocal [co-created] partnership that engages students, faculty/staff, and community members to achieve academic, civic, and personal [growth] learning objectives as well as to advance public purposes" (Bringle & Clayton, 2012)

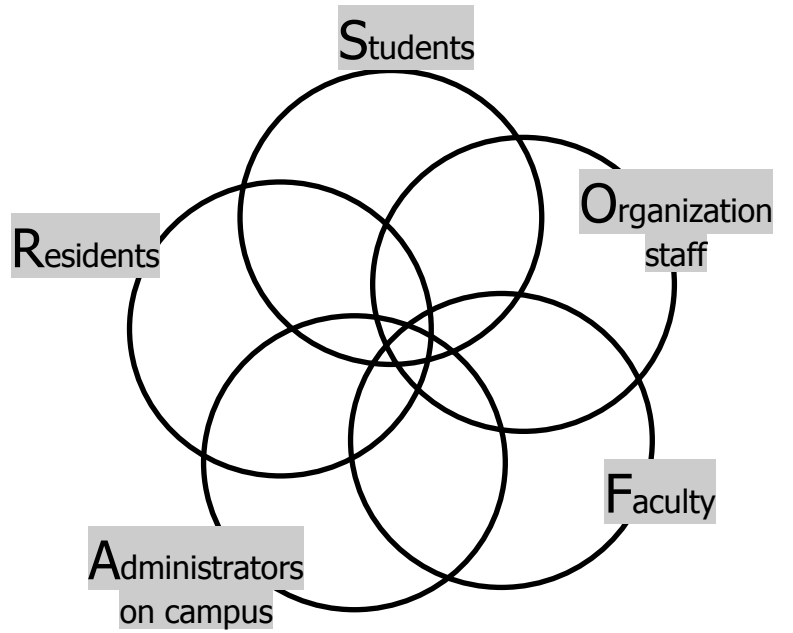
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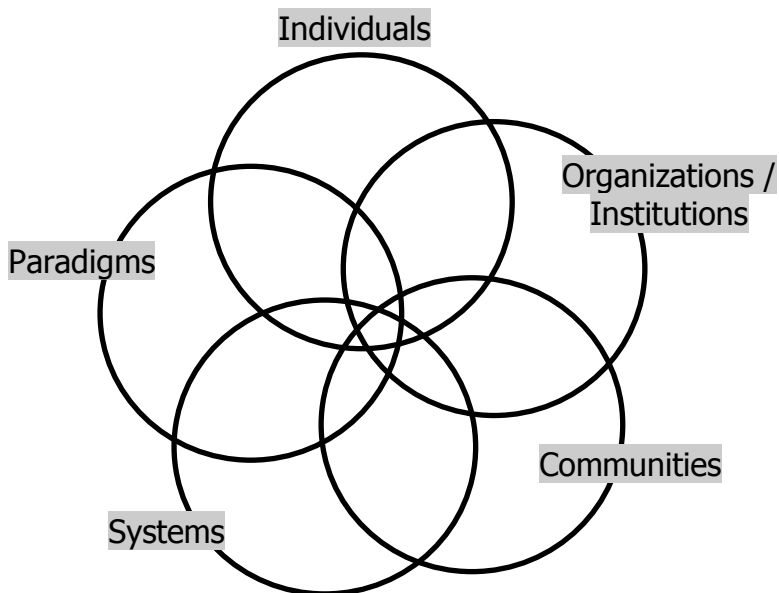
Learning Goal Categories (intentional)



**Partners: SOFAR
(co-creators)**



Change Goal Categories



What might SLCE look like?

A- Students in a first year environmental ethics course join a partnership composed of local merchants, homeowners, city government, the Department of Transportation, and the university that is focused on revitalizing the main street running next to the campus. Together the partners develop a webpage for the project and host an Earth Day event to engage the full range of community members in revisioning the area. One key learning the partners achieve through the project concerns the significant role played by environmental quality in many people's sense of community.

B- Representatives from county government, local museums, land conservancies, and various academic departments on two local campuses form a partnership focused on preservation and management of public land. They form a board composed of undergraduate and graduate students, professional staff members from the various organizations, local community residents, and faculty and staff from the campuses. Partners learn together about service-learning and share their various individual and organizational goals, some but not all of which are held in common across the group. Partners set up and undertake regular workdays on the sites of several undeveloped public areas, inventorying flora and fauna and removing garbage; other students and faculty from related disciplines are invited to participate in some of these activities. Some partners teach others how to use GIS tools and together they begin mapping potential recreational sites as well as ecologically sensitive areas. They develop and present to local mayors a proposal for classifying public lands that are currently not being managed. They maintain a public wiki about the project and also write a book chapter on the evolution of their partnership.

C- Students in a living-learning community partner with housing staff and instructors and with a local high school to learn about and experiment with various approaches to activism. They read and, over a series of three dinner meetings, discuss historical examples of activism. Individually, they each contribute to an online letter writing campaign on an issue of their choice, and together they join a march to call attention to an unjustly jailed protestor. They compare these forms of activism at another dinner meeting and then design an event, held simultaneously at the high school and on campus, to which they invite 3 local community organizers; at this event participants share stories of their own involvement in activism and produce a set of lessons learned that are published in the local newspaper as well as in student newspapers at the high school and the university.

D- Students enrolled in a course on "Humans and the Environment" picked up trash at a local lake alongside senior citizens one Saturday morning in September and helped construct new habitats at an animal sanctuary in a community an hour from campus one Saturday morning in October (different classes in the department had signed up for different Saturday mornings through the semester). Before each activity they learned about the organization they would be working with from its webpage and wrote about their expectations and objectives; after each activity they discussed it in class and wrote a two-page paper analyzing the experience from personal, civic, and academic perspectives.

E- A student designs a capstone research service-learning project to be undertaken in Ecuador during the summer before his senior year. He works closely with two faculty mentors for six months prior to his departure, designing a curriculum and accompanying reflection framework; and he establishes relationships with 2 Peace Corps volunteers who are working with an Ecuadorian non-governmental organization. In Ecuador he works with residents in a small village to catalogue indigenous knowledge of local plants while reading extensively on sustainable community development and discussing with community leaders how they envision and work toward sustainable development. He makes notes throughout each day in a small notebook, develops those notes into key ideas for further thought most evenings, and several times a week writes in response to the prompts in his pre-determined reflection framework. He sends reflective essays home to his faculty mentors as his schedule and access to the Internet allows, and they provide feedback while reflecting themselves on their role in his project and on the new perspective it is bringing to their own work. Upon his return to campus he produces a critical evaluation of the project, mentors another student in designing a similar capstone project, and presents on the design of capstone projects at a variety of national conferences.

What sorts of differences do you see across these examples? What sorts of commonalities?

Which of these examples is most / least similar to the SLCE you are / would like to partner in?

What questions do these examples raise for you about SLCE?