

Assessment Cycle

Academic Year 2016 – 2017

Community/Public Service

Prepared by: Steven C. Gruesbeck

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Approved by: Vickie Gentry

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Northwestern Mission Statement:

Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

Northwestern Community/Public Service Mission Statement:

The university is committed to serving the citizens in its region through organized community and public service projects that are relevant and meaningful to the volunteers and to those being served. Service projects that target community-identified needs enhance (and are enhanced by) university-community partnership.

Purpose:

Service projects provide an educational platform through which the university can contribute to the quality of life of the citizens of its region. Students benefit by learning, first-hand, about social responsibility. Meanwhile, the community benefits from responsive service projects that address real-life matters such as health and fitness; education; environmental stewardship; economic development; arts, culture, and entertainment; safety and emergency preparedness; poverty, hunger and homelessness; and the protection of vulnerable adults and children.

Outcomes:

- 1) **Students will have increasing opportunities to serve the community through participation in service activities.**
- 2) **The community will benefit from responsive service projects that address the community's unique and evolving needs.**
- 3) **Faculty and staff will have access to resources with which to track and enhance their service projects.**

Methodology:

- 1) Assessments of NSU's service efforts are distributed by the Director of Service-Learning each academic year:
 - a. Faculty and staff complete an online *Community/Public Service Survey*;
 - b. Community partner agencies complete an online *Community Partner Survey*

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(Note: Faculty and Staff identify Community Partner agencies with whom they have collaborated on prior service projects and then solicit their participation in the assessment);

- 2) Data from these assessments are collected and returned to the University's Director of Service-Learning;
- 3) The Director of Service-Learning will determine the degree to which outcomes were met;
- 4) The Director of Service-Learning will share outcomes with appropriate designees within academic departments, student affairs, and athletics;
- 5) Individual meetings will be held with designees, if required to enhance the effectiveness of service initiatives.
- 6) Assessment findings from prior year(s) will be used to develop at least one (1) professional development training about using service projects as high-impact educational practices.

Northwestern Community/Public Service Effectiveness

Outcomes:

- 1) **Students will have increasing opportunities to serve the community through participation in service activities.**

Measure 1.1

Conduct an annual measure of the number of community and public service opportunities. These do not take into account "academic service-learning" which is measured separately via Measure 1.2. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of community and public service opportunities each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline established during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that students participated in 273 community and public service opportunities during the 2016-2017 Academic Year (i.e., baseline year).

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty and staff will report the number and types of community/public service opportunities that they make available to students. Faculty/staff will self-report using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university increased the total number of community and public service (i.e., non-academic service-learning) opportunities by 10% each year.

In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the NSU Office of Service-Learning will make available information about service opportunities in our

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community. The office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the office will coordinate annual assessment and facilitate communication between the university and its community partners.

NSU's Office of Service-Learning director consulted with university administration regarding the importance of distinguishing between 'academic service-learning' and 'community/public service'. The discussion included mention of the ways in which faculty, staff, and students may benefit from keeping the terms separate but related. For the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle, the university will continue to distinguish between "community and public service" data and "academic service-learning" data. These will be recorded under two separate measures, 1.1 and 1.2, respectively. However, since both activities are so closely related to one another in terms of benefits to the community, the terms "service" and "service projects" will be used as general terms that include both activities for Measure 1.3 through Measure 3.3.

Measure 1.2

Conduct an annual measure of the number of academic service-learning opportunities. These do not take into account "community and public service" which is measured separately via Measure 1.1. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of academic service-learning opportunities each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline established during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that students participated in 53 academic service-learning opportunities during the 2016-2017 Academic Year (i.e., baseline year).

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty and staff will record the number and types of academic service-learning opportunities that they make available for students. Faculty/staff will self-report using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university increased the total number of academic service-learning opportunities by 10% each year.

In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the NSU Office of Service-Learning will make available information about service opportunities in our community. The office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the office will coordinate annual assessment and facilitate communication between the university and its community partners.

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As stated above, the Office of Service-Learning and university administration agreed on the importance of differentiating “community and public service” from “academic service-learning” for the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle. However, the terms “service” and “service projects” are used to refer to both activities together for Measure 1.3 though Measure 3.3.

Measure 1.3

Conduct an annual measure of the total number of courses that have a service component. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of courses that have a service component each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline established during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that there were 53 courses with service components taught during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty and staff will identify their courses that have a service component. Faculty/staff will self-report using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university increased the total number of courses with service components by 10% each year. In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the NSU Office of Service-Learning will make available information about service opportunities in our community. The office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the office will coordinate annual assessment and facilitate communication between the university and its community partners.

2) The community will benefit from responsive service projects that address the community’s unique and evolving needs.

Measure 2.1

Conduct an annual measure of the degree to which all types of NSU service projects are effective in helping community partners address community needs. At least 70% of respondents will report that our volunteer service efforts are effective.

Finding: Target met. More than 70% of respondents indicated that our 2016-2017 service efforts were effective in helping them address community needs in a variety of areas.

Sample Community Partner Responses

“The students were well engaged and showed a desire to make their projects be a success. We plan on implementing their (Engineering

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Technology) design in the near future. This is a very worthwhile program to all involved. Good Job!”

City of Natchitoches

“We receive social work and psychology students who volunteer for our organizations. It’s a great service!”

Natchitoches Regional Medical Center

“The university does a great job providing services to our community. NSU students come to our school to participate in PBS celebrations and Reading and Math nights. They also provide complimentary tickets for our students to attend...(University Creative and Performing Arts Exhibitions, Concerts, and Plays)”

M.R. Weaver Elementary School

“The athletes always help us with our Annual Christmas Toy Drive. Every year they raise thousands of dollars to help us give toys to 600-700 Natchitoches Parish children. We couldn’t do what we do without the help of the NSU Athletes.”

Natchitoches Area Jaycees

“The Computer Information Systems (CIS) department served fifty-four 5th graders every week for ten weeks. The students learned how computers are made, how to create apps, and how to make webpages using HTML.”

NSU Elementary Lab School

“Our partnership with the NSU College of Nursing is instrumental in the success of our program. NSU assists us with driving our mission of providing quality healthcare to the most vulnerable residents in our region.”

Shreveport MLK Health Center & Pharmacy

Analysis: The data shows that community partners rated our service efforts as ‘effective’ in helping them address a variety of community needs during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. Effectiveness ratings are broken-down by community and public service focus areas:

Percent of Community Partners Who Rate University’s Service Efforts as being ‘Effective’

95% Healthcare - Physical & Emotional (21 of 22 responses)

93% Sports & Fitness (13 of 14 responses)

97% Education (29 of 30 responses)

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- 95% Environmental Stewardship (18 of 19 responses)
- 95% Economic Development of Town & Business (18 of 19 responses)
- 86% Creative & Performing Arts Exhibitions (6 of 7 responses)
- 94% Event Planning & Entertainment (17 of 18 responses)
- 94% Historical & Cultural Preservation (17 of 18 responses)
- 94% Community Safety & Emergency Preparedness (17 of 18 responses)
- 95% Protection of Vulnerable Children & Adults (20 of 21 responses)
- 94% Combatting Poverty, Hunger, or Homelessness (17 of 18 responses)

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, community partner agencies will be asked to report on the effectiveness of our service efforts. They will rate the degree to which we are effective in helping them address a variety of community needs. Partner agencies will report on our effectiveness in addressing a variety of project focus areas by way of an on-line *Community Partner Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university attained an effectiveness rating of at least 70% in each of the community/public service focus areas in which the community partner agency is involved.

In order to sustain and improve the university's service efforts, faculty and staff will be encouraged to communicate directly with their community partners before, during and after service. In addition, faculty and staff will encourage their community partners to complete an online *Community Partner Survey* within 10 days and to set up meetings for further discussion as needed. Upon request, the Office of Service-Learning may host meetings between university and community partner designees for the purpose of enhancing effectiveness of service initiatives. In addition, the Office of Service-Learning will use Assessment findings from prior year(s) to develop at least one (1) professional development training about using service projects as high-impact educational practices.

Measure 2.2

Conduct an annual measure of the types of community needs that are (and are not) being addressed through all types of NSU service projects. NSU will conduct service projects that focus on at least 70% of the identified community and public service focus areas.

Finding: Target met. NSU service projects addressed at least 70% of the service focus areas in 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that NSU conducted projects that address *all* eleven focus areas including:

Healthcare - Physical & Emotional

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Sports & Fitness
Education
Environmental Stewardship
Economic Development of Town & Business
Creative & Performing Arts Exhibitions
Event Planning & Entertainment
Historical & Cultural Preservation
Community Safety & Emergency Preparedness
Protection of Vulnerable Children & Adults
Combatting Poverty, Hunger, or Homelessness

No respondents cited a need for projects that address 'other' community needs besides the eleven mentioned above.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, community partners will be asked to report the types of community needs that are (and are not) being addressed by NSU service projects. Community partners will report this using the on-line *Community Partner Survey*. On the same survey, partners will be invited to identify new areas of need and their contact information in case they would like to be contacted. To facilitate communication between parties, they will also be asked to record the name of their NSU contact person and encouraged to communicate directly with him or her about specific ways of enhancing future volunteer efforts. Upon request, the Office of Service-Learning may host meetings between university and community partner designees in order to enhance service initiatives.

The *Community/Public Service Survey*, a companion survey designed for use by faculty and staff, will include new, corresponding items with which respondents can more easily identify the focus area of their project(s) as well as indicate their interest in developing new projects that address existing and/or new focus areas. They will also be encouraged to discuss directly with community partners the specific ways in which the university might enhance future collaboration.

Measure 2.3

Conduct an annual measure of the number of community agencies with whom NSU collaborates on service projects. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the number of these community partner agencies each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline established during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that NSU collaborated with 248 service agencies during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

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Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty and staff will continue to report the name(s) of community agencies with whom they collaborated on service projects. This will be self-reported using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university has attained a 10% annual increase in the number of community partner agencies with whom they collaborate.

In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the NSU Office of Service-Learning will make available information about service opportunities in our community. The office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the office will coordinate annual assessment and facilitate communication between the university and its community partners.

3) Faculty and staff will have access to resources with which to track and enhance their service projects.

Measure 3.1

Each year, faculty and staff will complete the *Community/Public Service Survey* where they will record the number of student volunteers involved in their respective service projects. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the number of instances of student volunteerism each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline was established for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows 3,791 instances in which students volunteered for service projects during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. This number was derived from faculty and staff input only. Data regarding *student-led* service projects was not available this year.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty, staff and student organizations will record the number of volunteers involved in each of their respective service projects. They will report this using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university is attaining a 10% annual increase in the number of instances of student volunteerism.

In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the NSU Office of Service-Learning will make available information about service opportunities in our community. To facilitate communication between the university and its community partners, the Office may host meetings between university and community representatives. In addition, the office will coordinate annual

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assessment and encourage professional development on the topic of community and public service as a high-impact educational experience.

For the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle, the Office of Service-Learning and the Division of Student Affairs will collaborate on data collection concerning student-led service projects carried out by groups such as Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs), Student Government Association (SGA), etc. By soliciting the “student voice”, we expect to capture even more data about student volunteerism at NSU.

Measure 3.2

Each year, faculty and staff will complete the *Community/Public Service Survey* where they will record the number of hours that students volunteered for their respective service projects during the year. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of hours that students volunteer for service projects each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline was established for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that students volunteered a total of 222,236 hours during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. This number was derived from faculty and staff input only. Data regarding *student-led* service projects was not available this year.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Each year, faculty, staff, and student organizations will record the number of hours that students volunteer for service projects. They will self-report using the on-line *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether or not the university is attaining a 10% annual increase in the total number of hours that students volunteer.

As mentioned above, the Office of Service-Learning and the Division of Student Affairs will collaborate on collecting data about student-led service projects. By soliciting the “student voice”, we expect to capture even more data about student volunteerism at NSU.

Measure 3.3

Each year, faculty and staff will complete the *Community/Public Service Survey* where they will record the number of hours that they spend on their respective service project(s). After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of hours that faculty and staff dedicate to these projects each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline was established for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

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Analysis: The data shows that faculty and staff spent a total of 6,147 hours on service projects during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: NSU's Office of Service-Learning director consulted with university administration regarding the on-going usefulness of this particular data set. We decided that this data falls outside the scope of the university's community/public service assessment plan. However, since this information may be pertinent for some departmental faculty/staff activity reports, promotion and tenure applications, etc., faculty and staff will be encouraged to consult with their respective departments about whether to record this information for these purposes. The 2017-2018 Assessment Plan will no longer include this measure and the relevant survey items will be omitted.

Measure 3.4

Each year, faculty and staff will complete the *Community/Public Service Survey* where they will record an estimate of the number of community individuals served by their projects. After establishing baseline during year one, there will be a 10% increase in the total number of community individuals served each year.

Finding: Target met. Year one baseline was established for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that 91,761 community members benefitted from university service projects during the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: NSU's Office of Service-Learning director consulted with university administration regarding the on-going usefulness of this particular data set. We decided that this data falls outside the scope of the university's community/public service assessment plan. However, since this information may be pertinent for some departmental faculty/staff activity reports, promotion and tenure applications, etc., faculty and staff will be encouraged to consult with their respective departments about whether to record this information for these purposes. The 2017-2018 Assessment Plan will no longer include this measure and the relevant survey items will be omitted.

Measure 3.5

Each year, faculty and staff will be invited to at least one (1) professional development presentation on the use of service projects as high-impact educational practices (Kuh, 2008).

Finding: Target met for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Analysis: The data shows that there were seventeen presentations in which service projects were used as a high-impact educational practice at the

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University of Louisiana System Academic Summit (03/30/17 - 03/31/17). This is an annual regional conference of outstanding examples of undergraduate research, service-learning, and creative/performing arts projects. Presentations were made by faculty, staff, and students from the nine universities constituting the University of Louisiana System. Five NSU faculty attended at least one of these concurrent sessions. In addition, Northwestern's 30th Annual Research Day (4/20/17) included five presentations focused on service projects as high-impact educational practices. Research Day is a university-wide conference-style showcase of outstanding undergraduate, graduate and professional research. Ten faculty attended at least one of the concurrent sessions about turning community service into a high impact educational practice.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Faculty and staff will continue to receive invitation, by way of an 'all call', to at least one (1) professional development presentation focused on the use of service projects as high-impact educational practice. Prior year assessment results will inform topic selection. The Office of Service-Learning will also encourage faculty, staff, and students to present their service projects at venues like NSU's Annual Research Day and the University of Louisiana System's Academic Summit.

The Office of Service-Learning will support Northwestern State University of Louisiana's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Learning for Life: Experience Your Future*. This plan focuses on enhancing and expanding experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students. To this end, a new cohort of academic program QEP coordinators is identified each year. They are responsible for curriculum redesign and programming within their respective departments that will engage majors in high-impact experiential learning. For the 2017-2018 Academic Year, these academic program QEP coordinators will be identified and personally invited to professional development on the use of service projects as high-impact educational practices.

The university has a variety of service opportunities. Each one requires a different level of volunteer commitment. A department that is new to adopt experiential learning may be interested in learning about how to use service projects as a way of gradually introducing students to the concept of experiential learning and other high-impact educational practices.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Findings and/or Decisions

Outcomes were derived from two companion surveys, *The Community/Public Service Survey* and the *Community Partner Survey*. Both surveys are *on-line* and include selected-response (forced-choice) items and constructed-response (free-response) items. The first survey was completed by faculty and staff. The second survey was completed by community partners.

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A review of the data reveals success in meeting all three objectives:

- 1) Students will have increasing opportunities to serve the community through participation in service activities.**
- 2) The community will benefit from responsive service projects that address the community's unique and evolving needs.**
- 3) Faculty and staff will have access to resources with which to track and enhance their service projects.**

Next year's assessment plan will be almost the same as it was this year, but with a few updates that are expected to enhance the 2017-2018 cycle. For instance, all three objectives will remain unchanged, but two unnecessary measures (3.3 and 3.4) will be omitted. The two companion surveys will be updated to reflect these changes. Year one baselines have been established and we are positioned for growth. New for next year, we will encourage communication with community partners, solicit the "student voice", and provide support to the university's QEP, *Learning for Life: Experience Your Future*. Details of these key decisions were included in the narrative and are summarized below.

- 1) The Director of Service-Learning consulted with university administration about the on-going usefulness of certain measures and survey items. The discussion included exploration of the ways in which faculty, staff, and students may benefit from keeping the things as-is versus changing them. The decisions were:
 - a. We will continue to distinguish between "community and public service" data and "academic service-learning" data by way of two separate (but related) Measures 1.1 and 1.2, respectively.
 - b. Since community service, public service, and academic service-learning projects are related activities that produce similar benefits to the community, the terms "service" and "service projects" will be used as general terms that lump all of these activities together for Measure 1.3 through Measure 3.3.
 - c. We will no longer record the number of hours that faculty and staff volunteer on their students' service projects. The associated measure and survey items will be omitted.
 - d. We will no longer record the number of individuals in the community who benefit from university service projects. The associated measure and survey items will be omitted.
- 2) Year one baselines were established for Measures 1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 2.3; 3.1; and 3.2. Next year's assessment plan will focus on whether an annual 10% increase over baseline was attained for each of these measures.
- 3) The Office of Service-Learning will encourage faculty/staff and community partners to communicate directly about the effectiveness of the service initiative. To this end, new survey items will be developed that will allow community partners and faculty/staff to

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identify new areas of community need and provide their contact information for future correspondence. The goal is to increase service project effectiveness by way of facilitating direct communication between both parties. Upon request, the Office of Service-Learning may host meetings between university and community partner representatives in order to facilitate this dialogue.

- 4) The Office of Service-Learning will collaborate with Student Affairs to better capture the “Student Voice” by including student organizations among those polled for information about service participation rates on Measures 3.1 and 3.2. This year, service participation rates were derived strictly from faculty and staff input. Since similar data from student groups was not available, we may have underestimated the number of instances of volunteerism as well as the number of hours spent volunteering on service.
- 5) The Office of Service-Learning will continue to invite faculty and staff to Professional Development on using service projects as high-impact educational experiences. Prior year assessment results will be used to inform topic selection. Additionally, in light of the fact that the University’s QEP focuses on enhancing and expanding experiential learning opportunities, one topic of professional development interest may be early exposure to service projects for the purpose of preparing students for more intensive experiential learning later on.

REFERENCES

Kuh, George D. (2008). Excerpt from “*High Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter.*” Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), Washington, D.C. <https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>