

Service Learning: Expanding Community Partnerships and Student Learning

Emily Havrilla
Wilkes University, USA

Background: Service learning is an educational strategy that integrates service and student learning. Based on a reciprocal relationship between a community partner and an educational institution, it provides a unique opportunity for student learning. Grounded in the Kolb Cycle of Experiential Learning, service learning is comprised of instruction, service, and reflection. This partnership results in positive benefits for both partners.

Program: Service learning was initiated in the School of Nursing as an elective nursing course. Design of the service learning course included planning with the community partners. Existing faculty professional relationships with free health clinics in the community were expanded to include service by students enrolled in the service learning course. Course content included: vulnerability, vulnerable populations, and health disparities, cultural competence, social justice, and health policy. Reflective journaling and assignments were key elements in fostering learning. Students received course credits for both the didactic and clinical components of the course.

Outcomes: Service learning provided alternate practice opportunities and reframed knowledge acquisition through civic engagement. The link between knowledge and service fostered critical thinking and assisted in developing a life-long community perspective.

Biography:

Emily Havrilla is an assistant professor in the department of nursing at Wilkes university. She has published many articles in reputed journals.