High-Impact Educational Practices
Service-Learning

**Definition of Service-Learning:** Service-Learning is a common pedagogical strategy used to operationalize community-based learning in curricular programs. “In these programs, field-based ‘experiential learning’ with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life” (AAC&U). In essence, service-learning is an intentional and collaborative pedagogical practice that engages students in structured service to address an identified community need and help them “gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996, p.112).

**Service-Learning Courses:**
Service-learning goes above and beyond community service and volunteerism. While those activities are an important part of community engagement, service-learning differs in several ways. First, the service activities address specific community needs *related to the learning goals and objectives of a particular course* of the students providing the service. More specifically, Service learning:

- Is academically integrated — service is part of the coursework, not an unrelated "add on" requirement.
- Is purposefully designed with service projects that focus on community needs AND academic outcomes.
- Includes an evaluation of student work based on the learning gained from their service experience.
- Connects the student to substantial, ongoing forms of structured reflection and analysis (before, during, and after the service).
- Includes activity which values student and community knowledge and involves community collaborators in the design of the course and service project.
- Typically lasts the duration or majority of the semester, and experiences are intended to build upon themselves and on the accumulation of classroom knowledge.
- Is based on collaboration and reciprocal relationships between faculty, students, and community partners on projects which typically have real world challenges that students, community partners, and faculty must overcome together. (Adapted from Coastal College of Georgia)