

VI. AGAPÉ CENTER

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Putting Faith Into Action 2



Putting faith into action through service and mission.

I. Our Vision

The Agapé Center for Service and Learning develops, administers, resources, and coordinates programs of service-learning, learning guided community service, and contributing to the mission of Messiah College to “educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.” Students, faculty, and staff work with community-based partners in local, national, and international settings to empower communities while providing holistic learning opportunities for students.

The name Agapé, the Greek word for selfless, caring love, reflects the intention of the Center to incarnate the love of God which is demonstrated in our lives through acts of service, mission, reconciliation, and peace which will transform the world. Learning from and about people with whom we serve, and learning how to serve more faithfully, are integral parts of mission and service.

II. Service Learning

A. “Service-Learning.” A pedagogical model which intentionally integrates academic learning with community service in a credit-bearing academic course. Students participate in an authentic service activity which meets needs identified by the community (designed within the framework of a mutually beneficial relationship) and critically reflect on that activity. Thus, students gain a deep understanding of course content, a commitment to socially responsible citizenship, and develop skills and understanding needed to contribute to civic well-being.

B. General Service-Learning Parameters.

1. General Criteria: Incorporates nationally established and recognized best practices in each Service-Learning course.

Criteria:

- a. Awards academic credit.
- b. Requires educator orientation and training in the pedagogies and best practices of Service-Learning.
- c. Incorporates research and theory from experiential/contextual learning and Service-Learning in course design and delivery.
- d. Provides evaluation and feedback for students.

2. Components. Approved Service-Learning courses incorporate the following components:

a. Content Component. Service readings and activities will relate service to the course objectives.

Criteria:

- i. Introduces students to research problems and community partnerships that address a significant need in our community, region, country, or the world.
- ii. Prepares students for service by studying theories and gaining academic knowledge relevant to the problem.
- iii. Prepares students for service by orienting them to the problem and the context in which they will work.
- iv. Uses readings and discussions to connect learning to College-Wide Educational Objectives. (See APPENDIX C1)

- b. Service Component.** Service assignment addresses a significant need in context. Students will satisfy the service requirement by choosing from a variety of activities approved by the Director of the Agapé Center for Service and Learning and by the faculty member teaching the course.

Criteria:

- i. Provides opportunities for students to express value commitments and disciplinary knowledge in an authentic, real-life setting.
 - ii. Enables students to personally connect with people involved with the issue to which the service is directed. Ideally, this will include a relationship with persons directly affected.
 - iii. Relates to programs with long-term commitments to the communities and issues they address.
 - iv. Includes sufficient contact time and duration to allow students to build relationships with people facing the issue and to develop deep understanding.
- c. Reflection Component.** Incorporates structured reflection activities that relate the student's major and service experience to Christian discipleship and vocation.

Criteria:

- i. Includes students, faculty and community partners.
- ii. Requires written and oral reflection activities.
- iii. Critically analyzes the theories, structures and assumptions of students' academic disciplines in the context of the service experience.
- iv. Helps students to link their values and academic learning to other parts of the curriculum and co-curriculum.
- v. Encourages students to evaluate their personal values and commitments, and to grow in discipleship and toward a mature Christian faith.
- vi. Helps students develop a theological understanding of vocation that enables them to contextual their faith.

C. Types and Classifications of Service-Learning Courses

Any course approved as a Service-Learning course by the Service-Learning Committee will be given a "Service-Learning" attribute and will be identified as such in the course schedule under the comments section for each semester. (Example: ACC 247 Basic Income Tax, "Comments": Service-Learning) In some instances, Service-Learning will be an essential aspect of the course and hence will be approved and permanently cataloged as a Service-Learning course. In other instances (analogous to writing courses with a designated "W" attribute), the course will be given a "Service-Learning attribute for given semesters.

The deadlines for securing signatures from the Department Chair, School Dean, and Service-Learning Committee are October 1 for Spring courses and March 1 for Fall courses. The Agapé Center will forward the list of approved courses each semester to the registrar.

III. Our Programs

A. Service-Learning: Service related to academic courses.

The Agapé Center and the Service Learning Committee assists faculty who wish to incorporate service-learning into their courses and discipline. After adapting service-learning to course curriculum, arrangements are typically made to match students with existing Outreach Teams. Service-Learning is offered a variety of disciplines, including Biblical studies, education, computer science, business, human development and family science, and sociology.

To enroll in Foundation of Service, Mission and Social Change, talk with Chad Frey or your advisor, and register for the following courses during registration:

- SERV 231: "Studies in Service-Learning I" (Spring, 3 hours, graded)
- SERV 232: "Studies in Service-Learning II" (Fall, 1 hour, pass/fail)

This Service-Learning course gives students the opportunity to learn about Christian service in the classroom and then to put what they have learned into action in a summer service project. The course is comprised of three segments:

- *Spring Term*: Students take an interdisciplinary course to study Christian service and to gain knowledge and skills needed to serve.
- *Summer*: Students serve for at least six weeks with a mission or service agency. They can serve in the United States and overseas, and work with children and youth, communities fragmented by injustice and poverty, homeless persons, troubled teens, development, health, missions, engineering, education, or in other fields.
- *Fall*: Students take a course to reflect on the summer experience.

Students have served in a variety of areas, from urban settings like Harrisburg and Allentown to international settings such as Lebanon, Vietnam, and Guatemala. Recent service assignments have included roles such as:

- Serving at an orphanage
- Teaching Bible school in Alaska
- Teaching English to foreign nationals
- Helping with a medical clinic in a developing country
- Serving at an international church
- Working with homeless families

The cost of the spring and fall courses is covered by regular tuition. Where needed, students raise support for the costs of their service assignments. Students receive financial aid grants the following year to compensate for wages lost during the summer.

B. Information: For information about Local and National / International Service Learning opportunities please go to our web site www.messiah.edu/agape