

From Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse  
<http://www.servicelearning.org>

**Service-learning** is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

**Service-learning** combines service objectives and learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.

In 1990, the Corporation for National and Community Service conception of **service-learning** said that it:

- Promotes learning through active participation in service experiences
- Provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and/or writing about their service experience
- Provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations
- Extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community
- Fosters a sense of caring for others (as adapted from the National and Community Service Act of 1990)

From the University of Nevada at Reno:

<http://www.unr.edu/core-curriculum/faculty/forfacultycapstoneguidelines.html>

**Capstone courses** are intensive experiences in critical analysis, designed to broaden students' perspectives beyond their culture or discipline and provide an opportunity for integration of previous courses in the major and in the core curriculum. They require students to examine complex issues in substantial pieces of writing. Entrance into the capstone courses follows completion of other parts of the core curriculum; therefore these courses are designed for seniors. Topics of capstone courses may include issues relating to science and society, the analysis of diverse cultures and traditions, the application of varied disciplines to a single problem, or the analysis of a single issue across national, cultural, or disciplinary lines.

**Capstone courses:**

- build upon the core curriculum. They provide the opportunity for students to bring to bear knowledge gained in other core courses and knowledge derived from courses in the major.
- are integrative, broadly focused, multi-disciplinary, and if relevant, cross-cultural.
- focus on ethical and substantive issues and themes that affect the world community and broad cross-sections of humanity.
- promote critical thinking, reaching beyond orthodox or traditional approaches and perspectives. Courses challenge students to question and critically examine established assumptions.
- include a rigorous writing component and also, wherever possible, a computational component.
- offer a unique opportunity for innovative teaching. Cross-disciplinary courses and team-taught courses are encouraged.

From Skidmore College:

[http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/assessment/H\\_Capstone\\_courses1.htm](http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/assessment/H_Capstone_courses1.htm)

A **capstone course** is a course designed to be offered in the final semester of a student's major, a course that ties together the key learning objectives that faculty expect the student to have learned during the major, interdisciplinary program, or interdepartmental major.

**Capstone courses enable:**

- Faculty to assess the cumulative abilities of students within the context of one course;
- Faculty to develop the assessment materials to be evaluated within the context of a course;
- Students to produce work to be assessed as they would produce work for any course;
- Students to demonstrate how they can integrate the knowledge, abilities, and

values that faculty have been teaching or demonstrating.

From the National Research Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition report *"Preliminary Summary of Results from the 2006 Survey on **First-Year Seminars**"*:  
<http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/surveys/survey06.html>

Types of **First-Year Seminars** (N=821)

- 57.9% - extended orientation seminars (n=475)
- 28.1% - academic seminars with generally uniform content across sections (n=231)
- 25.7% - academic seminars on various topics (n=211)
- 14.9% - pre-professional or discipline-linked seminars (n=122)
- 21.6% - basic study skills seminars (n=177)
- 20.3% - hybrid of above categories (n=167)
- 4.4% - some "other" type of first-year seminar (n=36)

Indiana University of Pennsylvania's **Common Freshman Reader** Program  
<http://www.iup.edu/commonreader/faq/>

The **Common Freshman Reader** is a book selected each year for incoming first-year students. The book is given free to students to read during the summer before they come to campus in the Fall. The goals of the Common Freshman Reader are to enhance new students' understanding of the academic climate, what it means to be a member of IUP's learning community, their connection with faculty and fellow students, and their academic success. Through reading, discourse, and engagement with faculty and students, in and out of the classroom, first-year students will experience IUP as a university that encourages student participation and will recognize the educational value of their active involvement in the intellectual life of the campus.

Student learning outcomes include:

- Participation enhances students' understanding of the academic expectations of college.
- Students feel more connected to faculty and staff as a result of participation in discussions or events around the book.
- Faculty and staff feel more connected to students as a result of participating in discussions or events around the book.
- Students are more confident during their transition to college as a result of participating in the common freshman reader program.

University of Delaware's **LIFE** (Learning Integrated Freshman Experience) Program  
<http://life.ugs.udel.edu/>

LIFE freshmen form a small learning community organized around several of their courses (in which the students are co-enrolled), an academic theme, and out-of-class experiences related to those courses and themes. LIFE courses and experiences are known as LIFE clusters: they involve the integration of a variety of experiences centered on academic material. Some clusters are focused on specific majors or careers; others have a more general focus. Most clusters require that the students involved also live together, although there are occasionally clusters without the residential requirement. First-year students are assigned to each cluster and to the same residence hall community (where the cluster is residential), and these students are also co-enrolled in the cluster courses, as well as a co-curricular course, University 101, First-Year Experience (a one-credit, P/F seminar). Each cluster has a Peer Mentor, an advanced undergraduate student who helps students make the adjustment to the academic life of the university, facilitates UNIV 101, and, in general, ensures seriousness of purpose and academic quality in the co-curricular experiences of the LIFE students. Each cluster also has a LIFE Mentor, who provides counsel for the cluster and helps the Peer Mentor and students in the cluster explore academic issues related to the cluster theme.