

Am I Crazy? Check Sheet

Use this resource to help you with incorporating a last-minute service learning opportunity into an existing class. Please use this list as a working document to help you to think through many of the issues and possibilities necessary to make a last-minute project work out successfully. There is intentional spacing for you to add your own notes.

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1. **Prior** to the semester start (if possible)
 - a. Plan in a project that can be replaced
 - i. Sometimes I do this to account for semester issues such as snow days, or a class that doesn't advance at the expected pace
 - b. Keep an open mind to possibilities that may arise when you talk to folks
 - c. Use your best problem solving skills

2. Project opportunity **sources and ideas** – if you are looking for a project
 - a. Community, professional organizations, other campus programs
 - b. Be open to ideas when you talk to others in the community and on campus
 - c. Consider course trades or sharing with other faculty across disciplines

3. **Communicate** with the community members
 - a. What do they have to offer?
 - i. Materials, new ideas, different viewpoints, expertise
 - b. What do they expect? Find out what they have in mind.
 - i. Be prepared to probe for answers and expectations
 - ii. Sometimes they just want to involve the students and don't know how, but they just think this would be good for the students to use/know/experience/etc.

4. **Problem solve**
 - a. Determine if the project is possible and worthy. How can you create a project or assignment with the information provided that includes student learning in both the program area and the course content?
 - i. Will the students be learning or increasing their knowledge base in their program area?
 - ii. Will the students be able to use the skills or other learning from your course?

- iii. Will the students be interested in this project and how can you present it to them to promote buy-in?
 - iv. Are there expectations for the students to be used as free labor or will they truly benefit from the experience?
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- b. Be sure that the project is a win-win situation.
 - c. Work through your ideas; bounce the ideas off of others for changes and/or improvements. This is especially helpful if you are not really clear about the best way to incorporate the opportunity into a useful outcome.
 - d. Assess whether you think the project can work successfully. If you cannot come up with something you believe in, then JUST SAY NO – respectfully, of course.
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5. **Communicate** with the community members about your ideas. See if they are receptive to the outcome or deliverable that you foresee for the students.
- a. See if they are willing to come and talk to the class or allow for a field trip.
 - b. Discuss possible dates as early as you can.
 - c. Remember that this will take up an extra class date.
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6. **Involve the students** in the planning
- a. Tell them about the project in a way to really get them interested.
 - b. Discuss your ideas about how it might work and see if they have ideas to make it better, easier, more effective, easier to understand, etc.
 - c. Request ideas on how the students think the project should be assessed. Get some consensus among the students that will work for you.
 - i. Be sure to include some type of assessment in the middle of the project to hold all students accountable for their work.
 - d. Have students help to set up a timeline and due dates.
 - i. Begin with the end in mind. Start at the ending date and the end result and work backwards. Do this with the students as they are not used to setting their own due dates and determining how long projects may take.
 - e. Discuss the expected outcome and quality of work expected.
 - f. If teams will be used, let the students discuss how the teams will be set up and how work will be divided.

7. Set up a **“beyond the classroom” experience** for the students. This may be a guest speaker in person or by Zoom, or a field trip. Consider if other courses or faculty will also be interested and invite them if it will not make things unwieldy for you.
 - a. Prior to the visit by a guest speaker, be sure to check on parking passes, speaker appreciation gifts (there may be issues with this if you want university funding), campus maps with your building clearly marked and where to park also clearly marked, cell phone number exchanges as visitors invariably get lost on campus, etc.
 - b. If using Zoom be sure that the meeting is set up, the invite is exchanged for all interested parties, and you have tested the equipment in your classroom **ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT**. (Also have I.T. on speed dial if necessary.)
 - c. Prior to a field trip, check on permissions, notices to other faculty that students may be late or miss class, arrange transportation for students (van, carpool, etc.) as all students do not have vehicles on campus and they won't tell you that. Get the exact address and the parking recommendations. Build in travel time in both directions if students need to get back for another class. Express dress code issues and behavior issues and consequences. Certain clothing items may be required such as closed-toed shoes, head coverings, or sleeves.
 - d. Be sure that students are prepared with intelligent and effective questions.
 - e. Determine what to do if a student cannot attend.
 - i. Our guest speaker was video recorded through standard campus “pandemic era” recording.
 - ii. I also had students Zoom in to the speaker (as I had several out in quarantine).
 - iii. For other projects, I have allowed students to visit the site on their own but you need to make arrangements for that with the staff.
8. Fully **refine your project** in written format for the students. Be sure to include how this project will benefit the students. If you have trouble explaining the project ask for help from the students.
9. Set up your **rubric for grading** so the students know the expectations. Here are some grading considerations:
 - a. Teamwork, attitude, perceived effort, successful use of course materials or methods, aesthetics and function of the final project
 - b. Be sure that consequences for sub-par work are clearly spelled out.

10. **Bring in your speaker** or go on your field trip. Be sure that there is a contact person (the speaker or someone at the venue) for students to reach out to with questions after the event. Have the speaker share his/her email and encourage questions by the students. Students are more likely to reach out to the speaker if they are invited by the speaker to reach out. This contact opportunity is very important or you will end up as the go-between.

11. **After the speaker** or field trip, discuss any questions or issues with the class and resolve them or be sure to follow up if necessary.

12. Project implementation

- a. Progress reports and brief class **critique EVERY class**. This step is critical in order to keep the project moving and to identify any individuals or groups that are not keeping up with the expectations.
- b. Critique includes visual display and discussion. If the project is tangible with graphics, let the critique be the opportunity to decide on how to make the project cohesive.
- c. Students like critique as it gives them opportunity to learn from others without needing to ask their opinions. It also makes decisions about the project as a whole more democratic.
- d. Critique also involves **reflection** about the learning and the process.
- e. Pump as much energy into the project as you can every time the students meet. Assure them that their efforts are working and worthwhile.
- f. Ask them where things need improvement or change—give them a voice throughout the project.
- g. Assess with grades somewhere in the middle of the project. This may even be a pass/fail grade, but you might need to get their attention.
- h. Be sure that all students are working up to expectations.

13. Project completion

- a. Have a set **deadline** (with a day or two wiggle room in case issues arise)
- b. If at all possible build in time to **present the project to the community** partners who initiated it.
- c. **Bring in some press**. Take photos throughout the progress. Bring in an institutional photographer if possible.
- d. Press benefits include esteem for the students, press for your program and university, and press for the community partners.
- e. Consider **social media** posts if possible to let students share as they progress through the project.

- f. **Thank all students for their hard work.**
- g. **Thank the community partners** for considering the students and presenting them with opportunities for practical application.
- h. **Grade fairly**, but be considerate of the difficulties for the students in working on a project that is untested and may have unclear expectations at certain points.
- i. **Assess what worked and what did not.** Make notes for what to do or not to do in the future.
 - i. Reflect on whether the project was worth the extra time and energy to bring to fruition.
 - ii. Consider whether you would like to work with that community partner in the future.
 - iii. How could a future project flow easier or be more effective?
 - iv. What changes need to be made to the grading rubric to make it easier to use?
- j. Be sure to **share** what you did with others. Tell your “boss” so that they know about the community sharing. Share with Experiential Learning folks.
- k. If the project was successful or not, it is a great learning opportunity for you. Add this experience to your CV.