**Service Learning**

*Service learning provides a great avenue for undergraduate research. At WCU, there are three principal approaches to undergraduate research through service learning: problem-based service learning, community-based research, and participatory action research.*

**Problem-Based Service Learning (PBSL):** Problem-based service learning engages students in seeking solutions to real, community-based problems. Students usually work in teams and relate to the community similar to “consultants” working for a “client.” They work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This service learning approach presumes that the students will have some knowledge that they can draw upon to formulate and propose authentic, viable solutions to community problems.

**Community-Based Research (CBR):** In community-based research, students and faculty collaborate with community partners on research projects that address community-identified needs and promote social change. CBR aims not merely to generate knowledge, but also to ensure that knowledge contributes to making a concrete and constructive difference in a community. CBR emphasizes the use of multiple methods of discovery and the dissemination of the knowledge produced.

**Participatory Action Research (PAR):** Participatory action research has emerged in recent years as a significant methodology for intervention, development, and change within communities and groups. PAR seeks both to understand and to alter the problems generated by a social system. In this service learning approach, the community indicates the research needs and students bring their research skills to bear on community issues or concerns. With guidance and support from faculty members, students gather, analyze, and interpret data and then report the research results.

The term *community-based participatory research* (CBPR) is also used. CBPR is characterized by authentic partnerships, meaningful community engagement, and community capacity building that combine knowledge with action to achieve social change.

**Benefits of these Approaches**

* Enhanced research skills
* Increased disciplinary knowledge
* Improved knowledge and skills for active citizenship
* Opportunities for collaborative work with faculty and community partners

**Service Learning Resources**

*Research Assistance*

Service Learning Center staff members provide research assistance to both students and faculty who request it. Such assistance is typically in the form of library resources (e.g., books, articles, and exemplary syllabi).

*Funding Assistance*

The Service Learning Center collaborates with other centers and departments of the University to tap sources of monetary and scholarship support for problem-based service learning, community-based research, and participatory action research. In particular, collaboration is designed to identify grant sources, and to prepare and submit proposals to grant-making organizations.

*Internships*

Service-learning internships provide practical experience in problem-based service learning, community-based research, and participatory action research. Research outcomes might take the form of documentaries, newspaper or magazine articles, oral history segments, feasibility studies, business plans, grant applications, project manuals, or program brochures.

[*Literature*](http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/center-for-service-learning/service-learning-library/index.asp)

The Center for Service Learning

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[http://www.wcu.edu/9815.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/center-for-service-learning/index.asp)