

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Guide to Service-Learning



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Purpose

The **Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning** is designed to be a reference tool for California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) community partners involved with service-learning faculty/courses. This resource guide will provide you with guidance on your role as a community partner, designing a service-learning project, preparing students to serve at your organization, and facilitating student reflection activities.

Our service-learning program is based upon reciprocal relationships between faculty, community partners and students. Your relationship with our students will result in an integrative teaching approach and provide a foundation for their learning.

As a community partner, you play an integral role as co-educator in the academic careers of our students. By sharing your community knowledge and expertise, our students will be able to:

- connect and contribute to the community in which they live;
- learn about the larger political and social structures within their community;
- develop civic responsibility and strong leadership skills;
- examine and challenge their value and belief systems;
- build professional networks

We greatly appreciate your involvement with our service-learning program. We look forward to a rewarding and collaborative partnership with you to make this program a huge success for our students and the community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.

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Mission of the Center for Community Engagement

The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) supports and promotes high impact service-learning in our communities by cultivating long-term sustainable partnerships that address societal challenges and foster engaged citizenship.

Service-Learning and the CSUCI Mission

The CSU Channel Islands mission statement emphasizes a strong commitment to the community through service-learning: *“Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and **service-learning**, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.”*

What is Service-Learning?

The CCE has adapted the definition of service-learning as stated by the Chancellor’s Office of the California State University system:

- Service Learning is a high-impact teaching and learning strategy in which meaningful service addresses a critical societal and/or social justice issue and is a critical component of course curriculum and assessment of student learning. It is characterized by critical reflection and a collaborative partnership among faculty, students, and community, with a focus on both student learning and community impact.

Essentially, service-learning is connecting students’ courses with community focus areas.

What Service-learning is Not?

Service-learning can be easily confused for other forms of learning and community experiences. Review this list to learn what service-learning is NOT.

- **Course Add-On:** An add-on to an otherwise unaltered academic course. Simply adding a service component to a college course with no strategies to link service activities with learning outcomes, fails to consider the community as a full partner, fails to ensure that the community will benefit.
- **One-Time Volunteer Event:** A one-time volunteer event or community service program that has the primary focus on providing a service and the primary or sole beneficiary is the service recipient (e.g., AmeriCorps programs).
- **Graduation Service Hours:** Logging an existing number of service hours to graduate
- **Internship:** An internship is intended to provide students with hands-on experience and to develop and socialize students for careers or professions. Such internships emphasize benefits to the student rather than the community.
- **Field Education:** Field Education provides students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related but not fully integrated with their formal academic studies. Students perform

the service as a part of a program designed primarily to enhance students' understanding of a field of study.

Potential Benefits of Service-Learning

Research shows that service-learning has many potential benefits for all stakeholders involved. Below is a listing of the most common benefits for each stakeholder:

Potential Benefits to the Community Partners:

- Provides an opportunity for community to participate in an educational partnership
- Allows community to contribute to the education and preparation of the next generation of community leaders, non-profit employees and public servants
- Provides opportunities to educate students about current issues that impact surrounding communities
- Increases volunteer resources
- Provides opportunities for collaborative funding projects

Potential Benefits to Student:

- Provides students with “real-life” experiences that in turn supports and contributes to academic learning and outcomes
- Gives students an opportunity to become active citizens; to be part of the democratic process and part of the problem-solving solutions that impact the community
- Provides students with political, social and professional resources by broadening perspectives, enhancing critical thinking skills and improving interpersonal and human relations skills
- Creates professional networks

Potential Benefits to Faculty:

- Connects the community with the curriculum and the academic mission of the University
- Fosters experiential learning connected to course content
- Generates collaborative experiences among students

Community Partners as Co-Educators

As a community partner, you are truly a partner in the student's education and should view yourself as a co-educator. As a co-educator you have a unique opportunity to mentor CSUCI students about the larger social, cultural and political issues that make up the world around them. You will also have an opportunity to provide them with the knowledge and understanding of the community/population they are working with and the service they are providing. By sharing the following information, you will help students better understand the community and their service.

What students need to understand:

- The community organization, its purpose and vision, the staff
- Community members who utilize the services
- The service tasks/projects they will be involved with and the larger context
- The surrounding neighborhood and larger context (town, city, etc.)
- The local community assets and challenges and how they can best be responsive to them

- The history between the community, the agency, and the higher education institution
- How they can be of service and be open to being served as well
- What might others have to teach them in this experience
- How they can be responsive to what the identified community focus areas are

It is also the community partner's responsibility to provide orientation, training and supervision to CSUCI students. Communicating your expectations, clarifying responsibilities and goals, and discussing risks involved in the service project (if any) will help you and the student(s) have a successful experience.

The **Orientation Checklists below** are tools to help you properly prepare service-learners for their community experiences. The orientation should provide students with a clear understanding of the work they will be doing, any risk associated with that work, and how they should conduct themselves when they are working in the community as part of a class assignment.

The **first orientation**, prior to the first day of service occurs, gives students information about the community-based organization and the nature of their service placements. This should take place either in class or in a required outside of-class meeting.

Orientation Checklist Provided Before First Day of Service

- Mission of the Community-Based Organization (CBO)
- Who does the Community-Based Organization serve?
- What programs/services does the CBO offer?
- Specific policies and procedures related to the service placement.
- Share how staff prioritize equitable practices (examples include agency mission statement & program goals; site environment reflects diversity and inclusion; all constituencies are treated equitably with care and support).
- Share how site staff is prepared to accept and support qualified students of varying backgrounds (including race, religion, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, health related condition, age, disability, veteran status, immigration status, political belief, etc.).
- Review any proof of eligibility that is needed (fingerprinting, background check).
- *CBO covers cost. Where should students go to have fingerprinting done?
- Discuss CBO service expectations.
- Provide students a job description detailing the work they will do (outlines scope of work). Explain the types of activities that are "outside" the scope of work.
- Give the students their site supervisor's contact information.
- Will the students need to meet with the site supervisor prior to beginning their service?
- How closely will the student be supervised? By whom?
- Who do the students call if they cannot make their scheduled service, or will be late?
- Discuss appropriate attire when providing service (based on CBO standards).

- Provide specific training for the position.
- What will the student learn? What qualities or skills will the student develop?
- Review confidentiality rules for the site. Are pictures or video allowed?
- Review the risks associated with this placement.
- Explain what students should do if harassment occurs? Who do they contact?
- Talk about service schedule (total number of hours, days and times of the week, etc.). Also discuss beginning and end of service. Students should not volunteer outside of scheduled hours until requirement is complete.
- Who can the students contact with questions or concerns about their placement (CBO contact, and faculty contact)?
- Is there a CBO training or Orientation to attend? Where? When? How long?
- Where do students check in at the site on their first day?
- How are students' service hours recorded? (For their course and the CBO).
- Give location of the site and directions via personal vehicle or public transportation. Where will students park if they drive? What is the cost associated with parking or taking public transit? Emphasize that the student is responsible for getting to and from the site.
- Who will be evaluating the students' service? Is there a formal evaluation the CBO will fill out?

For Virtual Sites:

- Will the student orientation be conducted virtually? If not, where will orientation take place?
- How will service-related activities be effectively coordinated between the supervisor and student?
- Communicate how the supervisor will check-in with the student on a regular basis.
- Describe methods, if any, in place for evaluating the student's work.

The **second orientation**, presented by the community-based organization, should take place at the site where students will be working. This is the simplest, most effective way for students to become aware of emergency policies, accident procedures, and the rules and regulations of the site.

- On Site Orientation should occur on or before the first day of service. The following site-specific risk management information should be reviewed with students:** Tour of site – location of restroom and break room.
- Where, and with whom, do students check in each time they arrive at the site?
- Where is the logbook kept (to record service hours)?
- Review safety rules of the site, location of emergency exits, and emergency procedures. Introduce students to other staff at the agency.
- Review accident procedures at the site and what to do if a student or client is hurt.

Understanding and Preparing Students for Service

Understanding CSUCI Students

Planning for service-learners with an awareness of the diverse characteristics of the CSUCI student population can improve the experience for everyone involved. When planning for student involvement at your agency, anticipate a wide range of background and experience. For example, some students will be “traditional” college age (17-24); however, others will be older and/or returning students. Following is a profile of the CSUCI undergraduate student taken from the 2020-2021 data.

In 2002, CSUCI opened as the newest of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system. CSUCI is located in Camarillo, a rural suburb of Ventura County, California, 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles and 45 miles south of Santa Barbara.

CSUCI is a Hispanic-Serving Institution that largely serves first-generation and a historically underserved student population of almost 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students. As of the Spring 2021 semester, of the largely underrepresented minority students, 55% are Latinx. The university has received the Seal of Excelencia, a prestigious, voluntary, & comprehensive certification granted by the Washington DC-based organization, Excelencia in Education. The Seal recognizes an institution’s very high-level commitment to serve Latinx students.

65% of the undergraduate student body is female and more than half are Pell eligible, meaning that students whose total family income is \$50,000 or less per year. The average student age for undergraduates is 23 years and many of our first-time freshmen are from the Los Angeles or Ventura area. However, almost two-thirds of transfer students are from Ventura County. The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement, which surveys first-time freshman, found in 2017, that many of our first-time freshmen bring community or volunteer experience with them.

Planning Your Service-Learning Project

Contacting Faculty

CSUCI's service-learning program fosters a reciprocal relationship between the community partners, faculty members and students and we welcome suggestions from community partners for potential service-learning projects. The CCE can assist by acting as liaison for community partners and faculty. If you have an idea for a service-learning project, please contact Pilar Pacheco, Director, at pilar.pacheco@csuci.edu or Jennifer Raymond, Community Partner Coordinator, at jennifer.raymond@csuci.edu. The CCE will assist you in scheduling a meeting with faculty to discuss the responsibilities and goals for a proposed service-learning project.

Designing a Meaningful Service-Learning Project

A service-learning project integrates the skills or knowledge students are learning in the course. Service-learning projects should be designed so that a student or a group of students can make a significant contribution to your organization's mission or goals within a semester and coincide with the academic calendar. Service-learning projects can take on many different forms. When thinking about or designing a service-learning project, it is important to keep the following question in mind – What kind of service project will this be?

- **Direct service:** Student interacts directly with focused populations from your organization (e.g., tutoring elementary students, collecting oral histories).
- **Indirect service:** Service is not provided to individuals, but the service benefits the community (e.g. students collect and analyze water samples to inform an environmental impact report).
- **Advocacy:** Students create an awareness of a community issue (e.g., writing letters to the editor, attending and reporting on city council meetings).
- **Research:** Students gather data and report on an issue of public interest (e.g., developing a survey used to determine farmworker health issues).

For all types of service projects students should be able to relate their work directly to the mission and goals of your organization and should be addressing a specific community need.

We welcome the opportunity to meet one-on-one with community partners to discuss service-learning related issues/concerns, to better understand the service-learning program and your role as a co-educator or brainstorm service-learning project ideas. To request a consultation, go to go.csuci.edu/CPconsultation & complete the request.

Guiding Questions for Service-Learning Partnership Meetings

A service-learning experience is a collaborative partnership between a faculty member and a community organization(s). The faculty member and community organization(s) together identify a project or activity that addresses a community need or contributes to the necessary work of the organization. The service-learning project is directly related to learning goals that the students are already working to achieve. The project contributes to their understanding and knowledge of academic concepts or skills. Service-learning students participate in a structured reflection or assessment process which facilitates the integration of the service experience and course content (learning).

These questions are meant to be a guide to discuss the objectives and details of the project and establish partnership expectations. This is a working document and as such, the Center for Community Engagement welcomes your feedback and ways to improve upon this stakeholder resource.

Meeting Date:

Faculty Member's Name:

Community Organization(s) Name:

Community Partner(s)' name, phone number and email:

Course Name:

Community issue or need being addressed by students/project:

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES: What do all stakeholders want students to learn from this service-learning course (academic content, professional application, service/social justice/civic engagement skills, leadership, etc.)?

- Faculty member discusses course goals and objectives of the course, shares course syllabus.
- Community partner shares information about their history, mission, client-base, and goals of your organization; and a list of essential procedures and guidelines for working with your agency or organization.

SERVICE OUTCOMES:

- What do all the stakeholders (especially people working most closely with the service learners) want the impact of the student service to be in the community)?
- What do stakeholders want students to learn as a result of their service?
- How does the service connect to the course content?

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Describe the service-learning project(s) students will be involved in at the partner site(s)

PREPARING FOR SERVICE increases the likelihood that there will be positive outcomes for all stakeholders, including students. What kinds of preparation are needed for students to be engaged in service and reflection, and what preparation activities will be the responsibility of the faculty member, students or community partners?

- How many students will/can be placed at the community partner site?

- What times and dates are available?
- Is there a certain number of hours students will serve?
- When will students begin their service-learning? When will they end it?
- Will students be working in groups?
- How many students will it realistically require to complete the project?
- How many students can we handle at once?
- What staff members will supervise and coordinate student work?
- Does the student need training? When/where will the training take place?
- What types of orientation occur prior to service?
- Who will supervise the students? How can this person be contacted? Is there a backup supervisor?
- Who should students call if they will be absent or late?
- Do students need to be fingerprinted or have a background check?
- Is there a dress code students should adhere to?
- Discuss any important dates:
 - In-class orientation date: ○ Mid-semester check-in date:
 - End of semester presentations/posters:
- What is the protocol for discussing any concerns? Who should the community partner contact with student issues?
- What is the best way to get in touch with faculty member/community partner?
- Will the faculty member check-in during the semester?
- What are some potential physical accessibility barriers at the community partners site? Consider items broadly, such as stairs (including public transportation), required mobility (“walking”) distances, air quality, heat, etc.
- What might be ways to ameliorate or overcome physical accessibility barriers? Are there alternative ways to participate to reach the same service/learning outcomes?

REFLECTION establishes connections between students' service experience and the academic curriculum. The most effective system is to have participant's reflection occur before, during, and after their service-learning experience.

- What type(s) of structured reflection will be integrated into the course? The service site(s)?
- How will the partners be involved in designing, implementing, evaluating and benefiting from on-going reflection activities?

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION built into the initial design of the service-learning project is essential so the impact on students, faculty, and the community can be measured and reevaluated for the remainder of the present, and for the next, semester.

- How will student learning and the value of the service to the community be assessed (e.g. presentations, evaluations, papers, etc.)?
- How will stakeholders assess the partnerships and identify strategies for improvement? Will there be an end of the semester meeting?
- What steps will be taken if students are unable to finish the project or neglect their project responsibilities

Critical Reflection

Structured critical reflection time is integral to service-learning programs because it connects and reinforces in-class work and readings, and service-learning experiences. It provides an opportunity for students to think critically about civic experiences, examine and challenge personal values, beliefs, and opinions. It provides a platform for students to ask questions, share ideas and experiences, challenge current solutions to community issues and develop plans to address community needs.

It is important to incorporate structured reflection time (before, during and after the service experience) so that students develop a deeper understanding of course subject matter outside of the traditional classroom environment. Reflection promotes interpersonal communication, problem solving skills, self-awareness, a sense of civic responsibility, and a sense of belonging.

Types of Reflection

The sample questions below are meant to give you an idea of how reflection may be structured at your service site.

1) Group Discussions

Service site discussions can occur individually, in several small groups or as one large group. Topics can vary but should be structured.

Examples for discussions at the **beginning** of the semester:

- What is the identified problem/community focus area?
- How are you going to address that need?
- What are some of your perceptions or beliefs about the population you will be working with?
- What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- Why are you needed?

Examples for discussion **during** the semester:

- How does your service-learning experience relate to the learning objectives of the course?
- What did you do at the site since the last reflection discussion?
- What did you observe?
- What did you learn?
- How has the experience affected you (how did you feel)?
- What has worked and hasn't worked?
- What do you think is (will be) the most valuable service you can offer at your site?
- What has been particularly rewarding about your service?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- Has your service experience, so far, changed any of your perceptions or beliefs?
- Is there something more you could do to contribute to the solution?

Examples for discussion toward the **end** of the semester:

- What have you learned about yourself?
- What have you learned about your community?
- What have you contributed to the community site?

- What values, opinions, beliefs have changed?
- How has your willingness to help others changed?
- What was the most important lesson learned?
- How have you been challenged?
- What impact did you have on the community?
- What should others do about this issue?
- What else can be done to address this issue?

2) Journaling

Journaling offers students an opportunity to practice writing, analyze, and articulate their service experience and record and document their progress toward their learning objectives.

Examples of journaling questions:

- How is your service-learning experience related to the readings, discussions, and lectures in class?
- How does the service-learning experience connect to your long-term goals?
- What new skills have you learned since beginning your service?
- What have you done this week to make a difference?
- What characteristics make a community successful?

Frequently Asked Questions

How is service-learning different from internships or volunteerism?

While internships and volunteerism are great forms of experiential learning, they typically lack the coursework integration and the opportunity for shared reflection, essential to the process of service-learning.

When can I expect students to start?

If you refer to the CSUCI Academic Calendar at <https://www.csuci.edu/calendars/> you will see when semesters begin and end. When students start will depend upon the service-learning project, the number of hours required by the course, and what is decided upon by the faculty member and the community partner. Generally, students will be placed at an organization within the first three to four weeks of the semester.

Will students stay beyond one semester?

Many service-learning projects may last only one semester. However, that same course may be offered the next semester with the possibility of a new group of service learners working at your placement site.

How many students will work with us for the semester?

When you complete the information in our community partner database, it is very important that you list the number of students you can support each semester. Many of our community partners have over 20 students per semester, while others have just one or two. You should not take more students than you feel comfortable supervising and providing quality experiences and opportunities for.

What if students don't show up, stop coming, or don't complete their hours? If students say they are going to show up and don't, or if they stop coming all together after coming a few times, the first thing to do is contact the student directly and ask what happened. In most cases the situation can be resolved at this step. If you are unsuccessful at reaching them or they do not return your calls, please contact the faculty member. We are here to help you work most effectively and successfully with students.

What if my organizations cannot facilitate on-site reflection?

Being able to facilitate on-site reflection is certainly not part of the criteria for being a community partner and should be done only if you feel comfortable with this process. Reflection does not have to be a formal process. Students are reflecting on their experiences in class through discussion, writing, reading assignments, and research. However, as co-educators you and your staff have something unique to add to a student's coursework. You are the experts on your organization, and as such, offer unique community knowledge. Think broadly and creatively in terms of what reflection is and how you can achieve that with your students. It could be as easy as walking down the hall with a student asking them what they achieved today. It is possible for you to even discuss with the faculty member ways you can complement what is happening in class.

Who are the students participating in service-learning?

The CCE works with a variety of faculty and departments around the University. Therefore, the students coming to your organization will have a variety of majors and areas of study. Should there be student requirements your organization is looking for (i.e., areas of study, language etc.) be sure to note these in our community partner database.

What happens at the end of the semester?

Community partners will be asked to complete an evaluation. Data will be used for program planning and quality improvement.

NOTES