Service Learning @ CSULB: A Community Agency Handbook

California State University, Long Beach
Community Service Learning Center
E. Library/Academic Services, Room 120
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90840-2007
(562) 985-7131
The Community Service Learning Center has developed this handbook as a resource for you in your work with service-learning students from California State University Long Beach. By agreeing to work with the California State University, Long Beach Community Service Learning Center you have become part of an extraordinary group of people working together to address the needs of your community through direct service. Welcome to Community Service Learning!

Part One: Community Service Learning, An Overview

Who We Are

The Community Service Learning Center was established in 1998 under the direction of Dr. Patricia Rozee, professor of psychology at CSULB. Since that time, more than 100 Service Learning undergraduate and graduate level courses have been developed at CSULB. Service Learning can now be found in 29 departments and 7 academic colleges.

The mission of the Community Service Learning Center (CSLC) is to develop awareness, understanding and commitment to service-learning by providing a physical and virtual resource center that facilitates interactions between faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, student services staff, and community partners. The CSLC works actively to serve educational institutions, government and non-governmental organizations, community agencies, and the CSULB campus community to address specific societal needs.

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is the integration of community service into an academic course. It is a partnership between campus and community that seeks to address significant community needs while meeting the academic learning goals and objectives of a course. Service-learning allows students to see and experience the relationship between theory and practice as they draw together their community service experience with readings, lecture, and classroom discussion. Service Learning is a service experience in which students have intentional learning goals and reflect on what they are learning through the experience. Service Learning:

- Links academic study to community service through structured reflection to enhance both learning and service
- Emphasizes active learning in different environments
- Values reciprocity, with the community and academic partners sharing the roles of learner, server, and educator to meet both academic and community goals.
- Engages students in responsible and challenging community service that meets identified community needs
- Allows students to reflect critically on their experiences
Service Learning Benefits Everyone:
Community-based organizations involved with CSULB service-learning and their constituents gain:
- Tangible benefits from student community service learning activities
- The possibility to address needs that require specialized knowledge
- Opportunities to develop ongoing partnerships with university faculty and students that can help address longer-range goals
- Opportunities to serve as “co-educators” in guiding and supporting service learners
- Gaining long-term benefits of a citizenry more committed to service and more aware and sensitive to community needs

Students who complete Community Service Learning benefit from:
- Richer learning opportunities, resulting in increased information retention and higher grades
- Opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real experience in the community
- Increased academic and social self-confidence
- Increased critical thinking skills
- Increased sense of community “connectedness” and civic engagement

Faculty members utilizing community service learning benefit in that this teaching method:
- Provides new and effective teaching resources and methods
- Engages students and motivate them to be active participants in classroom discussions and/or assignments
- Provides an means of articulating the relationship between academic material and its applications
- Allows for greater awareness and involvement in the community
- Creates new opportunities for research and publications
- Provides opportunities to utilize knowledge and expertise to meet significant community needs
- Provides opportunities to advance teaching, scholarship and service
Part Two: Becoming a Service Learning Partner

If you have heard about the Community Service Learning Center through another member of the community and have not talked to a member of the CSLC Staff, please contact our office at (562) 985-7131. We would be more than happy to explain, in detail, the ways in which we can address your needs as a community agency. If you have already been in contact with the CSLC, the following information should aid in the beginning stages of becoming a service-learning placement:

Establishing your relationship with the Community Service Learning Center

The primary goal of the Community Service Learning Center Coordinator is to facilitate interactions between faculty and community agencies. Whether you are contacted directly or seek out a member of the CSLC staff, it is important that both parties have a clear idea of what community needs must be addressed. This mutual understanding will allow the center to connect a faculty member who is seeking a specific service learning experience for her/his students (whether it be mentoring children to creating a web page) with an agency who truly needs this type of contribution.

In an effort to collect this information as accurately as possible, a Potential Community Agency form will be sent to you. This document asks specific questions both about your organization and how you plan to utilize student’s service learning efforts. Make sure that you clearly explain the type of work that you need to be completed. This information ensures that you are not sent a student who is asked to do something beyond her/his capabilities. Remember, the more information that is provided the easier it is for the staff in the CSLC to find a service learning course that will fit with that specific type of service. Once this information is received, you will be contacted directly by the Community Partners Coordinator. All information will be confirmed and entered into a database.

From there, several steps will be taken before you become a designated placement. First, in order to ensure the safety of all students who work within the community setting, it is required that all agencies complete a Service Learning Agreement. Issues on liability coverage will be discussed in full, and both the Community Service Learning Center and you as an agency will need to sign the document before students will be sent to perform service. This document is a precaution to protect you as a community agency, the student as a volunteer and the Community Service Learning Center as a facilitator. Before signing any legal document it is important that you read and understand its contents. If you have any questions or problems feel free to contact the CSLC.

With that said, participating in Community Service Learning is as much of a commitment to the student faculty as it is their commitment to you. It is important that you understand the following before you decide whether or not you wish to be a designated Community Service Learning placement:

1. Students will be placed in your agency with the expectation that they will be fulfilling a community need as well as learning about the subject matter in the course. They should not, therefore, be observing your agency or the clients whom you serve.
2. Although most agencies could use someone to do filing, answer phones and complete other needed office work, service-learning students are not to be utilized in these ways.
Only those tasks that a professor approves are to be completed by the student during their community service-learning placement.

3. Students must be under the direct supervision of a member of your organization while completing service activities. Each student is required to keep a log of the hours they complete at your organization, and it is their responsibility to have it signed every time they visit your agency.

4. Most students have taken courses to prepare them for service in your agency. Some, however, are in courses that are lower division and therefore have no previous training. It is important, therefore, that you are available to answer questions and aid in the student’s learning process.

Maintaining your relationship with the Community Service Learning Center

Over time, your goals and needs may change. For this reason, you will always be contacted before your agency is referred to a professor as a possible placement site. This allows the Community Service Learning Center to establish a working relationship with your agency as well as ensures that your needs and goals are addressed along with the needs and goals of a specific course. A member of the CSLC staff commonly asks the following information:

1. The Community Service Learning Center’s database states that you currently have a need for ______. Is this still the case?
2. How many students can you accommodate to work on this specific project?
3. What hours are the students able to complete their service activity?
4. Are there any requirements (TB test, background check, orientations, dress code, etc.) for working in your organization that you may not have previously mentioned?
5. Do you have liability coverage for volunteers at your organization?
6. Have you recently moved or changed staff?
7. Are there a minimum number of hours you wish students to complete, or a time commitment?
8. Would you prefer the students to contact you by phone or via e-mail?

Keeping this information updated and accurate is essential. If you move or change contact information, the CSLC appreciates notification of the change as soon as possible. We are contacted by new service learning faculty on a continuous basis, and are always looking for ways to address community needs through service.

Supervising and Working With Students:

If your organization is not accustomed to having student volunteers, interns and or service learning students, it may be hard to imagine how participating in Service Learning can effect your agency as a whole. As mentioned earlier, participation in service learning can lead to a positive outcome for all who are involved. Once you have agreed to allow students to complete service at your agency, they will contact you directly. All students are required to know specific information before they begin service. Once you know you are a designated placement site, prepare to answer the following questions, or set up a system to provide the needed information when students contact you via e-mail. The sooner a student has the needed information, the sooner they will begin service. The following section is taken from the student handbook on the proper procedures for contacting a community agency:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Agency</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred contact method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/President/Founder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Address of agency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Directions from CSULB</td>
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</tbody>
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| Possible Start Date                          |                                    |
| Service Learning Hours                       |                                    |
| Requirements                                 | [] TB Test                      [] Background Check  [] DMV Report |
| Other:                                       |                                    |
| Dress Code                                   |                                    |
| Student’s Position Title                     |                                    |
| Service Learning Description                 |                                    |
| Potential Risks to Student                  |                                    |

Do not be afraid to be proactive! If an agency contact person is unavailable when you call ask when a better time to contact her/him is. If you leave a message and do not hear back from the contact person within 24-48 hours, try calling again. If there are other methods of contacting the agency (i.e. e-mail addresses, fax numbers, etc.) attempt those as well. If you have tried to contact the agency using all available means and still are not able to make contact with the agency, notify your professor and/or the Community Service Learning Center. Remember, non-profit organizations are often short staffed and extremely busy. Always, therefore, call during the hours of operation listed on your contact sheet.

Once a student has this information it will be included in a document known as the Community Service Learning-Learning Plan. This plan includes goals and objectives the student sets for their semester of service, ways to measure successful service activities, contact and community agency information. Always ask the student to make a copy of the document and retain it with the other Community Service Learning documents. This will ensure that you clearly understand the goals and expectations of the professor, and have her/his contact information for your own personal use. It may also be helpful to ask the student a few questions
prior to her/his first day of service. At minimum, you should know the following information after the student contacts you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Hours Required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What, specifically, the student is required to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Start Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Day of Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Experience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In most cases you will have been contacted prior to the beginning of the semester by the instructor of a specific course and will have a working relationship. In this case, students will not need to provide much more than what is listed above. In others, you may not be contacted by the professor him/herself until the end of the semester, or not at all. Note that it is the responsibility of the student to contact you once your information has been passed on, not the professor. This means two things. First, you may not have a clear idea of what the student is required to do. Second, this means every individual in the course who wishes to complete service with your agency will contact you. It may be helpful to have the answers to the above questions addressed before the student calls in e-mail form. Sending valuable information in this way will save you time and confusion, as all necessary information will be clearly stated.

**Part Three: The Service Activity**

In most cases, community agencies are very excited about having students complete service in their agency. Students, conversely, are often apprehensive about going into an unfamiliar agency. The following table can make all the difference when a student is trying to settle into their service-learning role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do:</th>
<th>Don’t:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Be available to students. They will have many questions about procedures, preferences, etc. in the beginning stages of their service.</td>
<td>• Hesitate to contact the student’s professor if she/he is behaving inappropriately or is not completing assigned tasks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Make sure that you understand the goals and requirements of the course that your service-learning student is | • Forget to sign the service-learning student in and out of your agency. This not only ensures that the student is
taking. If necessary, have the student make a copy of their syllabus so that you will both have a document to reference.

- Ensure your service learning student’s safety at all times, and inform them of any potential risks.

receiving credit for the valuable services they are providing but keeps an accurate account of when the student was under your care and supervision.

Be uninformed. CSULB has a web page (www.csulb.edu) that includes links to individual departments and faculty, calendars and more. Furthermore, contact information for faculty and students can be found for your own use.

It is important to remember these key points while a student is completing service. Maintaining an open line of communication between yourself and your service learning student(s) can insures that your concerns and needs are addressed.

Part Four: Helping Students Help Themselves

Within the first few visits, the student should understand the proper procedures for completing their service in your organization. If students will be working with sensitive documents, serving clients of a vulnerable population or completing physical activity that may result in injury, it is important that you reinforce the following information, which can also be found in the student handbook.

Maintaining Confidentiality:

When working with sensitive personal information it is critical that each student realizes the importance of maintaining confidentiality. The first step to insuring that sensitive documents remain protected is to inform the students of what has been deemed confidential and for what reasons. Furthermore, any information that students are not authorized to see should be properly stored.

Those students who work with elderly persons, persons under the age of 18 years old and persons with disabilities need to understand the importance of keeping their clients’ identities a secret. The following information is provided in the student handbook, but should be reviewed prior to service:

If it is necessary to discuss an individual as part of a class discussion or written assignment centering on the service-learning experience, care should be taken to:

- Utilize an “alias” when referring to others (avoid using the person’s actual name).
- Eliminate identifying characteristics.
- Suppress details about the individual’s personal background. You can discuss a general history of abuse, for example. Simply avoid using details about “whom,” “when,” and “where.”

The following circumstances would require that these rules of confidentiality be disregarded:

- The individual has threatened to physically harm another person,
- The individual has threatened to physically harm her or him self, and/or
• The individual has disclosed physical and/or sexual abuse or neglect by a caregiver.

In these instances you should approach your agency supervisor with the information so that she/he can follow through with appropriate reporting procedures. When working with vulnerable populations you are obligated by law to report information pertaining to the above circumstances, even if it is only an educated suspicion.

Make sure the student understands the proper procedures for reporting any problems that she/he may have as a result of their service. A well-informed student will know what is and is not inappropriate, and will be able to identify such actions accordingly.

Serving Safely

There are risks associated with nearly every aspect of daily life. A person could slip in the shower, stub their toe while running barefoot or have their car burglarized in front of their house. The risks of everyday activity are minimized when one identifies the risk (a wet shower floor can be slippery), and responds proactively (put a rubber mat in the shower). When a student begins a service-learning placement, care must be taken to identify any potential risks and respond proactively to insure a safe experience.

Identify potential risks by asking yourself and the student the following types of questions:

- What kinds of risks (to the student, to clients, to others) are there to the service learning activity? For example, does the activity include physical activity (recreation, construction, etc.), or does it include working with a “vulnerable” population (children, elderly, disabled)?
- What kinds of risks are there in the environment in which the student will be doing service learning? For example, is the building in good condition, is the surrounding neighborhood relatively crime-free or is there a higher-than-average rate of crime?

Respond proactively by making sure that:

- You provide a safety orientation, training on any unfamiliar equipment, and information on what to do in case of an emergency.
- Any clearly unsafe conditions outside of the student’s control are identified, documented and, if necessary, reported to the Community Service Learning Center.
- You maintain any and all liability coverage for volunteers and employees.
- Appropriate precautions are taken to ensure the student’s personal belongings are safe from crime.
- All rules and regulations of your agency are clearly explained to the student before service activities begin.
- You avoid assigning activity that is beyond the student’s physical capabilities or training.

Injuries During Service:

Although most non-profit agencies have insurance for the safety of their staff and volunteers, some do not. As mentioned earlier, the CSULB Community Service Learning—Learning Plan will need to be completed before your service is started. This legal document...
serves to insure that a student is covered in case of an accident or emergency as a direct result of service. When complete with signatures, you, the student, and her/his professor should each keep a copy. In combination with the required time log, this document will not only serve as an account that the student has completed the required time commitment but will also show the hours that you as a community agency were responsible for the student’s supervision.

Sometimes, accidents just happen. If a student is hurt during her/his service activity but is not a direct result of service, it is important that personal medical care is obtained independently. All full-time CSULB students can privately receive minor to moderate health care free of charge at Student Health Services. Part-time students can pay a small health fee for services. The CSLC strongly recommends that all students maintain health insurance, whether it is independently or through the Associated Students’ sponsored student health coverage plans.

Talk with your service learning student(s) about the proper procedures for obtaining medical aid before it is necessary. All students are advised to report accidents immediately to their supervisor for directions on how to obtain medical care. If the student has injured her/himself participating in an activity other than their service activity, reminding them of campus-sponsored health care is sufficient.

**Part Four: Student Assignments**

A student’s successful completion of a service-learning course is assessed in many ways. Along with the traditional midterm and final examinations, there are many assignments that are directly related to the competed service that are a large portion of a student’s grade. The following are required in most service learning courses:

**Completing Required Number of Service Hours**

Before a service learning student begins service you should have discussed the minimum number of hours the student is required to complete during the semester of service at your agency. These hours, as mentioned before, should be logged in every time the service-learning student is completing service. In general, students are expected to complete 20-40 hours of community service learning, although there are some courses that require as many as 120 hours of service over the course of the semester.

**Completing Reflection Logs, Journals, and In-Class Assignments**

It is important that one remember that Service Learning is a method of teaching and learning. Throughout the service learning experience, it is important for each student to thoughtfully reflect on her/his experience in relationship to the course content. In service learning courses, assignments are structured to allow connections to be made between your experience in the real world setting and what is being learned from course documents and lectures. As the community agency you become a co-educator with the professor. Discuss the course with your service learning student(s) when you have time, and ask what they have learned while completing service. The student may have valuable information to share with you, as well as other service-learning students in their course.

**Completing/Presenting A Final Portfolio**
Nearly every Service Learning Course requires that the student compile all reflection logs, time logs and in-class assignments into a finished product. Often, along with these items, the student is asked to submit the “end-product” of their semester’s activity. Journalism courses, for example, are often asked to submit the publication materials created during their semester’s placement. If applicable, you may want to ask the student for a copy of this assignment. Often, wonderful insight from a fresh, new perspective can be gained.

Part Five: Ending Service Learning

After a semester of actively working with a Community Service Learning student, it may be difficult for you, your staff, and the clients in which you serve to say goodbye to her/him. Unfortunately, a large majority of students are not able to continue doing service at their agency after the semester is over. Others, however, commonly agree to stay with the agency and complete similar work after their service is complete.

In this case, it is important that you and the student discuss issues of liability, job obligations and any other changes that must be made now that the student is no longer a representative of CSULB. Organizations that did not previously have liability coverage for the student should remind her/him that they would no longer be covered in any way, in the event of an accident. Furthermore, if there is any change in position, the student should be notified before the end of the semester and their independent service begins.

Part Six: Conclusion

If you have any questions regarding anything that you have read in this handbook feel free to consult the CSULB Community Service Learning Center. For even more information, the following web-sites may be helpful:

- CSULB Community Service Learning Center
  - [http://www.csulb.edu/cs1c](http://www.csulb.edu/cs1c)

- California State University, Fresno
  - [http://www.csufresno.edu/scs](http://www.csufresno.edu/scs)

- Campus Compact
  - [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)

*Once again, welcome to Community Service Learning! Have a great semester!*