



## **Service-Learning Student Guide**

Welcome to this exciting opportunity to be engaged in service! Colleges and universities all over the nation and world are finding that students are learning far more through engaged service than just from books and lectures alone. Moreover, communities are equal beneficiaries when students and faculty apply their knowledge and skills in a public setting.

### **So what is service-learning?**

Service-learning is a teaching approach integrating academic instruction with community service that engages students in civic responsibility, critical and creative thinking, and structured reflection.

### **What is the difference between service-learning and community service?**

- Service-Learning combines what is learned in the classroom with real world experiences. The community becomes an extension of the classroom, and service-learning students are evaluated and assessed according to assigned learning objectives. Community service is volunteer work independent of strategic learning outcomes.
- Service-Learning uses community service as a vehicle for students to reach their academic goals, develop new skills, and consider future vocational options.

### **What are the benefits of service-learning?**

- Enhanced understanding and practical application of course material.
- Service-learning fosters an ethic of service and civic responsibility for future community leaders.
- Increased awareness of current societal issues as they relate to academic areas of interest.
- Increased perspective and understanding of other cultures.
- Enhanced critical thinking and communication skills.
- Opportunities to apply student learning to real life situations and develop tangible and transferable skills for future work.
- Developed networks in the community and opportunities to explore career options.

### **How do I do it?**

#### **1. REQUIRED: Read carefully and sign the Waiver of Liability Form.**

#### **2. Select a project or an organization**

In some cases you will be presented with several options for service. Consider your schedule and choose the organization/agency that fits your schedule and learning objectives best.

#### **3. Initiate contact**

Connect with the assigned agency representative as provided by the Service-Learning Coordinator either by phone or at the Service-Learning Fair.

#### **4. Fill out the Service-Learning Program Learning Agreement**

- You are responsible for filling out the entire contract. Before the initial meeting with the organization, identify the course learning objectives with the help of your professor.
- How you fill out the Agency Objectives and/or Activities section will depend on your placement and purpose for being there. You will need to discuss these objectives with the organization upon your first visit to ensure clarity in communication and identify the reciprocal nature of this partnership.
- Think about what you hope to learn during your service-learning experience. Learning objectives can be related to knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values.

#### **5. Serve! – Do your best! You can make a significant contribution to our community.**

#### **6. Reflect – Real learning happens when “doing” and “reflecting” occur.**

#### **7. Turn in the completed Service-Learning Contract to your professor**

#### **8. REQUIRED: Fill out the evaluation form**



The Service-Learning Coordinator will distribute these forms to you in class two weeks before the end of the semester. These forms help us improve the program for future classes.

**Tips for Success:**

- Get involved. Invest yourself in your service experience. Ask questions, listen and learn.
- Set a regular schedule and stick to it. Be realistic about what you can accomplish.
- Don't postpone your service experience for the end of the semester. You only put a bigger burden on the community agency, and you diminish the opportunity for extensive learning from the experience.
- Be flexible and patient. Give yourself time to adapt to your surroundings and role in the community.
- Maintain clear communication and honor your commitments with the community agency. If you must cancel a commitment, call the appropriate person at least 24 hours in advance. If you are not able to reach the contact person in the agency, contact Jacob Spaun for help.
- Avoid risks.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of clients. Respect their cultural values and seek to develop relationships that transcend superficial encounters.
- This is not a lab project. Offer community members your respect and appreciation at all times.
- Reflection is a key ingredient for transforming service experiences into learning. Take time to reflect on your expectations, experience, notable discrepancies, and societal influences and impact. Your professor will provide further guidelines for reflection.

**Volunteers Never:**

- Offer their home as shelter, or give their phone number or address to those with whom they are working, leave personal belongings where others may be tempted to take them, wear much jewelry, or exchange money with a client. Avoid wearing provocative clothing.
- Volunteers should never give a client a ride in a personal vehicle unless authorized to do so.

**Transportation:**

- We recommend you carpool or take public transportation if at all possible.
- In order to drive yourself to a site, you must have a valid Driver's License, car insurance, and should obey all traffic laws.
- If you're having trouble finding transportation, ask the Service-Learning Coordinator or your professor about the option of using a school vehicle.

**What do you do if you encounter problems during your service-learning experience?**

- If possible, talk with the community organization representative, your professor or the Service-Learning Coordinator right away.
- When there is an on-site emergency, talk with the on-site supervisor. If you have a medical emergency, contact the Whitworth Health Center (777-3259).

**Contact Information:**

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