



Service Learning

STUDENT GUIDE

“There is no cause half
so sacred as the cause of
a people. There is no idea
so uplifting as the idea of
the service of humanity.”

Woodrow Wilson

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What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a program that integrates community service with what you are learning in class. Students work with their instructor and the Service Learning Coordinator to find meaningful volunteer opportunities in the community.

Through Service Learning, you have the opportunity to apply concepts from your coursework, explore possible career choices and earn valuable work experience. You will gain an increased awareness of community needs and work to address those needs.

How does it work?

The Service Learning Process

1. Become Informed

Read your syllabus. Your instructor has included a Service Learning component and provided specific guidelines for your course. Discuss with your instructor what he/she would like you to learn and achieve through your service.

2. Select a Community Agency

Selecting the right agency is an important step to ensuring a positive experience. Consult your instructor for suggestions and/or contact the Service Learning Coordinator. The coordinator has numerous listings available for review and is eager to answer questions and offer suggestions.

Things to consider in selecting an agency:

- What type of service will compliment your course subject?
- Is there a certain topic or issue that you would like to learn more about?
- Is there a certain population that you would like to serve (children, seniors, homeless)?
- Do you have any special interests, talents or strengths that you would like to share?

3. Make Contact

Once you have selected a few possibilities, make contact. Call the volunteer coordinator and introduce yourself as a Citrus College student. Tell them that you are interested in volunteer opportunities and let them know how many hours you plan on serving. It is also a good idea to ask about agency requirements (some agencies require a minimum time commitment, while others may ask for a TB test or a background check). If it seems like it is a good match, schedule an interview. If not, try another agency.

4. Interview

When meeting with the agency representative, be sure to bring your agency agreement form (the white form in your packet). Discuss what type of service will be done. Whatever the activity, it should be related to classroom learning. Because this is an educational program, we ask that students are involved in meaningful learning activities and not clerical or janitorial tasks. List your duties on the agency agreement form and have the representative sign it. Use the interview time as an opportunity to learn more about the agency and their services.

Integration

- Has this experience helped you to integrate knowledge gained in the classroom?
- Could you see any relevance for any of the theories/applications you learned in the classroom?
- How has this experience changed what you thought about community agencies?
- What specific problems did you encounter?
- How has your experience affected your educational goals?
- Were there conflicts between your service and the learning objectives?
- How were you perceived by those you served?

Service Learning Paper

Are you writing a Service Learning paper for your class? Perhaps you are required to give an oral presentation. Here is a simple outline to get you started on your project. Check with your instructor for specific guidelines.

Description

- What were your duties and responsibilities?
- How was your work situation and environment?
- What are the goals of the agency?
- What skills did you acquire? What skills did you improve?
- How did the Service Learning experience evolve and change during the semester?

Evaluation

- Why did you choose community service?
- What impact do you feel you had on the community?
- What did you learn from the experience?
- What did you learn about the agency?
- What did you learn about yourself - strengths and limitations?
- How could you improve the quality of your service?
- If you were in charge of the agency, what would you do to improve it?
- Would you have the volunteers do anything different?
- Would you treat them differently?
- Did you learn anything about your career goals and objectives?

5. Serve

Serve your assigned service. Remember to treat your community service as though it were a job. Be sure to arrive on time, dress properly and call your supervisor if you are unable to attend or will be late. Enjoy your time at the agency. It is a great opportunity to learn new things, meet new people, and explore different possibilities.

6. Communicate

Communication is essential to the learning process. Make sure you are talking regularly with the instructor about your experience. In this way, your instructor can help apply your service experience to the course curriculum and you can receive maximum educational benefit. Communicate with the agency as well. Make sure they are helping to make this a positive learning experience. If you don't remind them of your goals, it is easy for them to forget to help you achieve them.

7. Reflect

Take time to think about your service experiences. What did you observe? Who did you meet? What did you do? What did you learn about the agency and the people they serve? Keep a journal of your experiences or write field notes (your instructor will provide reflection guidelines for the course). The reflection process may also include other activities such as classroom discussions and oral presentations.

Helpful Hints...

Suggestions for a Successful Service Learning Experience

1. Contact the Service Learning Coordinator whenever you need help or guidance. The coordinator can help you find the right placement and share relevant agency information. If you have any problems or difficulties, do not hesitate to call.
2. Get started early. Some agencies only accept a few students at a time, so it is a good idea not to procrastinate. An early start also gives you plenty of time to complete your project.
3. If contacting an agency representative becomes too challenging, try another agency. Do not use too much time trying to get a placement set up.
4. Communicate effectively with agency personnel. They are there to support you and help you have a positive experience. It's a good idea to show your supervisor the course syllabus so they can accommodate your learning needs.
5. If you feel that you have done a great job in your service, ask your supervisor for a recommendation for future job or internship possibilities.
6. If your service requires a TB test, you can go to Health Services (on campus) and get one for free. You must tell them that you are a Service Learning student. Any other agency requirements such as fingerprinting and background checks should be paid for by the agency.

7. Your relationship with your community partner doesn't need to end with the completion of your service contract! You might have enjoyed the volunteer work to the extent that you will want to continue at the agency you have selected.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Rights:

1. To be treated as a co-worker.
2. To be carefully interviewed and assigned.
3. To receive sufficient information about agency organization, policy, people, programs and activities.
4. To receive orientation, training, and ongoing supervision for the assigned task.
5. To have the ability to pursue leadership roles.
6. To perform meaningful and satisfying work.
7. To be evaluated and receive letters of recommendation based on service completed.

As a volunteer, the student has certain responsibilities to the agency and clients they serve. These responsibilities are as follows:

Responsibilities:

1. To be open and honest at all times.
2. To understand commitments and tasks and fulfill them.
3. To be reliable. Students must call their supervisor if they know they will be absent or tardy.
4. To tell agency staff their personal or course objectives.
5. To respect confidentiality.
6. To enter into service with enthusiasm and commitment.
7. To serve as ambassadors of goodwill for the project.
8. To complete all the necessary service learning forms and paperwork.