

# Service Learning

## Community Partner Guide



As a Community Partner, you play an essential role as co-educator in our students' Service Learning classes. We value our collaborations with you and look forward to our continued relationship.

### What is Service Learning?

Service learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community.

—*Campus Compact (Compact.org)*

### How Do Students Benefit from Service Learning?

**Learning outcomes**—deeper understanding of course material, positive impact on student engagement, retention, and graduation rates

**Personal outcomes**—enhances leadership, collaboration, communication skills

**Social outcomes**—appreciation of diversity, cultural competence, empathy, civic engagement

“Although SL students and non-SL students had similar pre-college academic characteristics, **SL students were more successful while enrolled in college. They earned more credits, had a higher average college GPA, and they graduated at a significantly higher rate than did non-SL students, despite having greater financial need while enrolled.**”

—*The Relationship between Service-Learning and Degree Completion, Lockeman, Kelly S.; Pelco, Lynn E., Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, v20 n1 p18-30 Fall 2013*

### How Do Community Partners Benefit?

- By educating students about current issues that impact the community and inspiring the next generation of community leaders.
- Extra hands to support the important work you do.
- Developing relationships with CSUSM and other Community Partners.
- Increasing visibility of your organization on campus and in the community.
- Energy and enthusiasm of student volunteers who may be inspired by your mission and carry it forward in their future lives and careers.
- College students can become positive role models for organizations working with underserved youths.
- Creating connections with students for long-term volunteering or hiring.
- Opportunities for your organization to collaborate in faculty research.

### Who Are Our Students?

CSUSM is proud to serve a diverse population of students. Understanding their characteristics can help you better integrate them into your organization. Following are some trends from fall 2019 enrollment data.

- About 60% of our students are female and 40% male.
- 47% identify as Hispanic/Latinx, 27% as white, 8.7% as Asian, 3% as Black.
- Approximately 11% are military-connected students.
- 31% are first-generation college students in their family.

- The average age is 22.7, though ages can range from 17 to mid-sixties.
- Our students are extremely busy! Many hold full-time or part-time jobs. Others juggle school with work and parenting.

## Developing Partnerships with Faculty

Strong ties with faculty members help maintain a steady flow of students to your organization from one semester to the next. As co-educators, you play a key role in student learning.

### How to promote successful partnerships with faculty:

1. Understand the **learning objectives** of the course and how your organization fits in. You can ask faculty members for a copy of their syllabus and invite them to tour your site.
2. Discuss **what students will do at the site** to ensure a connection between service and learning. A faculty member may prefer students to focus on particular tasks. For example, students in a Spanish class want to use their language skills; students in an education class want experience tutoring children, etc.
3. Find out **the number of Service Learning hours** the professor is requiring for the semester. Based on that, determine about **how many students your organization can accept**. If you accept too many, students may complain that they cannot find an open slot in the schedule or feel they have nothing to do at the site.
4. At the beginning of the semester, have a representative from your organization **visit your professors' classes** (contact [servicelearning@csusm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@csusm.edu) for campus parking passes). During the class visit, give a quick overview to the students, covering the following points:
  - **Big picture:** What is your organization's mission and what population(s) do you serve?
  - **Tasks:** What will Service Learning students do at your site and how does it connect to the class?
  - **Onboarding:** What are the pre-service requirements, such as background check and orientation?
  - **Scheduling:** What days/times are available for students to work? How will they schedule their shifts? Our students are busy and prefer organizations with flexible scheduling. Even better, allow students to schedule shifts online.
  - **Include visuals:** Some organizations show photos or a brief promotional video of their organization to get students excited about the opportunity.
5. Keep in touch! During the semester, communicate any concerns about students or praise for the excellent work of particular students to faculty or to our office ([servicelearning@csusm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@csusm.edu)).
6. After the semester, reach out to faculty for a debrief. If it was a good match, make plans to partner with them next semester. Consider nominating a student for our annual [Service Learning award](#).

## Site Supervisor/Contact Person

When a student requests placement at your site, an email is sent to the contact we have listed in our database to approve the request (or not). This person will also receive our end of service verification of student hours and an end of semester evaluation from our office. Be sure to update the site supervisor in our database as needed so that this information goes to the correct person by contacting the Office of Internships and Service Learning at [servicelearning@csusm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@csusm.edu) or 760.750.4055.

## Orienting Students to your Site

Before students begin volunteering, educate them about your organization's mission, policies and procedures to ensure a smooth start.

### *Orientation Checklist*

- ✓ **Big picture:** Orient students on the organization's history, mission, and goals. Describe the strengths and challenges of the population(s) you serve along with demographic information. Explain what community issues your organization addresses and what needs you fill. Share stories about the positive impact your organization is making.
- ✓ **Policies:** Explain the policies for dress code, use of cellphones, restrictions on photos, confidentiality of clients, etc. Also explain **why** these policies are important.
- ✓ **Onboarding requirements:** State the pre-service requirements, like volunteer forms, background check, TB test, Live Scan, etc. If possible, suggest low-cost options for these requirements.
- ✓ **First day information:** Tell students exactly where to report, including address, floor, room number and name of staff to report to. Include information on where to park, closest public transit stop, and how to enter the site (like sign-in or buzzer at the door).
- ✓ **Contact information:** Tell students how to schedule shifts, whom to contact in case they need to cancel or change a shift, and who signs off on student hours.
- ✓ **Necessities:** Give a tour of the site. Orient students on where to find things they may need, such as restrooms, water, refrigerator, and where to store purses or backpacks.
- ✓ **Safety:** Review safety policies, potential risks, location of emergency exits and emergency procedures.
- ✓ **Troubleshooting:** Whom should students contact if they have a problem onsite or experience harassment?

## Training Students

Students can be nervous about stepping outside their comfort zone and are often reluctant to ask questions, even when they are confused. Instead, they may leave feeling frustrated and complain to professors that they were "poorly trained" and that the staff was "unhelpful." For these reasons, training should be an important first step, and it should be ongoing, especially when students start their Service Learning work.

### *Suggestions for Training*

- Students are often anxious about their first shift. Let staff members know when new students are coming so they can be greeted with warmth and enthusiasm.
- Ask students if they have special skills and, if possible, align their tasks with these.
- Provide students with a handbook or job descriptions of various tasks at the site and/or written instructions detailing the work they will do.
- For their first shift, have students shadow an experienced volunteer.
- When students return for subsequent shifts, make sure they understand their tasks. Don't assume they remember from last time.

- As you teach them, explain **why** these tasks are important to the organization. Help them see the big picture.
- If possible, make connections between student work onsite and their class learning.
- Point out additional skills students are learning at the site, such as leadership, collaboration, along with site-specific skills such as tutoring children.
- Training should be ongoing. Encourage students to ask questions and demonstrate their understanding. Schedule brief check-in meetings with them on a regular basis.

## Finding More Students/Adding Opportunities to your Site

If you are already an approved Community Partner with an active University Community Partner Agreement and want to add another opportunity, please complete the [New Opportunity form](#) on our website. Contact us directly to update contact information in our database: [servicelearning@csusm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@csusm.edu) or 760.750.4055.

If you have a particular need for students, let us know. Although our office does not directly place students at sites, we can help connect you with relevant faculty in order to create those opportunities.

## Additional tips

- Show enthusiasm for good student work and let them know they are appreciated, maybe with a small gift or certificate.
- The number one barrier to completing Service Learning hours, according to students, is fitting it into their very busy schedule. Once they are at your site, give them meaningful work to do and help them see the big picture. We don't want them to think of this as wasted time.
- At the end of the semester, ask students for feedback about their experience. They may have ideas on how to make it easier for future volunteers.
- Be flexible about how students can participate. If a student has a challenge that prevents them from serving on-site, can they do some work remotely, such as research, translation, data collection, etc.?
- Share volunteer success stories with us and on your social media.

## Useful Links

CSUSM Office of Service Learning:

- [Service Learning](#)
- [For Community Partners](#)
- [New Service Learning Opportunity Form](#)
- [Service Learning Events](#)