

Getting Started with Service Learning

Congratulations on adding Service Learning to your class!

By taking education outside the walls of the classroom, students learn course concepts while growing skills in leadership, self-confidence and civic engagement.

As Faculty Director of Service Learning, I am here to support you as you plan and implement your Service Learning courses. Please contact me with any questions along the way.

Carol Cujec
Craven 6112
ccujec@csusm.edu

Here is an outline of the process to get you started—

Plan your course

- Consider what type of service you want and how that service will be tied to course learning objectives.
- How many hours will you require? (We recommend at least 15-20 per semester.)
- If you are adding Service Learning to a class you have taught before, what assignments will you remove from your syllabus to “make room” for Service Learning and reflection assignments?

Find Community Partners

Begin making connections with community partners 1-2 months before the start of the semester. Keep in mind that you may need to contact 15-20 sites to end up with a list of 5-10 partners that offer projects aligned with your course learning objectives. Use a spreadsheet or notebook to keep track of whom you have contacted and their response.

- Search for community partners in our Service Learning Database:
<https://app.calstates4.com/csusm/sites>
 - Under **Program**, choose Service Learning.
 - You can narrow your search by **Organization type** (education, healthcare, etc.), **City**, or **Keyword**.
 - Read the description of various organizations and click on their websites to learn more.
- If a community partner looks promising, email/phone them using the contact information in the database. Inquire about the projects they envision for your students and the requirements for working there. (Sites that require extensive training or a 6-month commitment, for example, may not be practical for your students.)

Sample first contact email:

Dear _____,

My name is Professor _____ and I am looking for Service Learning opportunities for my students for _____ semester.

I am planning to include a XX-hour Service Learning component in my _____ class. Because my course focuses on _____, I would like students to get hands-on experience with _____. (Explain why you see them as a potential match for your course.)

Would your organization have projects that my students could help with? If so, please give me an idea of the work they would do and how many students you could use.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name

Phone

- Consider the number of students in your class(es) and partner with enough organizations to offer all your students a spot. Keep in mind that students will have limited time in their schedules and may not want to travel long distances, so offer a variety of locations and options.
- To accommodate students with limited or no transportation, consider including a few on-campus organizations among your sites (type CSUSM in the database under **Site name**).

Designate your Course as Service Learning

- Courses can be designated by your Administrative Coordinator as “Service Learning” when the course is initially created. Faculty may also self-designate their course as Service Learning by completing this brief online form:
<https://www.csusm.edu/servicelearning/sldesignationreq.html>

Link Service to Learning Objectives Through Reflection Activities

- Student reflections are one of the best ways to help students link their service to course concepts. We recommend that the reflection process be ongoing throughout the semester—pre-service, during service, post-service—and that reflection topics challenge students to examine new learnings along with changes in their perspective throughout.
- Reflections can take many forms: in-class discussions, journals, presentations, theory application papers, case studies, videos, letters to the editor, multimedia brochures, blogs, etc.
- According to the University of Minnesota Center for Community-Engaged Learning,

As students participate in a service-learning class and do the related community work, they should ask themselves these questions: What? So What? Now What? The reflection process begins with a defining and sharing of the "What" of the student's experience, and follows a continuous cycle towards "So What?" and "Now What?"

*–**What?** Report the facts and events of an experience, objectively.*

–**So What?** Analyze the experience.

–**Now What?** Consider the future impact of the experience on you and the community.

(<http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html>)

Orient Students at the Start of the Semester

- At the beginning of the semester, invite a representative from the Office of Internships and Service Learning to your class to help students understand how to navigate the database and how to apply for opportunities with community partners.

Request a classroom presentation at this link:

<https://www.csusm.edu/servicelearning/classroompresentation.html>

- If possible, invite representatives from your chosen community partners to your class. (Our office can provide parking passes.) Ask them to briefly describe their organization, the work the students would do there, and how students can apply.
- Once students have found an appropriate community partner (and received confirmation from that community partner that there is a spot for them), students must return to the [Service Learning database](#) and make their official placement at that site by completing a brief online form.

Wrapping up—How Did It Go?

- We love hearing student success stories, so please share those with us. You can even nominate one of your students for our annual **Outstanding Service Learning Student Award**.
- We also want to hear about problems or concerns we can assist with. Share those as well.

Thank you for providing students with opportunities to serve, learn and grow!

Useful links:

Campus Compact has a resource page with [sample Service Learning Syllabi](#) in all disciplines.

Here is a useful [Service Learning Reflection Toolkit](#) compiled by Miami Dade College.