

## **Student Engagement in Service-Learning**

### **What is Service-Learning?**

Barbara Jacoby defines service-learning as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning.” Jacoby also notes the critical nature of the hyphen in service-learning as it “symbolizes the symbiotic relationship between service and learning” (Service-Learning in Today’s Higher Education, 1996).

In addition to this definition, we also recognize the National Society for Experiential Education’s Eight Principles of Good Practice for Experiential Learning Activities:

1. Intention
2. Preparedness and Planning
3. Authenticity
4. Reflection
5. Orientation and Training
6. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement
7. Assessment and Evaluation
8. Acknowledgment

### **Service-Learning at CSB/SJU**

Service-Learning is one program located in the office of Experiential Learning and Community Engagement (ELCE). The Office of Experiential Learning & Community Engagement supports programs that empower CSB/SJU students to integrate and apply knowledge and theory gained in the classroom setting to a hands on learning environment, such that a deeper understanding is gained and demonstrated through clear learning outcomes. The office brings together students, faculty members, businesses, non-profit organizations and government partners to promote access to mutually beneficial partnerships through experiential learning opportunities.

In the Fall of 2010, the Curriculum Committee approved service-learning projects that meet the expectations set forth for fulfilling the experiential learning requirement. As such, all service-learning courses must strive to meet the following two learning goals:

Learning Goal 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from this course (and possibly previous courses) through their service-learning projects.

Learning Goal 2: Students will demonstrate specific ways (including written reflection) in which the service-learning project deepens their understanding of the knowledge and skills gained through traditional course work.

As a part of these goals, the Service-Learning Program has outlined the following requirements for all service-learning courses:

1. Students must complete a minimum of 20 hours of service throughout the semester
2. Additional learning goals and objectives should be outlined by the faculty member that connect service-learning to course content
3. At least one piece of written reflection must be required of all students participating
4. Partnerships between students and community must be mutually beneficial and contribute to the greater good of the community
5. Service-Learning should be integrated into classroom learning through discussion, content, activities, etc. It should not be included as an “add on” component in a course.

### **The Experiential Learning (EL) Designation**

As part of the common curriculum, all students are required to complete a course with an experiential learning designation. Service-Learning is one way to earn this designation. If you have questions about this designation or how it fits into your academic plan, we encourage you to contact academic advising.

To earn this designation, students must meet the minimum requirements of the service-learning experience and successfully pass the course in which they are enrolled. Students who meet these guidelines will be submitted to the registrar to earn the EL designation.

### **The Service-Learning Process**

The Service-Learning program strives to be as helpful as possible in helping students navigate the process of service-learning. To do this, we take the following steps:

1. Initial Presentation-A member of the Service-Learning program will visit each class to provide an overview of service-learning, hand out paperwork, and share expectations. At this visit students will receive a list of partners that have been approved for their course as well as their contract and other resource information.
2. Service-Learning Fair-All students participating in service-learning who have a choice of community partner are invited to attend the service-learning fair. This fair occurs approximately the second week of the semester and allows students the opportunity to meet with and hear from the partners with whom they can work. After meeting with partners and selecting their top three choices, students should complete their contract and turn it in at the fair. Students unable to attend the fair should contact the Service-Learning program for additional guidance.
3. Site Partnerships-Students will be informed of their approved site partnership the same evening as the fair. While we will make every attempt to partner students with their first choice, the Service-Learning program must consider a variety of factors including schedule availability, transportation, and partner preference and availability. **No spots will be held for students who do not turn in their contracts by the end of the fair and**

**we cannot guarantee that the remaining sites will fit the scheduling and transportation needs of the student.**

4. Orientation and Paperwork-Once students have received a confirmed site partnership, they should schedule their orientation with their partner organization. Some sites will schedule large group orientations ahead of time while others will provide an individual orientation. Students should check the information given during the orientation to determine which option applies to their site. **It is the responsibility of the student to schedule their orientation within one week of partnering with their site.** Students may be asked to complete additional volunteer paperwork and a background check before they begin at their site. Some background checks may require an additional fee. Students with concerns about this fee should contact the Service-Learning Coordinator.
5. Getting Started-Once students have scheduled and attended their orientation, they should work with their site supervisor to determine a schedule for the semester. Schedules can be set up in any way that is mutually beneficial for the partner and the student. We recommend that students schedule their service in advance at consistent times, spend approximately 2-3.5 hours per visit, and serve consistently over the course of the entire semester.
6. Recording Hours-To receive credit for the hours that students are working at their site, they must report hours to the service-learning program (or in some cases to their faculty member). This is typically done through posts in canvas and students should check with their academic coordinator to determine the exact process for their course. Please note that most sites will also ask students to track their hours with the site. These hours are used to verify the hour's students report to service-learning and should be done separately per the instructions of the community partner.
7. Reflection-Reflection is an essential component of the service-learning experience and helps to ensure that connections between classroom and community work are being made. We encourage you to check with you faculty member or service-learning coordinator to learn more about how reflection will be implemented in your course.
8. Ending the Semester-Students are done with their service-learning project after they have met the minimum requirement for their course as well as the minimum guidelines set forth by their community partner. The service-learning program will share a completed community partner evaluation with the student once it is received. Any concerns or discrepancies on this evaluation should be followed up on with the community partner.

### **Community Partners**

The Service-Learning program recognizes community partners as co-educators in the service-learning experience. Many of our partners have been hosting CSB/SJU students for decades and consistently provide high-quality learning experiences for students. In order to ensure the best possible experience for students, the Service-Learning program and faculty will seek out community partnerships that fit the learning goals specific to each course. These partnerships

require intentional reflection and are designed to be mutually beneficial for both the student and the community partner.

Occasionally, a student may choose to propose an alternate partner for their service-learning project. This can be done by submitting the following information to the Service-Learning program:

1. Confirmation from the faculty member that they approve the alternate partner
2. Contact information (including email) of the site supervisor
3. Confirmation from the site supervisor that they are willing to meet the requirements of a community partner (see Community Partner page)

### **Switching Sites**

On rare occasion, a student may need to switch to a new site. If a student believes this is necessary, they must meet with the service-learning coordinator and receive faculty approval for the switch. Students must also complete a site switch form (available from the service-learning coordinator) and notify their previous site of the change. Please note that switching sites during the semester is a last resort and will be approved only when absolutely necessary.

### **Transportation**

Transportation is the greatest challenge and barrier faced by the Service-Learning Program. Currently, we have two options for transportation for students:

- The use of a personal vehicle or car pool with a friend or class mate
- The ELCE mini-bus

The ELCE mini-bus is available to all service-learning students at no cost and is run and operated by a student employee bus drivers. The bus runs three routes in the afternoon/evening on Monday-Thursday and is able to go to most service-learning sites in the St. Joseph, Waite Park, and St. Cloud areas. Students must sign up in advance to ride the mini-bus. The Service-Learning office is happy to provide more information regarding the bus route, times, and availability upon request and will do their best to ensure accessible options for every class.

As we continue to look at ways to ensure that experiential learning opportunities are available for all students, we encourage you to contact administration and Metro Transit to advocate for transportation for CSB/SJU students.

### **Mandated Reporting**

Students completing service-learning are legally considered mandated reporters. Students are required to report suspicion of neglect/abuse to site supervisor immediately.

Students Working with Children: Student is required to contact Angie Schmidt Whitney, Director of ELCE and CSB/SJU member of the Child Protection Report Team at (320) 363-55117

or [awhitney@csbsju.edu](mailto:awhitney@csbsju.edu) to report suspected child abuse/neglect within 72 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Angie will assist student in determining next steps. Student may contact Stearns County Human Services at (320) 656-6000, if Angie is unavailable within the 72 hour timeframe; however, student is still required to report incident to Angie as soon as possible. For additional information, please review the CSB/SJU policy on Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, available online at: <http://www.csbsju.edu/human-rights/child-protection/reporting-suspected-child-abuse>. Please contact Angie as soon as possible to follow proper protocol, in accordance with HIPAA.

**Students Working with Vulnerable Adults:** Student should report any suspected abuse or neglect to his/her site supervisor immediately. Please contact Angie as soon as possible to follow proper protocol, in accordance with HIPAA.

### **Communication**

The service-learning program is committed to providing students with the resources and support necessary to be successful in their service-learning project. Communication will primarily occur via campus email address. Students are responsible for ensuring that their email is working correctly and that they are checking for messages on a regular basis. Any concerns regarding technology should be shared with IT services.

Additionally, the Service-Learning Program expects active, professional communication from the student. Issues and concerns cannot be addressed unless we are made aware of them. Students who do not utilize appropriate communication with the service-learning program and with their site supervisor may receive a point deduction or may not be able to continue with their service-learning project.

### **Expectations**

In order to ensure a positive experience for all involved in the service-learning experience, the Service-Learning Program has the following expectations for students:

- Students should employ respectful and responsible behavior at all times
- Students must actively communicate with their site, faculty member, and the service-learning office
- Students must be accountable to their site and uphold their commitment
- Students must dress appropriately for their site
- Students should limit technology use (including cell phones) when at their service-learning site

### **Service-Learning Language and Terminology**

- Academic Coordinator-Student employees in the ELCE office who are assigned to oversee specific service-learning courses.

- Community Partner-Organizations and programs that host service-learning students and serve as co-educators in the service-learning experience
- EL-Experiential Learning. Service-Learning is one form of experiential learning. This is also a graduation requirement for CSB/SJU students which is met through a successful service-learning experience.
- ELCE-Experiential Learning and Community Engagement. This is the office in which the service-learning program is housed. We also oversee academic internships, undergraduate research, the Bonner Leader Program, the Jackson Fellowship, Community Kitchen and other fellowship programs.
- Hyphen-The CSB/SJU Service-Learning program chooses to hyphenate the term “service-learning” to note the critical, symbiotic nature between service and learning.
- IP-Initial Presentation. The in-class presentation given at the beginning of the semester introducing service-learning to students.
- Partnership-The Service-Learning program uses this term to describe the relationship between the student and their site. We do not use the term “placement” as it does not indicate the active participation of the student in the process.
- Reciprocal Partnership-The service-learning program strives to achieve partnership that are beneficial to the student and the community to ensure a mutually beneficial experience.
- SL-Service-Learning

## **Contact**

For more information about integrating service-learning into your course, please contact Adia Zeman, Bonner/Service-Learning Coordinator at [amzeman@csbsju.edu](mailto:amzeman@csbsju.edu) or 320-363-5237.