

What Is Service-Learning?

Service-learning provides you, the student, with the unique opportunity to link what you are learning in class to the world outside of the university. The vehicle for doing this is community service; service to a community benefit organization (nonprofit or not-for-profit organization). Since you are using what you learn in class to help meet needs in the community, you are not the only one who benefits. Those served through your community activities also benefit greatly.

Regardless of your major, you will find that service-learning helps support classroom learning and provides an opportunity for hands-on experience that directly relates to your studies. You will learn the material you are studying better and in unique ways, while also having an opportunity to adopt and practice new skill sets. Service-learning puts “academics into action”, taking basic academic theory, facts and figures and bringing it to life through service to others.

“Volunteerism” and “Service-Learning” may have similarities, but they are not the same. Both do include an element of service to the community. However, service-learning has very intentional learning outcomes that are directly related to the academic content being studied in your class. Some service activities involve direct service, like tutoring, while others may take the form of research or some other indirect service. Furthermore, service-learning typically involves partnering with a community benefit organization, such as a nonprofit, school, government organization, or other not-for-profit community group.

Service-learning intentionally combines what you study in a class with service, improving both the *service* and *learning*. It also provides students with the opportunity to gain and practice professional skills.