

A Student's Guide to Successful Service-Learning

The Jan & Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning

Thomas Administration, Room 107 | (559) 278-7079 | <http://www.csufresno.edu/cesl>

Why Service-Learning?

So you're thinking about service-learning. Maybe it's because you have to do it for a class, or maybe it's part of a scholarship or internship program. Whatever the reason you've decided to get involved, the benefits are endless. Did you know that compared to students who do not take part in service activities, students involved in service-learning typically:

- Achieve better grades
- Have lower dropout rates
- Graduate at higher rates
- Show a greater interest in graduate studies
- Report higher levels of satisfaction with their undergraduate education and career choice

Service-learning experiences will also help you:

- Develop leadership skills, a sense of community, self-esteem, communication skills and an appreciation of diversity
- Explore potential careers
- Experience your chosen career field
- Develop professional skills and contacts
- Build your resume
- Put into practice the information you have learned in academic settings

Service-learning also helps the community by:

- Providing needed services (e.g., tutoring a child, building a home for a low-income family, helping those suffering with illnesses)
- Providing talents and knowledge to nonprofit organizations and community-based groups that could not otherwise afford those services
- Enabling service organizations to reach more people in need of help

Tips for Service-Learning Success

EXPECT...

- A worthwhile and challenging experience
- Orientation, training, and supervision
- Feedback and evaluation on your work performance
- Respect within the organization
- That your time, energy, and talents will be well utilized

BE SURE YOU...

- Obtain course credit for your service-learning
- Get help from your site supervisor when in doubt
- Abide by all requirements and guidelines
- Perform tasks to the best of your ability
- Provide feedback to your supervisor
- Don't take on more responsibility than you can handle
- Keep track of the time spent in service according to organization and university policy

KNOW...

- Who to contact if problems or emergencies arise
- How the service work relates to the course objectives



***Service-Learning
is a unique
“real world”
experience that
combines
academic
coursework with
meaningful
community service
activities and
critical reflection
on that service.***

The opportunity to serve the community enriched my life far more than I imagined. I donated my time and in return I gained knowledge, leadership skills, self-esteem, and great memories. Volunteering also helped me relate what I've learned in all my classes to the real world – it all ties together and makes sense now.
– Fresno State service-learning student

Tips for Service-Learning Success, continued



*What one has not
experienced one will never
understand in print.
-Isadora Duncan*

NEVER...

- Report to your site under the influence
- Give a client money or other personal belongings
- Engage in any type of business with clients
- Give a ride to a client or organization representative
- Engage in discriminating behaviors
- Engage in behavior that might be perceived as sexual with a client or organization representative

ALWAYS...

- Respect confidences entrusted to you
- Be open minded and respectful
- Be punctual and responsible
- Notify your supervisor if you will be late or absent
- Request an alternative site if you are not comfortable with your current placement

Choosing the Right Organization

Choosing the right organization for your service-learning experience is key to success! It is important that you research your options and select an agency whose mission aligns with your own interests and passions as well as your course of study and personal goals. Before deciding what type of service you'd like to do, think about the following questions:

- What are the course objectives for your service-learning class?
- What common jobs in your field of study?
- What are some social issues that are important to you?
- In your own history, where are some areas that you've received help?

The next step is to explore and research your options. Your instructor may have predetermined service sites already arranged. If not, use the answers to the above questions to guide you in choosing a service site. Compare the things that are important to you and your coursework to the values of the organization. The organization that is right for you will have similar values and visions for the community that you do, while providing you an opportunity to relate classroom theories to your service.

Where to Go for Help

The Jan and Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning at California State University, Fresno is always available to help make your service-learning experience more memorable, meaningful, and manageable.

Contact us

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*Service-learning students
provide the core of our
program's services. They
serve and learn while the
children in our program
gain excellent role models
and academic guidance.*

*-Don Romsa,
The SMILE Center*

