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# Service-Learning Program Community Partner Handbook

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*of* CALIFORNIA

# Community Partner Handbook

Service-Learning Program



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# What is Service-Learning?

## **Dominican University Mission:**

Dominican University of California educates and prepares students to be ethical leaders and socially responsible global citizens who incorporate the Dominican values of study, reflection, community, and service into their lives.

**Service-Learning** integrates meaningful community engagement with academic curriculum. Through partnerships with community organizations and schools, students have the opportunity to learn about the lives of others as well as the larger contexts and root causes of issues that ultimately impact the well-being of all.

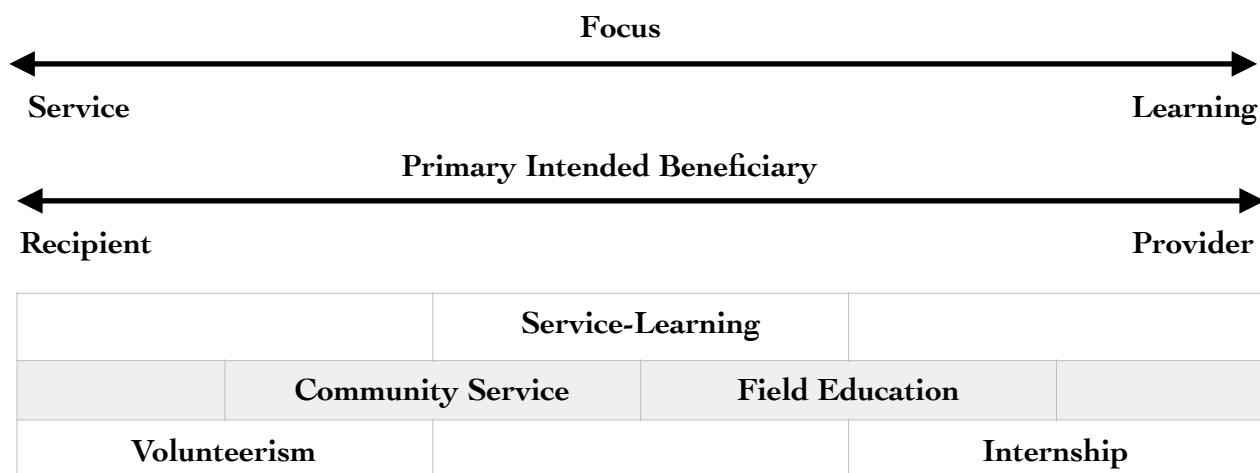
These ideals provide a strong foundation for service-learning, a pedagogy that creates intentional links between academic education and community experience where each strengthens the other. Service-learning engages students, faculty, staff, and community partners in collaborative and responsive action, dialogue, and reflection to address community-identified needs, meet learning goals, expand our perspectives, and increase civic participation. In this way service learning creates reciprocal benefits for all involved:

1. The University is able to live out its mission and enhance its role as a vital and active partner in the community;
2. Faculty are supported in connecting innovative teaching, research/scholarship, and community action;
3. The Marin County community benefits from the University resources (student power, library, educational opportunities, research networks) while contributing to the education of students; and
4. Students gain self-awareness, practical skills, career-related experience, insight into the relevance of academic knowledge, a deeper understanding of their own personal impact, and an enriched capacity to become effective community builders.

All Dominican Service-Learning Designated courses, regardless of departments and disciplines, share these same **Learning Outcomes**:

1. Act as socially responsible community members: Reflect and act on civic role and responsibilities as members of a larger, interconnected community and global society.
2. Apply learning in social context(s): Connect and contextualize concepts from academic field and/or interdisciplinary knowledge with community engagement.
3. Value community voice and knowledge: Recognize the assets (expertise, wisdom, and aspirations) of diverse communities in order to work as allies.
4. Reflect critically on root causes and systemic social/environmental issues: Analyze larger contexts and root causes of social issues, unjust structures, and power imbalances.

# How Service-Learning Differs from Other Types of Community Engagement



**Volunteerism** Activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient.

**Community Service** Activities that primarily focus on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have on recipients (e.g. providing food to the homeless during the holidays). The students receive some benefits by learning more about how their service makes a difference in the lives of the service recipients.

**Field Education** The engagement of students in co-curricular service opportunities that are related, but not fully integrated with their formal academic studies. Students perform the service as part of a program that is designed primarily to enhance students' understanding of a field of study, while also providing substantial emphasis on the service being provided.

**Internships** Service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study.

**Service-Learning** 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.

(Furco, Andrew. "Service-Learning: a Balanced Approach to Experiential Education" Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit. Campus Compact, 2000.)

# Check List for Partnership

Dominican's Service-Learning Designated Courses require that students work with their community partner for approximately 20-25 hours during the semester. The service hours must occur weekly and continuously throughout the semester, and the time spent constructively and productively towards the needs and goals of the community.

Ideally, a community partner has existing programs and infrastructure that can provide our SL students with opportunities to gain consistent (weekly) and extensive (semester-long) experiences participating and interacting with community members. In turn, SL faculty intentionally guide their students to reflect on and analyze their weekly community experiences to make connections with course content.

## General Considerations

**Service-Learning students are great if you are looking for:**

- Inquisitive minds that are open to learning more about the social or environmental issues your program is trying to address in our community
- People who can provide consistent (weekly) accompaniment for the span of a semester
- Engaged, energetic participants to interact, socialize, and build relationships with community members
- Assistance for programs with supervision of regular staff

**Service-Learning students are probably not suitable if you are looking for:**

- Self-supervised interns or substitutes for regular staff
- Office or secretarial help with little face-to-face interaction with the community
- Researchers to conduct community-based projects
- Skilled professionals to provide training or services
- Individuals with flexible hours or more than 2-3 hours per week

**Community Partners are encouraged (not required) to attend the following events:**

- 1) SL Student Orientation in the beginning of each semester
- 2) Dominican-sponsored public education programs
- 3) SL Program-organized workshops
- 4) Community Partner Luncheon (we try to do it at least once each semester)
- 5) Invitation as guest speakers for SL classes
- 6) SL Students Symposium at the end of each semester

## Additional Considerations

- 1) Do you have **existing programs** (usually volunteering opportunities) that already provide the weekly/semester-long structure?

Please list the programs/projects and provide brief descriptions for each.

- 2) Is there **designated staff supervisor(s)** onsite to serve as the main contact person, and verify their service hours, and support their learning as co-educator?

Who will be the designated contact person/supervisor?

How many SL students can this contact person realistically supervise (without adding significant burdens to their existing workload)?

- 3) Do the programs/projects you have in mind offer SL students **frequent opportunities to interact** with and talk to community members/your clients?

- 4) Will the programs/projects you have in mind require **specific organizational, professional, or language skills**? If so, please list them here:

- 5) Will the programs/projects you have in mind require **extensive training** (more than 4 hours) or **matching process**? Please list and briefly describe.

- 6) Any other requirements?

# Service-Learning Student Guidelines

Dominican strives to educate students to be conscientious global citizens. Service-Learning program provides guidelines for how SL students are expected to behave in their community engagement. Community partners, as co-educators, should clearly communicate to our students the organization's rules and policies, as well as any cultural and community-specific expectations and etiquette that SL students should observe while they are in the community. Training/orientation is a great time to explain expectations and rules to SL students.

## Dominican Service-Learning Student Guidelines

(Included in all SL-designated course syllabi)

As a Service-Learning course, participation in class and with the community partner is essential. These components are integral and non-duplicable. The course is designed around community engagement and it is the central assignment. Community partners provide students with vital opportunities to work closely with community members and experience programs and services that the organizations provide. Our partners give their time and resources because they believe in the learning experience involved. Dominican students are there to learn and support the mission of the school or organization. Students are joining a community and building trust requires openness to new perspectives. It will also call for empathy, some courage, and cultural humility. Treat this as an educational and professional opportunity (students can add the experience to their résumé, receive letters of recommendation, students have also gone on to work for the partner). Students should prepare to:

- Be punctual on shifts you sign up for. Communicate in advance with the designated point person for your community partner if you must miss/reschedule a shift.
- Dress appropriately and address people with respect.
- Follow all rules and codes of conduct on site.
- Treat the community partner staff as you would a supervisor in a professional setting. He/she will evaluate student engagement with their organization.
- If you don't know what to do, ask. If you have a concern be pro-active.
- Students are ambassadors of Dominican values. Promoting social justice is much more than looking for shortcomings; it also includes deep understanding of the resources, power dynamics, and needs of the community on all levels.

**SL Community Partner Semester Commitment:** Please note that this service requirement is built into the class load and does not reflect dedicated student hours over and above the expectations of a 3 or 6 unit course. The hour requirement for student work with community partners serves as an indicator that this experience is meant to be sustained developed over the course of the semester. The final total hours may vary based on specific partnership opportunity and agreement, but this commitment cannot be terminated at any point in the semester based on having completed a certain number of hours.

**Community Partner Accountability:** Students are required to work with their community partner for **approximately 20-25 hours during the semester**. The service hours must occur **weekly and continuously** throughout the semester, and the time spent **constructively and productively** towards the needs and goals of the community. If student needs to miss a shift, please do your best to reschedule for another time in the same week. It is **not acceptable** to schedule long shifts of service for only a few times. The community partners are aware of this policy, and the supervisor/coordinator will evaluate individual student engagement.





## GivePulse: Tracking Student Hours and More

GivePulse is the online platform Dominican SL Program uses to manage students' community engagement. It is centralized information and student reflections. The following is a list of the key functions of Dominican's current use of GivePulse, and how community partners are involved in the process:

- 1) **Listing of Service-Learning Opportunities:** All service-learning opportunities offered by our community partners are listed on GivePulse. In each listing, there is a brief description of the community partner's organization and program, contact information, available positions and shifts, as well as any special requirements. We verify this information with our community partners before each semester to make sure that our information is up to date. Students enrolled in each SL-designated courses access their course page on GivePulse, and select among the SL opportunities specifically selected to match best with their course contents. \*Please note that we do not post open listings for non-SL volunteers.
- 2) **Tracking Student Hours:** Dominican SL students are automatically enrolled in GivePulse when they enrolled into any SL-designated course. Most of our faculty require their students to log their weekly community hours into GivePulse. Unless the community partner opts to not participate, usually we set up the community supervisors to receive emails from GivePulse to verify the student hours. It is a very simple process of clicking on a button embedded within the email for the supervisor to verify that the student had truthfully recorded their hours.
- 3) **Reading Student Reflections:** As students log in their weekly hours in GivePulse, they can also input their reflections on the experience. Community supervisors will receive these student reflections, along with the logged hours, again, directly in your email inbox. Community supervisors can also respond to the student reflections through link in the email.
- 4) **Contacting Students:** When logged into GivePulse, community supervisor can email students (only the ones working with you in the current semester) through GivePulse.
- 5) **Building Your Own Management Platform:** Interested community partners who don't already have a management platform can also consider building your own platform on GivePulse to track, connect, and communicate.

# Semester-End Evaluation

At the end of the semester, individual faculty might require their students to attain a final evaluation from their community supervisor. The evaluation form is standardized across service-learning courses, but is collected by faculty members (most do) who include community partner evaluations as part of the students' final grades. Students should provide the form to their community supervisors if required by their courses, and students are responsible for submitting completed evaluations to their faculty members.

## Supervisor Final Evaluation of Dominican University of California (DUC) Student

Date:

Name of Supervisor completing this Evaluation:

Name of Student:

1. Was the DUC student consistent and communicative in regards to scheduling/logistics and any instructions/directions you may have given?

2. Did the DUC student make an effort to address and overcome any initial challenges? Were there any challenges that s/he did not fully address or overcome?

3. Did the student demonstrate an understanding of your organization's mission and the social/economic/environmental issues it addresses?

4. What were the DUC student's strengths and what were areas for improvement (if any)?

5. Other comments?

Supervisor Rating of Student:

| <u>Disengaged</u> |   | <u>Engaged</u> |   | <u>Fully Engaged</u> |
|-------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------------|
| 1                 | 2 | 3              | 4 | 5                    |

# Contacts and More Information

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**Medium:** <https://medium.com/service-learning-program>