Welcome to the Service Learning & Volunteer Center!

This handbook is designed to help faculty members better understand the service learning program at MiraCosta College. Instructors play a critical role in the service learning process by thoughtfully constructing community based assignments that promote student learning outcomes and civic engagement.

As you consider incorporating service into your courses, please remember that our staff members are available to support your efforts from initial planning to project assessment. Whether you are fairly new to teaching or a seasoned educator, take a moment to reflect upon your teaching practices and how your students might benefit from real world learning opportunities.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Service Learning and Volunteer Center is to support and promote student success and student engagement through curricular and co-curricular community service. The center facilitates applied learning opportunities that enhance student learning while increasing personal civic responsibility, community awareness, personal growth, and cultural competency.

President's Honor Roll Recipient

Program Information:

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A distinction awarded from the highest levels of government which recognizes an institution's leadership in building a culture of service and civic engagement on campuses and in the nation.

What is Service Learning?

Service learning is a form of experiential education that partners academics with community service. It is an effective teaching strategy that is widely used in higher education. In 2014, the American Association of Community Colleges stated the following:

"The service learning instructional methodology integrates community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service learning programs involve students in organized activities that address local needs, develop academic skills, create a sense of civic responsibility, and foster a commitment to the community" (www.aacc.nche.edu).

There are three basic components to effective service learning:

1. Preparation-This includes identifying learning outcomes and planning the assignment and service activities.
2. Action- Students perform the service in collaboration with partnering organizations.
3. Reflection - Students analyze their learning experience, making critical connections between the service activity and course content.

How does service learning differ from volunteerism and internships?

Volunteerism
Student volunteers provide service to the community outside of their course studies. Because there is no curricular connection, they can select any type of organization they wish to serve and determine their own time commitment. Students often volunteer as part of college club activities or for personal enrichment and work experience.

Service Learning
Service learning students are enrolled in a course that requires a community service project. Because this assignment is just one component of course requirements, the time commitment is limited (typically 15-20 hours over the duration of the semester). The goal of the project is to increase student learning

through practical experiences **and** meet community needs. As part of the learning experience, students are required to critically reflect on their service through writing and dialogue.

Internships

Internships allow students to gain experience related to their major or career. Interns interview for and are selected to fill paid or unpaid positions in both non-profit and corporate settings. Since an internship study is a standalone course, the student is required to complete 60-225 hours of service based upon the desired units. Course assignments are completed under the guidance of a faculty member from the student's internship discipline.

Please note: The Service Learning and Volunteer Center does not facilitate enrollment in internship studies courses. For additional information about internships, please contact the MiraCosta College Career Center at 760.795.6772.

The Center, Staff & Student Leadership Team

Staff

- The center is housed at the Oceanside Campus, but support services are also available by appointment at the San Elijo and Community Learning Center.
- The program has two permanent staff, a full time coordinator and a part time secretary, and a team of Student Advocates.

Student Advocates (student leadership team)

- The program hires a team of student workers, Student Advocates. This team of students help peers connect with on and off campus service opportunities, help provide food pantry services to students in need, learn leadership skills, and are assigned to a local Title I school or a non-profit organization that supports local Title I schools. While at these sites Student Advocates meet the needs of the community, specifically focusing on literacy and STREAM. They also advocate for these schools or sites by sharing the service opportunities with others on campus.

What are the benefits of service learning?

For Instructors:

- Promotes innovative teaching methods
- Provides opportunities for practical application
- Promotes greater course satisfaction and retention rates
- Engages faculty members in local issues

For Community Partners:

- Fosters reciprocal partnerships between college and the community
- Provides student support to help meet organizational needs
- Increases student awareness about community issues
- Allows organizational leaders to share their expertise with students

For Students:

- Allows students to apply course concepts in real world settings
- Increases community awareness and fosters a sense of civic engagement
- Provides guidance with career decisions and planning
- Exposes students to community leaders who have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share
- Promotes diversity appreciation and cultural competency

What types of service opportunities are available?

The Service Learning and Volunteer Center maintains partnerships with over 75 different nonprofit organizations and public schools. These organizations provide diverse opportunities for student learning and development. A list of partnering organizations can be found on the program website: www.miracosta.edu/serve

The chart below provides examples of service learning projects at MiraCosta.

Discipline	Types of Service Activities
English	- tutoring support for K-12 - pen pal letter writing programs - nonprofit newsletter/ grant writing
Nutrition	- food bank support - cooking demonstrations for youth programs - assisting with senior meal programs
Gerontology	- music therapy for seniors with memory impairment - exercise assistance at elder care facilities - reading to patients with vision impairment
Spanish	- translation services (written and verbal) - K-12 ESL tutoring and mentoring
Chemistry	- teaching chemistry for kids workshops - tutoring high school chemistry classes - MCC STREAM Festival
Nursing	- leading activities at Alzheimer's centers - helping with local blood drives - patient support services at hospital/ clinics
Sociology	- serving meals to the homeless - providing companionship to HIV/AIDS residents - working on urban renewal projects
Media Arts Technology	- developing nonprofit websites - designing logos, marketing, and video materials
Horticulture	- landscape design for nonprofits/ schools - care and planting of community gardens

Do all service learning projects take place off-campus?

Not all service learning projects involve off-campus work. Direct and indirect service assignments both provide meaningful learning opportunities.
Direct (or onsite) - The student performs all of their service hours at the community site. Typically they have a set work schedule and spend their time working directly with agency clients. For example, a student might volunteer at a homeless shelter every Saturday morning from 10:00-12:00.

Indirect (or offsite) - The student serves a community organization but their service hours are completed independently. Students are given certain tasks or projects which can be done outside of the agency. Examples include: conducting organizational research, designing resource materials, and translation services.

However the service is delivered, it is important to maintain a reciprocal relationship where student learning needs and agency needs are equally valued.

How can a service assignment be incorporated into the syllabus?

Most instructors incorporate a service learning component in the following ways:

Course Option- A student selects service learning from a variety of assignment options. The benefit of this approach is that it provides choices and empowers students to make critical decisions about their own learning process. The challenge lies in having some students engaged in service and others not.

Requirement- A student is required to perform a service project in order to complete the course. The benefit of this approach is that all students are involved in service projects which can create rich classroom dialogue. A disadvantage is the logistics of community service (students without transportation, time constraints, etc.).

Extra Credit- A student earns extra credit for completing a service activity. The assignment may be a one- time project or require a set number of hours. While this approach is an attractive option for instructors new to service learning, the challenge lies in ensuring the extra credit assignment is integrated into the course and not treated as an add-on.

Are you ready to get started?

- Start the process by thinking about the practical applications of what you teach. How is the material covered in your class (and the skills learned) useful in the real world? How can community organizations benefit by partnering with your class?

- Review your curriculum and determine how service learning can be incorporated to enhance student learning. Identify learning objectives and keep these in mind when crafting the assignment. It's always best to connect this objective with learning outcomes.

- Connect with the service learning coordinator for program overview and project planning.

- Define the criteria for the service activity. Will it be a one-time project or an on-going project? How many hours will it entail? Will it be an optional assignment, course requirement, or extra credit?   Will students work independently, in a small group, or as a class?

- Add the service learning component to the syllabus and provide clear expectations for the students. Identify one course goal, learning outcome or objective and list it on the service learning description in your syllabus. Send a copy of the syllabus to the program coordinator.

- When possible make contact with partnering community organizations. This can be as simple as an introductory letter explaining the assignment and providing instructor contact information. Remember the community partners are educators outside the classroom and therefore should be included in the process and kept informed.

- Inform the program coordinator that you will include a service component into your course teachings. Your course will be listed on the Service Learning webpage, and you will receive student participation reports for the students who've submitted paperwork to the service learning office—for your grading purposes.

How do I get students on board?

- Explain and promote the ideas behind service learning. When instructors are enthusiastic and committed to this teaching method, students are much more receptive.

- Schedule an appointment to have the program coordinator present a short orientation to your class. All necessary paperwork will be provided.

- Get students to commit early in the semester. The earlier they start on a project, the better. Time management is an important for successful projects.

How do I incorporate reflections activities into the assignment?

- Require that students share their experiences throughout the semester. This can be done in the form of a journal, short papers, field notes, email, web postings, portfolio pieces, video, or classroom discussions. Whatever the format, regular submission of information should be mandatory. The key is to be intentional when planning this component as this is where a great deal of the learning occurs.

- Be prepared to help students think critically about their service experiences and how the work is tied to course concepts. Don't be surprised to find that even the brightest students struggle with the integration of theory and practice.

- Have students talk about their service learning experience in class. This is an important part of the service learning assignment and therefore merits valuable class time.

- Be prepared for emotional expression that is often absent from other student work. There may be joy, frustration, anger, and even grief. Students may be unprepared for the various types of responses they have when engaged in community service.

How do I assess student learning?

- When planning the assignment, be sure to include measurable learning outcomes. Too often instructors assign credit for the number of service hours completed versus the demonstration of learning that has occurred.

- Consider multiple methods of assessment including academic performance, self-assessment, and community partner feedback. All of these provide data about student learning.

- Consider the use of journaling assignments, field notes, or web postings as a reflections component. These types of assignments illustrate student learning over the duration of the semester.

Please Note: All service learning instructors are asked to submit copies of reflection essays for program evaluation and assessment. These are also used for publication purposes.

Should I be concerned about insurance and liability issues?

The Service Learning and Volunteer Center works in partnership with the Risk Management Office to ensure all community placements are approved for students. Each partnering organization has a Memorandum of Understanding with the institution and provides insurance coverage for the students. For this reason, it is very important that students are **only** working with approved service learning partners (see list of partnerships on program website: www.miracosta.edu/serve).

Do students need to fill out any paperwork?

The college requires that all students involved in service learning complete the appropriate paperwork. The paperwork includes the following:

- Agreement Form. The student takes this form with them the first time they meet with community personnel. The form clarifies expectations between the student and the organization they serve. Once completed, it is turned into the Service Learning and Volunteer Center or to the professor.

- Time Sheet. Students are asked to document all of their service hours. The Service Learning and Volunteer Center tracks volunteer hours and can provide verification for job, scholarship or transfer purposes. Students completing 15 or more hours will receive a service learning certificate. The certificate is mailed to the address on SURF.

- Student Evaluation. Students are asked to have their community supervisor complete an evaluation for them at the conclusion of their service. Many instructors find this feedback valuable for grading and assessment purposes.

- Program Evaluation. Students are asked to complete a program evaluation providing feedback on their experience, the organization they served, faculty support, and the service learning office.

While dealing with paperwork may seem daunting, it is important that these forms are completed to ensure students are in appropriate sites, insurance issues addressed, and service hours are documented.

What do students think about the program?

95% indicated that service learning helped them better understand course concepts

98% would recommend the program to fellow students

90% indicated that service learning helped them with career planning

83% cited an increased appreciation for community involvement.

Are there additional resources I can review?

MiraCosta College Service Learning and Volunteer Center   www.miracosta.edu/serve
This website provides information for the MiraCosta College Service Learning Program.

Association for Experiential Education www.aee.org
The Association for Experiential Education is a membership association that connects educators and practitioners to expand their capacity to enrich lives through experiential education.

California Campus Compact www.cacampuscompact.org
California Campus Compact (CACC) is a membership organization of college and university presidents leading California institutions of higher education in building a statewide collaboration to promote service as a critical component of higher education.

Corporation for National and Community Service www.nationalservice.gov
The Corporation for National and Community Service engages all Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to help strengthen communities.

Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning   www.umich.edu/~mjcsl
The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning is a national, peer reviewed journal consisting of articles written by faculty members and service learning educators on research, theory, pedagogy, and issues pertinent to the service learning community.

National Campus Compact www.compact.org
Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 900 public and private two- and four-year colleges and universities. This site provided a wealth of information regarding conferences, workshops, funding sources, syllabi by discipline, and many other resources.

The Generator School Network https://gsn.nylc.org/ The Generator School Network supports the service-learning community in higher education, kindergarten through grade twelve, community-based initiatives, and tribal programs, as well as others interested in strengthening schools and communities using service-leaving techniques and methodologies.

National Society for Experiential Education www.nsee.org
The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) is a membership association and national resource center that promotes experience-based approaches to teaching and learning

MiraCosta students learn about food insufficiency and Teri Inc.'s urban farms.

"When I take college courses, I find it hard to apply what I learn to real life situations. Service learning shattered that cycle." ~Sarah Peters

"This was the best experience of my college career." ~ Liling Chen