Mission Statement

Community Placement Service (CPS) involves University of Minnesota students in ongoing, meaningful, community-driven, community-identified outreach opportunities and through advising and on-going support will enhance students’ academic and career goals while developing civic leadership and capacity.

Partnering with the Community

CPS works closely with many community organizations around the Twin Cities area. Some organizations have been working with CPS for nearly ten years creating meaningful interactions between the University and its surrounding communities. These partnerships have been developed to maintain strong connections between community partners, students and the University.

What is Community Service-Learning?

Service-learning is an approach to experiential learning, whereby students learn and develop through active participation and engage in activities that address human and community needs together. Service-learning helps foster civic responsibility enhances the academic curriculum by connecting academic theory with real-world experience; and includes structured reflection [adapted from the Corporation for National Service RFP].

Benefits of Community Service-Learning

- Provides opportunities to connect theory to practice and help you gain a deeper understanding of course topics
- Gives you an opportunity to work with a diverse range of people
- Challenges you to gain greater understanding of economic, political, and cultural structures in society
- Helps you to examine your values, attitudes, and beliefs by engaging you in new environments
- Sharpens creative problem-solving abilities, collaboration skills, and other important leadership skills
- Expands your personal and professional networks
- Allows you to gain an understanding of other cultures and how an individual’s own culture has shaped his/her worldview
- Fosters respect and appreciation for multiculturalism, economic and environmental diversity
Getting Started

Step 1: Determining where to work

Meet with a CPS Program Advisor
CPS Advisors are undergraduate student peer advisors who work in the Career and Community Learning Center. These students run the CPS program by maintaining relationships with Community Partner organizations and by advising students who are interested in volunteering in the community.

Self inventory
- What social issues am I most compassionate about?
- Do I want to work directly with people or 'behind the scenes' on clerical/administrative projects?
- What type of environment would I like to work in (large/small, indoor/outdoor, structured/unstructured)?
- What skills or abilities do I have to share with others?
- What skills or abilities would I like to develop or nurture?
- Do I want to work in the field I am studying?

Step 2. After Your Advising Session

Talk to the organization
Review the information you received during your CPS advising session. Call the community organization’s contact person to ask specific questions and/or schedule a visit to the organization.

In this first contact, you should identify yourself in the following manner:
“I am [your name], a student at the University of MN. I am interested in the ___________ opportunity your organization has listed through the Community Placement Service at the Career and Community Learning Center.” Remember to be a clear and straightforward on this first contact in order to maximize the use of both your time and the person you are calling. The more you explain exactly what you are looking for and why you are interested, the more likely you are to have a good volunteer experience. Other important specifics you should cover with the coordinator:
- The specific positions are you interested in
- Talk about transportation concerns (bus routes, directions, and car pooling)
- What are they looking for from a volunteer?
- What are the hours and does this fit with your schedule?

When you talk to the organization contact make sure to ask about the following information:
- Application Procedures (do you need to fill out an application, provide references, submit a resume and cover letter, be interviewed?)
- Will the organization need you to complete other requirements in order to work with them (i.e. if you are working in a hospital or with children or some other populations, criminal background checks will be required before starting and these have a one to three week processing time) etc.?
Step 3: Preparing for your involvement

We highly recommend doing a site visit to each of your possible organizations so that you can get a feel for how the environment is and how the organization itself runs. After completing your site visits you should have a better feel for which organizations would best meet your goals and in which you would feel most comfortable. Once you have decided on which organization you will be working with you should attend all necessary orientations and trainings offered by the organization itself and the CCLC’s “Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved” pre-service training. Most organizations have their own trainings, which you will be required to complete before you can start your community experience. Thus, it is very important that you find out when their training dates are and make it a point to attend them. CCLC’s “Get Up Get Into It, Get Involved” training is a requirement for all CPS students and is most beneficial when completed before you start your community work, however, completing the CCLC training soon after starting is acceptable. You can find the dates of these training sessions on our website at www.servicelearning.umn.edu.

Your first visit to the organization:
- Set up a work schedule for the semester and complete any paperwork required of the organization
- Learn your organization’s policies and procedures
- Let your supervisor know when you have mid-terms, finals, or when you will be gone on breaks
- Ask about the history and mission of the organization so you can put your work in a context

When entering into any community site, ask yourself these questions:
- Why am I the way I am?
- Why do I see the world the way I do?
- How might my view of the world be limited, skewed, or mistaken?
- Do I see myself as a prejudiced person?
- Do I identify myself with a particular socioeconomic class?
- Do I hold stereotypes about people who are of a different gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic class?

Your Responsibilities
- Take your community work seriously! Approach your position as you would any job; arrive on-time and prepared to work.
- Never report to your organization under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Expect uncertainty at first. Your level of comfort will increase as the semester progresses.
- Maintain a positive attitude and keep things in perspective, no position is 100% exciting and challenging.
- Deal with problems and concerns as they arise—seek guidance from your site supervisor or course instructor.
- Inform your supervisor at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to attend your normal shift.
Safety Issues, Avoiding Risks & Ethics

Urban Street Smarts
- Stay alert at all times. Be aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts.
- Appear confident and comfortable and make eye contact with individuals in the community.
- Do not bring valuables or other items which make you appear as an “outsider” in the neighborhood.
- Give your schedule to a roommate or friend and include the phone number of the organization.
- Try to become a part of the community where you work—shop in local stores, eat out in the neighborhood, attend community and neighborhood events.
- Keep current on the issues and incidents affecting the neighborhood in which you work by watching the news and reading the newspaper. However, keep in mind that these sources may have biased representations of incidents.
- Develop a community safety net of resources in your assigned area: identify people, places, and things in the area that can be of assistance in the time of need (e.g., location of phones, 24-hour stores and their employees, local police, etc.).

Traveling to Your Organization
- Make sure that you research your route ahead of time and get clear directions on how to find your community site.
- Be sure to ask your organization contact where to park if you are driving or which bus stop to get off at if you are taking public transportation to the organization.
- Watch who gets on or off the bus with you. If you feel uneasy, walk directly to a place where there are other people.
- Always lock your car doors, whether you are in the car or not, and park in well-lit areas.
- If you feel that someone is following you, do not go home. Walk or drive to the nearest police or fire station, or open business for help.
- If you are uncomfortable going to your organization alone, try to arrange going to the site with other students in your class or from the U of MN.
- Ask for an escort when leaving a community agency if you feel uncomfortable alone.

Ethical Issues
Do not reveal or discuss information about clients/patients without permission from the professionals for whom you are working. Discuss disclosures from clients/patients only with your agency supervisor. Such examples include: 1. if the individual has threatened to physically harm another person; 2. if the individual has threatened to physically harm him/her self; 3. if the individual has disclosed physical or sexual abuse/neglect on the part of a caretaker or other professional.

Remember organizational confidentiality applies when discussing the individual(s) as a part of class discussion, written assignment, or telling friends and family about your experience: change the individual’s name; eliminate identifying characteristics (where parents work, identifiable physical characteristics, where the individual lives, etc.); suppress details about personal information that has been disclosed—for instance, you might state that the individual has a history of abuse by a family member, but details about who, when, and where should be kept confidential.
Observing Unethical or Inappropriate Conduct and Reporting Disclosures
It happens. You may see contraband or you may be told of something occurring (such as child abuse) that is legally or morally questionable. What do you do? How do you balance the need to report a crime or unethical behavior against maintaining someone's confidence or jeopardizing someone's safety? Such dilemmas raise serious ethical questions where you may feel you have conflicting duties. But the one rule you should always follow is do not try to resolve the problem alone. Consult with a supervisor or other professional to whom you are responsible to at the community agency or project.

Step 4: Time to Work!
Once you’ve chosen a community organization, completed appropriate applications, and attended an orientation and/or training (informal or formal) to start your position, Congratulations! Now it’s time to take action!

What to Do at Your Community Organization
Organization staff members tell us they highly appreciate students who are committed, responsible and who take the time to establish relationships based on respect and trust with the people they work with in the community.

Establish Rapport
• Be responsible about your schedule—inform your supervisor at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to attend as scheduled.
• Arrive on time and be prepared to work.
• Be aware of the organization’s hours and work within them.

Step 5: Ways to Learn From Your Experience

Reflecting On Your Work
Reflection is an integral aspect of the community service-learning experience. It is the key ingredient for transforming service experiences into learning. It is basic to the process of integrating service with the academic concepts presented in the classroom. In order to maximize your learning experience, reflection should occur both in and out of the classroom.

Ways to Reflect
• Periodically review your goals to assess how well you are meeting them.
• Discuss your experience with other service-learning participants and your supervisor.
• Keep a journal to help you reflect on your experience and learning.
• Help get others involved on campus. Talk with your instructors and peers about your experience.
• Update your resume to include your service-learning experience. Sign-up for one of the Career and Community Learning Center Resume Writing Workshops or Critiques online at www.cclc.umn.edu, call 612-624-7577 or visit 135 Johnston Hall.

Reflection Questions
• Describe a person you’ve encountered in the community who made either a strong impression on you, either positive or negative
• How has your understanding of the community changed as a result of your participation in this project?
Why does the organization you are working for exist?
How can you educate others or raise awareness about this group or social issue?
What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
How are your values expressed through your community work? And how you live your life?

Observation Questions
- What is the mission of the organization (e.g. the agency’s purpose)?
- How does the organization fulfill that mission?
- How is the organization funded?
- Who make up the population the organization works with?
- What are the characteristics of the client population?
- Where is the organization located?
- What does the neighborhood look like? Smell like? Sound like?
- How does the organization interact with the surrounding community?
- What resources are in the community?
- What is the proportion of paid staff to volunteers in the organization?

Step 6: Seeking Closure
Respectfully Ending Your Community Work Commitment
Please do not just quit going to the community organization. As you are approaching the end of your time with an organization, schedule a meeting with your supervisor to review and discuss your goals and what you have learned and observed over time by working with them. This will be helpful for both parties, especially if you later request recommendation letters or references. When you are working in one-on-one situations, by entering into an individual’s life, you have made a dramatic, quite possibly lifelong impact. Never, under any circumstance “drop-out” of the individual’s life suddenly and unexpectedly. Make an effort to establish a termination date, share that date with the individual, and keep your commitment.


Ways to Continue Your Community Work
1. Enroll in a service-learning course—check out our website at www.servicelearning.umn.edu to find a list of service learning courses to choose from.

2. Pursue Faculty- supervised field work, individual research or directed study: A student may contract with a faculty member as a means to develop an individual project in conjunction with a course, develop an independent research project, or engage in field-work, such as a service-learning internship or participate in a collaborative research project through UROP

3. UROP (Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program) grants of up to $1,400 are available for students doing collaborative research projects with a faculty sponsor. If you are interested in applying for the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programs (UROP) Grant, consider ways you could integrate your interests in the community by doing a community-based action research project. For example, a student might conduct research arranged through the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which works to connect neighborhood-based organizations with students or faculty interested in the research they want done. Information on UROP is available in 345 Fraser Hall (for CLA students) and in 325 Johnston Hall (non-CLA students)
4. Focus your undergraduate major on community issues by working with CLA Individualized Degree Programs. For more information call 612-624-8006 or come to 345 Fraser Hall. If you would like to design your own degree program using courses primarily from colleges other than CLA, contact the Inter-College Program at 612-624-2004 in 107 Armory.

5. Consider participating in one of the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA) locally-based, 16 credit program. Information about these programs is available in the Career and Community Learning Center’s Off-Campus Study program in 345 Fraser Hall, 612-626-2044.

   - **City Arts**: Explore the relationship between the arts, culture and social change. This off-campus learning experience, available over Spring semester, combines fieldwork, group conversation and a dynamic Twin Cities internship.

   - **Metro Urban Studies Term (MUST)**: Do you want to delve into social issues that you care about? Look into the Metro Urban Studies Term (MUST). This off-campus learning experience is available each Fall and Spring semester. MUST combines fieldwork, group conversation and a dynamic internship in the Twin Cities.

8. Pursue Ways to be Paid for Your Work in the Community:

   - **Community Service Work Study** is a program funded by the US Department of Education through Federal Work Study (FSW) The University of Minnesota Student Employment Center provides service opportunities to eligible students who wish to work in a non-profit environment. If you want to do community service work and you have a FWS award or if you are interested in determining your eligibility for FWS, contact the Job Center at 612-625-2000, option 2; 100 Donhowe, 319 15th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455. Listings of currently available FWS jobs are posted at http://data.ohr.umn.edu/student

   - **NPCR, the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization**, a program in the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (330 Humphrey Center or www.npcr.org) regularly funds Internships and Research Assistantships for students interested in working with neighborhood organizations on community designed applied research projects.

9. Explore international community-based field learning programs:

   - **Learning Abroad Center**: Consider participating in one of several international field study programs. Except as noted for SPAN, all of these programs are administered at the University of Minnesota through the Learning Abroad Center. For more information, UMabroad@umn.edu, call 612-626-9000, or www.Umabroad.umn.edu.

   - **Student Project for Amity among Nations (SPAN)**: Summer research program that allows students to design and conduct their own project in any of four countries under the direction of a faculty adviser who accompanies each group. Destinations and advisors change each year and are announced in February a year and a half before the summer abroad. Preparatory seminar precedes the overseas considered until October. Contact SPAN, 216 Heller Building, West Bank, 612-626-1083, SPAN@umn.edu.
**Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID):** Fall semester or academic year in Ecuador, India, Kenya, or Senegal. Fall combines classroom preparation with month-long field placement; spring continuation consists of 25-hour-per-week internship (8 cr) plus research project (8 cr). Internships are available in fields such as women’s mobilization, public health, environmental protection, agriculture, and micro-business development. Fall is 16 credits, 32 for the academic year.

**International programs run by HECUA:** Scandinavian Urban Studies Term, South American Urban Semester and the Environment, Economy, and Community in Latin America. These programs are 16 credits.

10. Check out our website at www.servicelearning.umn.edu for more information on options.