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Service Learning Student Handbook

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What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is defined in a number of ways by a number of different institutions of higher learning. However, one of the best definitions comes from The Center for Public Policy and Service at Mesa Community College. That definition envisions service learning as

- a method under which students learn and develop through
- active participation in
- a thoughtfully organized service experience that
- meets actual community needs and is
- coordinated in collaboration with school and community, and
- integrated into academic curriculum;
- a method that provides structured time for reflection so students can think, talk and/or write about what they did and saw during their service;
- provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real life situations in the community;
- enhances what is taught in schools by extending learning beyond the classroom; and
- helps foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING

The virtue of service learning lies in the benefits that all involved participants receive. Faculty, students, and the College community profit by participating in service learning.

Benefits to Faculty

The most important professional responsibility faculty have, of course, is to teach. Service learning is an innovative teaching methodology that centers on course relevance based on student-directed learning. The faculty at Houston Community College benefits from strengthened community and volunteer efforts, especially from projects that link service and curriculum. Service learning enables faculty members to establish a concrete link between the classroom and their communities, and that enhances their own academic learning. In some cases, students who may not respond to traditional instruction techniques will respond to an applied learning approach that uses community and volunteer service.

Many financial resources are available to faculty for course development. Campus Compact and COOL, two service coordinating agencies, have new grant programs funded by the Ford Foundation to strengthen the link between service and curriculum. The Student Literacy Corps supports volunteer literacy projects that are curricular components of community college courses.

Benefits to Students

Benefits to the serving student range from enhanced self-esteem and a heightened sense of civic values, to improved career opportunities. Some of the gains that researchers have attributed to participation in service learning programs include:

- improved self-esteem,
- greater likelihood of staying in college,
- enhanced intellectual and academic development,
- enhanced career skills and opportunities,
- deepened sense of citizenship and humanitarian values,
- improved social skills,

- greater later life earnings and career development,
- greater sense of empowerment,
- enhanced leadership development, and
- better preparation to participate in a culturally diverse environment.

Many of these benefits relate directly to the stated goals and mission of Houston Community College. Students who enjoy strengthened intellectual development and college performance are better-educated students. Developing self-esteem and a sense of efficacy, staying in college and finding a career are precisely the outcomes colleges desire.

Benefits to the Community

A primary beneficiary of a Service Learning Program at Houston Community College should be the community. Critical challenges face the nation's communities today. Many of these issues are felt most strongly by people living in communities served by community colleges. It is not enough to educate students and then return them to their communities. Community colleges can help their students strengthen those communities. The impact of service learning is not limited to a student's time in school. After graduation, students will be more likely to volunteer and participate in community affairs for the rest of their adult lives. What lasts is not only the urge to serve but also a broader perspective grounded in experience. That experience will enable our students to make more informed personal, social, and political choices as citizens in a democracy.

Benefits to the College

Houston Community College benefits from new and strengthened ties to the community it serves. Service projects will provide opportunities to develop new partnerships, raise the visibility of the College, and present the institution in its best light as a College actively concerned about the welfare of community residents.

Increased visibility also has an impact on enrollment and retention. For example, HCC students who serve in a mentoring capacity at local high schools make more secondary students aware of Houston Community College as an educational option. In all likelihood, the high school students will develop a favorable opinion of Houston Community College. Evidence from research also suggests that community service also helps boost retention. Studies indicate students involved in service learning activities are more likely to stay in school.

Though no less significant, other benefits to the College are more difficult to measure. Colleges with service learning programs stand to gain a more positive self-image to go with their new spirit. The student body, faculty and administrators can realize a greater sense of identity. Not only is the individual affected but also the other students and the whole campus. A service learning student's newly developed skills for functioning in a multi-cultural environment, for example, do not end with the service project but extend into his or her daily exchanges with peers on campus and on the job.

A college community service program may also generate new financial resources. If the College makes a commitment to organize the service component of campus life, it will find itself in a better position to take advantage of previously untapped funding opportunities. Such opportunities are currently expanding as a result of the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990.

Benefits to the Business Community

The business community's interest in service learning programs also constitutes a new opportunity for partnerships between businesses and colleges. Businesses want the visibility and positive reputation associated with service, and strong community college service programs can help businesses achieve those goals. Partnerships already exist between the College and the private sector. The Service Learning Program at Houston Community College enables students and corporate partners to have even more opportunities to achieve their respective goals.

If you are interested in participating in a Service Learning opportunity, follow these steps:

1. Contact the Service Learning Representative at your college.
2. Talk to your instructor to determine if Service-Learning is a component of class.
3. Complete the Service Learning application enclosed in this handbook.
4. Choose A Service-Learning Placement from the list of approved service-learning placement sites. A partnership site list is available from the college service learning representative.
5. Call the Service-Learning site contact person to arrange an interview.
6. Complete the enclosed Service Learning Placement Confirmation Agreement with agency supervisor.
7. Report to the Service Learning Partnership site at your scheduled time. Communicate regularly with your supervisor.
8. Use the enclosed Participant's Service Learning Hour Report to record your hours of participation.
9. Turn in Service-Learning Hours Report to your instructor.
10. Have agency complete the enclosed evaluation and turn it in to your instructor.



Houston Community College

Office of Student Activities 713-718-5613

HCC Instructor's Name _____ Class Meeting Day/Time _____

Name of Course _____ Hours Required _____

SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENT APPLICATION
(To be completed by the student)

Date _____ Student Number _____ Date of Birth* _____

Name (Please Print) _____ Male / Female (Please Circle)

Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____ Telephone (HM) _____ (WK) _____

- (Students under 18 must complete a "Parental Consent" form before beginning their placement-available from the Center)

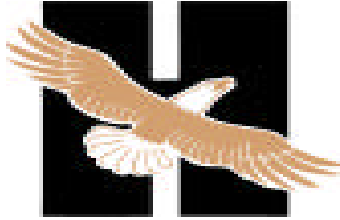
E-mail address: _____

Best time to reach you: _____

The Houston Community College Student Handbook governs the conduct of students participating in the Service-Learning program.

Student's Name: _____
Phone: _____
E-Mail: _____

Instructor: _____
Dept. _____ Phone: _____
E-Mail: _____



Houston Community College

SERVICE-LEARNING PLACEMENT CONFIRMATION AGREEMENT
(To be completed jointly by student and agency supervisor)

Dear Agency Supervisor,
On behalf of the Houston Community College we would like to thank you for entering into an educational partnership with our students. By accepting and supervising service-learners, you are helping these students join classroom theory with real-life experience. By encouraging and allowing these students to perform meaningful service, you are also contributing to education's mission of promoting civic responsibility. The critical role you play as a mentor and educator for our students cannot be underestimated. We appreciate your commitment to making our service-learners feel welcome and to ensuring that they have a productive and educational experience.

Name & Address of Agency _____
Telephone _____
Supervisor or Coordinator _____ Title _____

Describe the service-learning project, including expectations, requirements, and responsibilities

Days and hours to work _____ Total number of hours to be worked _____
Student will begin _____ Student will end _____

The student expects to gain the following kinds of learning from this experience

The agency agrees to provide the student with orientation and training:

Yes ___ No _____ Approximate date _____

The agency agrees to provide the student with the following resources: (Check as applicable)

_____ On-site supervisor _____ Space to work _____ Critique of student's work
_____ Materials (please specify) _____ Other (please specify) _____

I agree to, and will uphold, the terms of this placement.

Student's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Supervisor's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Agency Evaluation of Student

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR

SUPERVISOR: Please complete this evaluation of the service-learning student.

SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENT: After your supervisor completes this form, please return it to your instructor, or to the Service Learning Representative at your college.

Student's Name: _____ Agency Name: _____

On a scale of 0 to 4 ("4" representing the highest) please rate the service-learning student in the areas listed below by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

	0	1	2	3	4
Attendance/Punctuality					
Attitude					
Quality of Work					
Initiative					
Overall Performance					

Comments: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____ Signature _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____