

Benefits of Service-Learning for Students and Institutions

Service-learning partnerships help higher education institutions achieve their civic and social justice missions. However, institutions also pursue these partnerships for a number of other important reasons. These include the potential benefits to students and the institution as a whole.

Student Benefits

- Real-world opportunities for career exploration, skill-building, resume-building, and networking. Sometimes students even decide to change their career plans.
- Better understanding of community issues, deepened interests and passions, and skills to effectively direct their passions.
- Enhanced understanding of course content through the opportunity to apply abstract concepts and theories to real situations. Service-learning can also increase students' interest in the subject matter.
- Increased feelings of "self-efficacy." Students believe that they can make a difference because they have the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to do so.
- More civic engagement. These experiences can spark greater interest in social issues, politics, and understanding how to create change.

Institutional Benefits

- Enhanced public image and stronger community and neighborhood relations.
- A better local community (e.g., housing stock, jobs, community aesthetics) that makes the institution more desirable in the eyes of prospective students, staff and faculty, as well as alumni and donors.

- More appeal to high school students looking for colleges and universities that offer opportunities for service and civic engagement.
- Relationships with community partners (e.g., local schools) that can help the institution reach potential applicants among such populations as minority students, low-income students, and immigrants.
- New access to grants that require partnerships with community organizations.
- An increased feeling among faculty and staff, administrators, and students that involvement in the community is “right thing to do” (from a social justice, religious, or charity perspective).
- More opportunities for students to meet service or community-based learning requirements of certain institutions, programs, or groups.

Adapted from Scheibel, Jim, Erin M. Bowley, and Steven Jones. *The Promise of Partnerships: Tapping into the College as a Community Asset*. Providence, R.I.: Campus Compact, 2005.