

Types of Student Involvement in the Community

Student work in the community typically takes one of two forms: **curricular activity**, which is completed as part of a course, or **co-curricular activity**, which is not part of a course. Within both of these forms, student service can be *direct*, as in working directly with a community group's clients, or *indirect*, by providing administrative or other supportive work to the community group.

Curricular Activity

Service-Learning

- Meets community needs and goals for learning in the course
- Contributes to students' academic understanding, civic development, personal or career growth, and understanding of larger social issues
- Typically requires 1-3 hours of service per week over a 10-15 week term
- Service can be an optional or mandatory requirement, depending on the course
- Supervision is the responsibility of the community partner, or may be shared with faculty
- Grading is the responsibility of the faculty, though input from the community partner is often required
- Some partnerships involve individual placement of students to provide direct service or work on a project
- Other partnerships involve groups of students or even entire classes working on community projects
- Some service-learning may occur as part of an independent study

Community-Based Research

- Students and faculty conduct research to address community-identified needs
- Students use community members and community resources as primary sources of information
- May also be called action research and participatory action research
- Research is often planned in collaboration with community members
- Results are often shared with the community

Internships

- May be paid or unpaid
- Most often involve the placement of individual students, but there are also some group and class internships
- Emphasis is on providing “real-life” work experience to enhance a student’s understanding of a career field and develop skills and knowledge
- Students may work 10-40 hours per week with the community partner
- Supervision is shared between the faculty and the community partner
- Students often have a specific learning plan or goals for the internship

Practicum

- Also provides extended, on-site experience
- Emphasis is on the direct application of skills learned in the classroom to a real-world setting
- Common examples include student teaching, accounting practicum experiences, and clinical experiences for health sciences students
- Supervision is provided by the community partner

Co-Curricular Activity

Volunteerism

- May be one-time or ongoing, and often the first leads to the second
- Students may be perform one-time or short-term service for a service requirement (e.g., a “day of service” at new student orientation), to share a common experience (e.g. with a club or athletic team), or because they want to “give back” or get involved without a long-term commitment
- A popular short-term service opportunity on many campuses is the “alternative break,” where students perform service during school vacations
- Student groups and the institution often actively sponsor, promote, and organize both one-time and ongoing service activities
- Some institutions make commitments to send volunteers to community groups each year
- Individuals often learn of service opportunities through notices provided to the institution

Community Service Federal Work-Study

- All institutions receiving funding as part of the Federal Work-Study program are required to spend at least 7% of those funds on community-based work
- Many institutions look to work with community groups to host these positions
- Community groups typically pay a portion of the students wages, typically between 10% and 30%
- A common program is America Reads, which has students tutor children and work in family literacy programs

AmeriCorps students

- Part of a federal service program that sponsors full- or part-time positions serving as volunteers in the community

- Students commit 10-20 hours per week to direct service in the community
- Some campuses also host AmeriCorps VISTA members, who work in in-direct service roles on anti-poverty initiatives. Often your primary liaison for service-learning or student volunteer activities may be a VISTA volunteer.

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.