

Community Partner Handbook

Service Learning at Middlesex County College



A reference tool for non-profit and community organizations partnering with the service learning program at Middlesex County College.



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Purpose of This Handbook

The *Community Partner Handbook* is designed as a reference tool for Middlesex County College (MCC) community partners involved with Service Learning faculty, administrators, and courses. This handbook will provide you with information on Middlesex County College as an institution and our students, and guidance on your role as a community partner, designing a Service Learning project, and preparing students to serve at your organization.

Our service learning program is based upon mutual relationships between faculty, campus administrators, community partners, and students. Service Learning partnerships result in an integrative teaching approach and provide a hands-on foundation for student learning.

As a community partner, you play an integral role as co-educator in the academic careers of MCC students. By sharing your knowledge and expertise, MCC students will be able to:

- Connect with and contribute to the community in which they live.
- Learn about the larger political and social structures within their community.
- Develop civic responsibility and stronger leadership skills.
- Examine and challenge their value and belief systems.
- Build professional networks.
- Understand their course material and academic focus more thoroughly.

We appreciate your involvement in Service Learning at MCC! We look forward to a rewarding and collaborative partnership with you to make this program a success. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning:

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Middlesex County College Student Demographics

<p>Enrollment 11,380 (earning credit as of Fall 2016) 47% full time 53% part time</p> <p>Average Age 23.1</p> <p>Gender 53% female 47% male</p> <p>Finances 51% of full-time students receive need-based financial aid 46% of full-time students report household income less than \$30,000</p> <p>Alumni 52,800 total alumni</p>	<p>Residence 93% Middlesex County 7% Non-Middlesex County 246 International students representing 36 countries</p> <p>Ethnicity 29% White (non-Hispanic) 31% Hispanic 15% Asian 12% Black 0% American Indian or Alaska Native 0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 3% Two or more races 7% Other/Unreported 2% Nonresident alien</p> <p>Selected Majors 19% STEM 18% Business, Accounting, and Legal Studies 17% Liberal Arts 7% Protective Services 13% Health 6% Education 21% Other</p>
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Students participate in a post-service reflection activity to discuss their experiences. (December, 2017)

Service Learning At Middlesex County College

Middlesex County College Mission

The mission of Middlesex County College is to provide access to a quality, affordable education for a diverse population, to support student success for lifelong learning, and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

Mission of Service Learning at Middlesex County College

The Service Learning Program at Middlesex County College is committed to providing enriching Service Learning opportunities to Middlesex County College students that focus on heightening interest and engagement in community issues and social justice. The Service Learning Program supports students, faculty, and community partners to develop and execute meaningful Service Learning projects and partnerships.

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a teaching method used to link course content to real-life experiences that focus on a community need or issue. Students are required to complete a designated amount of service hours (typically 15-20 hours) per semester with an established community partner. A community partner is a co-educator and works directly with faculty members to determine a high quality Service Learning project, or service experience for students. Community partners are required to provide training, orientation, and supervision for students. A successful Service Learning partnership is symbiotic, meaning both students and the community partner benefit from the partnership.

Service Learning is NOT...

- An addition to an otherwise unchanged course that does not directly tie to the course learning outcomes and structured reflection.
- A burden on the community partner's resources, including staff time.
- A pool of students volunteers to be used at the partner organization's discretion.
- Acquiring service hours simply for the purpose of completing a course or graduating.
- An internship intended to benefit the student through hands-on experience and professional development.
- Field experience which provides students with hands-on experience in their academic field of study, but is not tied to a specific academic course or learning outcomes.

Benefits of Service Learning for Community Partners

- Gain additional volunteer resources needed to achieve organizational goals
- Inject new energy, enthusiasm, and perspectives into the organization's work
- Grow the organization's volunteer pool and educate the upcoming generation of community members, public servants, and non-profit employees
- Help prepare today's students to be tomorrow's civic leaders
- Creates potential for additional partnerships and collaboration with the College

Role of the Community Partner

Community partners work directly with faculty members and the Service Learning Program Coordinator to create a high quality Service Learning project, or service experience for students. Community partners are considered a co-educator to students participating in a Service Learning experience.

Community partners are expected to provide training, orientation, and supervision for all student volunteers. In return, student volunteers are expected to help address a community need or issue by way of their service.

As a community partner, the Service Learning Program at Middlesex County College expects the following:

- The community partner will provide an orientation and training for all student volunteers.
- The community partner will designate an on-site supervisor.
- The community partner will provide on-site supervision for students at all times.
- The site supervisor will sign off on all student time-sheets after each volunteer shift.
- The site supervisor will relay any issues, problems, concerns, etc. to the Service Learning Program Coordinator in a timely fashion.

Students **MUST NOT** engage in the following while on site:

- Driving as part of service responsibilities.
- Interacting with clients, employees, or other volunteers while alone.
- Soliciting donations or fundraising on behalf of the organization.
- Promoting a particular religious doctrine, political candidate, or belief system.
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing.
- Participating in activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants.
- Participating in non-service activities that are normally performed by an employee or intern.
- Any paid service activities.

As a co-educator, community partners will have the opportunity to work directly with students and provide them with the knowledge and understanding of the community members they are working with, and the social issues faced by said community members. The following questions will help guide you to understand what students should know about your organization:

Questions to Guide Students' Understanding of Your Organization:

- What is your organization's mission and vision?
- What services does your organization offer? Who delivers these services?
- Who utilizes the services your organization provides?
- What is the history of your organization?
- What service tasks will students participate in?
- What is the neighborhood surrounding your organization like? What about the larger town/city?
- What are some challenges experienced by the local community? How can students best respond to these challenges?
- What are the strengths of the local community?
- What is the history between your agency, the community, and Middlesex County College?
- What safety precautions do students need to take when serving at your organization?
- What might the community members you serve teach students through this experience?

Community Partner Orientation Checklist

This information should be provided to students prior to the start of their service:

- Mission of the organization
- Location of the site and information on public transportation and parking
- Profile of who the organization serves
- Programs and/or services provided by the organization
- Policies and/or procedures related to the service the students will be doing (i.e. volunteer policy)
- Review of specific eligibility that is needed to serve at the organization (ex: fingerprinting, background checks, etc.)
- Expectations of the student as a volunteer with your organization
- Description of the service work students will do and activities that they will NOT engage in as volunteers
- Site Supervisor's information (title, contact information, schedule, etc.) and what supervision will consist of
- Student's service schedule, hours expected of them, and days/times they will be on site
- "Call out" procedures
- Appropriate / necessary clothing attire
- Details regarding specific training required for the volunteer work (when will this take place, who will run trainings, etc.)
- What students should expect to learn, and what skills they will develop
- Confidentiality policies and procedures
- Risks associated with this placement and who students should immediately report to when an issue arises (ex: if a student experiences harassment from a client while on site, who should they report to and how?)
- Where/how students should check in on their first day
- How service hours will be recorded, both for Middlesex County College and for your organization (if required)

On-site Orientation Check List:

- Tour of the site including bathrooms and break room (if applicable)
- Introduction to organization staff members, employees, and other volunteers
- Where students check in / sign in when they arrive
- Tour of the emergency features of the organization (i.e. emergency exits, fire hydrants, first-aid kits, etc.) and a review of the emergency/safety/accident protocol and procedures

Planning an Impactful Service Learning Project

Developing a Meaningful Service Learning Project

A successful Service Learning partnership seamlessly integrates the learning objectives of a course, while simultaneously contributing to a community partner organization's mission and/or goals. Service performed by students helps to address the community partner's needs. In order to begin developing a Service Learning project, community partners should first identify the areas in which their organization could benefit from student volunteers. This could range from working directly with clients to "back-burner" projects such as creating a website or social media pages for your organization. Once your project idea is outlined, community partners will complete a short online survey (see below) and a Service Learning administrator will work to connect the partner to an appropriate faculty member and course.

Community Partner Survey

To begin establishing a Service Learning partnership with Middlesex County College, you must start by completing the [Middlesex County College Service Learning Partner Survey](#). This survey provides MCC Service Learning staff members a summary of your organization, volunteer needs, and project ideas. Once completed, a Service Learning staff member will contact you regarding next steps in the planning process.



Students collaborate with CoLAB Arts to create hands castings made from trash they collected during a community cleanup. (November, 2017)