# SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below are answers to the most frequently asked questions about….
**Kingsborough Community College's Service-learning Program:**

**What is Service-learning?**
Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service opportunities into a student's coursework.  Students are able to become active participants in the learning process by using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems.  They work with the staff of a partnering community organization and then reflect on their experience through written assignments and class discussions.   Service-learning may be incorporated successfully into courses from all academic disciplines; it may involve a single student, groups of students, or an entire class.  Students build character, gain a sense of civic responsibility, and have an opportunity to explore potential careers by working in their community to create service projects.

**What have studies shown about the success of Service-learning?**
- Research data show that Service-learning has a significant impact on student retention
- It has been proven that Service-learning enhances the quality and quantity of faculty interaction and promotes positive academic experiences for students in their adjustment to college.
- Studies indicate that Service-learning provides students with opportunities to practice learned skills, encouraging them to engage in out-of-class interactions with faculty, as well as with other students.
- A number of research studies report that students who participate in Service-learning courses are more likely to graduate and remain connected to their original academic discipline.

**What are the key components of Service-learning?**
One commonly used definition of Service-learning is that it is "a teaching and learning method that upholds a commitment to appreciating the assets and the needs of a community partner while enhancing student learning and academic rigor through the practice of intentional reflective thinking and responsible civic action."  The following are four essential characteristics that are clearly reflected in the definition:
- Commitment to community partnership
- Learning and academic rigor
- Intentional, reflective thinking
- Practice of civic responsibility

**How is Service-learning different from volunteerism?**
Volunteerism focuses on giving one's time and talent to share concern for the well being of others.  The partnering community organization is the intended beneficiary. In contrast, by participating in Service-learning, a student focuses on what he or she can learn while serving and making a difference in the community.  The benefit to the student and the community is mutual.

**How is Service-learning different from an internship?**
Internship programs engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study.  In this case, it is the student who mostly benefits from the experience.

**Are there different options for Service-learning?**
Yes, here are some distinctions:
<u>Direct</u>- students work directly with the population served by the partnering community organizations.  For example, students in an Early Childhood Education course might participate in the Homework Helpers program at an after-school program.
<u>Indirect</u>- students work on and develop a project or product for a partnering community organization.  By progressing through the necessary processes to achieve a goal, students have a valuable learning experience.  For example, students in a Sociology course will develop a program for educating the community about the ramifications of domestic violence.  They do not visit the site on a weekly basis but rather work on a project that may be a one-time presentation.

Service-learning can take place through the course of the semester, as students complete a set number of hours per week.  Or, the Service-learning component can be a one-time event, such as a fundraiser or an awareness workshop.

**Why should a student participate in Service-learning?**
For students, Service-learning:
- Emphasizes the relevancy of education by bringing academic instruction to life and allowing students to apply concepts from the classroom to their service.
- Enhances learning of values, citizenship, and leadership skills and provides a platform for discussing those qualities.
- Gives students a chance to gain knowledge and expertise from the community.
- Prepares individuals for potential internships and field research.
- Allows exploration of career options.
- Develops contacts within the community
- Teaches workforce skills.
- Fosters connections with people of diverse cultures and lifestyles.
- Increases a sense of self-efficacy, analytical skills, and social development.
- Provides legitimate workplace experience that can be added to a student's resume.

**What are the benefits for faculty members?**
For faculty, Service-learning:
- Enriches and enlivens teaching by offering real life situations that relate to text and concepts being taught in class.
- Offers an alternative means of learning course material, thereby increasing student mastery of core competencies.
- Offers the opportunity for faculty to encourage students to impact social change.
- Provides new areas for research and publication, thus increasing opportunities for professional development.

**How does the partnering community organization benefit?**
For partnering community organizations, Service-learning:
- Enhances positive relationships between partnering community organizations and the college, thereby facilitating additional collaborative ventures between the college and the community.
- Develops short and long term solutions to pressing community needs.
- Provides opportunities for the partnering community organization to participate in the educational process.
- Enriches roles for supervisors in partnering community organizations.
- Contributes to positive exposure in the community for both the college and the partnering community organization.
- Provides access to college resources (i.e. facilities).

**How does a partnership work?**
The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) organization has set a number of principles for establishing strong partnerships:
- Agreed-upon goals and values on how to progress towards accomplishing those goals
- Mutual trust, respect, authenticity, and commitment
- Intentional working out of identified strengths, addressing areas that need improvement
- A balance of power and a sharing of resources
- Open and accessible communication
- Collaborative processes established through the interaction of all involved
- Feedback for improvement
- Sharing credit for accomplishments
- Commitment to spending the necessary time to develop these elements

**What does Kingsborough's Service Learning (S-L) Program strive to do?**
- Kingsborough's S-L Program places students in community sites related to their coursework in any discipline with the dual goal of enhancing student learning and benefiting the community.
- Provides training, support, and resources to participating faculty, students, and community organizations.

**Who provides supervision to students?**
- The on-site community agency supervisor provides direct supervision to students and is also the person who signs student timesheets.
- While faculty members can visit the field site, individual faculty members are not required to supervise students at the community site.

**What are the responsibilities of the students?**
- 15-24 field hours (1 ½ - 2 hrs. per week over the course of a 12 week semester)
- Time sheets appropriately completed and submitted to the instructor
- Written assignments as decided by individual instructor
- Being open to learn about the community and the partnering organization within that community
- Arranging hours with partnering community organization
- Fulfilling all agreed upon duties and responsibilities at the partnering organization site
- Reflecting, in writing, on the service-learning experience and how it pertains to the course learning objectives
- Being prompt, respectful, and positive at the partnering community organization site

**What are the responsibilities of participating faculty?**
- Assigning written assignment to students (based upon a significant body of research, it is recommended that the S-L written assignment be a type of reflection paper or journal designed by the individual faculty member according to his/her course requirements and goals for students - many resources on developing reflection paper and journal assignments are available through the S-L office)
- Attending 1 orientation meeting prior to the implementing S-L into the individual course
- Attending 2 progress meetings during the semester in which S-L is being offered
- Monitoring project activities of students to assess/discuss needs of students and projects
- Collecting completed student time sheets and handing in time sheets to S-L office at the end of the semester

**What are the responsibilities of the Kingsborough S-L office?**
- Learning and understanding the needs of the partnering community organization
- Training partnering community organizations about the goals/objectives of the program
- Referring students to the partnering organizations for placement
- Monitoring project activities of the organization to assess and/or discuss the needs of students and the project
- Providing appropriate recognition, appreciation, and reassurance to S-L students
- Maintaining ongoing communication and being available to partnering community organization regarding service projects

**What are the responsibilities of the partnering community organization?**
- Completing training and necessary agreements with the college
- Providing adequate training for assigned tasks
- Assigning work that is significant and/or challenging to the student
- Ensuring a safe work environment and reasonable hours for the student to perform their service
- Monitoring student work hours and signing student timesheets
- Communicating with college staff and informing them of issues/needs

# SAMPLE SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

**Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC)**
**Community Experiences in Nursing, Advanced Community Experiences in Nursing, Trends in Nursing, and the Somerset Valley Visiting Nurses Association: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Community Problem Solving.**
- For two consecutive semesters, 12 RVCC nursing students participated in a collaborative Service-learning project with the Somerset Valley Visiting Nurses Association (SVVNA). The students researched and documented the 50-year history of the SVVNA as part of their academic studies in three different courses: Community Experiences in Nursing, Advanced Community Experiences in Nursing, and Trends in Nursing. The first phase of the project included interviewing former and present members of the SVVNA, including physicians, nurses, administrators, and patients. The students also collected and assembled information from newspaper stories, pictures, and office records that depicted the 50-year history of the SVVNA. In the second phase of the project, the students wrote and designed a booklet that highlighted the history of the organization; they also prepared a videotape describing trends in nursing and home health care. The booklet was a special edition to the organization's annual report, celebrating its 50-year history. This undertaking is a dynamic example of a true collaborative Service-learning project between the College and the community. Most noteworthy is the fact that due to its complexity and commitment of time and resources, this type of work is typically not undertaken at a junior college level or even a baccalaureate level.

**Chattahoochee Technical College**
- Students in English classes conducted research and collected video oral histories as part of an immigration project.
- Early Childhood Education students conducted research and then designed brochures and resources for parents.
- Allied Health students planned and carried out a week-long health fair for the college community.

**Kingwood College**
- History students researched and collected video oral histories to preserve the legacy of a poor African-American mill town being threatened by commercial development.
- Biology students partnered with high school students using hands-on activities to teach K-6 children the principles of everyday biotechnology.
- Graphic Arts students assisted nonprofit organizations in designing informational brochures and advertisements.
- Business students practiced their international business relations skills by serving as conversation partners with ESL students improving their English fluency.

**Northern New Mexico Community College**
- Chicano History and Humanities students researched and collected video oral histories of local elders, focusing on the influence of outside groups on the environment, ecology, landscape, and lifestyles of Northern New Mexico and its people.
- Students in a Family System course created booklets featuring services, opportunities, and agencies that meet the needs of local families.

**Western Wisconsin Technological College**
- Sociology students worked with members of a LaCrosse's Hmong population to document the immigrant experience and develop campus wide celebrations honoring their language, history, and customs. Students' reflections on this project indicated an increased self-awareness of cultural bias and misunderstanding, leading to greater tolerance and acceptance.

**Kingsborough's S-L program was piloted in two courses within the Department of Behavioral Sciences during the Fall 2006 semester and by all accounts was successful in terms of student outcomes and faculty satisfaction.**

**If you are interested in incorporating S-L into your course(s) or would like to find out more about the program, please contact Genéa Stewart at 718-368-5656 or email genea.stewart@kbcc.cuny.edu.**