

# Service Learning Program

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The Service Learning Program is a teaching and learning methodology that partners academic instruction with experiential community service through a critical learning lens and a great strategy for anti-racist and culturally responsive teaching. Each semester approximately 60 courses at MiraCosta offer in-person and virtual service opportunities with campus and local non-profit organizations. Students work with their instructors and Service Learning and Volunteer Center staff to find meaningful service opportunities that relate to what they are learning in the classroom, democracy, or their academic and career pathways. Community-based placements are offered both in person and virtually.

Critical service learning requires that students examine the diverse and cultural perspectives as a means to examine their own agency and increase their social and cultural capital. A critical component of service learning is self-reflection; this provides students with an opportunity to meaningfully connect course content and the structures of inequality within our society. These experiences serve as vehicles that encourage students to think and develop their own counter-stories to historical ideologies that contribute to systemic oppression and the status quo. Service learning is not a volunteer opportunity and rejects ideologies of "saviorism" and "charity" as a means for academic learning and civic engagement.

Placements for service learning must be pre-approved by the Service Learning and Volunteer Center and include youth programs, conservation efforts, programs that address homelessness and hunger, senior services, child development programs, social services organizations, museums and arts programs, after school programs, and literacy programs as well as many other opportunities within K-12 grade public schools and non-profit organizations. Students can earn a certificate of participation in Service Learning when they complete 15 hours at one site for one course. For a list of approved community partners, go to the Service Learning Community Partners List website at [hub.miracosta.edu/servicelearningpartners](http://hub.miracosta.edu/servicelearningpartners). Students can also take advantage of the Volunteer Certificate of Achievement offered through Sociology to jump start their academic and career path. This certificate of achievement is a great tool for students looking to work in non-profit organizations, public health, community engagement, social services, case management, education, and government agencies.

Through these community placements, students apply classroom knowledge to everyday situations and real problems. They gain practical 21st century employability skills that can help them explore or confirm possible career paths. Students are encouraged to mention their service learning experiences when they apply for scholarships or complete transfer applications, professional portfolios, or resumes.

Students who participate in service become more civically aware of the value and power of their own voice. Students have reported that these experiences affirm their career paths, provide job opportunities, and increase their cultural and social capital. Students who are pursuing careers in education, public health/nutrition, the non-profit sector, social work, government, racial justice, or any service-minded career should consider taking courses with instructors who offer service learning. For more information about the program, including its courses and community partners, students should visit the program's website.

## Volunteer Program

Students who are not enrolled in service learning courses can participate in the Volunteer Program, a co-curricular opportunity for students to engage in their campus and local community through volunteerism and civic engagement. Clubs and Associated Student Government are also great ways to earn volunteer hours! Students can earn certificates of volunteerism, also known as service awards. Both service learning and volunteer opportunities are perfect ways to integrate cultural competencies and learn about 21st century skills for career paths, and they lend themselves to learning about social issues and democracy. These experiences can be applied to the student's resume as well as transfer and scholarship applications. Students can earn two certificates of participation: MiraCosta Service Award (50-99 hours) or MiraCosta Presidential Service Award (100+ hours). For additional one-time volunteer opportunities, students can visit the monthly calendar of volunteer opportunities or check out the list of local community organizations for ongoing service opportunities at [miracosta.edu/student-services/servicelearning](http://miracosta.edu/student-services/servicelearning).

## Benefits of Critical Service Learning and Volunteer Programs

- ▶ Apply course content through "real world" experiences
- ▶ Apply critical thinking and reflection for personal growth and development
- ▶ Increase cultural capital and respect for diverse perspectives
- ▶ Apply these experiences to your resume, transfer applications, and scholarships
- ▶ Increase social capital and awareness of your community and its resources
- ▶ Explore and confirm career paths, and network with community professionals and field experts
- ▶ Acquire 21st century employability and collaborative skills
- ▶ Experience ethical reasoning, civic engagement, democracy, and action