The Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center develops service-learning, community-based participatory research, and service opportunities for UW students that sustain reciprocal partnerships, deepen learning, advance civic leadership, and contribute to our greater community.
Overview

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the University of Washington Carlson Center worked to connect 2,934 students in 98 courses to service-learning opportunities.

- Students worked with **more than 450 community partners**, engaging in a wide variety of non-profit and public sector activities.
- Students completed over **58,680 hours**\(^1\) of service through their service-learning courses.
- The estimated net worth of student service hours totaled **$1,331,449.20**\(^2\).

The number of students participating in service learning represents a strong continuation of the number of students participating in the 2011-2012 year. It is representative of the consistent increase of capacity and utilization of Carlson Center opportunities since 1995.

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\(^1\) Assuming each student completes 20 hours (the minimum service-learning requirement)

\(^2\) Independent Sector estimates an hour of volunteer service in Washington state to be worth $22.69
Service Learning Assessment

To continue to improve the experience of service-learning for our students, the Carlson Center administers a survey to all of our service-learners at the end of each quarter to evaluate the performance of the Carlson Center, community partners, and the service-learning course experience as a whole. For the 2012-2013 academic year 62.7% (n=1839) of students who participated in service-learning responded to the survey. An overwhelming 95.97% recommended service learning for their fellow students. Our data was collected via an online survey distributed to all service-learning participants after the completion of each service-learning course. Questions were in either yes/no or Likert-scale format, or provided space for qualitative information about the students’ experience. Questions were divided into sections that focused on academic course and service-learning integration, Carlson Center performance, experience with their community partner organization, and a qualitative section on overall experience.

Service-Learning Courses

Students participated in 98 service learning classes over the course of the 2012-2013 academic year. Courses ranged through all levels of undergraduate academics and included a diverse representation of fields of study. Service learning placements were intentionally matched to course-content prior to students selecting their placements.

![Student Satisfaction with Service-Learning/Course Material Integration](image)

Student Satisfaction with Service-Learning/Course Material Integration

Service-learning experience will have an impact on my future academic and career choices.
Believe more courses at the University of Washington should incorporate service-learning.
Satisfied with the inclusion of service-learning in this course.
Service helped me understand the relevance of this course's subject matter in my everyday life.
Learned more in this class than if there was no service experience.

Figure 1: n=1834
Strengths that were repeatedly cited by students centered around the opportunity for reflection that is built into the service-learning experience. By combining service-learning with the classroom experience, students felt they were able to walk away from their class with a more complete understanding of how concepts function in a real-world setting, and build a personal context for making connections between theory and practice.

_You learn a lot about yourself and it is really helpful to see that course materials are very relevant. It’s so much fun and it’s great to form a connection with the people you are volunteering for. You can really see that you are making a difference._

–Student, Anthropology 150: Culture and Human Rights

_Service-learning helps to take aspects of the class and incorporate them into everyday life while also expanding social networks between individuals around the same topics._

-Student, Environmental Policy 385: World Food Politics.
Community Organizations

Community organizations that offered service-learning opportunities represented a wide variety of clientele and service methods. Most students signed up for service opportunities with community organizations identified by the Carlson Center, with a few students identifying self-placement opportunities with organizations within which they already had a connection.

Figure 2: N=1835

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the overall service-learning experience provided by their placement organizations. Many students reported that they were interested in continuing as volunteers at their placement organizations after the completion of their service learning course, and 15.2% students identified increased community involvement as either their primary motivation or greatest learning achievement of their service-learning experience.
Awesome experience. Aside from being a walking distance from class, the organization of University District Youth Center allows volunteers to become close with staff and clients due to the intimate environment. This means that one is able to see the change of clients through time as well as the impact that you have made as a volunteer.

–Student, Sociology 270: Social Problems

My time spent during service-learning was a lot better than I thought it would be. At the beginning of the course, I wasn’t looking forward to volunteering because I thought it would take time away from my schoolwork. My opinion changed due to the people I was working with. The staff at Seattle Union Gospel Mission are wonderful people.

–Student, English 121E: Writing as a Force for Social Change

Working with the Carlson Center

The Carlson Center works to facilitate the entire service-learning experience. Of the 1839 respondents, **32% of students contacted the Carlson Center by phone, email, or in person** (589 students). Students who contacted the Carlson Center generally had a more positive experience with the Carlson Center, and found
communications from the Carlson Center about their service-learning placements more useful.

![Bar chart showing student satisfaction with the Carlson Center](image)

**Figure 3: N=1839**

![Bar chart showing student satisfaction with the Carlson Center](image)

**Student Satisfaction with the Carlson Center**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Students who did not Contact the Carlson Center</th>
<th>Students who Contacted the Carlson Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the overall support I received from the Carlson Center throughout the quarter.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails sent throughout the quarter from the Carlson Center were informative.</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation by the Carlson Center during the first week of class was valuable.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing student satisfaction with the Carlson Center](image)

**Service-learning is a good way to ensure that students have resources to get involved with the community. If I hadn’t had access to the Carlson Center I would have been at a loss as to find out when, where, and how I could serve my community.**

-Student, General Studies 344: How can I help?: An Introduction to Service and Community in Seattle

At the very least, service-learning is an opportunity to pad a resume. But in a better, more realistic way, service-learning is a chance to learn new skills, interact with people outside of your normal routine, and effectively contribute to a cause greater than yourself. If someone has time in their schedule, I highly recommend they work with the Carlson Center to connect with a cause they care about.

-Student, Environment and Philosophy 416: Ethics of Climate Change

Most students credited the Carlson Center with playing a key role in connecting them to new opportunities and giving crucial assistance in locating a wide range of service opportunities.
Room for Growth

Generally, responses to surveys highlighted several areas where there is room for growth.

- Logistical difficulties in getting to and from service-learning sites.
- A general trend that highlighted lower satisfaction among participants in 100-level courses and rising satisfaction among participants in higher-level courses. *(Below)*
- Lower satisfaction with informational emails sent out from the Carlson Center after the initial orientation presentation. *(See figure 3)*

### Student Satisfaction by Course Level

- My service-learning experience in this course will have an impact on my future academic and career choices.
- Based on my experience in this course, I believe more courses at the University of Washington should incorporate a service-...
- I was satisfied with the inclusion of service-learning in this course.
- My service experience helped me to understand the relevance of this course’s subject matter in my everyday life.
- I have learned more in this class than I would have if I had not participated in a service experience.
Would you Recommend Service-Learning?

95.97% of respondents would recommend service learning to another student. Students found value in service-learning for a variety of different reasons. Among the most popular were the experience of community involvement, influence and skill-building for future careers, and adding real world context to course material.

![Reasons for Recommending Service-Learning](image)

Figure 4: N=1462
Final Thoughts

Students report that the service-learning program administered by the Carlson Center offers a successful entry point into community involvement for almost all of its participants. Students felt that service-learning offered them valuable context and experience that correlated well with their course material. Student comments largely reflect that the experience was both personally rewarding and enhanced their understanding of theoretical course material.

Service-learning allows you to reflect on your own role within the concepts discussed in class. The interactions with others teach you a lot and you learn lessons that can be applied in multiple aspects of life.

-Student, Gender & Women’s Studies/Psychology 357: Psychobiology of women

My experience with service-learning was a fantastic opportunity that not only allowed me to gain more knowledge about the course I was taking, but inspired me to consider my goals for the future. After working with my service-learning organization over the term, this is an organization that I cannot wait to continue working with in order to make a difference in the community.

-Student, Geography 371: Hunger and Agricultural Development
Appendix

Questions from student evaluation survey

Carlson Center Questions

After the initial class presentation by the Carlson Center, did you contact the Carlson Center or come into the Carlson Center office? (Yes or No)

Communication from the Carlson Center staff (via email, phone or in person) was helpful. (Rank 1-5)

The Carlson Center was effective in problem solving my service-learning position. (Rank 1-5)

The presentation by the Carlson center during the first week of class was valuable. (Rank 1-5)

Emails sent throughout the quarter from the Carlson Center were informative. (Rank 1-5)

I was satisfied with the overall support I received from the Carlson Center throughout the quarter. (Rank 1-5)

Community Organization Questions

Was your service-learning site a Self Placement? (Yes or No)

Select the Name of your service-learning organization (Select from list)

The orientation/training at my service-learning site from the supervisor was useful. (Rank 1-5)

There were ample opportunities to contribute significantly to the mission of the organization. (Rank 1-5)

The supervision from the organization while on site was adequate. (Rank 1-5)

There was strong communication from the organization supervisor/staff while on and off the site. (Rank 1-5)

I believe that the Carlson Center should continue to partner with this organization. (Rank 1-5)

I was satisfied with the volunteer portion of my service-learning experience. (Rank 1-5)
Course Questions

For how many classes did you participate in service-learning during this quarter? (1 or 2)

In which service-learning course were you enrolled? (Select from list)

More courses at the University of Washington should incorporate a service-learning component. (Rank 1-5)

My service experience helped me to understand the relevance of this course's subject matter in everyday life. (Rank 1-5)

I have learned more in this class than I would have if I had not participated in a service experience. (Rank 1-5)

I was satisfied with the inclusion of service-learning in this course. (Rank 1-5)

My service experience will have an impact on my future academic and career choices. (Rank 1-5).

Other Questions

Do you have any additional comments regarding your experience with the Carlson Center, your volunteer site, or your course?

Would you recommend service-learning to another student? (Yes or No)

Why or why not, and what would you tell them about service-learning?

Can the Carlson Center contact you to further discuss your service-learning experience? (Yes or No)