
Service Learning Basics

APU Mission Statement

Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs in higher education that encourages students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life.

Service Learning and the Cornerstones

Service learning connects the four Cornerstones. Service learning builds *community* by developing positive, reciprocal relationships between APU and the local private and public sectors in order to enhance *scholarship* of both faculty and students through *service* activities, which integrate faith in *Christ* with service and learning.

What is Service Learning?

Service learning is different from charity or volunteerism in that it is a reciprocal effort. Both the server and those being served are teaching and learning during their interaction. The community is seen as a teacher by providing the student with tangible experiences, discussions, and observation related to course content. The student contributes to the community by providing services, knowledge, energy, and ideas. In a true service learning model, the community, the students, and the professor are partners in the learning process.

Service learning is at its root an experientially based teaching method, which combines classroom pedagogy with community action as an integrated aspect of the course. Service learning gives students the opportunity to test and evaluate academic theories in real life settings. Students gain a larger perspective for the context of course materials which they are studying, and those subjects become more dynamic and real because of their experiences and observations.

Service learning is an academic process. Academic activities and discussions provide the knowledge and personal reflection, which turn volunteer opportunities into learning experiences. In this model, the community provides the students with pathways to academic discovery. Azusa Pacific professor Dr. Richard Slimbach writes, "At their best, Service Learning experiences put abstract classroom concepts into concrete form and provide meaningful opportunities to test and refine theories while helping to meet basic community needs."

Service Learning Is a Method:

- Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs.

- That is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the service activity.
- That provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities.
- That enhances what is taught in school by extending student beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

(Source: The National and Community Service Act of 1990)