

Student Guide to the Academic Civic Engagement Experience



ACT Center

Carleton College

Sayles Hill • 1 North College Street • Northfield, MN 55057

<http://apps.carleton.edu/collab/civic/>

*Material adapted from the University of Minnesota's Career and Community Learning Center

What is academic civic engagement?

Academic civic engagement is the relationship between an academic institution and its community, both on-campus and off-campus. To quote from "Service Matters," National Campus Compact, 1996, "higher education has a responsibility to develop the next generation of active citizens, and campuses must be good citizens in their own communities. When a campus achieves both these aims they are what we call a truly 'engaged campus.'" Academic civic engagement involves three main areas:

- **Community-Based Learning**—Academic work that includes a community as a site for observation (and reflection) and community members as subjects for such observation. Examples: students in an educational studies course may be asked to observe a public school classroom; students in an environmental studies class may visit a local dairy farm and explore question of farm production; alternate terms include "field education."
- **Community-Based Research**—Academic work that uses a community as a site for study and community members as subjects for such study. Examples: students in an anthropology class may be asked to observe interactions among members of a Carleton sports team; students in a literature class may be asked to interview a local senior citizen to construct a memoir.
- **Service-Learning**—Is both a teaching method and a learning process that combines community service and academic learning. It is rooted in academic and focuses on critical thinking, reflective thinking, civic responsibility, commitment to the community, personal and career growth, and an understanding of larger social issues. It meets a community-identified need and contributes to a positive change in the community.

Why am I getting credit for volunteering?

Your professor is not giving you academic credit for the time you spend working with an organization: you are receiving credit for the learning connected to your experience in the community. Academic civic engagement is different from volunteering, where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient. Think of your experience as a text you are learning from, but instead of reading it, you are living it. Unless you are able to articulate and connect the theories you learned from your course texts, from lectures, or from your experience in the community to the course concepts in an acceptable way to your professor, you will not get credit for your work. Typical volunteering does not have a direct link to your academic courses, academic civic engagement does!

Benefits of academic civic engagement

- Provides opportunities to connect theory to practice and help you gain a deeper understanding of course topics
- Gives you an opportunity to work with a diverse range of people
- Challenges you to gain greater understanding of economic, political, and cultural structures in society
- Helps you to examine your values, attitudes, and beliefs by engaging you in new environments
- Sharpens creative problem-solving abilities, collaboration skills, and other important leadership skills
- Expands your personal and professional networks
- Allows you to gain an understanding of other cultures and how an individual's own culture has shaped his/her worldview
- Fosters respect and appreciation for multiculturalism, economic, and environmental diversity

Getting Started

The information provided in this guide is general information. However, each course incorporating academic civic engagement will differ greatly. Your professor will have the best knowledge and information for you.

Speak with your professor first

- In most cases, your professor will have the information you need to begin your project

Your first phone contact with the organization

- Identify yourself as a Carleton College student from xxxx academic civic engagement course.
- Let them know that you have been referred by your professor to contact their organization.
- Let them know why you are interested in working there during the trimester.
- Make sure to have your calendar available so you can set up an initial meeting time to get oriented to the organization.
- Make sure you know where the organization is located.

Before your first visit

- Research your organization and learn the history of why this organization exists.

Your first visit to the organization

- Set up meeting times for the trimester and complete any paperwork required of the organization—Bring your calendar.
- Learn your organization's policies and procedures.
- Let your supervisor know when you have mid-terms, finals, or when you will be gone on breaks.
- Ask about the history and mission of the organization so you can put your work in context.

Your responsibilities

- Take your time and work seriously! Approach your position as you would any job; arrive on-time and prepared to work.
- Never report to your organization under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Expect uncertainty at first. Your level of comfort will increase as your relationship with the community progresses.
- Maintain a positive attitude and keep things in perspective, no position is 100% exciting and challenging.
- Deal with problems and concerns as they arise—seek guidance from your site supervisor or professor.
- Inform your site visitor at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting.

Ethics, Safety Issues, and Avoiding Risks

Ethical Issues

Remember organizational confidentiality applies when discussing the individual(s) as a part of class discussion or a written assignment: change the individual's name; eliminate identifying characteristics (where parents work, identifiable physical characteristics, where the individual lives, etc.): suppress details about personal information that has been disclosed—for instance, you might state that the individual has a history of abuse by a family member, but details about who, when, and where should be kept confidential. If you are working with human subjects, you may need to go through the process of the institutional review board at Carleton. This process can take some time, so be sure to start this process early in the term. Ask

your professor if you need to go through this process. A more detailed explanation can be found via the dean of the college office: <http://apps.carleton.edu/governance/irb/>

If you are working with people/children/clients/patients, etc, do not reveal or discuss information about them without permission from the professional for who you are working. Discuss disclosures from them only with your agency supervisor. Such examples include: 1) if the individual has threatened to physically harm another person; 2) if the individual had threatened to physically harm his/her self; 3) if the individual has disclosed physical or sexual abuse/neglect on the part of a caretaker or other professional. In all of these cases you should report the incident to your supervisor. This is most likely mandated by Minnesota State Law.

Take Precautions to avoid risks and uncomfortable situations

- Be patient with working with children; discipline is not your role.
- Respect the privacy of individuals you are working with in the community.
- Respect people's boundaries.
- Respect your own privacy.
- Don't expose others, especially children, to illness.
- Children will look up to you, be careful about what you saw and do while you are working with them.
- Never make promises or commitments to people at the organization that neither you nor the organization can keep.
- Report any incidents, real or perceived, which make you feel uncomfortable.
- Don't offer a client a ride in your personal vehicle unless authorized to do so by the organization.
- Do not give your phone number or address to non-staff members you are working with in the community.
- Document in writing any accidents that occur while working in the community organization.
- You are not required to participate in an activity that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, however, you should discuss such situations with your site supervisor.

Transportation

Within Northfield

- Walking
- Bikes
 - Your own
 - ACT Bikes can be reserved at the front desk of Campus Activities, Sayles-Hill 150. This is also where you check them out and get the lock keys.
- Cars
 - Your own
 - Your friend's car (You will need to fill out and return a waiver to your professor)
- Northfield Transit
 - Carleton and St. Olaf have arranged for Northfield Transit to provide students with daytime transportation services between the colleges and to other locations within the city limits of the City of Northfield during the academic year. Students may ride free with a current student ID. Students must call at least 2 hours in advance. Call 507-645-7250.

Beyond Northfield

- Cars
 - Your own
 - Your friend's car (You will need to fill out and return a waiver to your professor)
 - The College has a limited number of cars and mini-vans available for use on authorized trips. These vehicles may be driven only by college-approved drivers. College vehicles are not to be

used for personal reasons. Student groups must obtain authorization prior to reserving vehicles. Authorization forms are available in Campus Activities. Call 507-646-4443

Reflecting on your work

Reflection is an integral aspect of the academic civic engagement experience. It is the key ingredient for transforming these experiences into learning. It is basic to the process of integrating service with the academic concepts presented in the classroom. In order to maximize your learning experience, reflection should occur both in and out of the classroom. In most cases, your professor will require reflective writing as part of your coursework for the academic civic engagement project.

Ways to Reflect

- Periodically review your goals to assess how well you are meeting them.
- Discuss your experiences with other classmates, professor, and supervisor.
- Help get other involved on campus. Talk with your professors and peers about your experience.
- Keep a journal to help you reflect on your experience and learning.
- Update your resume to include your academic civic engagement learning experiences.

Reflection Questions

- Describe a person you've encountered in the community who made either a strong impression on you, either positive or negative.
- How has your understanding of the community changed as a result of your participation in this project?
- Why does the organization you are working for exist?
- How can you educate others or raise awareness about this group or social issue?
- What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
- How are your values expressed through your community work? And how you live your life?

Observation Questions

- What is the mission of the organization?
- How does the organization fulfill that mission?
- How is the organization funded?
- Who makes up the population of the organization works with?
- What are the characteristics of the client population?
- Where is the organization located?
- What does the neighborhood look like? Smell like? Sound like?
- How does the organization interact with the surrounding community?
- What resources are in the community?
- What is the proportion of paid staff to volunteers in the organization?

Ending your academic civic engagement work

- Be mindful of the commitment you made to the organization and the person(s) with who you are working.
- Schedule a meeting with your supervisor to discuss your time with the organization and what you have learned.
- Several weeks prior to the end of the trimester, remind the supervisor your time at the organization will be ending.
- **Keep in mind that you may continue working with the organization once the class has ended!**

Student Academic Civic Engagement Participant Agreement

In order for community academic civic engagement partnerships to be effective and beneficial for all parties involved, it is essential that several basic responsibilities are outlined and understood.

As a Student Academic Civic Engagement Participant, I agree to the following:

1. I will attend all meetings, orientation/training, and reflection sessions as deemed necessary by my community organization site supervisor and my professor.
2. I will be punctual, responsible, appropriate, and professional. I will notify my site supervisor in case of illness and make arrangements for any absences as far in advance as possible. I understand any absence will be noticed since community work is very relationship oriented and people depend on me to keep my commitments.
3. I will keep an accurate record of the hours that I contribute at my community organization for the course. I will turn this information in to my instructor and the ACT Center via the Community Involvement and Academic Civic Engagement Hourly Log.
4. I will respect and follow confidentiality, ethical practice, and safety guidelines as outlined in the "Student Guide to the Academic Civic Engagement Experience."
5. I will adhere to the rules, regulations, and other requirements of the community organization in accordance with city, state, and federally mandated policies and procedures.
6. I will keep in mind that I am representing not only myself, but also other current and future Carleton College students while I am working in the community.
7. I will treat the individuals I come into contact with at my community organization with respect by challenging myself to keep an open mind, by examining and questioning my values and beliefs, and especially while interacting with people different from myself in terms of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.
8. I will notify my community organization supervisor, professor, and the ACT Center of any problems as soon as they arise.
9. I understand that there are risks involved in doing community work and that Carleton College does not assume any responsibility for injuries or loss to my personal property while I am participating in a community organization. I understand I should obtain health and/or personal property insurance if I do not have it.
10. I will complete an evaluation of the community academic civic engagement experience, and provide a copy of this evaluation to my professor and the ACT Center at the end of the term, if applicable.

Student Participation:

I have read and understand the above agreement and I agree to complete _____ hours per week, or _____ total hours, between the dates of _____ to _____ in the fulfillment of the community academic civic engagement objectives described above and to meet my academic requirements of this academic civic engagement experience.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Academic Civic Engagement Transportation Waiver

(This form should be used if a student is using another student's car to transport themselves to and/or from a community site. Please return to your professor once completed.)

I hereby authorize _____ to use my car
(please print student's name)

for transportations to and/or from his/her community site for the Carleton College

_____ academic civic engagement course during
(please print class title and professor)

Fall / Winter / Spring Term, 20____.
(circle one)

My vehicle description is:

Year: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____

By signing below:

- I acknowledge that this is my personal decision, made of my own free will and without coercion,
- I acknowledge that by granting use of this vehicle to the above-named student, my personal insurance is liable for damages of any kind that may arise during its use, and
- I acknowledge that Carleton College is not liable in this matter.

Owner's Printed Name

Owner's Signature

Date