Overview

“CSL has forced me to get out into the community, volunteering at different agencies. I have seen how non-profit agencies work and how communities work for social justice.” – Former CSL Student

The School of Social Work established the Community Service Learning (CSL) program as a part of the Bachelor of Social Welfare (BASW) curriculum several years ago. Now a required course, CSL provides undergraduate students with a valuable opportunity to bridge classroom content with “in-the-field” experiences.

CSL presents students with a unique opportunity to develop a better understanding of why one might choose social work as a field of study and it is an opportunity for students to explore the world of social services in a hands-on way. As students engage in service learning, they will hone their critical thinking skills, advocate for diversity and multiculturalism in support of social justice, while deliberating upon the political, historical and cultural context of social work practice. Students will have the opportunity to learn from community-based social services professionals and the communities they are working within. For many BASW students, the CSL internship is their first experience working in a social service setting. Accordingly, it is a chance for students to explore areas of interest in the social work field and possible career paths prior to a formal practicum.

Role of Service-Learning in the Course

In the CSL course, students can choose from an array of social service agencies based on their own interests. These community service placements serve as the core element of this course, with the aim of connecting hands-on experience with social welfare coursework and concepts. Students are continually encouraged to critically reflect on their observations, personal growth, and learning through in-class and online discussions, weekly assignments, and monthly meetings with their agency supervisor.

“CSL has strongly supported my learning this year by giving me a chance to apply everything I learn in class to real life situations at my [placement]. This experience has definitely strengthened the foundations of social work in me.” – Former CSL Student

Assignments Related to Service-Learning

Throughout the CSL experience students will engage in critical reflection and dialogue with their peers. Students will also participate in group service projects in the local community. Additionally, students will explore professional identity development within the field of social welfare, articulating skills and attributes they have developed over the course of the year.

Expectations of CSL Agencies/Supervisors:

An agency should be able to offer an environment that is optimal for the learning of the CSL students. This includes the following:

- Develop a learning contract with the student that provides opportunities for them to actively participate in agency work. Student roles can range from micro (direct interaction with clients) to macro
(administrative tasks, planning, organizing), and should strive to meet the goals of both the student and the agency;
â€¢ Provide the student with sufficient orientation/training and supervision (we encourage monthly meetings as a minimum) during the course of the commitment; and
â€¢ Provide relevant feedback regarding studentsâ€™ work and complete evaluations of the students throughout the year.

Expectations of CSL Students:
â€¢ Students are expected to complete approximately 40-60 hours per quarter and develop a regular schedule with the CSL agency;
â€¢ Students are expected to be proactive in their learning at the CSL agency and to effectively communicate with the agency supervisor to meet their learning goals as well as conduct themselves in a respectful and professional manner.