

Community-based learning refers to a broad spectrum of curricular activity that connects students to communities for the purpose of deepening learning. Community-based learning can include a variety of modes, including but not limited to service learning or volunteering; collaborative projects with community partners; clinical education, student teaching, and internships; bringing community collaborators into the classroom; and study trips and immersive engagement with community experts. Across these modes, community-based learning activities further learning by: providing context for conceptual course content; providing an opportunity to apply course methods with an intent to deepen learning; and supporting critical thinking. Some community-based learning classes engage students in community activity as a component of the class; others integrate community engagement across the entire class.

Modes and Approaches to Community-Based Learning:

- **Study Trips**, including field trips, service trips, and participant observation or shadowing. Example: Students visit local museums and sites of significance related to their course, such as the Holocaust Museum in Washington and the Slave Trail in Richmond, or students studying sustainable development perform service in the Guatemalan Highlands over spring break and tie their service back to their classroom learning.
- **Student Volunteering** (also called service learning) connected back to classroom learning. Example: Students in a Spanish language class, “Spanish in the Community,” volunteer in various local Spanish-speaking communities and connect these experiences to their classroom learning, or “Justice and Civil Society” students volunteer at various nonprofits working to address local social issues.
- **Collaborative Projects with Community Partners**, including data analysis and research for community partners, producing community-engaged creative works (such as documentaries, murals, etc.), organizational studies and consulting, and sharing course material in schools, prisons, etc. Example: Students in a course called “The Urban Crisis” produce documentary videos on local issues and screen the films for the public, or “Statistics for Business and Economics” students analyze data for local nonprofits.
- **Bringing Guest Speakers into the Classroom.** Example: Providers and patients from a community agency visit and present to a Neuroscience class.
- **Clinical Education, Internships, and Student Teaching.** Example: Law students complete supervised work in a pro bono clinic, or Education students regularly observe and student teach in a local school.