

## What is a Community Engaged Scholarship Course?

*Community Engaged Scholarship describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.*

*– Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

Community engagement makes student learning more relevant and challenges students to use their knowledge and skills to address real, complex, community concerns. Assigned community engagement activities facilitate learning of course objectives and also invite reflection on students' sense of purpose and civic responsibility.

Some Community Engaged Scholarship involves direct, in-person service individuals in the community, for example, tutoring a child, preparing tax forms with low-income clients, or assisting therapists who treat people with physical disabilities. Community Engaged Scholarship can also be indirect, in which students produce a deliverable or conduct research for organizations that serve the community. Examples include writing grants, conducting program evaluations, doing policy analysis, or developing an advocacy campaign strategy.

## Link to Contents

This Student Guide to Community Engaged Scholarship addresses the following topics:

[Frequently Asked Questions about Community Engaged Scholarship Courses](#)

[Checklist for Community Engaged Scholarship Courses](#)

[Tips for Reaching Out to Community Partner Organizations](#)

[Reporting Service Activities: GWserves](#)

[Keeping Yourself and Others Safe](#)

[Gender-Based Harassment On-site or within the GW Community](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions about Community Engaged Scholarship Courses

### **How is a Community Engaged Scholarship course different from volunteering or an internship?**

Community Engaged Scholarship links a community-based service initiative to the intended educational outcomes of the course. The course also includes a reflective component in which students think critically about issues related to the public good, equity, and the role of the active citizen in creating a just community. Volunteers may commit to addressing community needs, but their work does not have to be explicitly tied to one or more learning outcomes. Interns may be required to demonstrate mastery of learning through their applied experience, but their initiatives may or may not be focused on issues of community wellbeing.

### **What other community service opportunities are there at GW?**

The Honey W. Nashman Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service provides far too many opportunities for community engagement to list here. Visit <https://serve.gwu.edu> for more information about service programs like engageDC and GW Art Reach, earning Federal Work-Study through service, service trips during spring break, and grants available to support your social innovation project ideas.

### **Are background checks required by community partners in order to serve?**

Many community members who GW students serve, such as children, senior citizens, or people who are incarcerated, are considered to be “vulnerable populations.” It is quite common for service organizations, schools and youth development programs to require a background check for anyone providing services with these populations. Be sure to ask your community partner for information about background checks and allow time to complete the process.

Some community partners require *DCPS Clearance*, which means they align their background checks with the DC Public School process. This clearance is valid for two years, and includes TB testing and fingerprinting, all of which can still be done during physical distancing. The Nashman Center provides [step-by-step instructions for the DCPS Clearance process](#).

## Checklist for Community Engaged Scholarship Courses

### Planning Phase

□ **Familiarize yourself with the goal of the community engagement assignment in your course.** Review the objectives and requirements of your service assignment in the course syllabus. Be sure you understand the outcomes intended for your community partner and the learning outcomes for students.

□ **Identify one or more community partner organizations to work with.**

Your instructor will probably provide a list of community partner organizations for you to choose from. These opportunities have been identified as good a fit for the course and usually represent a standing campus-community partnership your instructor would like to continue to honor.

If your instructor indicates that you are responsible for finding an organization to work with, the [Nashman Center's GWserves platform](#) can help you. Use the "explore" tab to search service organizations by cause, location, or other criteria.

Be certain you are clear about your instructor's intentions for the service project and for your learning, so you will be able to communicate the course objectives to your community partner organization when setting up your project.

□ **Contact the Community Partner.**

We recommend that you call AND email the organization. Let the volunteer coordinator know what kind of experience you're looking for and what you hope to learn from it. Listen carefully to understand what the agency most needs from you. **Allow time for this stage – get started as soon as possible.** You may need to contact multiple organizations before finding a fit for your course. A sample script is provided in this guide.

□ **Complete any necessary training or background checks.**

Most agencies will require some volunteer paperwork. Some, particularly those involving direct contact with children or other special populations, may require additional steps such as a police background check, or special training.

□ **Complete the Online Waiver and Release Agreement Form (shared with you on GWserves).**

If you will be travelling off-campus for service, complete this form before you begin service.

## Action Phase

It is important to remember that you are representing not only yourself, but also George Washington

University. These guidelines are a minimum of how you can best do that.

- **Be professional.** Treat your service as you would treat paid employment. Perform the duties and responsibilities assigned to you in a complete and professional manner as if you were an employee. If you are going to be late or are unable to attend please call your contact person as soon as possible.
- **Maintain confidentiality** of clients and employees at your community site. Anything you share about your experience there should not reveal any identifying information of the people there. If you ever have questions about what information can and cannot be shared, ask about the policy.
- **Be punctual.** Arrive on time. Tardiness is unprofessional and inconvenient to the site supervisor who is counting on your help. Set a schedule with your supervisor for your service and stick to it. If you have to make changes, communicate well in advance with your supervisor.
- **Follow a work ethic.** Remember your agreement to serve is a commitment to the community partner. You will establish relationships with the community partner's clients and they will look forward to seeing you. Community partner staff will value the service you provide and count on your help.
- **Be presentable, even if serving virtually.** Clothing should be neat, professional and appropriate for the duties required. Ask whether the organization has a specific dress code and meet it.
- **Communicate.** Ask questions if you aren't clear about how to do your tasks. If you have any concerns, communicate them before the situation becomes unmanageable.
- **Be personal.** Within the bounds of appropriateness, get to know the people around you (staff, other volunteers, clients of the organization).
- **Be observant and mindful** of how you can link your service experience to your course topics. Do ask questions of those around you in order to learn, but exercise empathy and respect in how you ask them. Avoid giving the impression that you are negatively judging another's experience or decisions.
- **Transportation.** The best and most economical way to travel to your site is likely not via Uber. In our annual surveys, students note that Metro and buses are cheaper, often quicker and easily access most service sites. You will be glad to get to know DC well enough to use the same public

transportation options that its residents do. Smartphone apps like Citymapper are available to help plan trips and predict bus/train arrival times.

- **Keep track of your service activities**, including the amount of time served and what was accomplished and report it to your instructor and community partner. At GW we use the [Nashman Center's GWserves platform](#) for this reporting, described below under the heading, *Reporting Service Activities*.

### Finishing Phase

As you wrap-up the semester, there are a wealth of opportunities for you to keep in mind.

- **Complete course assignments, weaving together your service experience with your academic learning.**

It is helpful to think of your service with the community as being more similar to a text than an assignment. You do not receive points or grades for reading your textbook or for completing service hours, but for completing exams or papers that demonstrate what you have learned from them. Reflection activities and course assignments will be assigned by your instructor to help meet the objectives of your particular course. You will do well if you are able to demonstrate an ability to articulate how your service experiences and the topics discussed in your course integrate and inform each other.

- **Consider your eligibility for a service award**

The Honey W. Nashman Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service recognizes students for their community engagement work through [service awards and graduation cords](#).

All service work toward these recognitions must be reported through the GWserves platform, so we encourage you to also use GWserves to report community engagement you do outside of your course expectations, either with a student group or on your own. These reports do not need to be shared with your course instructors. For example, report activities such as:

- Direct volunteer service like mentoring or doing yard work for senior citizens
- Advocacy and activism activities like attending marches, creating multi-media campaigns to educate the public, or giving testimony to a local government agency
- Participating in political processes like registering people to vote or canvassing for a political party

The GWserves platform lets you view a record of all your reported community engagement activities you have submitted, click the drop-down menu at the top right under "Hi your name" and choose "summary."

□ [Submit a Paper for the Julian Clement Chase Prize through the GW University Writing Program](#)

If your course assignments included a scholarly paper that is about Washington, DC, or how a social issue is affecting the DC community, we encourage you to submit it to the University Writing Program for their [Julian Clement Chase Prize](#) (submissions due May 24th).

□ [Submit a Paper for Publication](#)

Several undergraduate journals, like the [Undergraduate Journal for Service-learning, Leadership and Social Change](#) focus on community engaged scholarship and accept papers that are project descriptions, case studies, research, and reflections. [Link here](#) for a list of journals and their submission information.

□ [Continue to Serve Beyond the Course](#)

Many students may find that their ability to make a positive difference in the community is helpful for their own well-being. If you would like to continue to serve, you have several options:

- Continue to serve in the same capacity. Communicate with your community partner about continuing to serve with them beyond the timeframe of the course.
- Apply to serve through a [Nashman Center Program](#). SMARTDC, engageDC, and Jumpstart are three examples of Nashman Center programs that engage students in the community, either voluntarily or earning Federal Work Study funding.
- If you would like to serve on your own, but with a new partner, use the “explore” tab in [GWserves](#) to look for new opportunities.

□ [Propose a Project for GWupstart Funding](#)

As you learned about the important service your community partner organization provides, you may have developed ideas for new ways to support them. Students can submit proposals requesting funding support for new social innovation initiatives through the Nashman Center’s [GW Upstart program](#). Students with relatively small projects can consider the Public Service Grant Commission. Students with larger-scale initiatives might consider the Eco-Equity Challenge, Projects for Peace, or even the Knapp Fellowship for Entrepreneurial Service-Learning.

## Tips for Reaching Out to Community Partner Organizations

Increasingly, service organizations in the community have online platforms for you to sign-up to work with them. Some of GW's partner organizations use the [GWserves](#) platform to register students to serve with them. In some cases however, you may still need to have a phone or email conversation with the organization's program manager or volunteer coordinator in order to confirm the details of your project. The following are frequently asked questions for navigating these conversations.

### Who do I talk to?

When calling a community organization, ask to speak with the contact person identified by your instructor or ask for the Volunteer Coordinator.

### When should I call?

Try to call the contact person during the times they have identified as the best time to reach them. If you must leave a message, identify yourself, why you are calling, your phone number and the best time the contact person can reach you. Be persistent in your efforts, as non-profit organizations and government agencies may be very busy providing services to the community. You might have to make SEVERAL attempts before you are able to reach your contact.

### What do I say?

Hi. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I am a student at George Washington University. As part of my involvement in *(name of course)*, I have been asked to complete a service-learning project. As part of this project, my instructor wants me to learn: *(give the main learning objective of the project)*. I would need to complete *(scope of project/number of hours/visits required)* by *(state your deadline)*. I would like to know if you have any service-learning opportunities where I might be able to help your organization while also meeting my project's requirements.

### What do I ask?

How can people serve there?

What times can I come?

What location will I be working at?

Are background checks required?

Will I be trained?

How do I get there?

What should I wear?

When can I start?

### What do we discuss at my first meeting on-site?

Collect the information needed to report your project plan to your instructor (e.g. contact person's name, title, email, and phone).

Communicate your learning objectives. Do the activities help you meet your objectives?

Determine a schedule.

Complete background checks if required by the organization.

Find out when your orientation and training will be (if applicable).

Complete required paperwork for the partner organization.

Confirm your next steps (when do you start, who do you meet, where do you go, etc.).

Confirm how to communicate moving forward

Who do you notify if you are ill and can't serve? Who do you turn to with a question about a task?

## Reporting Service Activities: GWserves

In order for your course instructor and community partner organization to confirm that you have met the agreed-upon community engagement expectations for the course, you will need to document the time spent working on your community engaged scholarship project.

[GWserves](#) is the online platform GW uses to report community engagement activities. It uses the same log-in and password as your GW email account. [A guide to using the platform](#) to report your community engagement activities is available as well.

We strongly recommend that you report all activities related to your project as you do them, rather than submitting one record at the end of the semester. This helps your instructor know that you are making steady progress, and provides an opportunity for you to share any encouraging or concerning experiences with your community partner organization. Having this on-going record will also help you remember more details about your activities and experiences, which is helpful for completing your end-of-semester reflection assignments.

### DO report

- Performing any activity assigned to you by a community partner
- Attending training or orientation activities hosted by a community partner or related organization, e.g. CPR training by the Red Cross for an assisted living center
- Meetings with a community partner to discuss your project, plan, give updates, or present results
- Planning, doing research, or preparing for activities when necessary to complete assigned tasks. In other words, you should report not only time spent presenting a report to a community partner, but also all the time spent preparing that report.
- Activities related to creating products for the community partner, e.g. grants, brochures, websites

### DO NOT report the following activities

- Traveling to/from a service site, unless the travel is part of the related activity, e.g. a tour that is part of an orientation, or supervising school children on a bus to the service site
- Time spent contacting community organizations when seeking a service project
- Reflection activities, assigned or otherwise, e.g. writing field notes or reflective journal entries
- Time spent learning the course-based skills used to complete the project.
  - For example, if you are conducting interviews for a program evaluation, the time you spend in class learning how to conduct an interview SHOULD NOT be reported. The time spent preparing to conduct the interviews, like preparing the interview questions, SHOULD be reported as time toward your service project.



## Keeping Yourself and Others Safe

These guidelines will help you have a safer and more effective experience serving with the community.

**Establish a contact person and/or site supervisor.** Know who will be working on the project with you and a phone number to reach them. Be prompt to your scheduled time and ready to work.

**Understand the need for confidentiality and boundaries.** Developing personal relationships with members of the community is rewarding, but it is important to maintain appropriate boundaries. Do not share personal information. Be prepared for others to share sensitive information. Respond respectfully. Speak with your site supervisor about their confidentiality policy. Do not share information that would reveal the identity of anyone you work with.

**Follow the organization's policies and procedures.** Be familiar with the specifics of your job. Gain a clear understanding of any rules you need to follow and take any training you might receive seriously. Also ask about any liability of which you need to be aware.

**Be aware of your environment.** The organization with which you are working has specific ways of interacting and getting things done. Be aware of these expectations and act appropriately. Do not assume you know more than the people who are there every day.

**Dress appropriately and sensibly.** Dress neatly, modestly, cleanly, and safely and do your best to blend in with the community. Wear clothing that affords you comfort, flexibility and is appropriate for the conditions you will be working under. When in doubt, ask your site supervisor.

**Avoid carrying expensive personal items.** Items such as expensive electronics, flashy jewelry and designer clothing can cause you to be identified as an outsider.

Use common sense:

- **Do not give out your home address or telephone number to the organization's clients.**
- Maintain an appropriate level of interaction with the staff and clients at the site and don't counsel clients unless you are trained to do so. Do not borrow from or lend money to anyone.
- Be aware of your instincts. Be sensitive to your own needs and limitations.
- If you feel uncomfortable, discuss it with your site supervisor, your instructor, or the Nashman Center staff.
- Don't expect to know all the answers. If faced with a question you are not familiar with try to get the answers or direct someone to the proper person that can provide an answer.
- Stay informed of issues affecting the area in which you serve.
- Take extra special precautions when going to sites at night.
- Don't leave visible items unattended while you are volunteering.
- Work and travel in pairs, if possible.
- Give the phone number of your agency and your schedule to a roommate or friend.
- Never use alcohol or drugs on site. Please respect the smoking policy of the agency.

In the event of an emergency, either On-site or in Transit:

- 1) For some emergencies your first call may be 911
- 2) Contact your site supervisor/contact person and follow the organization's protocol
- 3) Call the University Police Department (UPD): 202-994-6111
- 4) Call Amy Cohen, Nashman Center Executive Director: W#202-994-9890 C# 703-850-5708

## Gender-Based Harassment On-site or within the GW Community

Be aware of gender-based harassment policies and what forms it can take. This includes unsolicited and unwelcome sexual advances, either verbal or physical. It refers to behavior which is not welcome, personally offensive, and which debilitates morale. GW students' desire to develop authentic, trusting relationships with community agency staff and clients exists within boundaries of mutual respect. These relationships must be free from intimidating behavior, disrespectful comments, or unwanted flirting.

The George Washington University is committed to maintaining a positive environment free of any form of harassment and works to create a campus culture that fosters respect for all members of the community. If you have any concerns about gender-based harassment occurring in relationship to your service:

1. Notify your contact at the community organization (if the incident(s) occurred at the service site).
2. Notify Amy Cohen, the Nashman Center Executive Director if the incident(s) occurred on-campus: W#202-994-9890 C# 703-850-5708. Please note she has a responsibility to report incidents to GWU's Title IX office.

Title IX protects *any* person from sex-based discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived sex, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Female, male, and gender non-conforming students, faculty, and staff are protected from any sex-based discrimination, harassment or violence.

The Title IX office at George Washington University monitors overall compliance with Title IX requirements, implements campus wide sexual harassment/violence prevention and response programming, and ensures equitable access to University resources.

For more information about our efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence, please visit <http://haven.gwu.edu/title-ix-office>

To report an incident: <https://haven.gwu.edu>

If you wish to remain anonymous please call the Sexual Assault Response Consultative Team (202) 994- 7222.