

## Picking a Nonprofit Organization for CSLP

*So you'd like to participate in the Community Service-Learning Program, but you aren't sure where you should volunteer. You can do several things to ensure you pick the best site for you.*

- **Choose the type of service-learning work you would like to do:**
  - Volunteer work should relate to the course you are taking, as well as be of interest to you. It's a good idea to consult your professor in this stage to ensure that he/she would approve your site selection.
- **Know that you have many options:**
  - You can choose from many different types of sites including ones that focus on food and hunger, youth, women and gender, international and multicultural issues, GLBT, race and ethnicity, housing and homelessness, environment, Latino community, and education and literacy, among others.
- **Come to the Center for Community Engagement & Service (CCES) for assistance:**
  - The CCES has lists of DC metro area nonprofit organizations and schools, organized by different types of organizations. Please stop by Mary Graydon Center 273 for copies of any of these nonprofit directories, or find them online at <http://bit.ly/enZvJK>. You can also stop by to learn about organizations that have recently contacted us to express interest in student volunteers.
- **Explore different options of volunteer work:**
  - It's a good idea to explore three or four different sites. Look at their websites, email and/or call the organization (see the back side of this page), and find out if they would be able to facilitate your volunteer work. Learn about the types of things other volunteers have done for them in the past, and find out what kinds of projects you'd be working on during the semester. Do this early!
- **Ensure that you will be able to work 40 hours:**
  - You will want to make sure that you would be able to work at this organization for 40 hours over the course of the semester (about 4 hours per week.) The orientation, mid-semester, and end-of-semester sessions can count toward these hours.
- **Select a site, get your professor's OK, and complete the CSLP application on time:**
  - You'll want to have your site selected, application completed, and your professor's approval by the third week of the semester.

# Contacting a Nonprofit Organization: What to Say

**FIRST:** Check the website of each organization with which you might like to volunteer.

- What is the organization's goal and mission?
- How does the organization work with and benefit the community?
- Does the organization need or have opportunities for volunteers?
- Would you be interested in or able to provide the rights skills for this type of work?

**SECOND:** Email and/or Call (doing both is best.)

**Example of what to include in an email:**

Hello [name of volunteer coordinator/director],

My name is [your name], and I am a student at American University studying [your area of study]. I am writing to ask if you could use a volunteer this semester from [approximate start date] to [approximate end date]. I'd like to volunteer for about 40 hours over the course of the semester with your organization (about 4 hours per week). Forty hours of relevant community work is required for one of my classes, [name of class].

I am very interested in working with you because [describe what you found interesting on their website]. [Organization name]'s mission and work is both important and is in line with my interests. The skills and experience I could bring to your organization include [list of relevant skills, experience]. However, please let me know if the organization has other uses for me as a volunteer, and I will do my best to be flexible.

Please let me know whether [organization name] could use a volunteer. Feel free to contact me by email or phone at [phone number].

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

[Your name]

**Example of what to say when you call:**

Hello, my name is [your name], and I am a student at American University studying [your area of study]. I learned about [organization name] on your website, and I would like to volunteer with your organization, if you could use a volunteer. For my class, [class name], I am required to volunteer for 40 hours over the course of the semester at a nonprofit organization, which is about 4 hours per week. The semester lasts from [approximate start date] to [approximate end date]. Could you use a volunteer, and if so, what sorts of things would you need me to do?

**THIRD:** Follow up!

- If you do not hear from the organization within a couple of days, call again.
- Come to the Center for Community Engagement & Service (CCES) if you are having trouble, and we will try to help you make contact.