How can I get my opportunities advertised to students?

If you are working with a service learning course, CCLC will distribute the list of opportunities with organizations to the students at the beginning of the semester. Simply make sure that we have the most current information on your opportunities, and we'll do the rest. As part the service learning courses, we arrange for panel presentations within the first two weeks of the semester. You will have the opportunity to come to the class and make a “pitch” to the students about your organization. A CCLC staff member will contact you about the presentations if you are listed with a class. As part of CPS, Community Placement Service, advisors meet with students they assess what that student’s skills and interests are, and then discuss your organizations opportunities if they are a match. Again, making sure we have the most up-to-date brochures, program and staff information, and other information for your organization is important as we relay that to students. The annual Community Involvement Fair each September is a great way to connect with students. As a community partner, you are invited and offered space before other area organizations. Typically we ask you to reserve your table at the Fair sometime during the spring semester before the Fair. Additionally we can post flyers or other advertisements around our office for your organization. CLA Link, our web-based listing of internship, full-time job and volunteer opportunities, is another way. (See the CLA Link section to this manual.) We also maintain a CCLC listserv that is sent twice a month for students on the list, as well as an extensive email list for departments. If you forward what you want sent out to a CCLC staff member, we can send that on for you. There are many other ways that your organization can get the word out to students, for example Minnesota Daily ads, flyers around campus, class talks (non service learning classes), presentations to student groups, tables in Coffman Union, and more. We will try to connect you with those opportunities whenever possible, just call us for assistance.

How many hours will students work?

Typically students through service learning courses will be required to complete between 20 and 30 hours each semester. The CPS program advisors advocate for students to commit to at least two to four hours per week for at least a semester. However, if your program requires that volunteers need to be on-site for more than the typical amount of hours students work in the community from service learning classes or CPS, you should not change that to fit the students. Advertise the hours that are required and students who can commit to that timeframe will self-select.

Will students stay beyond one semester?

As you know, student schedules change from semester to semester. While juggling classes, part-time or full-time work, co-curricular activities, and more, students tend to make decisions based solely on time and how they manage that time. Even if students have a substantive and meaningful experience with your organization, they may not be able to stay beyond one semester due to schedule changes the following semester, even if they want to. You and your organization staff can do several things to help ensure students will return. First, providing meaningful and rewarding experiences is the most important step. Next, recognition is key (see the recognition section of this manual); make sure the students know that their work is valued, appreciated, and critical in fulfilling your agency’s mission. Finally, approach them with the framework that you would like to stay with your organization, speak to them long-term, discuss stories of past students who have stayed beyond one semester, and stress the value of continuity with agency clients and community members they work with. Know that having the expectation that students stay beyond a semester may not be realistic, but you can help create a culture that makes students want to stay longer.

How many students will work with us for the semester?

In our process of coordinating service learning for courses, we work with the faculty member to discuss their goals and objectives for the course. With that information we then match our community partners who best fit those objectives with that course. Students are given a list of pre-determined organizations to choose from, and at that point they self-select the best organization for them. Most students take location, time and scheduling, organization mission, and their own personal experience or passion into consideration when selecting a site. The students then contact your organization directly to make an appointment to begin their work. Because the entire process is based on the students’ selection, it is very difficult to say how many students you should anticipate working with your
organization. Many of our community partners have over 15 or 20 students per semester, while others have just one or two. If your agency has a maximum capacity that is manageable, be sure to list that in your description. If you need a large number of volunteers to keep your programs operating successfully, then be prepared to have to supplement your staffing needs by recruiting beyond the University of Minnesota students who may come to you through CCLC.

Students who learn about your organization through the CPS program will also contact you directly after their advising session. The CPS program works with students that are self-motivated, and as a result come into our office at any time during the semester. It is impossible to be able to tell you how many students you may have, as it varies so greatly. Just as with courses, students are selecting their opportunities based on many different variables. Some organizations have a large interest from students, and others less. CCLC has noted that organizations with close proximity to the University often have more interest from students, considering many students struggle with transportation issues.

When can I expect students to start?
If you refer to the academic calendar and important dates section of this manual, you can note when semesters begin and end. Typically students will call your organization to begin their work within the first three weeks of the semester, which is what we ask students to do. It is not uncommon for a few students each semester to wait much longer to begin their work. If you receive a call from one of these students, do not feel obligated to fulfill their request. If you can take them later in the semester and still work them into your program successfully, then it still works out for everyone. It is their responsibility to plan accordingly, and if they are not successful at doing so, you are not required to still accept them just because they seem very anxious about fulfilling this course requirement.

What if students don't show up, stop coming, or don't complete their hours?
While it’s frustrating, it is possible that some students will not follow through on their commitment to your organization. CCLC, faculty members, and your organization all work to instill in the students the importance of maintaining and completing their commitment, but sometimes there are students who simply do not do this. In the event that students say they are going to show up and don’t, or if they stop coming all together after coming a few times, the first thing to do is contact the student directly and ask then what happened. In most cases the circumstance can be resolved at this step. If you are unsuccessful at reaching them, they do not return your calls, or said they'd come back and don't, please contact a CCLC staff member. If the student comes to you through a service learning course, we can discuss the situation with the faculty member and perhaps resolve it that way. Regardless if they are in a class or through the CPS program, we are here to help you work most effectively and successfully with students. Even if you only want to report the issue, and not necessarily have the students return, it is important for us to keep track of these situations as they occur. Additionally, in most cases the situation can be resolved with everyone working together.

Will I need to turn in any paperwork to CCLC?
Yes. With the large numbers of students going through our programs, it is nearly impossible for us to keep track of that without your help. Most organizations have methods already in place to track their volunteers and hours, so that is not anything additional for you and your staff to do. We will ask periodically for that information. Students are also asked to chart their hours, but we have been more successful at getting that information from organizations directly. Additionally, once a year we ask organizations to complete a community partner survey and return it to us.

How can I help students be more connected to my organization?
There are infinite ways to help students be more connected to your work and mission of the organization. CCLC approaches this partnership with your organization being a co-educator in the student's learning at the University. The first step is the orientation to your organization. Give students a thorough understanding of the history, mission, successes, challenges, staff, community, and culture of your organization. Make the opportunities with your organization substantive and meaningful. Talk to your students ever time they come in; ask them questions about their experience, how it connects to their class content; solicit feedback about where they see your organization meeting it’s mission or struggling to do so. If you are able to really integrate them into the organization, students over time will feel the connection.
What if my organization can't do on-site reflection?
Everyone can do on-site reflection. While we realize that managing many volunteers, perhaps working in multiple sites, and constantly multi-tasking can make reflection challenging, reflection does not have to be a formal process. Students are reflecting on their experiences in class through discussion, writing, reading assignments, and research, but what you and the staff of your organization can offer as co-educators is something unique to their coursework. You are the experts on your organization, and as such offer a perspective they are not privy to in the classroom. Think broadly and creatively in terms of what reflection really is and how you can achieve that with your students. Also, CCLC can connect you with the faculty from service learning course. It is possible for you to even be in class or discuss with the faculty member ways you can compliment what's happening in class.

Are there events for me to attend as a community partner?
The staff at CCLC tries to build relationships among faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Therefore we coordinate events to do just that—build relationships. Each semester we offer a faculty/community partner gathering, where you can meet and talk about issues relating to co-educating students. As mentioned before, we host the annual Community Involvement Fair, which primarily students attend, but staff and faculty as well. Each spring we host our annual Recognition Event to bring together everyone who works with community involvement and service learning, honoring their hard work, dedication, and celebrating what we've accomplished. Our training and reflection series called “Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved“ is a great way for you to connect with students, staff, and faculty. Occasionally we invite you to evaluation sessions or special events addressing community issues, and you will receive that information directly through email.

Who are the students participating in service learning?
CCLC, although housed in the College of Liberal Arts, actually coordinates service learning with all colleges and departments around the University. Therefore, the students coming to your organization will have a variety of majors and areas of study. All of the courses we currently coordinate service learning for are undergraduate courses, so the students will be undergraduates. With a University this size, the diversity among students is apparent—racial, socio-economic, age, ability, and sexual orientation.

Can I get a group of students for a one-time event at my organization?
While CCLC doesn't specialize in one-time group projects, we are happy to help you connect with student groups or University organizations whenever we can. The Campus Involvement Center (CIC) can also be a good resource in connecting with students for group projects.