



LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY  
Service-Learning Student Handbook  
2009 - 2010



LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

Student Handbook  
for  
Service-Learning

2009 – 2010

Office of Service-Learning

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**La Sierra**  
UNIVERSITY



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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is Service-Learning at LSU?**

It is a way for students to get class credit and out-of-class service experience all in one. At LSU designated SL courses connect what students are learning in classes with real-life experiences at the same time meeting genuine community needs.

### **How many Service-Learning courses do I need to complete?**

If you enroll as a Freshmen, you will need to complete 3 SL courses before you graduate. The criteria is different for transfer students. If you transfer as a Sophomore you will need 3 SL courses, as a Junior — 2 SL courses, as a Senior — 1 SL course.

This requirement may be fulfilled as follows:

Successful completion of a Service-Learning course.

Successful completion of a Service-Learning intensive.

- Many of the UNST 404 courses are Service-Learning (check the major requirements)
- Many University Studies courses such as SSCI and NSCI offer Service-Learning options
- Check the La Sierra University website for Service-Learning courses offered

### **Also....**

One unit of Service-Learning may be fulfilled through Service-Learning intensives (1 unit UNST 201 courses) — check Spiritual Life or Service-Learning website for options. These service experiences are off campus, occur during school breaks, and take a minimum of one week. Intensives also require some reading, an exam and a paper as required by the instructor. Contact Short Term Missions at (951)785-2090 for more information.

### **How many hours of Service-Learning are required per class?**

A minimum of 14 hours of service per quarter depending on the course and service opportunity.

### **How do I find Service-Learning courses on the online schedule?**

Service-Learning courses have an s1R (required) or s1O (optional) designation in the GE (General Education) column of the online course schedule. You may find all courses offering SL credit in any one quarter by searching in the GE drop down menu bar or on the Service-Learning website.

### **What is the difference between Service-Learning “Required” and “Optional” courses?**

Some courses require that all students registered in the class complete the Service-Learning component. In other classes, a student has the option of

completing the Service-Learning requirement. This is indicated in the course syllabus. Students who enroll in the Service-Learning Optional MUST formally sign up the first week of class.

**If I don't pass my Service-Learning courses, but completed the required service hours, do I still get Service-Learning credit?**

This depends on the class and instructor requirements. See class syllabus for details, or speak to your instructor about specific class requirements.

**Can I meet this requirement through volunteer work for my community?**

No, the University requirement incorporates service into specific courses. However, the University recognizes volunteer service to the community by recording hours of community service not associated with a Service-Learning class on a student's transcript. If a student wants to have hours recorded, prior to beginning service, they can download the appropriate forms from the Service-Learning website.

Students who have completed a year of service in a formal program (i.e. student missionaries) may request a one-course waiver from their graduation requirement. This service must be deemed significant and extensive by the Office of Service-Learning and must last for a period of months. Students wishing to receive this type of credit must submit a request and develop a portfolio of their activities. Instructions are available in the SL office. This option is also available for students who have completed extensive and significant service prior to enrollment at LSU.

**If I take two Service-Learning courses in one quarter, can I get double the Service-Learning credit?**

Yes, as long as you complete the Service-Learning requirements for both classes separately.

**What if I don't have a car to get to my service site?**

The SL office provides transportation to local service sites for students in need. You must fill out a transportation request at the time of orientation and specify the days and times you need a ride to your site. If you miss your ride more than once without notifying the office, you are dropped from our transportation list until the following quarter.

**Service-Learning Website**

The Service-Learning website address is: [www.lasierra.edu/service](http://www.lasierra.edu/service). The website includes course and community partner information, FAQ and a current SL calendar.

## Registration and Orientation

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All students must be registered for a course and attend an orientation/training session.

- You may be unable to register for Service-Learning if you have not enrolled in the course by the first week of school.
- During the first week of classes you will sign up for an orientation session to your site. Consult the registration packet (green papers) to determine the Service-Learning experience your professor expects you to have.
- **YOU MUST ATTEND AN ORIENTATION SESSION**, and you must be on time! In case of emergency call the Office of Service-Learning or send an e-mail to **service@lasierra.edu**.
- Complete the Registration Form when you register and take your schedule with you to the orientation session so that you can make the Service-Learning appointments for the rest of the quarter. In a number of places, the orientation and registration occur at the same time. In others, you register separately for the orientation.

# General Guidelines

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## **I. Required number of service hours.**

Most classes require 2 hours per week for 7 weeks while others require up to 18 hours of service. The given course syllabus should include the specific number of hours as well as other requirements.

## **II. On-site orientation.**

All students are required to attend an on-site orientation. Make-up orientations will not be scheduled because they cause great inconvenience for staff. Please schedule accordingly. See registration packet for orientation times and locations.

## **III. Registration.**

Students need to register with a site supervisor. At that time they will receive a time card and place assignment. Students should also bring any required documents as indicated during the in-class orientation.

## **IV. Reflection assignments.**

The course syllabus for the given Service-Learning course should indicate requirements for reflection assignments.

## **V. Grade for Service-Learning.**

The course syllabus should indicate how Service-Learning will be incorporated into the course grade. The Office of Service-Learning will report service hours to the teachers. The office will also share student evaluations from site supervisors.

## **VI. Site evaluation.**

Toward the end of service, students will be asked to complete an evaluation of their Service-Learning experience. These evaluations are important as they help the Office of Service-Learning to facilitate a positive service experience.

## **VII. Communication with students.**

The Office of Service-Learning will send e-mails with important information using students' standard university e-mail address. It is the student's responsibility to forward mail to another account if desired. Students are encouraged to e-mail us at [service@lasierra.edu](mailto:service@lasierra.edu) to inform of any positive or problematic experiences. It helps us to receive feedback throughout the quarter.

## **VIII. Student community liaisons.**

Some community sites have a student liaison. These liaison's are there to support the experience, and help students achieve their Service-Learning

goals. If a class has a site with a liaison students will be contacted by this person.

**IX. Timecards.**

Students are responsible for making sure they obtain a timecard from the Office of Service-Learning and have their site supervisor sign the recorded time at the end of each service session. Some course instructors will require timecards to be submitted to them before the final week of the quarter. Otherwise, timecards should be submitted to the Office of Service-Learning no later than the Friday before the final week of the quarter or as otherwise indicated by the Office of Service-Learning.

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*“TELL ME AND I FORGET. TEACH ME AND I  
REMEMBER. INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN.”*

*~ BENJAMIN FRANKLIN*

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# Community Guidelines

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In its Mission, *To Seek, To Know, To Serve*, La Sierra University sets out its commitment to working in the community. Through Service-Learning, the university and community work together, involving hundreds of students as partners in making Riverside a better place.

## I. You are representing La Sierra University.

As service-learners in the Riverside community, *you represent La Sierra University*. Your responsible efforts help determine the respectability of LSU in the community. It is important for future Service-Learning students that you leave a good impression.

The following guidelines will help you do so:

- Exercise courtesy and maturity at all times.
- Smile and greet the people you see as you walk through your site.
- Turn off and put away any cell phones or pagers.
- Dress Appropriately!  
Clothing should always be neat and professional. Consult with your site supervisor(s) about their policies on appropriate attire.

The following items of clothing are *NOT* appropriate for community settings:

SHORT SKIRTS	TANK TOPS
RIPPED CLOTHING	FORM FITTING CLOTHING
HALTER TOPS	LOW CUT SHIRTS
HATS	BAGGY PANTS
SHORTS	SMELLY DIRTY SNEAKERS
FLIP FLOPS	T-SHIRTS WITH PRINT
MIDRIFF-BARING SHIRTS	PAJAMAS
LACK OF UNDERGARMENTS	OPEN-TOED SHOES
LOW CUT PANTS	SLIPPERS

- Present a professional appearance.  
Extreme hair styles, multiple body piercings, and body art must be covered.  
*Remember that children in particular will look up to you.*
- Seek assistance immediately from the Office of Service-Learning should any questions or problems arise surrounding your service activities in the Community. We are here to help!
- Be perceptive. Observe your surroundings.

## **II. Learn about Riverside and your service site before making assumptions.**

- You may come from a very different community than the one you will become a part of through Service-Learning. Therefore, it is important that you do not assume that you know how to help and how to solve a perceived problem.
- Make an effort to learn about existing strengths as well as needs in the community. Be open to seeing the positives.
- Understand the purpose and goals of your program.
- How can you help the program meet its goals?
- Be open to seeing things in new ways, from other viewpoints. Observe and respect cultural differences in language, expectations, and values. Try to develop mutual trust and make efforts to understand and appreciate the culture of the community and/or organization.
- Ask questions and do not just hear; *LISTEN* to what is said! Let the people who work and live within the area of your Service-Learning placement help you become an effective service-learner.

## **III. Realize that you do not have all the answers.**

- Make it a point of knowing what you are expected to do as a service learner at your Service-Learning site.
- Realize that you may not already know how to do what is expected of you.
- Take steps toward preparing yourself by asking questions.
- Seek out useful information about the site and the project you will be working on.
- Critically think about the purpose of your Service-Learning assignment and actively work toward meeting the community's needs while understanding the relevance within your area of study.
- Pay attention to how you practice power. Learn and serve *WITH* the people at your site. We are reaching our hands out, not down.

- Be patient. Learn that things do not always go as planned or expected.
- Accept, enjoy, celebrate and build on small successes.

#### **IV. Building relationships**

- ***Build trust.***  
If you are serving at a local school you will discover that before you can work on academics with your students, they must feel comfortable in working with you.
- ***Maintain trust.***  
You will have a set service time every week. The staff and partners with whom you are working expect you to be there when you say you will. Failure to do so may create disappointed and hurt. If for some reason you are unable to attend at your scheduled time make sure to contact your site and have the message given to those you serve.
- ***Do no harm.***  
Understand that by virtue of being at your site, you will have an impact on the people there. Being conscious of this and following the guidelines contained in this handbook will help make sure your impact is positive.
- It is important to be non-critical and non-judgmental.
- Be positive and firm in your interactions. Set personal limits that are comfortable for you. Use positive reinforcement whenever possible.
- Plan a positive way of winding up your quarter's activities, so that you and the people you have served will have a chance to say goodbye and to appreciate the experience you have shared during the quarter. Please refer to the section on closure in this handbook for ideas.
- Keep an open line of communication. If you become concerned about an individual with whom you are working, let the site supervisor know of your concerns and seek his/her advice. Ask for assistance or advice as soon as you realize you need it. But don't bother the supervisor about trivial matters that you can handle yourself.





## Working at Educational Sites<sup>†</sup>

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### **I. Schedule your service time with your site.**

- Know the exact number of Service-Learning hours you are expected to complete over the course of the quarter. At the on-site orientation or registration, you will set the times you will be there each week. If there is a problem, contact the site coordinator.

### **II. Arrive on time and ready to work.**

- It is important that you are consistent with your attendance and that you arrive on your scheduled day and time. You should identify a contact person at the site and obtain his/her phone number, so that you can inform him/her if you are unable to keep a scheduled visit.

### **III. Sign in.**

- You are expected to sign in at your site. Sign-in procedures vary according to site. Make sure you are familiar with the appropriate procedures.

### **IV. Attendance.**

- You are responsible for taking the green attendance card with you each time. The site supervisor or teacher will sign off on your hours. Check your syllabus for the deadline to turn in your attendance card. You will be responsible for submitting the attendance card at the end of the quarter.

### **V. Recognize your limits.**

- Accept assignments that you know you can handle. If you are given something that you think you cannot handle, make sure you discuss the situation with your site supervisor and the Office of Service-Learning and request other duties, within the first two weeks of beginning service. Use your time wisely and do not interfere with the performance of others.

### **VI. Understand your responsibilities:**

- Discipline is the teacher's responsibility and the teacher is in charge of the classroom. You should **NEVER** intervene physically to break up a fight or altercation between students! At a school, call a teacher or supervisor to deal with the situation.
- You are not supposed to be left alone with a student. If the supervisor leaves, send the child to the office. Have the child inform the office that

there is not a supervisor around. You should stand by the door or right outside the door until one of the supervisors return.

- If you are working at a public school site, please remember that there is separation of church and state, therefore you should not discuss religion with children.
- Whenever you take students out of the classroom, go to a place designated for Service-Learning activities or where school staff can supervise you. Find out at orientation or ask your teacher where you can work best.

## **VII. Understand what it means to work with children.**

- Remember that children may not always be perfectly well-behaved. Exercise patience and don't take things personally. Consider the child's context and viewpoint: What may be affecting his/her behavior? Look at the situation as a chance to develop your skill in interacting with all children.
- Children will look up to you, what you do or say can have a big influence on them. Be careful not to make promises that you cannot keep. If you would like to start a project with a child or try a new activity, speak with the teacher first to make sure it is appropriate.
- Because the children will come to expect your visits, it is important to have a special way to mark the end of your work with them. Talk with your teacher/coordinator about a classroom party, games, or some special activity on your final day at the school or program. See the section on closure in this handbook.

## **VIII. Limit your discussions about your experiences.**

- The people you work with have a right to confidentiality. We encourage service learners to talk about their experiences with others and reflect upon them in their journals.
- However, please do not use real names when discussing your experiences off-site. Simply change the names or omit names altogether. Refrain from discussing one student with other individuals or staff unless you are seeking advice from the teacher or program coordinator on how to better work with that service recipient. Be respectful of privacy and use discretion.

## **IX. Remember that you are there to learn and serve.**

- Sometimes a teacher or supervisor may ask you to help with activities that you may not think are important (i.e. cleaning, grading papers). We are there to not only learn but to serve. If your duties do not allow you to complete the assignments for the class, contact your teacher.
- You might want to share your assignment (i.e. guide questions for the week's reflection) with the site supervisor or teacher. If they know what is expected from you they will be better prepared to help you.
- Understand the importance of building relationships. Be a good listener. Let the service recipient know that he or she matters. Carry out your role as a tutor, mentor, leader, or friend.
- Encourage service recipients to do their own thinking and problem-solving. Be patient. Give them plenty of time to answer. Silence can mean that they are thinking or organizing what they want to say or write. Be sensitive, however; don't leave the person hanging if he/she doesn't know the answer.
- If you don't know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it and work it out together.
- Respect ideas and opinions. Give positive and specific feedback.
- Comment or apologize when you make a mistake. It is important that children hear apologies the way adults do and come to know that no one is perfect. In the same sense, it is also important that adults and the elderly feel respected.

## Tutoring Tips<sup>†</sup>

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Many of you will be tutoring children. It is important that you understand the purpose of tutoring:

- I. To improve the educational achievement of the student.**
- II. To enhance the student's self-esteem and sense of competency.**
- III. To widen the student's horizons through contact with a concerned, helpful, more experienced person.**

## Steps to Success

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In working with students remember four over arching guidelines:

- I. The best way to teach is to get students involved and interested in what they are doing.**

Many times students are not interested or motivated to learn. They are often required to come to tutoring, which does not help their attitude. You need to show that it does not have to be boring or too difficult! The trick is to connect the learning to something the student is interested in. This may require imagination on your part.

- II. Often, concepts may be difficult to grasp.**

Students will react with fear. So, very early in the session you need to ease student's fear. The best way to do this is to start very small with something that they know and to praise the student for these early answers.

- III. Sometime students do not want to go in the direction you have set out.**

They resist your efforts to keep them on track. Pay attention to where they are going. There are many ways to learn and the student may be giving you valuable information about how to go about learning.

- IV. Once the child is not afraid, challenge him or her!**

You may want to offer some small reward (check with the teacher whether the reward you are offering is ok). Sometimes racing against the clock can be a powerful motivator.

<sup>†</sup>Adapted from Rabow, J. Toffani, C. & Fahimian, N. (1999). Tutoring matters: Everything you always wanted to know about how to tutor. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

## Working Effectively in the Community

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**I. Use tact and positive comments.**

Use encouragement. Find something worthy of a compliment, especially when service recipients are having difficulties.

**II. Accept each person as he or she is.**

Do not feel responsible for judging their abilities, progress, or behavior.

**III. Respect privacy.**

If personal information is revealed regard it as confidential unless it puts the individual or others in danger. If so, tell your site coordinator.

**IV. Keep your commitment.**

The service recipients will expect you and look forward to your coming to their site. If you know you will be absent, tell them in advance. Do not make promises you cannot keep. The impact can be significant.

**V. Maintain a sense of humor.**

Enjoy yourself!

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*“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF  
THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN  
CHANGE THE WORLD, INDEED IT’S THE  
ONLY THING THAT HAS.”*

—MARGARET MEAD

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## Creating Closure†

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How can you best prepare yourself and individuals you have been working with for your departure? Through Service-Learning, students experience the frustrations and difficulties as well as the successes and hopes of working with different populations on a short-term (quarter-long) basis. Closure signifies the ending of an experience and will involve a period of time meant to effectively prepare participants for the conclusion of a Service-Learning partnership.

### I. **Give advanced notice — two to three weeks before your service ends.**

In anticipation of final visits to the service site, you should inform the site supervisor and those with whom you have worked about the number of weeks left for your quarter-long commitment. This way, the site supervisor will be alerted to the loss of assistance and the persons being served will have the opportunity to emotionally prepare for and express “good byes.”

### II. **Plan closure by doing something special.**

The following are some examples:

- ***Ceremony for your final session.***

This does not need to be elaborate but it is a time for acknowledgment, for sharing accomplishments, providing certificates and awards, taking and sharing photographs if permitted, creating a bulletin board, photo album, or another memento to signify the experience.

- ***Write letters.***

Write a letter to the service site and/or the person you served sharing how the experience changed you, what you learned, and the lasting impact the service has had on you. If you would like to continue writing after the quarter, invite the individual you worked with to write back.

- ***Make a booklet.***

This can include any number of things and will give the person you have served something by which to remember you. You can bind together examples of the work you did together over the quarter, write stories about your time together or detail plans for the future. Perhaps you and your community partner will want to make separate books and exchange them.

- ***Give small gifts as remembrances.***

Make a CD of music both parties like, take a digital camera to the last service visit and take pictures of each other to exchange, give a book (one that you have read together or one that you think the person might enjoy). *Don't spend large amount of money on gifts, please!*

### III. Behaviors to avoid when saying “goodbye.”

Emotions often surface for you and the individuals with whom you have been working as your time together draws to an end. It is likely that those you have worked with have experienced losses and it is never an enjoyable part of a partnership.

Leaving a partnership without saying goodbye will leave both you and those you have worked with feeling unsettled and abandoned. Be aware that you may become “romanticized” and may be inspired to make promises to perpetuate feelings of good will. However, you must **BE HONEST** about ending the experience. Your time commitment is finished and it is appropriate for you to say goodbye. Do not make promises that cannot be kept.

## Most Importantly

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Your Service-Learning experience should help you apply what you are learning in your class while you meet needs in our local community. Most students find their Service-Learning experience enriching and personally rewarding.

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***“I FEEL THE EXPERIENCE I GAINED FROM VOLUNTEERING HAS BROUGHT SO MUCH JOY TO MY HEART. EVERYONE NEEDS LOVE AND ATTENTION AND WE NEED TO STRIVE AT NOT LOOKING DOWN AT OTHERS.”***

— PAULA WILLIAMS  
*Jesus and the Gospels (RELB 104)*

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