Center for Academic Service-Learning

Mission Statement

The Center for Academic Service-Learning (https://www.apu.edu/service-learning) (CASL) is an academic unit connecting APU’s Four Cornerstones (https://www.apu.edu/about/cornerstones) through high-quality, course-based service-learning experiences across the campus and in the wider community. Service-learning builds community by developing positive, reciprocal relationships between Azusa Pacific University and the local, national, and international private and public sectors in order to enhance scholarship of faculty, students, and community partners through service activities, which integrate faith in Christ with service and learning.

Academic Service-Learning at APU

Academic service-learning is a teaching and learning method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to the course content, with a focus on (a) connecting theory to practice, (b) critical reflective thinking, (c) personal and civic responsibility, (d) faith integration, and (e) relationship to students’ planned vocation. The three distinctives that characterize service-learning at APU are that it is:

1. Academic: intentional and clear connection to course learning outcomes and purposeful critical reflection throughout.
2. Reciprocal: active partnerships between faculty, community partners, and students as mutual beneficiaries and coeducators.
3. Making a Difference: outcomes of the project are evidenced through impact on the community as well as on student learning, civic understanding, goals, and faith development and application.

CASL staff members work with faculty and community leaders to intentionally integrate academic coursework with relevant community service that enhances student, faculty, and community scholarship. Undergraduate and professional courses designated “Service-Learning Course” in course registration materials meet the criteria for excellence in academic service-learning, and the designation is reflected on official school records and transcripts for the baccalaureate degree. Also, upon faculty verification, traditional undergraduate students who successfully meet a course’s service-learning requirements earn university service credits (https://www.apu.edu/studentaction/servicerequirement) needed to meet graduation requirements.

Academic Service-Learning Student Outcomes

Connecting theory to practice

• Demonstrate competence in academic content and theory through practical application
• Gain increased understanding of how academic content relates to “the real world”

Critical reflective thinking

• Articulate connections between course content and service-learning experiences
• Identify how service-learning affected sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual development, understanding of diversity, and moral development

Personal and civic responsibility

• Develop personal desire to contribute to local, national, and/or global community
• Evaluate how cultural competence and understanding of diversity are developed through informed and reciprocal interactions with others
• Strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility

Faith integration

• Explain the relevance of Christian faith through the application of learning
• Articulate an integrated understanding of faith and learning in action

Relationship to planned vocation

• Prepare for employment by gaining practical experience and networking opportunities
• Demonstrate skills that employers seek (e.g., communication skills, leadership, problem solving, etc.)