



**Center for Community  
Engagement, Learning &  
Leadership**

## Service, Service-Learning, and Community Engagement Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

*LSU continues to monitor the coronavirus pandemic. While the situation is fluid and we need to retain flexibility and resilience, CCELL has a few guidelines to help you plan for service experiences, service-learning classes, and various forms of community engagement in 2021-22.*

### General Guidelines

Health is our top priority. No matter how you navigate service, service-learning classes, or community engagement, we encourage everyone to observe CDC guidelines, including physical distancing, handwashing, face coverings, and vaccination for all who are eligible. Face-to-face service is currently permissible for the 2021-22 academic year as long as:

1. CDC and university health guidelines are observed
2. Community partners are accepting face-to-face volunteers
3. Students are comfortable volunteering face-to-face



*PHOTO: Today's service opportunities might involve more outdoor or at-home work.*

When deciding what to do with your course, service hours, or community-engaged scholarship, weigh the pros and cons of each option available to you. CCELL supports you making the decision that is best for you and your loved ones, your community partner and/or the populations they

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<sup>1</sup> Last updated August 20, 2021

serve, and that preserves your ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance. In what follows, we provide suggestions and advice for how to figure out your individual course(s), degree requirements, and/or community-university relationships.

## The Importance of Partnership(s)

A top priority for faculty, students, and community partners is figuring out how to sustain existing partnerships in a pandemic. The good news is you have already made it through the hard part! LSU faculty, students, and partners were amazingly resilient in the face of COVID-19 when the stay-at-home order went into effect in Spring 2020. That resilience continued throughout the academic year.



*PHOTO: In Spring 2020, one LSU student created an opportunity for young Muslim women to connect through service to combat social isolation.*

With the uncertainty we face as the pandemic continues, however, the work may not be easy. Faculty have a wealth of resources for high-quality teaching approaches<sup>2</sup> from LSU, but may be uncertain about what service-learning can or should look like right now. Community partners are also navigating health and safety challenges of their own. Students are challenged to find service hours and service-learning classes. Engaged scholars may have had to put their research on hold for a while and figure out how to move forward when and how possible.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, [professional development courses are available through LSU Online](#); LSU Online has provided a one-page [summary of terms critical to remote and blended instruction](#); and the [Faculty Technology Center](#) is available for individual assistance at [ftc@lsu.edu](mailto:ftc@lsu.edu).

The common thread here is we are all facing planning challenges. A first, and critical step, in the process is to communicate about what the challenges are. It is likely you have already done this. You may know your faculty partner cannot teach their class as service-learning right now. You may know your community partner is excited to welcome back a smaller number of volunteers with safety protocols in place. Or you may know your existing partnership or engaged research needs to be on pause because the pandemic continues to disrupt face-to-face interaction.



*PHOTO: In Spring 2020, some Psychology students worked with a temporary community partner and completed meaningful service safely from home, making read-alouds for children out of school due to the pandemic*

In this context, you may be looking for a new partnership. As a community partner, you might have lost your faculty collaborator temporarily and want to pair up with another class. As a student, you may be looking for a new place to volunteer because your former agency is not taking face-to-face volunteers. If you are faculty and your community partner cannot take on volunteers in a way that fits with your class needs, you might be looking for a new (maybe temporary) solution. We are here to help you figure that out.

Regardless of the situation you are in, going through the steps below should help you plan for fall in a way that is as simple as possible, while also reflecting the core values that drive your dedication to community engagement.

# Service-Learning Planning Guidelines

## Step 1: Sustaining or Changing an Existing Partnership



*PHOTO: Can your work with an existing partner be moved outdoors or shifted to at-home projects for a semester? That kind of temporary adjustment might be the simplest route for everyone, if available.*

- If/when possible, existing partnerships should be sustained. If you have not already, reach out to your community partner to see how they are doing. If you are a community partner who has not heard from your faculty partner or regular student volunteer(s), check in with them. Together, evaluate whether/not your partnership can be sustained for fall.
- Consider remote or e-service options. Due to the threat of unanticipated disruption and the reality that not all community partners and students can safely engage in face-to-face service during the pandemic, the easiest route might be to temporarily adopt a remote model.
  - [Click here for a set of “best practices”](#) for planning an entirely online service experience in service-learning classes.
  - [Click here for a set of “best practices”](#) for planning remote service work as an individual student.
  - [Click here to email CCELL](#) if you have interest in joining a working group for engaged scholars whose community-based research has been disrupted
- Plan for face-to-face service, but also its potential disruption. For community partners who are currently taking in-person volunteers and want to in fall, it might be most beneficial to plan for that in advance, but to have a backup plan in place for students who have health concerns and/or for everyone, as virus rates go up and down and/or lead to another period of physical distancing measures. Our “best practices” document provides advice on how to plan a hybrid service model in advance. [Click here to access it.](#)

If your needs are met after Step 1, you can stop here. If they are not, consider Step 2.

## Step 2: Creating a New (Maybe Temporary) Partnership

There are many local, regional, and global issues students can work on from home for a semester, with the right (temporary) community partner. Research, reports, and other deliverables are well-suited for a one-time or short-term partnership.

- Create a new (maybe temporary) partnership. If you need a new partnership, you face the challenge of being back in “square one,” so to speak: cultivating a new relationship based on mutuality. We encourage faculty, students, and community-partners to consider remote or e-service options first, since they are the easiest to sustain across a variety of pandemic-related scenarios.
- Explore your social networks. You may have local, national, or international organizations in your existing social networks you could tap into. The benefit to this approach is some of the relationship-building processes involved in developing a new partnership might already be done. For example, trust could already exist if you are recommended to the faculty member or community organization by a mutual friend.
- Consider remote or e-service options. Choosing a new (maybe temporary) partner who can accept e-service protects everyone best against the threat of unanticipated disruption and the reality that not all community partners and students can safely engage in face-to-face service.
  - [Click here for a set of “best practices”](#) for planning an entirely online service experience in service-learning classes.
  - [Click here for a set of “best practices”](#) for planning remote service work as an individual student.
  - [Click here to email CCELL](#) if you have interest in joining a working group for engaged scholars whose community-based research has been disrupted
- Explore our list of e-service opportunities. Click [here](#) to see the list of e-service opportunities we have cultivated. If you know of an opportunity that can be added to the list, please email us at [ccell@lsu.edu](mailto:ccell@lsu.edu) to get it added ASAP.

If your needs are met after Step 2, you can stop here. If they are not, contact us ([ccell@lsu.edu](mailto:ccell@lsu.edu)) to schedule an individual Zoom consultation on navigating your concerns and planning.