

## Encourage a culture of service

So your student finished the minimum community service hours needed for those college applications and scholarships. Now that they are enrolled they can relax, have fun and not worry about any more service until at least junior year, right?

Well, if your student has dreams of going on to graduate school, medical school or wants to have a competitive edge over their peers in this job market---then you may want to encourage them to think twice about sitting back now. Did you know that their actions in the first year of college often last throughout their college career and beyond (Hunter and Moody, 2009)? So help your student get an advantage by asking about their involvement in service-learning and community engagement.

The University of South Florida is committed to developing a community of learners who build significant university-community partnerships that foster healthy communities. They can find endless opportunities here at USF to get civically involved and make a difference. First, learn the types of service that exist at USF:

- **Volunteerism:** Giving personal time freely for the purpose of assisting others (Pidgeon, W., 1998). Generally benefits the community only.
- **Community Engagement:** Experiences that provide the opportunity to volunteer in traditional ways, through community-based placements, in areas of interest unrelated to courses or academic majors, but include facilitated reflection and evaluation (taken in part from Michigan State University and Youth Service California). Generally benefits the community, but can benefit the student.
- **Service-Learning:** Thoughtfully organized service that is integrated into the course objectives, and which meets the needs of a community, helps foster civic responsibility and includes structured time for students to reflect on their service experience (adapted from the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993). Benefits both the community and the student.

Why is this distinction important? Well did you know that undergraduate students learn more effectively when their learning is integrated throughout the curriculum and across in-class and out-of-class experiences (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993)? So it is important that students aren't just getting out there and spending a few hours giving back to the community, but that they are truly understanding the root causes behind issues facing our community and why those few hours make a difference to the population they serve. "Service-learning stretches your mind beyond the classroom, and welds the mental with the physical aspects that preserve a moment of your life you will never regret," says Adriana a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Chemistry major.

Participating in service and service-learning courses does not just improve their academic abilities, but it can lead to transformative change in your student's personal life. Getting involved in service leads to personal fulfillment, developing strong friendships and discovering one's own passions in this world. And USF offers something for everyone.

“Service has a place for everyone and you feel great inside when helping others. I suggest that students find their passion and get involved in an organization that helps them learn more about it. Getting involved makes these, the best years of your life, even better,” says Krystal a 4<sup>th</sup> year Early Childhood Education major.

Does your student like to travel abroad? Encourage them to join the **Bulls Service Break** movement, a service-immersion experience where they can travel to domestic or international locations to learn about a new community, the issues facing that community and participate in service for the week.

Do they want to be a part of USF’s largest tradition of service? Then remind them to sign-up for the annual **Stampede of Service** (SOS) which takes place each Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend in January. Join thousands of USF students on a day of service in the Tampa Bay Community.

Are they interested in research and a hands-on experience? Then encourage them to register for a **Service-Learning Course** next semester through the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships. Courses are offered in multiple disciplines.

Do they have a passion for fundraising for a cause?! Tell them to join a **Bulls For Kids!** Team, a year-long philanthropic event that raises thousands of dollars for the All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, FL, a Children’s Miracle Network Affiliate.

Do they want to get involved in weekly, on-going service projects? Then remind them to log into their **BullSync** account and register for the next service opportunity!

Are they interested in joining a student organization dedicated to service and social change? Search for one of the **more than 40 service organizations at USF** or start your own club through the Center for Student Involvement.

“Being involved in service throughout my four years here at USF has tremendously broadened my horizons,” says Gabby a 4<sup>th</sup> year Education major. “Students should get involved for a multitude of reasons: stepping outside your comfort zone, creating new and often life-long friendships, and to really explore who you are.”

Is your student ready to discover their passion, get involved, and make a difference? Then direct them to these great resources: Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement at [www.LeadandServe.usf.edu](http://www.LeadandServe.usf.edu), the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships at <http://usfweb3.usf.edu/Engagement/> or the Center for Student Involvement at <http://involvement.usf.edu/orgs.htm>.

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