

SERVICE-LEARNING

The What and the Why of Service-Learning: One of the defining characteristics of Florida Gulf Coast University is its institutional commitment to service, put into practice through the civic engagement activities of faculty, staff, and students. Service-learning connects students to the community and the classroom to the real world. Through service-learning students are both learners and teachers, sharing themselves and their knowledge and, in turn, learning from the clients and the environment where they serve. Because service-learning is such a powerful teaching tool and because service-learning sets the stage for continued community involvement, University founders established service-learning as an undergraduate requirement.

How Service-Learning Works: Students admitted to FGCU as first-year (FTIC) students or lower level transfers must complete 80 hours of service-learning as part of their graduation requirement. Students admitted as upper-level transfers must complete 40 hours of service-learning as part of their graduation requirement. FTIC students who have earned a Florida AA degree prior to matriculating at FGCU (through dual enrollment and accelerated credit) must complete 40 hours of service-learning as part of their graduation requirement. Students dual-enrolled in the FGCU Accelerated Collegiate Experience (ACE) program (part-time or full-time) will be required to complete 80 hours of service-learning as part of their graduation requirement.

Students who have already completed a bachelor's degree at another institution and are admitted to FGCU to complete a second undergraduate degree must complete 40 hours of service-learning as part of their second degree's graduation requirements. Students who have completed a bachelor's degree at FGCU and are re-admitted to FGCU to complete a second undergraduate degree have already fulfilled the degree requirements for service-learning; however, if they register for a class that has a service-learning requirement, they are obligated to complete it as a component of the course's requirements. Although there is no service-learning graduation requirement for graduate level students, they may be enrolled in courses that integrate service-learning as an effective teaching methodology and therefore would engage in service as a component of their coursework.

It is each student's responsibility to know his or her classification at matriculation and to submit and document the required service-learning hours through the Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement, preferably one semester prior to graduation.

The office assists students in locating appropriate service agencies and documenting their service-learning graduation requirement.

To ensure that an activity is service-learning:

- Students must work with a non-profit, not-for-profit, or government agency.
- Students cannot be paid and must do more than observe.
- Students cannot earn service-learning hours by working with a for-profit agency, even if they are not being paid.
- Agencies listed on the website (<https://www.fgcu.edu/studentlife/servicelearning/>) are pre-approved for non-course based service-learning experiences. However, approval is needed from the Office of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement if the agency is not listed on the website.

Documenting Service-Learning Hours: Community partners and student service-learning hours must be submitted and verified electronically in the Eagle Service Network to ensure service-learning hours count toward the graduation requirement. A service-learning guide is located on the office website (<https://www.fgcu.edu/studentlife/servicelearning/>) and provides guidance from start to finish: securing a community partner, getting partner approval, doing service, tracking hours, and getting those hours verified by the community partner. Students should always confirm that tracked hours in Eagle Service Network get verified by their community partner and the service-learning requirement is met in their Degree Works profile.

The process for submitting service-learning hours in Eagle Service Network remains the same whether a student completes hours as part of a course, with a registered student organization, or on their own.

At any point, students can seek personalized assistance from the Office of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement through email at servicelearning@fgcu.edu.