

University at Buffalo Community Service Guidelines

The University at Buffalo encourages its students to engage with their local, national, and international communities, learn about social injustices, and build a strong network of diverse peers who are motivated to create positive social change via voluntary service. Students, faculty, and staff are supported in their community and civic service endeavors, which can be logged via UBLinked's "Service Hour" tracking feature.

This policy helps define community service at the University at Buffalo and ensures that student contributions are meaningful, organized, and aligned with broader community engagement goals.

What Counts as Community Service:

1. **Voluntary Contribution:** Service must involve time freely given to benefit another group, organization, or cause. This includes volunteer work, unpaid internships, or other activities that benefit non-profit organizations.
 - Benefits such as travel stipends, financial aid awards, or academic credit do not disqualify the service.
2. **Partnership with a Non-Profit or Governmental Organization:** Service must be conducted in collaboration with a recognized 501c3 or 501c4 organization.
3. **Student Club Activities Benefiting the Broader Community:** Service activities organized by student clubs that have a positive impact on the university, local, national, or international communities.
4. **Voluntary Service-Learning Courses & Community-Based Research:** Coursework or research that directly benefits the community, conducted through partnerships with non-profit or governmental organizations. Required training for academic programs are **not** considered service.
5. **Non-Partisan Voter Registration:** Engaging in voter registration efforts that are non-partisan, supporting civic engagement and voter participation.
6. **Required Training for Service:** Time spent on any mandatory training provided by the university or community partners to prepare individuals for service qualifies as part of the service activity.

What Does Not Count as Community Service:

1. **Court-Ordered or University-Sanctioned Service:** Involuntary community service such as those hours mandated by a court or as part of a university sanction.
2. **Informal Help for Friends, Family, or Neighbors:** Spontaneous or informal assistance provided to family, friends, or neighbors is not considered formal community service.
3. **Student Club Activities Serving Only Club Members:** Activities such as organizing meetings, creating internal materials, or anything that only benefits a club or organization's own members.
4. **Political Lobbying:** Activities aimed at advocating for specific political causes or candidates, including lobbying efforts.
5. **Travel Time to Service Activity:** The time spent traveling to and from the location of the service activity does not count as service.
6. **Faith-Based Activities:** Activities that are religious in nature, such as worship, proselytizing, religious study, or events that solely benefit members of a religious organization.
7. **Degree Requirements:** Required training for academic programs is not considered service. Examples include clinical hours and job shadowing.

If you have questions or concerns not answered by the above guidelines regarding whether your activity qualifies as service, please feel free to contact the Coordinator of Community & Civic Engagement within the Office of Student Engagement, Alivia Smeltzer-Darling, at aliviasm@buffalo.edu.

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