

Dear Partner Agency,

Thank you for agreeing to join Bellevue College to potentially provide volunteer opportunities for our students. As discussed, the students will work with your organization over a quarter (volunteer time of about 7-8 weeks in total), via a class that also utilizes service-learning as a teaching methodology. Through this, you and your agency become co-educators for our students. This does not necessarily mean that we expect more of your time; it simply means that our students have much to learn from the experience of working alongside you and your clients. The students' instructors will strive to apply to the classroom objectives what the students experience with you, mainly through reflections, papers, presentations, discussions, and portfolios.

Over the next few pages, we will outline some information about the process of working together for service-learning. Additionally, we have attached some other documents to this one. The goal is not to be comprehensive, but to help make this process as easy as possible for all of us.

Please feel free to reach out to me at any time during the quarter. My email is [service-learning@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:service-learning@bellevuecollege.edu), and my phone is 425-564-6575.

Thank you again for giving this time and energy for our students.

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High Impact Practice Project Manager  
RISE Learning Institute  
Bellevue College

## Documents

1. Partner Manual
2. Galaxy Digital Partner FAQs
3. Icons for Galaxy Digital
4. Service-Learning Agreement
5. Evaluation - Agency
6. Worker's Compensation for Student Volunteers Info Sheet



## Who are Bellevue College students?

They are a mix! Bellevue College (BC) serves over 35K people a year, making us the third largest educational institution in the state. The average age of the full-time equivalent (FTE) BC student is 27.5, older than the average student at other academic institutions. In fact, we can say that our students come in three age categories:

- 15-17: Bellevue College has a robust Running Start program, meaning that many of your service-learning students may be in high school.
- 18-22: Many of BC's students are of traditional age; most choose to transfer to other institutions after completing their second full year.
- 23+: Most of our students, though, are older. They have families, full-time jobs, and a great deal of life experience. These students look to education to give them a career, or to change (or start) their paths.

Bellevue College students come from all over. While most are from East King County, some come from as far away as North Bend and Skykomish. Many live in Seattle or as far south as Kent. We also have a large international student population.

Almost half the student population is part-time, while more than half have at least one job. Over one-fifth of the students have dependents. The majority of our students are people of color, a sizeable percentage of the total is homeless, and for many students, they are the first in their families to go to college.

Bellevue College aims to provide robust educational opportunities to the entire community, and due to our open enrollment, we do not turn anyone away. This gives you the chance to get students from all walks of life, with a variety of experiences as volunteers during their service-learning courses.

## What is the student perspective about service-learning?

Obviously, this is a challenging question to answer, as each student has a different perspective. Some students have been volunteering for years with other organizations and may fully support the idea of doing service through their classroom. We have others who will have no idea what to expect and might feel nervous about the idea of interacting with communities very different from their own. This will particularly be true with international students.

And there are definitely those who fight the idea of being asked to do such work as part of their coursework. They may even question why they've paid money for a class that's asking them to volunteer. They may be parents with full schedules and multiple jobs. Or perhaps they don't own a car and worry about the time (and money) involved in getting to your site. Or, commonly, they are simply more comfortable with the traditional model of learning through lectures, papers, and exams.

In essence, we expect a mix of students. Here are some tips to help you engage them, no matter what perspective they bring in:

- **Include them in the process.** This is particularly hard if your organization has many volunteers from many institutions. And yet, if there is a way to personalize your interaction with them,

they will be more likely to feel that their time is being better spent. This may be even more true for adult learners, who bring vast and varied experiences with them.

- **Be patient.** Again, this can be challenging when you have lots of volunteers to oversee. For our international students, particularly, this patience can go a long way. They will likely be unfamiliar with the idea of service-learning, mainly interact with people from their own country while here in the USA, and struggle with more complex English skills. Patience can make a huge difference, and you will hopefully be rewarded with new and interesting perspectives to your work.
- **Dispel myths.** Some students may have very specific beliefs about people who are different from them. While it isn't your job to educate students how these beliefs may be incorrect, we hope that you'll see this as an opportunity to challenge someone's perspective. This can come through the types of projects the students work on, and the types of interactions they have. Additionally, some students may be too nervous to step into drastically new situations; patience, as discussed, and well-formed connections can help.
- **Communicate.** We mention this a lot, but it's important. We tell this to the students, too. It is not only about being responsive, but also about being open to sharing and receiving feedback with and from the student. We want to make sure that the students do quality volunteer work that meets your agency's needs. At the same time, if the student has a meaningful experience, and, in particular, feels heard, it will help to grow our service-learning program. If you are having a challenging situation with a student, do not hesitate to reach out to us or the instructor. And if the student is doing amazing work, we'd love to hear that as well.
- **Be safe.** While we know that you would not put any volunteers in harm's way or in unsavory situations, the moment a student believes that you're doing this, the relationship and experience are ruined. Therefore, make sure to communicate with the student what you're doing and why, and please ensure a level of safety and accompaniment for the volunteers, to the best of your ability.
- **Remember that this is an educational opportunity.** This doesn't mean that you focus solely on educating the student through training and shadowing opportunities. In fact, we're very clear that the partnership must be of mutual benefit and involve reciprocity. Still, keeping in mind that this experience is meant to be educational means that the service role a) should relate to the class and b) be meaningful for the student. For example, strictly clerical work may not be seen as meeting these criteria, unless you and the student can make a solid case for it.

Each student brings his or her own past background, present expectations, and future aspirations to the service-learning opportunity. We are confident that you will be able to work with them to help them get the most out of the experience. And no matter what, we are here to help support you if needed.

## What will be the process for setting up students?

At Bellevue College, we give students full latitude to find and secure their own service opportunities. We do not hold their hands or make arrangements for them. Instead, the students use the Galaxy

Digital portal (aka the BC in the Community web platform) to explore agencies and their posted opportunities, visit their websites, and reach out to them to start a conversation.

If you have not yet logged into the portal, checked the information on your agency's profile, or uploaded a logo, please do so immediately. Look at the attached Galaxy Digital Partner Guide for details about using the portal, and contact us with any questions.

We inform students that they need to move quickly, and that they must be responsive to communications from you and/or your agency. In fact, they must treat this application experience like that of an interview, with two key points.

- There is competition for each volunteer opportunity. Organizations have limited capacity, and other students are seeking the same openings not only from elsewhere in their class, but from other institutions as well.
- Agencies have a right to determine that a student may not be a good fit for that role or for that organization. Similarly, students have the same right.

Here are a few notes to consider about the process:

- Even if you have your own volunteer application process online, all students have been instructed to send you an introduction through the portal. The introduction will include some of the following:
  - Why they are interested in your agency and that role/opportunity
  - Which service-learning class they are in, and how the agency/opportunity fits with it
  - Goals for the experience
  - Convenient locations and scheduling
  - Proficiency in other languages
  - Questions about age, duration, or identity-based preferences your organization may have
- Once you have heard from the student, please be responsive. Students are under a time crunch, and thus they have been told that if they do not hear back within 72 hours of sending you an initial email or submitting an online application, they must move on to another organization. Do not use the portal to communicate with the students; just stick with email.
- Follow your own process for bringing on volunteers. If you require a phone call or an in-person meeting, please make the arrangements with the students directly. If you require that the student attend an orientation or training program, please inform them about this requirement in your first response so they are aware of your timeline. Students also know that they may have to fill out paperwork and potentially go through a background check (see below).
- The student will carry a Service-Learning Agreement (SLA). The SLA describes the learning outcomes for the class. Please review those before finalizing the student's volunteer work, as this should hopefully prevent the instructor from questioning the relevance of the service experience to the course itself.
- Once you and the student sign the SLA, then the student can start.
- Note: If you had indicated that your agency prefers volunteers to be of a certain identity (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity), this cannot be a strict requirement for hiring volunteers. Doing this

would potentially go against Bellevue College's anti-discrimination policy, which you will sign when completing the SLA. So, for example, if you prefer female volunteers because of your clientele, you still need to offer opportunities to men, perhaps away from client-facing roles.

## What is the process for the Service-Learning Agreement?

In order for the service opportunity to be accepted as part of the class, the SLA will need to be signed both by you and by the student. The instructor will then review it to ensure that the volunteer experience will help the student meet the learning outcomes in the class. The process should be fairly simple. We have provided you here with the current version of the SLA for your reference. However, you will need to wait for the student to present it to you. Here's the general process:

1. Both the instructor and the student will fill out the information on the first page. However, the student will not sign it.
2. If you have a chance to meet the student in order to finalize the details of the volunteer opportunity, then the student will present the SLA to you. Complete the second page together. Once you and the student agree on the opportunity, both sides should read their respective responsibilities and sign the document. The student will then return it to the instructor for review. Original signatures are preferred.
3. If you and the student are not able to meet to finalize this, then the student will complete the first page electronically and send the document before signing it. You will then complete the second page and send it back to the student before signing it. Once the student has agreed to the details of the volunteer opportunity, read and sign page 2, and send the student a clear scan of it. The student will add it to a scanned copy of page 1 and forward them to the instructor.
4. The instructor will indicate at the top of page 1 the deadline for submission of the SLA. Please strive to adhere to it.

This process should take fewer than 10 minutes to complete. We recognize that you may have your own procedures with other institutions, and we appreciate you taking the time to do this for us.

A quick note: If an instructor feels that the agreed-upon service-learning opportunity does not connect with the course, he or she may reach out to you directly to make changes.

Another quick note: You may notice that you need to check off a box regarding coverage of medical expenses if an incident were to happen while the student is volunteering. If you have questions about the Workers' Compensation option, please review the attached document.

One last note: The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protects student education records, and thus does not allow us to give out student personal information to third parties. As this service experience is part of a class, anything with personal details falls in the same category. Therefore, while you are allowed to share evaluations with the instructor, for example, it would be a violation of FERPA to do the same with an outside party or a random employee. If you have questions about what you can and cannot do as per FERPA, let us know.

## How do we keep track of time?

The Galaxy Digital portal takes care of all this. Details are in the attached guide. Put simply:

1. Student volunteers.
2. Student submits hours via the portal.
3. You receive an email notifying you of pending hours.
4. Click the link.
5. Approve the hours.

A few points on this topic before moving on:

- If you have your own system for keeping track of hours, that's perfectly fine. However, for our own data purposes, please also approve hours that come through our system. We recognize that this is extra work for everyone, and we appreciate your cooperation with this until we can determine a less redundant process.
- Any required orientations or trainings for volunteers will be counted towards the total hours completed by the student. Pre-meetings and discussions will not.
- For the benefit of the student, we ask that they do not volunteer more than 2-4 hours per week. If longer volunteer shifts are the only option, students should then scatter these shifts throughout the quarter, as this would work better with reflective activities in class.

## What about my agency's own paperwork?

Not a problem! We've already told students that you might ask them to complete a volunteer application, give references, undergo background checks, sign confidentiality agreements, etc

With respect to background checks, many of our vulnerable students may not be willing to provide their Social Security Numbers. If your background check system requires the SSN, be upfront with these students. If they still are not willing to disclose this information, hopefully your agency will be able to provide a service option that does not require this background check.

## What else might happen during the quarter?

Here are some things that might happen before the end of the quarter:

- Either the instructor or an administrator from Bellevue College might reach out to you halfway through the quarter as a check-in. This could come as a site visit or a phone call. We look forward to hearing how the student is doing.
- RISE will send you an evaluation near the end of the quarter. We appreciate your honest feedback.
- During the quarter, we might ask to take photos of the students doing their service activities. If we choose to photograph you, other employees, or your clients, we will talk with you beforehand to see if any photo releases are needed. Many students will already have signed BC's releases.

Communication is very important. We have told the students to be responsive to you, and we ask the same in return from you. Additionally, if you reach out to me or to anyone else at RISE, we will do our best to respond as quickly as we can.

## What do I do if the student volunteer has a disability?

Our students come from everywhere, and we strongly believe in providing robust educational opportunities no matter the situation, background, or level of ability. For this reason, you may end up with a student who has a physical, mental, or learning disability. As their service with you is considered an extension of their coursework, we expect that your agency will support them no matter what diversity the student brings.

From our side, neither RISE nor the instructor is allowed to guide students to organizations that might be more “disability friendly.” All we can do is give them the pros and cons for each option, and let them choose on their own. Similarly, we are not allowed to inform you in advance of the disability without written authorization from the student. In essence, all students must be treated equally and fairly throughout the process. It is up to the student to determine what to disclose to you, the partner.

We expect partner agencies with 15 or more employees to meet basic ADA Title III requirements for physical accommodation in new buildings and those altered after 1992. For *existing buildings* older than 1992, the agencies should allow for reasonable physical accommodation. Some of these requirements include wheelchair accessibility and visual disability standards. Agencies with fewer than 15 employees should try to make accommodations that are readily achievable, on an as-needed basis. For more details about ADA Title III, go to [this site](#).

Overall, depending on the student, we hope that the agency will be able to make reasonable accommodations as needed to ensure that the student has the ability to contribute to your work. Please note that ADA Title III requirements deal mostly with physical disabilities. If a student discloses any other forms of disabilities and you are uncertain how best to support them, feel free to reach out to RISE for guidance. However, you **must** receive written approval from the student before doing this, as the student might not have disclosed this information to us.

## How do I engage with faculty?

Excellent question! There isn't one right answer here. The key is simply remembering that faculty, like you, have a gazillion things to do. And also, like you, they want to see the students succeed. While all the instructors support service-learning, many of them are nervous about using this methodology, as it lessens the control they have over the course material. Many also worry that their students will complain about the volunteering or come up with reasons to fight it. So, here are a few tips for engaging with faculty:

- **Communicate.** Yes, again, this seems simple. Feel free to share things that the volunteer is doing well, as this will lift the instructor's morale and help them realize that they made the right

decision. Hopefully, this will encourage them to continue employing service-learning. Of course, if a student is not behaving appropriately, inform the instructor immediately.

- **Invite the instructor to visit.** This is one of the best ways to engage them. Let the instructor see what type of work your organization does, and perhaps even see their students in action. There's no guarantee that an instructor will be able to visit every agency, but a simple invitation can mean a lot.
- **Give feedback at the end.** Once the quarter is over, talk with the instructor about what worked well and what could be improved. This can be particularly useful when thinking about how the instructor could better prepare students for the experience.
- **Visit the class.** Talk with the instructor about potentially stopping by the class the next time it is offered. Guest speakers are often appreciated, particularly as part of a pre-service-learning orientation.

## What is RISE?

RISE stands for Research, Innovation, Service, and Experiential Learning. We work with students, faculty, and community partners to help provide a range of high-impact educational opportunities for Bellevue College students. Additionally, within RISE is BC's Center for Career Connections, which oversees internships, work-study, and career support for our students and the community at-large.

If you or your organization would like to contribute to student education in different ways, such as through community-based research or internship opportunities, reach out to us. We would be excited to collaborate in various capacities.

Thank you once again for taking the time to act as co-educators for Bellevue College's students. We look forward to building this partnership with you over this and future quarters.