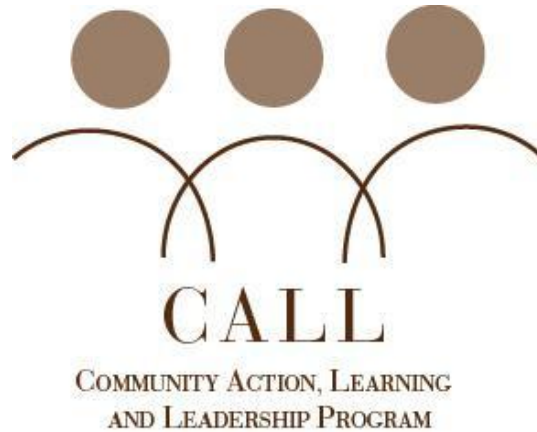


# Community Action Learning and Leadership Program

*State University of New York College at Old Westbury*

## STUDENT HANDBOOK

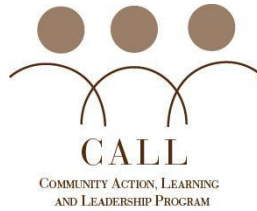


*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that has." Margaret Mead*

**Community Action, Learning and Leadership Program  
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Dear Students,

Welcome back to Old Westbury!!! We hope you enjoyed your time off and are ready to jump back in the saddle and get started on an exciting and intellectually stimulating new semester!!! We are very excited that you will be participating in the Community Action, Learning and Leadership Program.

Inspired by the passionate activism and civic engagement exhibited by the students, at SUNY College at Old Westbury, who worked on hurricane relief with the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans, in the spring of 2006, Old Westbury established the Community Action Learning and Leadership Program (“CALL”). Agreements were quickly formed with community partners and the first-year curriculum restructured to include a course-embedded civic engagement requirement. Old Westbury developed a collaborative model for effecting institutional and curricular change through community-based learning and action.

With this initiative, the CALL is able to engage students, both personally and intellectually, at the very beginning of their academic journey, in structured service activities and reflective projects, encouraging their future community involvement and allowing the College to deliver on the promises of its mission, “...to stimulate in students a passion for learning and a commitment to building a more just world for humankind.”

Based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development model that has realized successful outcomes in communities nationwide and through the efforts of CALL staff, the College is able to effectively leverage its resources to play an active role in community revitalization initiatives through public service projects and instructional programs.

Old Westbury is working in partnership with regional non-profit organizations to enhance the programmatic services these non-profit organizations provide in Long Island’s and the NY Metropolitan Region’s communities. This program is designed to assist organizations in identifying their organizational and operational needs and is structured where, upon assessment and qualitative examination, the matching of College resources is effectively executed.

We value your experience and welcome your suggestions as this program requires the collaboration of our students, faculty, staff and partners.

We also look forward to working with you to strengthen the collaborative bond between you, our College and the communities we serve.

Working Together To Serve Our Community,

Laura Anker, Ph.D.,  
Director, First-Year Experience/CALL

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**SUNY** College at Old Westbury (“Old Westbury”) has maintained throughout its history a commitment to social justice, educational empowerment, civic responsibility, and community engagement through its curriculum and activities. Old Westbury’s faculty and administration possess the research-based expertise and material resources to realize the college’s social justice mission through its curriculum, instruction and the activities of its students, faculty and staff.

The Old Westbury the Community Action Learning and Leadership Program (“CALL”) partners with non- profit organizations to address social inequities and serve community needs. The college, as a whole, is using its influential role as a regional employer and developer to contribute directly and tangibly to community revitalization efforts.

Critical to this effort is the student community engagement component. Implemented by CALL, the College initiated a voluntary course-embedded community-based learning and action program in the spring of 2007, in which students engaged in community service in areas related to their course of study. By linking community needs to the expertise of our distinguished faculty, experienced staff, and diverse student body, CALL conducts outreach and develops projects that are of mutual benefit to all stakeholders, enhancing student learning, providing faculty research opportunities and meeting real community needs.

This model exemplifies Old Westbury’s commitment to community outreach and leadership development. Students make connections between curricular concepts, community issues and the major problems confronting our global society today. Local communities benefit through the receipt of needed services, heightened student awareness and the promise of future civic engagement. The establishment of the Community Action Learning and Leadership Program at Old Westbury demonstrates the College’s commitment to deliver on its social justice mission, not only with its facilities and personnel, but also by embarking upon a process of curricular change that institutionalizes civic engagement as a required component of its First-Year Experience Program and goal of its liberal arts education.

In 2007, the CALL Program became mandated for all first-year students. First-year students are required to take a common first-year in the fall semester FY1000: The Ethics of Engagement: Educating Leaders for a Just World, followed in the spring by CL2000: Community Learning Seminar which includes, a 50 hour course-embedded, community-based learning and action experience.

## **HARVESTING INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

Old Westbury's approach represents an institution-wide effort where CALL serves as a clearinghouse of the college's resources, enabling the College to enhance its programmatic efforts by participating in community-based projects and academic programs. Through its efforts, CALL seeks to leverage this carefully created college network of resources for maximum impact.

*Employing an institutional approach to civic-engagement, CALL is:*

- Utilizing the knowledge and expertise of our faculty, and administration;
- Engaging the participation of student volunteers from the FYE; and
- Taking advantage of another integral component to this program – the physical infrastructure of Old Westbury's campus.

### *Our Faculty and Administration*

Highlighting the importance of this initiative, CALL has won the support of a highly esteemed, internationally acclaimed faculty and a talented and committed administration. CALL matches the knowledge and expertise of our faculty and administration with the integral needs of various non-profit organizations.

### *Enhancing the Student Experience*

The First-Year CALL Program not only engenders a sense of civic responsibility and positive student culture that embraces Old Westbury's mission of social justice and equality, but it also connects students to the college and community, develops leadership abilities that are responsive, innovative, progressive and broadly reflective.

Making community-based learning and action a required component of Old Westbury's first-year curriculum creates an educational identity for the College consonant with its commitment to social justice and leadership for change.

### *Our Campus - A Valuable Resource*

Old Westbury's physical infrastructure is a valuable resource. Old Westbury enjoys a campus of 604 acres that currently features an Academic Village comprised of four academic buildings and nine dormitories. There is a Campus Center, which houses the College Library, the Maguire Theatre and the Amelie A. Wallace Art Gallery. There is also the Natural Sciences Building, Student Union and the F. Ambrose Clark Athletic Center.

## **HIGHLIGHTING MANY BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE-LEARNING<sup>1</sup>**

### **The College**

Through Community-Based Learning (“CBL”) collaborations universities can:

- Enhance teaching, research, and outreach activities;
- Engage faculty and students in local and state community issues;
- Extend college knowledge and resources;
- Create positive community relationships; and
- Increase development and preparation of university graduates.

### **The Community Organizations**

For community partners, the goal of social change is the primary incentive for entering into community-based service-learning collaborations. Specifically, community organizations can:

- Mobilize additional resources to fulfill the organizational mission of the community group;
- Gain access to new resources and improve their ability to better leverage the resources that are already under their control;
- Build capacity by increasing the organization’s ability to operate more effectively;
- Increase effectiveness through an improved ability to collect, analyze, and use data independently;
- Develop greater public awareness and support of their mission; and
- Maximize community empowerment and advocacy efforts.

### **The Faculty**

By taking the classroom beyond the campus and into the community, faculty can:

- Increase teaching repertoire including the utilization of small group work and journals and the incorporation of experiential learning;
- Collaborate on the development of integrated curriculum and assessment;
- Increase contact with students, particularly freshmen, first-time to college students;

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<sup>1</sup> Closely adapted with permission from: Faculty CBL/CBR Handbook produced by CEPC for Social Justice Research, Teaching and Service at Georgetown University, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 2005. Retrieved November 21, 2006 ([www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu](http://www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu)).

- Increase their knowledge of current research and theory in relevant areas including cultural sensitivity, civic engagement, experiential learning and critical thinking and first-year programs;
- Participate in and present at professional organizations and pursue research in the above fields;
- Gain knowledge of and make connections to the local community and its organizations and integrate this knowledge with academic content;
- Gain new perspectives and increase understanding of learning by utilizing small group in-class discussions and ongoing involvement in assessment;
- Increase awareness of community issues and their relationship to instructors' academic interests;
- Identify current social and student learning issues that might inform research; and
- Provide opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration.

### **Students**

Students involved in a community-based learning project, can come away with many benefits from the experience. Community-based learning enhances a students' learning of curriculum content by creating synergy between a students' academic work and activities in the community. Because CBL offers the chance to learn through the best combination of community and classroom strategies, the expectation is that students will demonstrate the following:

- An ability to develop as intentional learners, to reflect upon and develop their ideas about what they are learning in the classroom, their educational goals and identity.
- Cultural sensitivity, an awareness of their own prejudices and respect for and an understanding of diversity in race/ethnicity, class gender, sexual orientation, age and abilities as it applies to their civic engagement experience.
- An ability to integrate the content of the CL course and of linked course to their placement experience.
- An engagement with social justice as an on going human concern and an understanding of themselves as active members of their community.

Students develop leadership skills, political awareness, and civic literacy by critically analyzing the sources of local challenges, considering alternative responses, confronting political and ideological barriers to change, and weighing the merits of legislative or other political strategies in collaboration with community members. As equal members of CBL "teams" students learn to listen to one another, to deliberate critically about problems and issues, to arrive at solutions mutually, and to work together to implement them - all of which are important skills in the increasingly team-oriented 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

## **HOW OUR PROGRAM WORKS**

In the spring of 2007, Old Westbury executed the First-Year Community Engagement Pilot Program. Funded by a major grant from the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund of the Long Island Community Foundation, this pilot program served approximately 70 students and has been expanded to engage the entire first-year class in a mandated course embedded community-based learning and action experience in the spring of 2008. Our program continues to expand and starting Fall 2013, we will offer non-freshmen students the opportunity to participate.

This program challenges students to confront the big questions facing the world today by participating in and reflecting upon civic engagement activities. This program not only integrates academic study and analysis with field experience to give students intellectual insight into social issues while directly engaging them in social action, but it also pushes students to critically evaluate and apply course-based academic concepts and theories to address authentic needs outside the classroom. Because students will be engaged actively and collaboratively in the learning process, they will learn the value of team work. They will find meaning in what they are learning and will make connections between the classroom and their lives, building self-confidence and instilling a sense of responsibility to the broader community. In addition, they will gain a sense of personal empowerment and self-confidence by working and succeeding in culturally and economically diverse settings.

In collaboration with community partners and the Old Westbury faculty, the Community Action Learning and Leadership Program develops volunteer opportunities. Student placements are determined by linked course content and objectives, as well as students' academic and career interests, schedules and other specifications. In addition to their normal coursework, students participate in their volunteer placements for a minimum of 40-50 hours during the semester.

Students are expected to reflect on their experiences in journals and evaluation papers involving research and analysis. They also consider the relationship of community-based learning to the College's social justice mission, the value of a liberal arts education, ethical decision-making and career development. In addition to the experience itself, there will be pre-reflection and assessment components, including readings and assignments. The class will meet as a group at least once a week and students will be expected to participate in mandatory workshops and campus events.

Depending on the agreement made with the organization, students may execute their volunteer responsibilities on campus, at the organization's work-site, and/or at a location agreed upon by the organization and CALL.



## ***Our Partners***

### **-Our Flagship Partner-** *Sustainable Long Island*

Sustainable Long Island (“Sustainable”) promotes economic development, environmental health and equity for all Long Islanders by acting as a catalyst and facilitator for sustainable development. They cultivate the conditions, identify resources and provide tools to make sustainable development happen on Long Island.

Through their Community Revitalization Program, they help people identify projects that will make their downtowns safer and more vibrant. They link them with the experts and the resources that will make their vision a reality. Also through their Brownfields Redevelopment Program, they help convert abandoned and blighted properties into productive commercial or residential parcels, boosting local economies and preserving open space.

Through their advocacy efforts, they advance practical alternatives to car transportation, leverage funds for Brownfields redevelopment, and encourage local and state governments to pursue Smart Growth policies.

CALL is working with Sustainable Long Island to identify Long Island based opportunities and jointly pursue such projects that emphasize economic development, environmental health and social equity. CALL is currently providing volunteer assistance and has identified key faculty to cooperatively work with Sustainable on their community revitalization program.

### **-The Veterans-**

*Adventures in Learning*  
*Girl Scouts of Nassau County*  
*Herstory Writer’s Workshop*  
*Interfaith Nutrition Network / Mary Brennan INN Soup Kitchen*  
*Long Beach Martin Luther King Center*  
*Long Island Council of Churches*  
*Mommas’s House*  
*North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center*  
*Urban League of Long Island*  
*Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program*  
*The Whaling Museum*

## *Goals and Expectations<sup>2</sup>*

In a CBL partnership, each member must meet certain criterion and expectations in order to assure a collaborative relationship. Some of these expectations follow.

### *Students are expected to...*

- Be prompt, willing, respectful and positive at their community-based placement;
- Fulfill all agreed upon duties and responsibilities at the community site;
- Provide feedback about the community-based experience and its relevancy to the course material;
- Participate in course discussions;
- Be open to learning about cultures and lifestyles that are different from their own;
- Speak with their supervisor if uncomfortable or uncertain about what they are to do;
- Respect the confidentiality of the people they work with;
- Call their supervisor, and all those involved, as soon as they know they cannot make it to their placement; and
- Participate in an evaluation process.

### *Community Partners are expected to...*

- Orient students to the agency and its mission;
- Help students to understand their role within the agency/project;
- Provide significant and/or challenging work for the students;
- Provide training, supervision, feedback and resources for the students to succeed in the service; and
- Ensure a safe work environment and reasonable hours for the students to perform their responsibilities/tasks.

### *Faculty members are expected to...*

- Describe the community-based learning program and its relation to the course objectives in the course syllabus and on the first day of class;
- Make contact with key personnel and become familiar with the type of work their students are engaged in at their placements;
- Schedule a visit to the placement sites;
- Monitor student progress through discussions, journal assignments, progress reports or individual check-ins;
- Have all students complete a cooperative community-based learning agreement; and
- Provide individual and group forums for students to reflect on what they are learning from the experience.

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<sup>2</sup> Closely adapted with permission from: Faculty CBL/CBR Handbook produced by CEPC for Social Justice Research, Teaching and Service at Georgetown University, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 2005. Retrieved November 21, 2006 ([www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu](http://www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu)).

## **Guidelines for Community-Based Learning Students <sup>3</sup>**

As you begin your community-based learning partnership with a community-based organization, you are probably eager to get involved and make a difference in the lives of the people and the organization with whom you work. We expect that you will view yourself as a representative of SUNY College at Old Westbury in the community and, as such, we ask that you carefully read through and abide by the following guidelines to assist you in having the most meaningful and worthwhile experience possible.

### **1. When in Doubt, Ask For Help**

Your site supervisor understands the issues at your site and you are encouraged to approach him/her with problems or questions as they arise. They can assist you in determining the best way to respond in difficult or uncomfortable situations.

### **2. Be Punctual and Responsible**

You are participating in the organization as a reliable, trustworthy and contributing member of the team. Both your supervisor and the clients whom you serve rely on your punctuality and commitment to completing your service hours over the entire course of the semester.

### **3. Call if You Anticipate Lateness or Absence**

Call your supervisor if you are unable to come in or if you anticipate being late. Again, the site will come to depend on your services and will be at a loss if you fail to come in as scheduled. Be mindful of their needs.

### **4. Respect the Privacy of All Clients**

If you are privy to confidential information with regard to the persons with whom you are working (i.e., organizational files, diagnostics, personal stories, etc.), it is vital that you treat it as privileged information.

### **5. Be Appropriate**

You are in a work situation and are expected to treat your supervisor, co-workers and clients with courtesy and kindness. Dress comfortably, neatly, and appropriately.

### **6. Be Flexible**

The level or intensity of activity at an Organization is not always predictable. Your flexibility to changing situations will help the operation run smoothly and produce positive outcomes for everyone involved.

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## **Guidelines for Community-Based Learning Students (cont).**

### **On the other hand:**

- ◆ NEVER report to your site under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- ◆ NEVER give or loan clients money or other personal belongings.
- ◆ NEVER give a client your address or telephone number.
- ◆ NEVER make promises or commitments to a client you cannot keep.
- ◆ NEVER give a client or agency representative a ride in a personal vehicle.
- ◆ NEVER tolerate verbal exchange of a sexual nature or engage in behavior that might be perceived as sexual with a client or agency representative.

Use common sense and conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. Every site has its own rules, policies, procedures, protocols and expectations, for which you are responsible. Familiarizing yourself with the workings of the organization will contribute to the success of your experience.

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## **Safety Tips for Students <sup>4</sup>**

- ❑ Whenever possible, travel in small groups or with another person.
- ❑ Avoid going to unfamiliar neighborhoods after dark.
- ❑ Carry a bit of cash, but not too much - a \$20 bill and a couple of \$1 bills are a good idea. Do not carry a lot of credit cards with you.
- ❑ Do not wear flashy and/or expensive jewelry.
- ❑ Try not to carry pocketbooks. If you do, be sure to close it securely.
- ❑ Dress appropriately for the activity of your project and take into consideration the context in which it takes place.
- ❑ Wear comfortable shoes for walking. Avoid wearing flip-flops and high-heels.
- ❑ Bring your cell phone.
- ❑ Let a roommate or friend know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- ❑ Be sure that your backpacks are closed securely.
- ❑ In case you do feel in imminent threat of being harmed, do not be afraid to scream, yell for help, or even scream "fire."
- ❑ In case of a breakdown or a mix up with transportation, contact the transportation provider and always carry enough money for transportation home.
- ❑ Get to know your supervisor and other staff members. Ask them questions about the area(s) and get their suggestions on what you should do if you find yourself in trouble.
- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the resources in the surrounding community that can be of assistance in times of emergency (e.g., know the location of phones, 24-hour stores, police station, etc.).

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<sup>4</sup> Closely adapted with permission from: Faculty CBL/CBR Handbook produced by CEPC for Social Justice Research, Teaching and Service at Georgetown University, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 2005. Retrieved November 21, 2006 ([www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu](http://www.socialjustice.georgetown.edu)).

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM STUDENTS**

### **Can I request to be placed with a specific organization?**

At the beginning of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to choose among the organizations/placements assigned to their class (on a first-come, first-served basis). However, please note that student placement will be contingent upon a completed questionnaire as well as scheduling. Overall, each student will be matched with an organization whose mission parallels the curricular content covered in the general education class. Students in certain classes will be placed with specific organizations that make sense.

### **By what date do I have to be finished with my 40 hours?**

Look at your syllabus or speak with your professor.

### **What if an employer asks me to work overtime (in addition to the normal pre-scheduled hours)?**

That's fine; however given the change in schedule, you may have to work out alternative means of transportation. Please speak with your CALL Student Coordinator.

### **Can I work on the weekends?**

Yes, in fact, some of our placements may require some work on an occasional weekend.

### **What do I do if I do not like my placement?**

Make an appointment to see the CALL Associate Director or one of the CALL/First-Year Experience to discuss your situation.

### **What if my employer does something that I am uncomfortable with?**

You must immediately report the incident to the Associate Director of CALL or one of the other CALL/First-Year Experience Staff Members.

### **What if I feel as though I'm not learning anything?**

Please avoid making this determination until you have been at your placement for at least 12 hours. It may take some time for you to get acclimated to the environment and it may take some time for the employer to better identify where they will need your services. If, after working 12 hours, you still think your placement is not working out, please make an appointment with the Associate Director of CALL or one of the other CALL/First-Year Experience Staff members to discuss your options.

### **Can a student be placed with two different organizations?**

Yes, however you must complete the minimum number of hours required by each organization.

**What if an organization wants me to divide my time between two different locations?**

That is allowed, however, there may be transportation challenges associated with doing this. This is something that you would have to work out with the Transportation Coordinator and your placement.

**What happens during the mid-term and final study periods? Do we have to work?**

Yes, you have to work. The work you perform at your placement is a required component of your class. There are no exams for The Community Learning Seminar; however, a final presentation is required.

**If the organization asks me to work additional hours (in addition to the pre-established number of volunteer hours), can I receive monetary compensation?** No, your involvement with your organization is a “for credit” course-embedded placement.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM ORGANIZATIONS**

### **By what date does the student have to be finished with his/her 40 hours?**

Completion dates are determined by the seminar professor. If you have questions regarding due dates, please consult the seminar class syllabus given to you or call the Associate Director or another CALL/First-Year Experience staff member on the CALL contact list.

### **What if I want a student to work overtime (in addition to the normal pre-scheduled hours)?**

That is fine; however given the change in schedule, you may have to work with the student to help them secure alternate transportation.

### **Can students work on the weekends?**

Yes, in fact some of our students may prefer to or will only be able to work on weekends.

### **What do we do if we are not happy with our volunteer(s)?**

Please call the Associate Director or another CALL/First-Year Experience staff member, immediately, to discuss your options.

### **Can a student be placed with two different organizations?**

Yes, however the student must complete the minimum number of hours required by each organization.

### **What if we want a volunteer to divide their time between two different locations?**

That is allowed, however, there may be transportation challenges associated with doing this. This is something that you would have to work out with your volunteer and the CALL Student Coordinator.

### **What happens during the midterm/final study periods? Can a student work?**

Yes, students are required to work. The work they perform at their placement is a required component of their class.

### **If we ask a student to work additional hours (in addition to the pre-established number of volunteer hours), are we required to pay them?**

No. The students understand that their placement is a “for credit” course-embedded experience.



## **INSURING A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME**

SUNY College at Old Westbury is committed to evaluating all aspects of this initiative. Ongoing assessment will help CALL to monitor outcomes and continually improve program service models to meet student learning objectives and partnership needs.

Evaluations include:

- The design and administration of assessment instruments;
- The design, establishment and management of databases where appropriate - coupled with related analysis; and
- Preparation of evaluation reports for partners and funders.

CALL staff will disseminate the results of the evaluation to funding partners, stakeholders, and regional and national organizations.

## **Service-Learning Resources On the Web**

Campus Compact  
[www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)

A comprehensive site that includes resources for service-learning practitioners, including faculty, presidents, administrators, and students. Includes model programs and sample syllabi, a calendar of events, extensive links to web resources, job listing, news, information on grants and fellowships, legislation, a special section for community colleges, and much more.

American Association of Colleges and Universities  
[www.aacu-edu.org](http://www.aacu-edu.org)

AACU's site provides detailed description of its projects, including the Diversity Initiative, in which service learning and campus-community partnerships play an instrument

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