

Qualities of a Successful Partnership *Insights from UCLA's Community Partners*

Community partners were asked to identify general qualities of a successful partnership and to discuss if and how the UCLA partnership has embodied these qualities.

Communication

The majority of community partners described the importance of communication with faculty and staff that is consistent, efficient, and honest. Community partners shared that they wanted to be aware of what is happening with students and would like to have honest conversations about partnership goals and coordination needs.

Coordination

In order for partnership coordination to be successful, community partners discussed the importance of accurate information regarding student requirements and concerns. Community partners shared that they would like to be involved in discussions about partnerships expectations and responsibilities. Community partners want to ensure that students are committed to completing their hours, the partnership is managed efficiently, flexibility is allowed, course objectives are aligned with the work that students will be doing on-site, and project/task details are negotiated in advance.

Student Engagement

All community partners shared that they appreciate working with students who are engaged and interested in the work of the organization. Community partners stated that the partnership is more fruitful for students when they educate themselves on the organization prior to starting, ask questions throughout the experience, take initiative in engaging with clients and students, and are willing to step outside of their comfort zone.

Consistency

Community partners shared that consistency is an important quality for a successful partnership. As noted above, community partners frequently shared that they appreciate consistent weekly student schedules. Having a consistent schedule allows for community partners to know when to expect students and to share this information with clients

Shared Vision

Many community partners stated that sharing similar goals and visions for the partnership is important to success. Community partners strive to work with faculty members who are interested in enhancing the community organization and benefitting the communities they serve.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity was an important quality of a successful partnership defined by community partners as mutual respect and mutual support. Many community partners shared that both parties need to understand each other's needs and goals, and should support each other in meeting these needs and achieving these goals. Likewise, reciprocity stresses that both parties should be able to have expectations of one another and that these expectations should be equally prioritized.

Clearly defined student activities and projects

Some community partners shared that it is easy for students to complete hours through direct service activities, while other shared that the hour requirement makes meaningful direct service experience a challenge. Therefore, many community partners shared that successful partnerships should have both short-term, clearly defined student projects that produce deliverables for the organization in addition to having opportunities to participate in direct client services.

Community partners also shared that the process of clearly defining student tasks and projects can help to ensure that student activities are meaningful for both the students and organization. Community partners are interested in quality, meaningful work rather than the number of hours worked.

Flexibility

Many community partners shared that flexibility is important to creating a successful partnership. Flexibility meant being understanding of community partner time and staffing constraints, being willing to make partnership requirements minimal and easy to complete, and being open to change depending on organizational capacity and need.

Accessibility

Community partners shared that accessibility was important to long-term partnership success. Accessibility included creating connections between community partners, sharing information about the partnership and about the work of other community partners, making the university more accessible to community organizations and their clients, and providing more opportunities for community partners to come to campus and participate in the community-engaged courses.