



The walk to Wednesday night class

The Importance of Service-Learning By Grace Cannon

At its core, service-learning provides students with an educational approach that combines classroom learning with community service, allowing students to gain a sense of belonging while highlighting civic responsibility. When coming to a new place, you are expected to feel a sense of isolation, especially as a freshman in college, leaving behind your family and friends for the first time in your life and being placed in a new environment with random people. In light of this, at Loyola, students are given various opportunities to engage in service and volunteering, whether through a class they are taking or a club they join. Incorporating service-learning in a your everyday routine can mitigate feelings of isolation by fostering a strong sense of community and belonging.

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Sitting on the quad after a long day!

Service-Learning at Loyola

As a new freshman at Loyola University Maryland with an extensive background in volunteer work, I worried that I would have to set aside these activities during my time in college. However, shortly after starting my first day, I realized this was a misconception as the very first class I took here, “Introduction to Education,” included a field experience portion where we could assist at a local school. Through these various acts of service, people on and off campus can join together, bridging gaps between communities.

On the first day of class, my professor went around the class carefully asking which school we would like to work at. I chose The Loyola School because it worked with the youngest kids—an age group I have experience in after working at various day-cares. At first, I was very nervous about how much time this would take out of my day or if it would affect the amount of work that was slowly piling on top of me. However, it did not take long for me to look at these experiences as a highlight of my week while I got to work with children and gain new insight into the Baltimore community I was now a part of. When talking with a peer about the incorporation of service-learning, they agreed with my thoughts, saying that it allowed them to “feel good about their educational journey” (Olivia Temple, Class of 2027). During the hectic times that college students face while dealing with various changes, service-learning can give them a positive outlook on their goals of giving back to others.

The Loyola School

For college students, the experience of working in a local school, like The Loyola School, is often eye-opening. Many students encounter realities that are far removed from their own educational experiences. This exposure can alter their education, social justice, and civic responsibility perspectives. In ["Helping, Fixing, or Serving?"](#) Rachel Remen explains that "Service is a relationship between equals: our service strengthens us as well as others." One of my peers described how volunteering at a local school also helps prepare them for their job in teaching. This hands-on experience can encourage students to apply the knowledge from their coursework, regardless of what that may be, to a real-world setting, thus enhancing their academic and professional skills.

Throughout my time at The Loyola School, I talked with one of the lead teachers about her experiences of having students work with her. During our discussion, she expressed that the presence of college students in the classroom helps bring "additional resources and energy into the classroom that motivates the students." (Kayla Seibel, PreK-3 Teacher) For many students, having a college student as their mentor can be motivating and inspiring, potentially altering their perceptions of education and future possibilities. From a teacher's perspective, the extra help provided by students can be invaluable, allowing for more individualized attention and support for the students, which might be challenging to achieve given the typical constraints of resources and staffing.

The Impact of Service-Learning

The importance of service-learning reaches far beyond the classroom, as it fosters a foundation for you to look beyond their academics and create an actual change in the world around you. By engaging in community service, you can become more aware of societal issues and your role in addressing them. This awareness can introduce a lifelong commitment to volunteering and civic participation, which is crucial in the world we live in today. In fact, service is one of Loyola's [Core Values](#).

It is also important to note that students engaged in service learning often experience significant personal growth. Through my experience in volunteering, I was able to confront and overcome personal biases, allowing me to develop a greater sense of empathy and understanding for others while also gaining a deeper understanding of my values and ethics. Through service-learning, students are encouraged to work in diverse environments, allowing us to gain an understanding and appreciation of different cultures and communities. This exposure is crucial for developing the ability to work effectively in today's world. Because of this, including service-learning on a college campus is essential for producing an effective and diverse learning environment for students. In all, service-learning at Loyola University of Maryland effectively combines educational objectives with community engagement, fostering academic growth, civic responsibility, and personal development, allowing our overall educational experience to be enhanced while preparing us for active and empathetic engagement in diverse environments.

