

# Community Service Learning for Health

[texashumanities.org/CSL](http://texashumanities.org/CSL)



UT Health

San Antonio

Center for Medical  
Humanities & Ethics



Preparing tomorrow's healers to act with compassion and justice.

## **The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UT Health San Antonio)**

The mission of UT Health San Antonio is to make lives better through excellence in education, health care, research and community engagement. More than 3,000 students per year train for health careers in UT Health San Antonio Center's schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, health professions and graduate biomedical sciences.

UT Health San Antonio's mission statement calls for providing compassionate, culturally proficient health care, and its strategic plan emphasizes training students to meet the needs of the community. This dedication to service has earned our institution a place on the U.S. President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll annually since 2009.



### **The Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics**

The Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics at UT Health San Antonio emphasizes ethics and professionalism and encourages community service learning in San Antonio, South Texas and abroad, where students experience health care as it is practiced in resource-limited environments.

The Center works to ensure that students are knowledgeable about ethical principles of health care and sensitive to the patient's experience. Varied classroom and field activities teach students to identify, analyze and resolve moral conflicts that arise in patient care while preserving the innate empathy that initially attracted them to the healing professions.

We fulfill our mission to educate medical students and health professionals in ethics and professionalism while nurturing empathy and humanitarian values by:

- Preparing students to identify, analyze and resolve moral conflicts in patient care and medical research.
- Deepening the attentiveness to patients that will persist throughout students' careers through exposure to excellent clinical role modeling, arts and letters.
- Providing a distinguished interprofessional community service learning program that serves as a bridge between ethics education and the development of empathy and humanitarian values.

The Center focuses on four key areas: Ethics and Professionalism, Literature and Art, Community Service Learning, and Global Health.

# Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Community Service Learning (CSL) Program.....	4
Definition of Community Service Learning	4
Benefits of CSL	5
CSL Online Directory	6
Examples of CSL Projects	6
How to Participate in CSL	7
How the University Supports CSL	8
“Build Your CSL Toolkit” Training Series	9
Annual CSL Conference	9
Roles and Expectations for CSL Partnerships .....	10
Students	10
Mentors	12
Community Partners	12
Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics	13
CSL Project Components.....	14
Orientation	14
Student Preparation	15
Monitoring	15
Results and Evaluation	16
Reflection	16
Get Involved with CSL.....	17
Frequently Asked Questions .....	18
Resources .....	19
Contact Information .....	Back Cover

# Introduction



*A student checks the blood pressure of a patron at an east side San Antonio barber shop as part of a hypertension education project.*

Tending to patients' needs involves more than knowing the facts of an illness or intricacies of a procedure. As health professionals, we must know how to speak to patients – and when to stop talking and simply listen. We need to appreciate how the unique circumstances of a life can impact health. And we should never forget that each patient is a person deserving of our respect and compassion.

The Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics at UT Health San Antonio is committed to imparting vital lessons like these to the next generation of doctors, nurses and other health professionals who will someday serve our San Antonio community and beyond. It's our duty to nurture the empathic and committed health professionals that you would want for yourself or your family in a time of illness.

Our efforts include coursework and opportunities for reflection, but they cannot end there. Recognizing that the most important lessons often come not from books or lectures but the people we encounter in our lives, we urge students to put ethical principles into action through community service learning.

Consider the example of one medical student who volunteered in our student faculty collaborative practice clinics, which provide necessary health care to recovering drug addicts and the homeless.

Afterward, the student reflected on his experience: “I learned how to put a face on the disease of addiction. So often as a health care provider, it is easy to categorize people and start to deem them worthy or unworthy of your time and your care. Working in the student faculty collaborative practice clinic helped me understand that underneath an awful disease is a human being in need of compassion and kindness.”

As his words illustrate, community service learning is a two-way street: The student addressed a real need, providing care to those who otherwise might not have received it. At the same time, he came away with a reawakened sense of empathy and the recognition that a health career can be not just a job but a calling to serve.

Such insights would not occur without the experienced health professionals who mentor our students or the community organizations who host them. Their dedication and humanity set an important example for students, helping them to truly appreciate the community's needs and inspiring them to serve.

Guided by faculty mentors, our students offer primary care at student-run clinics around San Antonio to those struggling with homelessness or addiction. Students also run Frontera de Salud, which provides health education, screenings, immunizations and home visits in impoverished parts of South Texas. Some students travel to resource-poor settings including Haiti and Ethiopia, which present stark examples of the desperate conditions that exist when medical care and public health infrastructure are lacking.

The many creative projects that students have led include helping teenage mothers learn to breastfeed their babies, designing a summer program to teach urban adolescents to make healthier choices for themselves and screening patrons of a barbershop for hypertension.

For mentors and partner organizations, guiding our students can be personally fulfilling, even as the students lend necessary support to their missions.

Some students will be so deeply affected that they will continue to work with the medically underserved throughout their careers. We hope all of them will become health professionals who understand their patients' concerns, empathize with suffering and relate in a caring way to patients and their families.

Nobel laureate Albert Schweitzer observed, "In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit."

We hope you will consider supporting community service learning as a community partner or faculty mentor, helping us to preserve the inner fire of these promising future health professionals.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ruth E. Berggren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ruth E. Berggren, M.D., MACP

Director, Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics

# The Community Service Learning (CSL) Program

## Definition of Community Service Learning (CSL)

Service learning is a structured learning experience that combines community service with mentored preparation and reflection. Students provide service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which illness develops, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens and professionals<sup>1</sup>. Students use what they learn both inside and outside the classroom to empower medically underserved communities.

The Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics directs the CSL Program at UT Health San Antonio and engages faculty, staff, institutional and community support of these activities.

<sup>1</sup> Definition adapted from:  
Seifer SD. (1998). Service-learning: Community-campus partnerships for health professions education. *Academic Medicine*, 73(3):273-277.

## Benefits of CSL

CSL is a mutually beneficial process. The student benefits by applying abstract concepts and theories from the classroom in real-world situations; developing a relationship with a mentor; and gaining practical experience for career path exploration, skill-building and interprofessional collaboration. The community agency benefits by addressing identified needs for clients; enhancing capacity to achieve its mission; and receiving assistance with training, research and program evaluation.

Examples of benefits to community organizations include:

- community needs assessments
- focus groups
- health and wellness education
- health screenings and referrals
- basic medical services provided under the guidance of faculty mentors
- program evaluation and assessment



*A pharmacy student gets real experience counseling patients under the guidance of a mentor.*



## CSL Online Directory

[texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory](http://texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory)

The Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics hosts an online directory that lists current and past CSL projects, as well as potential projects requested by community partners. The directory also lists faculty mentors with contact information to help connect students with appropriate mentors for their projects. Finally, the directory is the portal for the online mini- and mid-grant applications for students who apply for funds for their projects.

The directory is public. To report project data, apply for grants, or create a mentor profile, users log in with their UT Health San Antonio credentials. Community partners who submit a potential project idea do not need to log in.



*A student uses a model to teach kids about cholesterol.*

## Examples of CSL Projects

- Health screenings for glucose, cholesterol and hypertension for uninsured communities
- Empowering young adults with developmental disabilities through health literacy
- Culinary medicine classes for youth and adults
- Overdose prevention train-the-trainer workshops
- Health insurance literacy through the creation of an app
- Dental Screenings for refugees
- Breastfeeding education and support for homeless teens

## How do students participate in CSL?

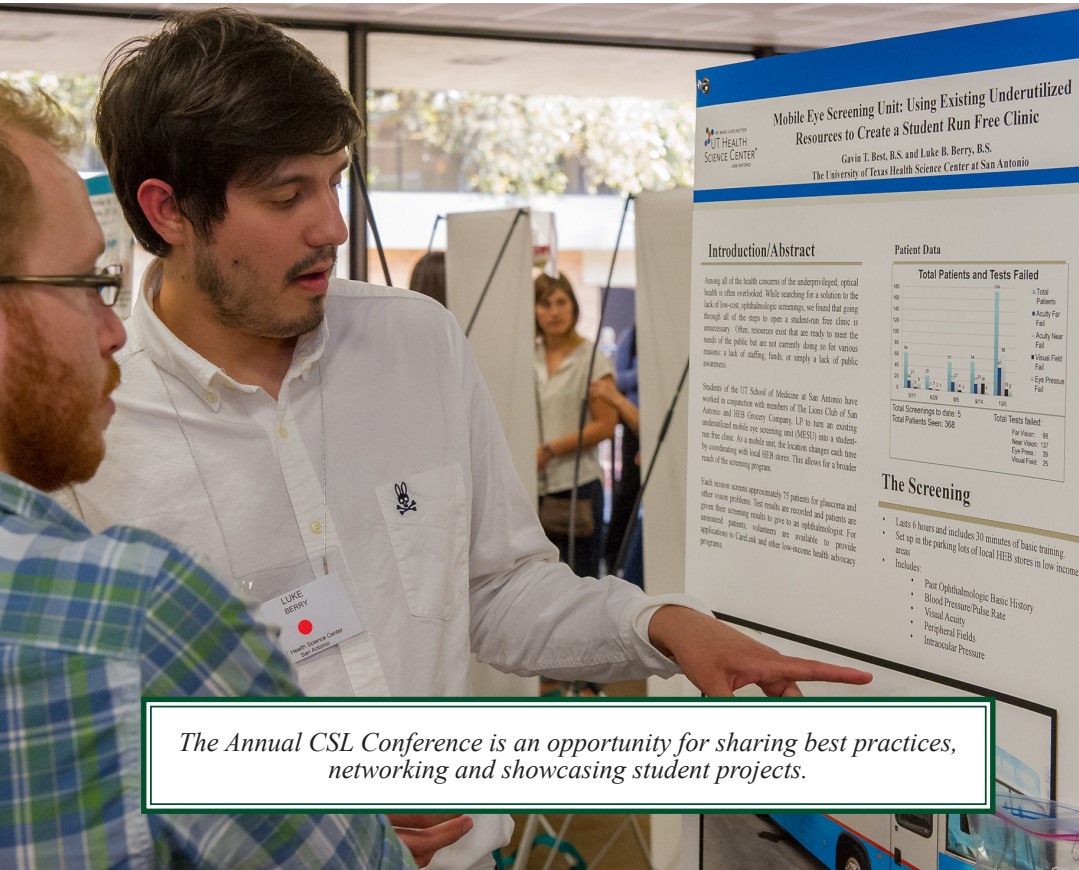
- Do a project on their own time, as part of a student organization, or through a class
- Become prepared by attending “Build Your CSL Toolkit” trainings and enrolling in the Leadership in Interprofessional CSL elective
- Report project data in the Online CSL Directory
- Attend and present a poster at the Annual CSL Conference

## How do faculty participate in CSL?

- Serve as a mentor for students
- Provide preparation and training for students
- Post mentor profiles in Online CSL Directory
- Attend Annual CSL Conference

## How do community agencies participate in CSL?

- Serve as a site for projects
- Identify and share needs of clients
- Post potential projects in Online CSL Directory
- Attend Annual CSL Conference



*The Annual CSL Conference is an opportunity for sharing best practices, networking and showcasing student projects.*



*Beneficiaries of a CSL project engage in hands-on nutrition education.*

## **How does the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics support CSL?**

- Provide funding for students' projects through competitive mini-grants (\$500 for pilot projects) and midi-grants (\$2,000-\$4,000 for established projects with demonstrated success) to help defray expenses such as supplies, printing and mileage
- Host free Annual CSL Conference
- Offer free "Build Your CSL Toolkit" training series to help prepare students for projects and to work in the community
- Offer elective courses in CSL: Leadership in Interprofessional CSL, Homelessness & Addiction, and Humanism in Medicine

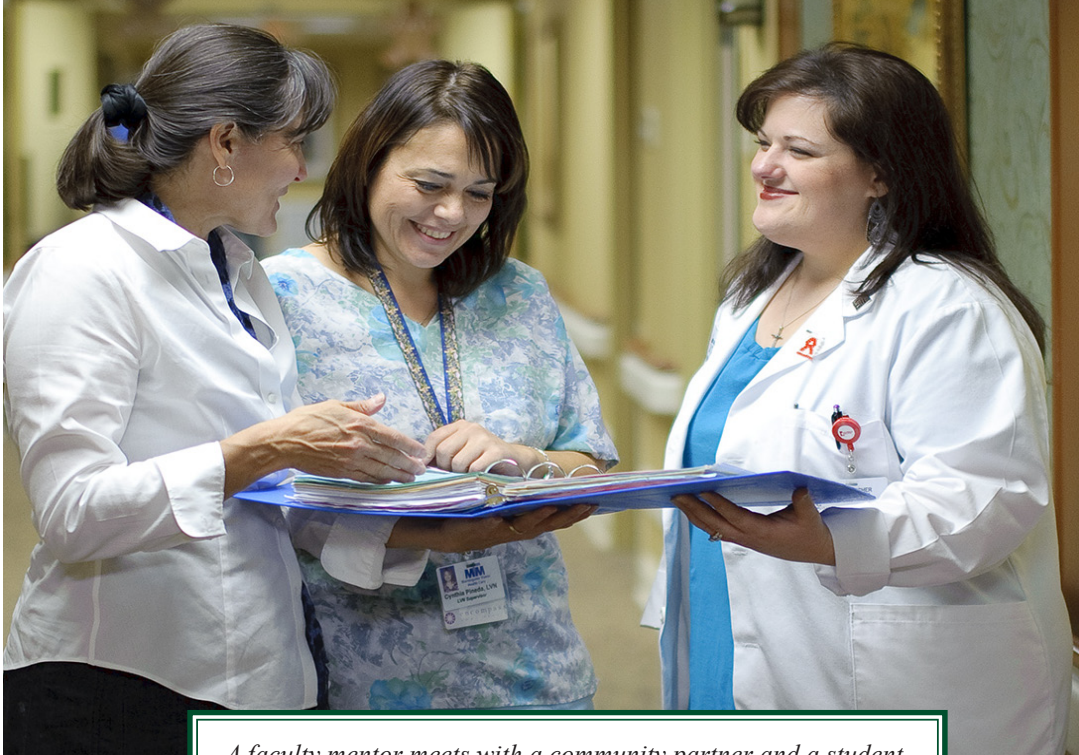
**“Build Your CSL Toolkit”** is a training series occurring in the fall and spring aimed at helping students prepare for CSL projects. Topics are based on the needs of students, mentors and partner organizations. All sessions are free and open to all students, faculty and staff, as well as community partners. A schedule of trainings and registration links are available at: [texashumanities.org/CSLtoolkit](http://texashumanities.org/CSLtoolkit).

**The Annual CSL Conference** shares best practices and scholarship in CSL by bringing together an interprofessional group of students, faculty and staff from across the state with community partners to foster service learning collaborations. Guest presenters provide lectures and hands-on workshops. A student poster session showcases service projects taking place during the year and top CSL projects are recognized for exemplary work. More information about the conference is available at: [texashumanities.org/CSLconference](http://texashumanities.org/CSLconference).

*A respiratory therapy student teaches kids about asthma.*



# Roles & Expectations for CSL Partnerships



*A faculty mentor meets with a community partner and a student.*

## **Students:**

- Respect and follow service site's policies and regulations
- Follow HIPAA procedures
- Address community-identified needs
- Provide project results to the community partner
- Engage in reflection with mentors and peers
- Take initiative in the learning process through problem solving and ethical decision-making
- Adhere to UT Health San Antonio rules (media, government relations, travel, fundraising, etc.)
- Report project outcomes through the CSL Online Directory and the Annual CSL Conference.



*A medical student performs a pediatric exam at a health fair.*

## **Faculty Mentors:**

- Assist student in developing a CSL project plan, including creating measurable objectives and an evaluation strategy
- Be oriented with the community partner organization, its clients and policies
- Meet regularly with student to discuss progress and provide feedback
- Engage in reflection to help student integrate service with academic and professional understanding
- Document hours and oversee project reports
- Guide student in abstract and poster preparation for Annual CSL Conference
- Provide additional resources and scholarship opportunities for students, such as journal submission and conferences

## **Community Partners:**

- Communicate the organization's needs to student and faculty mentor
- Provide student with an opportunity to perform meaningful service at the project site
- Post and update project opportunities in the CSL Online Directory
- Establish a CSL Site Affiliation Agreement with the university
- Orient students to the organization's mission and goals to ensure understanding of their roles
- Communicate policies and procedures
- Provide ongoing feedback to student and faculty mentor

## Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics:

- Maintain an Online CSL Directory of service project opportunities and mentors
- Serve as a liaison between community partners, students, and mentors in making connections for CSL opportunities
- Maintain a CSL Site Affiliation Agreement defining the roles of the university and the community organization as they relate to CSL
- Plan and host the Annual CSL Conference
- Answer questions, troubleshoot and serve as a resource for CSL for students, faculty and community partners
- Lead an interprofessional CSL Advisory Committee to direct the university's CSL efforts
- Provide competitive grant-funding opportunities for students to defray CSL project expenses

*A medical student counsels a patient during a health fair.*







*Nursing students discuss treatment options with their mentor at a student faculty collaborative practice clinic.*

## CSL Project Components

### Orientation

Before starting a CSL project, students must be oriented to the community agency and its policies and any risks associated with its work. Orientation allows students to understand the importance of their project to clients, the agency and the community.

An orientation for the student should include:

- The mission and history of the agency
- A tour of the site where they will be serving
- Introductions to staff and other volunteers
- Relevant policies and procedures
- Overview of services the agency provides and to whom
- Time for questions

## Preparation

Student preparation for the project includes:

- Discussing needs with the agency, including possibly reviewing a needs assessment previously conducted or performing one in conjunction with the agency
- Creating a CSL Project Plan with specific measurable objectives under the guidance of the mentor and with input from the community partner

Other forms of preparation for the student may include:

- Coursework
- Literature reviews
- Specific skills training, such as “Build Your CSL Toolkit”

## Monitoring

- Collect data on specific project objectives
- Track project data (including number of students, hours and beneficiaries)



*A community partner exhibits at the Annual CSL Conference.*



*Students plan together in the interprofessional CSL elective.*

## **Results and Evaluation**

- Use evaluation tools such as a pre/post test, survey, focus group, etc., to determine project effectiveness
- Report project outcomes through the CSL Online Directory
- Share results with the community partner
- Present a poster at the Annual CSL Conference and consider abstract submission to other conferences and/or journals

## **Reflection**

Critical reflection is a key component that separates service learning from volunteerism. Reflection helps students connect their service with their academic work and clarifies how the CSL activity is affecting the student as a future health care provider.

Reflection can take many forms, including discussions with the team, journaling, blogging and narrative writing. Upon beginning the project, the student and mentor will agree on an appropriate mechanism for and frequency of reflection, but reflection should be regular and ongoing throughout the project.

# Get Involved with CSL

UT Health San Antonio  
Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics

## Community Service Learning (CSL)

### About our program

Community service learning (CSL) is a structured learning experience that combines community service with mentored preparation and reflection. Our program provides a structure to bring students, faculty mentors, and community partners together to engage in CSL and provides support for these activities.

### How community organizations can connect with us

1. Learn more about our program: [www.texashumanities.org/CSL](http://www.texashumanities.org/CSL)
2. Email us to discuss a potential CSL project: [CSL@uthscsa.edu](mailto:CSL@uthscsa.edu)
3. Follow us on Facebook: [facebook.com/CSLCMHE](https://facebook.com/CSLCMHE)
4. Advertise a potential project and recruit students through our online CSL Directory: [www.texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory](http://www.texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory)

Step 1: Go to [www.texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory](http://www.texashumanities.org/CSLdirectory).

Step 2: Click on the "Community Needs" icon at the bottom of the page.

Step 3: Follow the steps to advertise a potential project and recruit students.

Step 4: The entry will be reviewed and approved by the CSL program.

Step 5: Interested students / faculty will contact you to develop the project.

5. Attend our Annual CSL Conference:  
[www.texashumanities.org/CSLconference](http://www.texashumanities.org/CSLconference)



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***Who is this handbook for?***

Community organizations and potential mentors interested in collaborating with the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics in providing community service learning (CSL) opportunities for UT Health San Antonio students.

## ***How is service learning different from volunteering?***

Both volunteering and service learning provide a service to the community. Service learning extends beyond volunteerism, however, in that service learning involves preparation, outcomes monitoring, reflection and the guidance of a mentor to tie in the service with academic learning.

## ***Why is it important to serve the community through service learning?***

Community organizations can enhance their services to their clients by utilizing the resources and skills of mentored students who will be tomorrow's health care providers. Students gain a better understanding of the social determinants of health, further their clinical and cultural competency, and become better equipped to care for patients in the future.

## ***Does the community agency have to keep track of the student's hours?***

No. Students are responsible for keeping track of their hours. The student's faculty mentor will be asked to sign the student's documentation of service hours.

## ***How can I learn more about the CSL program at the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics?***

Please view our website and/or email the program. Connecting to us on Facebook will allow you to stay informed about upcoming CSL opportunities and events. See contact information on back cover.

# Service Learning Resources

Corporation for National & Community Service:  
[www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

Jacoby B & Mutascio P. *Looking In Reaching Out: A Reflective Guide for Community Service Learning Professionals*. Campus Compact, 2010.

Schiebel J, Bowley M & Jones S. *The Promise of Partnerships: Tapping into the College as a Community Asset*. Campus Compact, 2005.

Seifer SD. (1998). Service-learning: Community-campus partnerships for health professions education. *Academic Medicine*, 73(3):273-277.

*Dental students provide an oral exam for a refugee patient.*







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