



# Community Partner Guide

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The Svooboda Center for Civic Engagement  
2025-2026  
*Updated 10.2.2025*



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# Theory and Guiding Principles

## St. Olaf College's Civic and Community Engagement

St. Olaf College is a four-year, highly-residential, liberal arts college founded by Norwegian Lutheran immigrants in 1874 and affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). The campus is situated on the homelands of the Wahpekute band of the Dakota people in what we now call Northfield, Minnesota, and is home to approximately 3,000 students, generally between the ages of 18 and 22.

Students coming to St. Olaf today represent a growing diversity within our country and world:

- Nearly 11 percent of the student body are international students representing 94 countries
- 22 percent of students identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- Over a quarter of the students are first-generation and/or low-income students
- Over a quarter of our students have no or unknown religious affiliation
- Nearly 30% of our students have a temporary or permanent physical, learning, sensory, health, or psychological disability.

In the last five years, the ten most popular majors of graduating seniors at St. Olaf are:

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Biology               | Mathematics         |
| Chemistry             | Music (all degrees) |
| Economics             | Political Science   |
| English               | Psychology          |
| Environmental Studies | Studio Art          |

St. Olaf's student body has a long history of engagement with communities near and far. Study abroad and away programs have taken place for more than 75 years, and, today, community-based work study, collaborative undergraduate research programs, Academic Civic Engagement classes, and volunteer activities regularly take place each academic year which engage with people and communities, locally and globally.

St. Olaf College's Mission Statement reads:

*St. Olaf College challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.*

While civic and community engagement is woven into the fabric of the College's Mission and incorporated into the functioning of the campus in a variety of ways, the creation of The Svoboda Center for Civic Engagement in 2025 provides an opportunity to pull together and think holistically about this work moving forward. Thanks to a generous gift from Paul Svoboda '81, the Svoboda Center aims to

foster the College’s civic leadership and responsible community engagement. It ensures that all St. Olaf students, staff, and faculty encounter abundant opportunities to discover and develop their vocations together through civically engaged courses, internships, volunteering, and research opportunities. The Svoboda Center is a connected center with the Institute for Freedom and Community.

The Svoboda Center highlights its guiding principles through the 5 C’s: “Civic Identity,” “Community Knowledge,” “Cultural Humility & Curiosity,” “Connectedness,” and “Changemaking.” Critically thinking about ourselves, our communities, our cultures, and our power to make change—which is emphasized by the 5 C’s—is necessary when engaging in and with communities, locally and globally.

## ST. OLAF | SVOBODA CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

| CIVIC IDENTITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE                                                                                                                                                                                                | CULTURAL HUMILITY & CURIOSITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | CONNECTEDNESS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | CHANGEMAKING                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing deep self-knowledge</li> <li>• Perceiving yourself as part of a community (ies)</li> <li>• Considering your own role and responsibilities in you community (ies)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about a community before you enter it</li> <li>• Continuing to learn about a community</li> <li>• Considering many different kinds of community (ies)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivating a humble mindset about cultures - yours and others</li> <li>• Turning toward curiosity when your uncertain</li> <li>• Being open to changing yourself as you learn about other cultures</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying links between people, relationships, and independence</li> <li>• Paying attention to power, privilege, and positionality within communities</li> <li>• Recognizing the value and complexity of collaboration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committing to change within yourself and your communities</li> <li>• Developing your personal resourcefulness and resilience</li> <li>• Taking action toward responsible change</li> </ul> |

## Intended Use of This Guide

The Svoboda Center created this guide with local community partners in mind to help orient our partners to St. Olaf College as an institution and some of the pathways that partners might engage with students, faculty, and staff.

*TIP:* Are you looking for something specific? Ctrl + F to do a keyword search!



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## What is Civic and Community Engagement?

**Civic and community engagement is a broad umbrella term** that can describe learning opportunities, but it isn't strictly about student learning. The term is widely used across institutions of higher education and encompasses a variety of student activities, such as student volunteering, community-based work study, internships, and voting in elections, along with other institutional initiatives, like land stewardship, local procurement of services and goods, and faculty research (including participatory research and public scholarship).

Civic and community engagement describes the opportunities created by collaboration and partnership between institutions of higher education and their communities and others—especially communities that have been historically excluded and isolated from participation in community life. Civic and community engagement seeks to create an environment of trust, reciprocity, and open communication where knowledge and resources can be exchanged. It intends to “enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”<sup>1</sup>

*Time to reflect: What does civic and community engagement mean for you? For your organization? What do you see as the value of community engagement, particularly with college students?*

**Every partnership looks different.** Partnerships can have different levels of involvement: short-term, long-term, or somewhere in between. They can be initiated by a college community member, the partner, or both through collaboration. They can involve an entire class of students, a couple students, or just one student. The type of engagement can also vary—it can involve in-person, hands-on work or assignments that are completed remotely through volunteering, employment, research, or courses.

*Time to reflect: Have you been involved in a partnership with a college or university before? What did that partnership look like?*

**The opportunity for co-education.** Civic and community engagement often corresponds with a student's education, but it also provides them with knowledge that transcends the boundaries of St. Olaf's campus or curriculum. Students develop skills to become future changemakers and to continue building relationships in their communities. Because civic and community engagement activities are a valuable learning opportunity for our students, we invite you to think about how you could play a role in our students' education. Though it isn't essential for community partners to consider themselves “co-educators,” there are opportunities for your organization to take on the role of a co-educator or mentor, if you so choose.

*Time to reflect: How would you see yourself as a co-educator when working with college-aged students?*

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<sup>1</sup> This definition is adapted from the definitions of “community engagement” endorsed by the [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#) and by [Nexus Community Partners](#).

## Foundations of a Strong Partnership

St. Olaf College strives to create strong partnerships by focusing on three major components from the very start: trust, reciprocity, and open communication. The considerations below are ideals

| Trust                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Reciprocity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The college staff* and the community partner should know about each other's mission, goals, and structure.</li><li>• Whenever possible, college staff and the community partner should co-create a plan for the partnership and develop accountability checkpoints in the process, including when and how to share feedback and planning for closure.</li><li>• They should be aware of their partner's expectations for the partnership and be honest about their ability to meet those expectations.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Both college staff and the community partner should benefit from working together.</li><li>• The work should be agreed upon and directed by both parties.</li><li>• Both partners should have an equal say in the decision-making process and feel their opinions are valued.</li><li>• They should have the best intentions in mind for their partner and should want to see mutual growth.</li></ul> |
| Open Communication                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners should teach each other about their organization/institution and be open to receiving new ideas.</li><li>• College staff and the community partner should freely express their concerns about the partnership without fear that discussion will negatively impact their ability to interact in the future. They should remain open to making changes to address concerns throughout the process.</li><li>• The planning stage of the partnership should include an agreed upon frequency and method of communication.</li><li>• While ongoing and regular communication is recommended, each partnership is unique and may require more or less communication.</li><li>• Please be mindful as you proceed through the partnership if the communication frequency is too little, too much, or just right—and this may change as the partnership progresses.</li></ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

\*College staff indicates the main point of contact with the college. This might be staff from the Svoboda Center, the Piper Center, faculty, or others, and, depending upon the various pathway(s) you engage students in, could include more than one person.

## Benefits and Trade-offs of Partnership

Civic and community engagement is intended to benefit all parties. While it is often clear how the college and students benefit from the partnership, the benefits to the community partner can sometimes be less obvious. As with any partnership, there are always trade-offs, too. Some examples are listed below of the potential benefits and trade-offs that could be faced by a community partner while in a partnership with St. Olaf College. St. Olaf strives to ensure that benefits outweigh the challenges in a partnership. As the partnership is developing, we encourage community partners and their main point of contact to discuss when and how to share feedback and concerns so we can continue to strengthen and improve our partnerships.

| Benefits                                                                                                          | Trade-offs                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improved communication with the college and greater visibility of the community-based organization at the college | Time spent communicating with the college                                |
| Access to work study students while contributing to only a portion of their hourly wages                          | Money spent by contributing to student work salaries                     |
| Opportunities to play a role in educating students and shaping future leaders                                     | Time spent training and supervising students                             |
| Targeted work to address a community-identified need                                                              | The cost of any new hires or equipment needed to support the partnership |
| Opportunities for reflection and critical assessment of the organization's mission and values                     | Difficulties that can arise from navigating a college institution        |
| Insight on your organization and work from the unique perspective of students                                     | Travel to/from the college campus for meetings                           |

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## Planning, Doing, and Wrapping Up

### Types of Partnerships with the Svoboda Center and beyond

Just as partnerships come in all shapes and sizes, there are a variety of ways to partner with St. Olaf. St. Olaf builds partnerships in a variety of sectors—some of the most common areas of interest being arts and music, economics, environment, health, immigrants and refugees, public policy, and youth and tutoring.

The different types of partnerships with the Svoboda Center and other offices and their descriptions are listed below. Your organization can select the method(s) that best fit your goals and values. You are welcome and encouraged to partner in more than one way as well; this can often lead to deeper and longer lasting partnerships.

**Academic Civic Engagement:** Academic Civic Engagement (ACE) courses typically involve students working with the community as a means of achieving the learning goals of the course. Students interact with, and in some cases, provide a “product” to a community partner. Project goals are determined by a combination of community needs and the learning outcomes of the course. Examples of interactions with the community include service-related activities such as tutoring, volunteering, and providing enrichment experiences. Examples of products students have created include marketing plans, grant proposals, statistical research, public art, videos, photo collections, and outreach/educational materials. Please contact Academic Civic Engagement at [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu) for more information.

**Community-based Work Study:** Community Based Work Study (CBWS) allows students with Federal or State financial funding to earn their work study awards by working off campus at local non-profit organizations or in preK-8 classrooms, typically for 8-10 hours per week. Both the community organization and institution contribute to the work study wage, with the organization only contributing 30% of the students’ total wage. CBWS gives students the opportunity to devote a significant amount of work study time to a local project while learning about community issues and services. Please contact Academic Civic Engagement at [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu) for more information.

**Volunteering:** Student organizations, the Volunteer Network, and Athletics are continually searching for volunteer opportunities for students that benefit both St. Olaf and the larger community. Partner organizations can benefit from the freely-given labor and time of students and the opportunity to educate students about service to their communities. Students seek both one-time volunteer events and those offering opportunities for lasting participation. If you’d like to share a volunteer opportunity with students, please contact [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu). If you work with a designated student service organization on campus, please contact the Office of Student Activities at [osa@stolaf.edu](mailto:osa@stolaf.edu).

**Internships:** An internship is a structured opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute in a professional setting. Students often seek part-time internships anytime in the year (4-10 hours/week), but most are interested in full-time internships during January term or summer. Internships may include compensation;





if not, there are funds available through St. Olaf to compensate students for unpaid internships. If you are interested in hiring a St. Olaf student for an internship, please contact The Piper Center for Vocation and Career at [piper.center@stolaf.edu](mailto:piper.center@stolaf.edu).

**Research:** Each summer, approximately 90 St. Olaf students participate in Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (CURI) programs, and during the school year, students from a variety of disciplines also engage in research. There are two major types of research that involve community members—community-based research and community-engaged research. Community-based research is centered in the community but the questions are framed and led by the academic researcher. Community-engaged research, on the other hand, is when community members are directly involved in the research, driving it forward, and determining the questions that are being asked. A partnership built around research can involve a general inquiry, statistics on a currently implemented program, or data and evidence for a grant application. Please contact Academic Civic Engagement at [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu) to begin a conversation about your research interests.

Finally, St. Olaf hopes to create a database to organize information about all community partners in a publicly accessible directory format. By becoming a partner, your organization would be added to this directory and could be contacted regarding additional opportunities for partnership as they arise.

## How to Become a Partner

St. Olaf does not have an application to become a partner. Instead, the process is carried out through ongoing conversation and can be facilitated through phone calls, emails, or in-person meetings at the Svoboda Center for Civic Engagement.

Your contact person for the duration of your partnership with St. Olaf is Alyssa Melby, Civic Engagement Director in the Svoboda Center. Alyssa's contact information is listed below:

Office: Tomson Hall 384

Phone: 507-786-2184

Email: [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu)

To begin a partnership with St. Olaf or to ask any questions about campus-community partnerships, contact Alyssa. You can also complete the *Community Partner Basic Information Questionnaire* (located on page 20 of this document) prior to connecting with Alyssa to give her an idea of your organization and the partnership you are envisioning.

Throughout your partnership with St. Olaf, this is the communication you can expect:

- A St. Olaf staff member will check in with you at the beginning of the academic year (August) to gather information on your organization's opportunities for student engagement in the coming year; at the midpoint of the semester (middle of October, middle of January, or middle of March); and at the end of the academic year (May).
- You will be given the opportunity to reflect on the partnership and express your concerns and/or successes
- During a specific project or program, your organization's communication with students will be determined on an individual basis.

This is the communication you can direct:

- Feel free to contact St. Olaf at any time if you have questions, comments, or critiques regarding your organization's partnership with St. Olaf.
- You can stop by the Svoboda Center for Civic Engagement on the 3rd floor of Tomson Hall on St. Olaf's campus, or you can always reach a staff member by phone or email.
- Let us know what communication methods you prefer and how to best reach you.



## Assessment and Evaluation

Just as a strong partnership begins with a strong foundation, it is necessary to check in on that foundation as the partnership progresses. Checking in on and evaluating the partnership at multiple stages helps the partnership remain strong.

For ACE courses, the ACE staff will facilitate two check-in sessions during the semester—one at the midpoint and one at the end of the semester. Faculty members may also periodically check in with you. However, community partners should always feel comfortable contacting St. Olaf to offer comments and criticism regarding the partnership. This information helps us to continually improve our partnerships and commitment to reciprocity.

In addition to the periodic check-in sessions, there are also opportunities to formally reflect on the partnership through a Google Form after a project or program has concluded. Page 25 of Appendix B: Resources for Partners contains the *Reflection Questions for Evaluating Partnerships* which will also be included in the Google form.

## Planning for Closure

Begin thinking about closure before the end of the semester or year. You might consider working with the faculty and/or students to collectively decide how to close the work.

- What does successful completion of the work look like for all involved?
- As the partner, what role could you play in bringing the work to a final end point?
- How could students play an active part in the wrap up of the work?
- Communicate your ideas for closure on the last day with the St. Olaf students and/or faculty.

*If the student is a work study student or intern*, closure could mean an exit interview or the presentation of the student's final project.

*If the student is a volunteer or part of an ACE course*, closure could mean a thank you note, celebration, or invitation to the opening of an event or project the student worked on. If there are any specific ways your community engages with closure, feel free to share that with the students.

Talk with faculty, too, about how to transfer ownership of the raw and final work products that the students created as part of the ACE project so that you can utilize them in the future.

Overall, there is no standard way to commemorate the end of a students' experience with your organization. Additionally, after the students complete their program or course, you can still share additional opportunities with the students so they can continue to engage with the organization in the future.



## Thank you and Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to read through St. Olaf College's Community Partner Guide. We hope this information was helpful, and we are looking forward to partnering with you in the near future.



## Appendix A: Understanding St. Olaf College

To help your organization navigate the often-confusing world of higher education, and specifically St. Olaf College, we would like to share some information about St. Olaf. This section of the guide contains a description of the different [majors and concentrations](#); buildings and places on campus; a glossary of acronyms; and a calendar of important dates in the St. Olaf schedule.

### Majors and Concentrations

#### Majors

Ancient Studies  
Art History  
Asian Studies  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Chinese  
Classics  
Computer Science  
Creative Writing  
Dance  
Economics  
Education  
English  
Environmental Studies  
Film and Media Studies  
French  
Gender and Sexuality Studies  
German  
Greek  
History  
Individual Major  
Japanese  
Kinesiology

#### Latin

Latin American Studies  
Mathematics  
Medieval Studies  
Music  
Nordic Studies  
Norwegian  
Nursing  
Philosophy  
Physics  
Political Science  
Psychology  
Quantitative Economics  
Race and Ethnic Studies  
Religion  
Russian  
Russian Area Studies  
Social Studies Education  
Social Work  
Sociology/Anthropology  
Spanish  
Studio Art  
Theater

#### Concentrations

Africa and the African  
Diaspora  
Asian Studies  
Biomolecular Science  
Educational Studies  
Engineering Studies  
Environmental Studies  
Family Studies  
Film and Media Studies  
Gender and Sexuality Studies  
German Studies  
International Relations  
Latin American Studies  
Linguistic Studies  
Management Studies  
Mathematical Biology  
Middle Eastern Studies  
Musical Theater  
Neuroscience  
Nordic Studies  
Public Health Studies  
Race and Ethnic Studies  
Statistics and Data Science

## Buildings and Places on Campus

The following list of buildings are organized alphabetically, and the main departments housed in each building and/or the purpose of each building are listed in parentheses. This list might come in handy if you come to campus to visit a class, table, or meet with faculty.

Buildings or rooms listed below are open to the general public when the campus is open; however, hours may change throughout the year.

Black and Gold Ballroom (located in Buntrock Commons)

Boe Memorial Chapel

\*[Buntrock Commons](#) (student-centered commons with meeting rooms)

\*[The Cage](#) (café with seating in Buntrock Commons)

Center for Art and Dance — CAD (art and dance departments)

Christiansen Hall of Music — CHM (music departments)

Halvorson Music Library (located in CHM)

Holland Hall (social science departments)

Kelsey Theater (located in the Theater Building)

King's Dining Room (located in Buntrock Commons)

Old Main (religion department)

The Pause (event space in Buntrock Commons)

Regents Hall (natural sciences and mathematics departments)

\*[Rolvaag Memorial Library](#) (Main library, English department).

Skoglund Athletic Center (gym, ice skating rink, and field house)

Stav Hall (dining hall in Buntrock Commons)

\*[St. Olaf Natural Lands](#)

Svoboda Center for Civic Engagement (located in Tomson Hall)

Theater Building (theater department)

Tomson Hall (admissions offices, Svoboda Center, Human Resources, language departments, and more)

Tostrud Center (kinesiology department)

Tweet Hall of Music (music department)

Viking Theater (event space in Buntrock Commons)

The Undercroft (located in Boe Memorial Chapel)

You can access [an interactive campus map](#) of these buildings and more.

Live in the local area? You can [apply for a community member library card](#)!

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## Glossary of Acronyms<sup>2</sup>

AA, “double A” - Administrative Assistant (for non-academic offices)  
AAA, “triple A” - Academic Administrative Assistant  
ACE - Academic Civic Engagement  
AD - Associate Dean  
BA - Bachelor of Arts  
BC, or “Bunt” - [Buntrock Commons](#)  
BM - Bachelor of Music  
BOR - Board of Regents  
CAD - Center for Art and Dance  
CHEM - Chemistry  
CHM - Christiansen Hall of Music  
CURI - [Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#)  
ELCA - Evangelical Lutheran Church of America  
EnCon - the [Environmental Conversations](#) program  
ENV - Environmental Studies  
EQ - the [Enduring Questions Conversations](#) program  
Fest - an abbreviation more than an acronym for the annual [Christmas Festival](#), a performance that involves hundreds of students and takes place the first weekend in December  
GFCR - [Grants, Foundation, and Corporate Relations](#)  
HH - Holland Hall  
HOM - Tweet Hall of Music  
IFC - [Institute for Freedom and Community](#); also known simply as “the Institute”  
IR - Independent Research (300-level tutorial-style class)  
IS - Independent Study (200-level tutorial-style class)  
JC - Junior Counselor  
KDR - King’s Dining Room  
MarComm - Marketing and Communications  
MSCS - Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science  
Ole - Usually an abbreviation for “St. Olaf student”; can refer to anyone in the St. Olaf community, past, present, and future.  
OLE Core - “Open, Linked, and Enduring” Core (New General Education Curriculum)  
Pub Safe - [Public Safety](#)  
RA - Resident Assistant  
RML - [Rolvaag Memorial Library](#)  
SciCon - the [Science Conversations](#) program  
SGA - Student Government Association  
SIS - Student Information System  
SLC - Student Life Committee

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Louis Epstein’s “St. Olaf Dictionary of Acronyms - SODA”





SoAn - Sociology/Anthropology (also abbreviated as Sōsh/Anthro)  
SOAR - [St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources](#)  
STOGROW - St. Olaf Garden Research and Organic Works Farm  
TES - Time Entry System  
TOM - Tomson Hall



## Important Dates in the St. Olaf College Academic Calendar

### **2025-2026 Academic Calendar**

#### **Fall Semester: September 4 - December 9, 2025**

New Student Orientation: August 30 - September 3

Fall break: October 18-21

November-December: [two rounds of funding for unpaid/underpaid internships for January 2026](#)

Thanksgiving break: November 26 -30

Christmas Festival: December 5-7

Final exams: December 11-16

#### **January Term: January 5-30, 2026**

MLK Day Holiday (no classes): January 19

Final exams: January 30:

#### **Spring Semester: February 5 - May 13, 2026**

Spring break: March 28 - April 6

April-May: [two rounds of funding for unpaid/underpaid internships for Summer 2026](#)

Final exams: May 15-20

Calendars for these and future academic years can be accessed via the [Registrar's Office website](#).

## Appendix B: Resources for Partners

Appendix B contains checklists, worksheets, surveys, and more to provide community partners with resources for planning and facilitating a partnership. The following resources should be viewed as suggestions rather than tasks that need to be completed. We encourage you to consider the following resources and identify how the values and mission of your organization might correspond with these suggestions.

### Questions to Consider before Beginning a Partnership

- ☐ How will you orient students to your organization/community? What should students know about your organization/community before engaging with you?
- ☐ What does co-education mean to you? How could you see your organization as a co-educator of St. Olaf students?
- ☐ How does your organization uplift the members of your community's voices? How is your work informed by the communities you belong to and the communities you work with? What is your position in the community you work with?
- ☐ What other experiences has your organization had with collaboration? What went well and what did not?
- ☐ Do you have specific projects in mind that this partnership could work on? Or do you anticipate building a project around a combination of students' needs and your organization's needs?
- ☐ Will students need supervision to complete this work? Who will supervise students?
- ☐ What is your organization's preferred communication method?
- ☐ How is the culture of your organization similar to or different from what you know about the culture of St. Olaf? How could that help or hinder this partnership?



## Community Partner Basic Information Questionnaire

Sharing the following information with St. Olaf will help us to become familiar with the characteristics of your organization, begin to tailor the partnership to best fit your needs, and start the partnership on a strong foundation. It is especially helpful if you fill out this worksheet before having an initial meeting with Alyssa Melby and send it to her at [melby1@stolaf.edu](mailto:melby1@stolaf.edu).

Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization mission: \_\_\_\_\_

If I could pick three values tied most closely to my organization, they would be: \_\_\_\_\_

My organization strives to address the major issues of: \_\_\_\_\_

My organization fills the following role in society: \_\_\_\_\_

My organization will benefit from a partnership with St. Olaf because:

\_\_\_\_\_

St. Olaf College and its students will benefit from a partnership with my organization because:

\_\_\_\_\_

Some concerns that arise when I think about a partnership with St. Olaf include:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Co-planning Partnership Agreement Form

The [Co-planning Partnership Agreement Form](#) is specific to ACE courses but can be adapted to other forms of community engagement.

This form intends to clarify roles, responsibilities, expectations, and outcomes between community partners, faculty, and students that are associated with community engagement. This form includes questions to guide initial co-planning conversations, space to plan and describe community engagement projects, and a list of roles and expectations for everyone involved in the engagement activity.

Ideally, faculty and community partner(s) work collaboratively to develop shared aims for the ACE project; then faculty relay expectations and project parameters to students in course materials (e.g., on the course syllabus, share this form, etc.). Please adapt this form to fit the needs of the stakeholders involved. Whenever possible, face-to-face meetings to discuss projects are recommended. Please contact Alyssa Melby, Civic Engagement Director of the Svoboda Center, at [melby1@stolaf.edu](mailto:melby1@stolaf.edu) if you would like support or have additional questions.

## Orientation Checklist

Orienting student workers and volunteers to your organization helps them feel more confident in engaging with you and your community members. The following information contains suggestions—adapted from Campus Compact’s “The Promise of Partnerships: Tapping into the College as a Community Asset”—for what should be included in an orientation session.

Though the structure and number of orientation sessions is flexible, Campus Compact recommends two orientation sessions: one at the St. Olaf campus before the first day of engagement and one at the community partner’s site on the first day of engagement. The following checklists are built around that recommendation; however, not all questions may be relevant for every type of engagement, so adapt as needed..

### St. Olaf Orientation Session

1. Mission of the community partner.
2. Who does the community partner serve?
3. What programs/services does the community partner offer?
4. Specific policies and procedures related to the service placement.
5. Review any proof of eligibility that is needed (fingerprinting, background check). Who will cover the cost of this? Where should students go to have fingerprinting done?
6. Discuss the community partner’s volunteer expectations.
7. Provide students with a job description detailing the work they will do (outlining the scope of work). Explain the types of activities that are outside the scope of work.
8. Give the students their site supervisor’s contact information.
9. Will the students need to meet with the site supervisor prior to beginning their service?
10. How closely will the student be supervised? By whom?
11. Who do the students call if they cannot make their scheduled service or will be late?
12. Discuss appropriate attire when providing service (based on the community partner’s standards).
13. Provide specific training for the position.
14. What will the student learn? What qualities or skills will the student develop?
15. Review confidentiality rules for the site. Are pictures or video allowed?
16. Review the risks associated with this placement.
17. Explain what students should do if harassment occurs. Who do they contact? Remind students that they can always report any bias, harassment, or hate crime to St. Olaf’s [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#), even if the incident does not occur on campus.
18. Talk about the service schedule (total number of hours, days and times of the week, etc.). Discuss the beginning and end of service.
19. Who can the students contact with questions or concerns about their placement (organization contact and campus contact)?
20. Is there an organizational training or orientation to attend? Where? When? How long?
21. Where do students check in at the site on their first day?
22. How are students’ service hours recorded? (For their course and the organization.)

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23. Give the location of the site and directions via personal vehicle or public transportation. Where will students park if they drive? What is the cost associated with parking or taking public transit? Emphasize that the student is responsible for getting to and from the site.
  24. Who will be evaluating the students' service? Is there a formal evaluation the organization will fill out?

On-site community orientation

1. Tour of site—location of restroom and break room.
2. Where, and with whom, do students check in each time they arrive at the site?
3. If applicable, where is the logbook kept (to record service hours)?
4. Review safety rules of the site, location of emergency exits, and emergency procedures.
5. Introduce students to other staff at the agency.
6. Collect emergency contact information.
7. Review accident procedures at the site and what to do if a student or client is hurt.

If students are not completing direct service work, the following questions may still be applicable:

1. Mission of the community partner.
2. Who does the community partner serve?
3. What programs/services does the community partner offer?
4. Specific policies and procedures related to the service placement.
5. Provide students with a job description detailing the work they will do (outlining the scope of work). Explain the types of activities that are outside the scope of work.
6. Give the students their site supervisor's contact information.
7. Provide specific training for the position.
8. What will the student learn? What qualities or skills will the student develop?
9. Talk about the service schedule (total number of hours, days and times of the week, etc.). Discuss the beginning and end of service.
10. Who can the students contact with questions or concerns about their placement (organization contact and campus contact)?
11. Is there an organizational training or orientation to attend? Where? When? How long?
12. Who will be evaluating the students' service? Is there a formal evaluation the organization will fill out?

## Becoming a Co-Educator

The following is a list of topics that might be worthwhile to discuss with your students if you choose to take on the role of a co-educator.

- Describe the type of problem the students' work is addressing. Is it addressing a symptom or a cause?
- Ask the students how their schoolwork relates to the work they are doing at your organization.
- In addition to giving a tour of the organization, give the students a tour of the community that you are working with.
- Are there any prominent community members who act as a spokesperson for the community who would like to meet with the students?
- Tell the students about your own career, interests, and how you got started in this work.
- Ask what the students hope to get out of this experience. Ask the students how this experience can best contribute to their education and their future careers.
- Ask students about their own communities and what lived experiences they might bring as an asset to this partnership.
- Explain what is unique about this community and whether or not other communities experience these same challenges. Explain how the tactics with which your organization chooses to address these challenges are specifically tailored (or not) to the community.
- Describe what is unique about the organization.
- Describe how the organization interacts with the public and what its role is in the community ecosystem. What other entities does the organization partner with? Are there similar organizations that exist fulfilling similar or complementary roles?



## Reflection Questions for Evaluating Partnerships

The following information contains directions, statements, and questions for assessing partnerships.<sup>3</sup>

Please read each statement and rate it on a scale of 1-10 based on how much you agree with the statement. On this scale, 1 is “strongly disagree,” 10 is “strongly agree,” and 5 is “neither agree nor disagree.” There is also a space to explain your rating after each statement, but it is not necessary to provide written feedback. We ask that all faculty, students, and community members fill out this evaluation form after completing an ACE course, study abroad/away program, or engaging in campus-community partnerships in any way.

1. Partners have agreed upon mission values, goals, and measurable outcomes for the partnership.
2. The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
3. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also addresses areas that need improvement.
4. The partnership balances the power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
5. There is clear, open, and accessible communication between partners, making it an ongoing priority to listen to each need, develop a common language, and validate/clarify the meaning of terms.
6. Roles, norms, and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners.
7. There is feedback to, among, and from all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
8. Partners share the credit for the partnership’s accomplishments.
9. The partnership is set up to take time to develop and evolve over time.

Open-ended questions:

- What are some areas of the partnership that could be improved upon?
- How has the partnership benefited St. Olaf students? St. Olaf College? The community partner?
- Has the partnership resulted in unexpected costs for the partners? What are some of these costs?
- What challenges have arisen during the partnership?
- How do you see the partnership evolving in the future? What are some ways you hope the partnership will evolve in the future?
- What advice would you give to new organizations just starting out as community partners?

St. Olaf also encourages the community partner to reflect on its own time without feeling the need to provide feedback to St. Olaf. Any of the above resources and questions can be utilized for private reflection.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from “Assessing Service-learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques” by Sherril B. Gelmon, Barbara A. Holland, and Amy Spring

## Navigating Community Based Work Study (CBWS)

### What is CBWS?

Community Based Work Study (CBWS) allows students with Federal or State financial funding to earn their work study awards by working off campus at local non-profit organizations or in preK-8 classrooms, typically for 6-10 hours per week.

Both the community organization and institution contribute to the work study wage, with the organization only contributing 30% of the students' total wage. CBWS gives students the opportunity to devote a significant amount of work study time to a local project while learning about community issues and services. Please contact CBWS staff at [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu) for more information.

### How do I know if I am eligible?

#### Employers

- Must be a federal, state, or local public agency or certain private nonprofit or for-profit organizations.
- Off-campus FWS jobs with federal, state, or local public agencies or private nonprofit organizations must be in the public interest.
- Off-campus FWS jobs with private, for-profit organizations must be academically relevant to the maximum extent possible.

### Structure

|                              |                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Compensation Breakdown       | 75% St. Olaf College / 25% from partner<br>100% St. Olaf College for all tutor positions.                                                         |
| Billing                      | Community Partners are invoiced at the end of each academic semester.                                                                             |
| Rate of Pay                  | \$15.00/hr (AY 2025-26)<br>Higher rates may be available depending on jurisdiction and job type.                                                  |
| Supervisory Duties and Roles | Organization has sole discretion of employment terms related to the scope of work.<br>Organization approves timecard sheet for student employees. |

### How do I become a Community Partner for CBWS?

- Organizations who wish to participate may contact [civic-engage@stolaf.edu](mailto:civic-engage@stolaf.edu) to determine eligibility and needs.
- We will provide details of the program and expectations for both all entities. If all things are in order, an agreement will be established and signed by representatives of St. Olaf College and the Organization.
- Job descriptions are submitted and posted on the Student Employment job board.

- Students undergo the organization's hiring and selection process, as appropriate.
- Selected students report to work once we confirm all employment documentation are in order.

#### What will communication look like both from and to St. Olaf?

| Communication from St. Olaf                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | What you can direct as a community partner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Check-ins from a St. Olaf member during these times; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at the beginning of the academic year (August) to gather information on your organization's opportunities for student engagement in the coming year;</li> <li>- at the midpoint of the semester (middle of October, middle of January, or middle of March);</li> <li>- and at the end of the academic year (May).</li> </ul> | Feel free to contact St. Olaf at any time if you have questions, comments, or critiques regarding your organization's partnership with St. Olaf and/or student concerns or questions.                                                                                                      |
| You will be given the opportunity to reflect on the partnership and express your concerns and/or successes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | You can stop by the ACE Office and Svoboda Center for Civic Engagement on the 3rd floor of Tomson Hall on St. Olaf's campus, or you can always reach a staff member by phone or email.                                                                                                     |
| During a specific project or program, your organization's communication with students will be determined on an individual basis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Let us know what communication methods you prefer and how to best reach you.<br><br>Contact for questions; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alyssa Herzog Melby, Program Director for Academic Civic Engagement &amp; CBWS</li> <li>- 507-786-2184 or melby1@stolaf.edu</li> </ul> |

#### What are other related departments and offices at St. Olaf where I could connect with students?

- [Piper Center for Vocation and Career](#)
  - To advertise and host internships
- [Volunteering or Service Organizations](#)
  - To connect with student volunteers and organizations
- [Education Department](#)
  - To connect with our teacher licensure program

#### What are some expectations for the site from St. Olaf?

- Supporting student development and providing feedback
  - Working with the student to outline schedules and responsibilities
- Having regular check-ins (see communication table above and adjust as needed) with clear communication
- Sharing insight and knowledge about the site
- Introductions to other colleagues and types of work in the organization
- Reinforcing professional behavior

#### What are some expectations for students?

- Trying new things and evaluating what they do or don't like, being willing to make mistakes
- Intentionally and strategically planning personal, school, and world life
  - Communicate schedule changes
- Meaningfully building community relationships
- Engaging in professional behavior

- Completion of paperwork
- Being attentive to community partner communications and priorities
- 

#### What is the disciplinary/termination process for CBWS students?

St. Olaf College, as the employer of record, is an “at-will” employer and as such may terminate employment if reasonable justification has been established.

All incidents or disciplinary actions, including verbal or written warnings, should be communicated to the CBWS staff so we can provide proper documentation to Human Resources. Please include the following information:

- Action taken (verbal warning, written warning, termination)
- Reason for warning (include any previous coaching and/or progression disciplinary documentation given to the student)
- recommendation(s) for improvement
- Student comments/remarks (if known)

To guide you in performance discipline conversations, you are welcome to use this [Conversation Guide](#).

The following guidance is provided in an effort to be fair to both the student and the supervisor.

- Immediate Dismissal: If a situation warrants, supervisors have the authority to immediately dismiss a student employee when evidence exists of a violation of the Code of Student Conduct, a breach of the St. Olaf Confidentiality Agreement, a violation of organization policies, or if other conditions exist that warrant immediate dismissal.
- Other situations that do not warrant immediate dismissal may result in any of the following actions:
  - Verbal or Written Warnings: If a situation warrants, the supervisor may issue a student a verbal or written warning. This communication should result in a clear understanding between both parties as to the nature of the infraction and how it can be corrected. If the warning is written, a copy of this letter should be sent to CBWS staff to forward to the Human Resources Office.
    - Whenever possible, students should be given three warnings (including a final written warning) before termination.
  - Dismissal: If the student continues to exhibit improper behavior, the site supervisor may dismiss the student. Please alert CBWS staff to begin the termination process.

## Resources Referenced

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