

FAQ Sheet – Students

Question: Why does this class have a community placement component?

The intent of the community placement component is to expose students to learning opportunities outside of the traditional lecture hall format, enriching their learning experiences. This course is centered on critically engaging and reflecting upon the various differences, the result of our distinctive identities, that inform education and schooling experiences. Therefore, community placements were viewed an opportunity to unite classroom knowledge and real-world experiences, the latter taking place with diverse populations in our local communities. **This does not mean that all students will be placed in a local school setting for their community placement. Students will engage with community members (varying in age) in diverse local venues.**

Question: Where are the community placements located?

Community placements will take place both on- and off-campus. Off-campus placements will be with community organizations in either Urbana or Champaign. Sites can be accessed either on foot (on-campus) or through personal or public transportation (off-campus). Students can access all of the community placements, specifically the off-campus placements, on a [CUMTD](#) bus. Students can also use the [CUMTD](#) website's "Trip Planner" feature to plan your trips to and from your community placement.

Question: What types of community placements will be available to students?

Community placements fall into six categories: *On-campus Organizations*, *Community Social Services*, *Educational/Informational Services*, *School Events/Programs*, *Adult Education*, and *Recreation*.

There will be specific community placement organizations available in each discussion section. Students will receive information indicating which placement sites are available in their discussion section. When students complete the community placement application (the application used to place them with a site) they will select placement sites from those offered in their specific discussion section. Students will rank their preferred placement sites (from 1-4) in their application.

Question: What does the application process entail to select a community site?

Students will be introduced to the course's community placement component during the first week of classes, in both the lecture and the discussion sections. At that time, students will receive the Community Placement Guidebook and the community placement application via email from Jay Mann. Dr. Mann will be one of the main contacts in the College of Education for the course's community placement component. He is the director of School and Community Experiences in the College of Education. The specific timeframe to complete the community placement application will be explained to students in one of the course's initial lecture sessions or discussion section sessions. Once all of the applications have been submitted to Jay Mann, he will determine community placements from the ranked preferences each students provided in their application.

All efforts will be made to place students with one of their preferred placements. **However, it is not guaranteed that a student will be assigned to one of their 4 preferred placements.**

Question: How can I learn about the community organizations participating in this course prior to completing my application?

To support your ability to complete your application you will receive a Community Placement Guidebook that will introduce you to each of the community organizations participating in the course. The Guidebook presents a profile description of each organization, detailing the “community experiences” each organization is offering EDUC 201 students. The Guidebook will also specify which community organizations are available in each discussion section. Along with the Guidebook, EDUC 201 students will attend the Office of Volunteer Programs’ annual Volunteer Fair before completing their applications. **The course’s community partners will be present at the fair. Students can ask community organization representatives questions about their organization, their mission statements, and the experiences they will offer EDUC 201 students. Students should also bring a few copies of their resume (if they have one) and the EDUC 201 Questionnaire to the Volunteer Fair in case community organization representatives would like to learn more about them.** *Please know that barring class conflicts, attendance at the Volunteer Fair should be mandatory for EDUC 201 students.* Attending the Volunteer Fair will be a great way for students to learn more about the course’s community partners; it will also be a nice opportunity for students to learn more about general volunteer opportunities on campus and in the larger U-C communities.

Question: What is a “community experience”?

Each community organization will offer unique experiences tailored to their organization’s mission and goals. The course’s community partners have spent considerable time designing personalized experiences for EDUC 201 students. The “community experiences” for each community organization are listed in their Guidebook description. Each site will offer at least one “community experiences”; however some organizations are offering a couple of “community experiences” at their site that students can choose from.

Question: Are students able to choose their community placement site?

Students will play a major role in selecting their community placement, from the placements available to them in their discussion section. Students will have the option of ranking their top 4 preferred community organizations from those available to them. **Every effort will be made to place a student with one of their preferred sites.** The placement process is predicated upon the overall preferences noted by all of the students in a given discussion section, the number of projected volunteers each site can take, and student/community organizations’ schedules.

When completing the application, students want to make sure they have thoroughly reviewed the descriptions in the Community Placement Guidebook and have attended the Volunteer Fair so they can make the most informed decision possible.

Question: When will EDUC 201 students begin their placement experiences?

EDUC 201 students should receive their placement letters from Jay Mann, indicating what community organization they will be placed with, by no later than Tuesday, September 25th. At that time, students should reach out to their site supervisors (they are listed in each community organization's profile in the Community Placement Guidebook) to introduce themselves and determine if there is an orientation session they need to attend.

Questions: What are my transportation options to get to off-campus community placement sites?

You can use personal transportation such as a bicycle or car to get to off-campus placement sites. If your placement is more than 15 minutes from campus (or if there is poor weather) you may not want to use a bicycle.

You can also get to off-campus placement sites by using public transportation such as, the Champaign-Urbana bus system. It is called CUMTD. All off-campus placement sites are accessible by a city bus. All of the busses have GPS tracking, allowing you to receive real-time schedules via smart phone apps. You can also text the CUMTD main transportation system and receive a text message indicating when a bus should arrive at a given bus stop.

Further information about navigating the C-U bus system is available at www.cumtd.com

Question: Does transportation time, to and from my community site, count towards my required hours?

No, transportation time does not count towards your required hours. When you complete your weekly timesheet, you are only recording contact hours at your actual site. It should not take more than 30 minutes, each way, to get to any community placement. You can import a community organization' address into the CUMTD "Trip Planner" feature, along with your "starting location", to obtain accurate travel information. Therefore, before selecting a given placement site you can determine the transportation time to get to and from any community organization. Though a placement site may require you to take a city bus, it should not detract from the worthwhile experience you will have once there. Off-campus sites (and taking public transportation) allow you to become better acquainted with the larger cities you now live in.

Question: How do I access my timesheets?

Students can access their weekly timesheet through the CTE Portal. The portal is an electronic platform that you will use to complete your timesheet as well as provide feedback on your experiences with the course's community placement component (you will do the latter through a mid-semester survey and an end of the semester evaluation). In your timesheet you will report your hours and the activities you completed each time you volunteered. Each week your completed timesheet will be submitted to your site supervisor for approval. The finalized timesheet (with your site supervisor's signature) will be sent to your Teaching Assistant so they can monitor your progress at your placement site, and tailor aspects of the class discussions around students' experiences in the community.

Question: How many hours are students expected to volunteer over the fall semester?

Students are expected to volunteer for 20 hours over the course of the semester.

Question: Do I have to attend my community placement site weekly?

Yes, you will attend your placement site weekly. Ultimately, you will determine your weekly schedule with your site supervisor. Some placement sites and site supervisors allow for more flexibility in determining a student's weekly volunteer schedule, and other sites require a more specific weekly schedule. Each community organization's Guidebook description will indicate the type of weekly arrangement they would like their volunteers to maintain. If a site requires specific weekly hours, this is most likely because EDUC 201 students will participate in programming already established at their site.

Question: Are students given any training prior to beginning their placement experiences?

It is at the discretion of each site supervisor to determine if they would like to hold an orientation or training session for their volunteers. Most site supervisors have indicated that they will hold an orientation session. The session will allow volunteers to learn more about the organization, its mission, and the specific "community experience" they will complete. If a site supervisor does not offer an orientation or training session, but such a session would make you feel more comfortable completing your experience let your site supervisor know. They will definitely create a training session for you, as they want you to get the most out of this experience. Also, if you need further support following an orientation or training session, let your supervisor know. You want to feel comfortable and confident completing your "community experience".

Question: Will any student be placed at a community organization by themselves?

No student will be placed at a community placement site by themselves. However, that does not mean that you will volunteer during the same time-frame as other students volunteering at your placement or that you will be placed with someone from your discussion section. Since there are specific placement sites assigned to each discussion section you will have students in your section who either have the same community placement or volunteer in a similar "type of community organization" (i.e. community social services). This way you can still reflect upon your shared experiences.

Question: Who should I contact if I have questions about my placement experience?

You can reach out to a few different people if you have questions. You can always contact your site supervisor if you have specific questions pertaining to your "community experience". You will discuss with your site supervisor the best way to contact them. In the past, students have used either email or text messaging to remain in contact with site supervisors. You can reach out to your TA or the course instructor, if you have any questions about the course or course requirements. If you have questions about your placement experience or the overall community placement component of the course you will find Jay Mann most helpful to answer these questions. Jay Mann can be reached at jaymann@illinois.edu.

Question: Do I get to provide feedback regarding my placement experience?

Yes, your feedback is very important. Along with any feedback you provide to your TAs, site supervisors, course professor, or Jay Mann throughout the semester, you will also complete a mid-semester survey and an evaluation at the end of the semester. In both the survey and the evaluation you will reflect upon the community placement component of the course. It is very important that personnel in the College learn all that they can about the community placement component. As students going through the course, experiencing the community placements first-hand, your feedback is vital.

Question: Are there any resources I can access now to learn more about volunteering in Champaign-Urbana as a university student?

Yes, a website was made, in part, for you as a student enrolled in EDUC 201. Some of the students enrolled in EDUC 201: Identity & Difference in Education during the fall 2015 semester selected to participate in a course entitled EPS 199: Community Engagement during the following spring 2016 semester. EPS 199 allowed students to remain connected to an EDUC 201 community organization. The students in EPS 199 created a course website where they reflected upon their experiences volunteering in Champaign-Urbana communities. They intended for the website to also be a resource for future students enrolled in EDUC 201 to help them learn more about local organizations and to support their efforts to successfully transition into their placement sites. The link to the website is below:

<http://engagingeducatorsuiuc.weebly.com/>

If you'd like to contact the students who produced the website, to gain a student's perspective on the EDUC 201 course and/or volunteering, feel free to contact them through the website.