



## **Alternative Service Experience**

Thinking about serving as a Learning Partner?

Here are some things to know so that you can make an informed decision:

### **What are the general responsibilities of a Learning Partner?**

- Provide guidance and life wisdom when necessary
- Fully participate in all service, reflection and group activities
- Recognize that the best way to lead is by setting a good example
- Adhere to all principles designed by the group (in pre-travel classes)
- Drive one of the vans. You may or may not be the only person with a valid license to drive the University van
- Take notice of group dynamics and help those who are not feeling comfortable
- Provide support and encouragement to the Peer Leaders, and work together to keep group harmony and positive morale
- Advise the Peer Leaders in “stickier situations”- they will need to discuss things confidentially with you at times
- Assist in facilitating –discussions
- Help keep the budget straight

### **What are NOT the general responsibilities of a Learning Partner?**

- Plan the program
- Lead discussions
- Make group decisions
- Play parent (i.e. wake people up in the morning, set the group tone)
- Fully coordinate the pre-travel classes

### **FAQ's of Potential Learning Partners:**

#### **Who plans the program?**

The two ASE Peer Leaders will fully coordinate all aspects of the program, from making project location arrangements, housing arrangements, leading daily reflection, etc. You may advise on some details, but the bulk of the work is the responsibility of the Peer Leaders.

**What are the pre-travel meetings?**

The pre-travel meetings provide a chance for your group to come together for initial icebreaking and teambuilding, as well as preparation for the experience. These meetings are important pieces for the comfort level of participants and their readiness to learn about a new community and social issue. You are welcome to share expertise and experience but not expected to create the content.

**How many students go on a program?**

Program capacity is 11 participants. 1 faculty/staff Learning Partner, 2 student Peer Leaders, and 8 student participants.

**How are students selected?**

There will be 1 sign-up date for ASE: Spring Break programs and 1 sign-up date for ASE: Fall Break program. Dates are listed on the ASE website. Sign-ups are on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students must show up with a non-refundable deposit (\$100 spring, \$50 fall), their student ID and a copy of proof of insurance.

**What is the “reflection” component?**

Peer Leaders will lead daily reflections sessions while on program. We encourage creative and interactive sessions that assist students in processing events and making connections between their life context and current experiences.

**Do I need to take vacation days for this?**

This is up to the discretion of each department director. Often directors do not require you to use vacation days for this experience, as it is a university program and a chance to really get to know students on a personal level. It does involve weekend days; this is also up for discussion with your director. If necessary, each University full-time staff member receives 3 community service leave days, which may be used.

**What are my expectations in terms of daily responsibility while on the program?**

The Peer Leaders will take care of nearly all the logistics. Perhaps a staff member’s most important role is to model good behavior and a solid work ethic while on site, as well as during reflection (this may seem obvious, but it is crucial). Additionally, staff members must drive the university vans, and assist (if necessary) with budgeting. There are mechanisms put in place to ensure that you are NOT the person waking everyone up in the morning (a thankless job), you are NOT the one getting everyone in the van on time, and you are NOT the only one buying groceries and cooking dinner. These responsibilities are taken care of on a rotating basis (or however the group determines). This not only lifts responsibilities from the staff members (who

are automatically seen as “authority”), but also has the advantage of shifting leadership among the students and increasing their level of cooperation.

**Will this program involve any costs on my part?**

Not much. The program cost for the Learning Partner is absorbed by the student group participants (as of now we are expecting the program cost to be approximately \$200 spring, \$100 fall). Certain smaller costs may arise; for example, if you choose to go on a site-seeing adventure, or to order a meal that is above the price determined by the group, then the cost is up to you.

**May I bring my children/spouses along on the trip?**

No. In addition to University policy stating that children are not permitted on the University vans, it is a Key Center policy that ASE programs are not appropriate for children and spouses. The Key Center recognizes the hardship and limits this may place on some families, and we apologize that the nature of the program cannot incorporate family members. We work diligently to maintain positive, cohesive and intentional group dynamics by holding each member to the same set of standards and expectations. Because this week offers the opportunity for intense relationship building and social problem processing we want to ensure that the group parameters are clearly defined and formed.