

Community Volunteering

Community engagement and volunteering is strongly encouraged at Bellarmine and we highly value the collaboration between our university and our local community in Louisville and southern Indiana. During your time here, you may find yourself involved in classes, student organizations, or other groups which require or offer off-campus volunteer activities. You may wish to volunteer your time somewhere outside of Bellarmine's partnerships.

International students on an F-1 or J-1 visa must make sure that opportunities to volunteer or engage in do not violate rules regarding your student status. Make sure before you participate in an activity that you understand the difference between volunteering and employment.

Contact the Center for Community Engagement (CCE) at communityengagement@bellarmine.edu as well as International Support if you wish to discuss experiential opportunities.

Volunteering or Work?

Federal regulations do not have a clear definition for "volunteering." Not being paid for work is not enough to qualify an experience as volunteering and not work. Improper unpaid internships violate your student status. Our advice is based on previous court rulings and guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor.

An experience may qualify as volunteering if:

- You and the organization understand that no wages will be paid as the result of your work
- You are the primary beneficiary of the training, not the organization, and it does not create an immediate advantage to the organization
- You are complementing the work of a paid employee, not displacing the need for a regular worker
- You and the organization understand that the experience does not entitle you to a job afterward
- The experience is for a charitable (non-profit) organization or has a civic purpose for local or state government

An experience may need to be approved for CPT if:

- The experience is at all tied to any of your academic coursework
- Your academic commitments are being accommodated by adherence to the academic calendar
- The experience is similar to training in an educational setting?

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Examples of Volunteering at Bellarmine

- Knights in Action, Martin Luther King Jr Week of Service, and SGA Community Connections Events are considered volunteering and do not need any special authorization
- Alternative Spring Break is an unpaid week of volunteering in a underserved community
- Activities like RISE Tutoring and Pathways: Knights Lighting a Path for College qualify as volunteering if they are not related to your major or career path (like education)

Curricular Pathways

Internship class (444 or 644): You may enroll in an internship class and work at an organization without pay. You would qualify for Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

Plus 1 BU250: Add one credit of experiential learning to a class that explores a community topic or social issue, with approval from your instructor. The core class must be in your major. Paid opportunities are not considered volunteering. This would qualify as Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

Funding Opportunities

If you are interested in working on a community-oriented project, consider the following and contact the Center for Community Engagement for help. **Always speak with International Support before you accept money or begin an opportunity.**

Impact Grants: These are small grants that provide a small amount of funding for a community project. While these are not wages, F-1 students should either be enrolled in a CPT-qualifying course or ask a faculty member to sponsor the project and handle the grant.

Community Engagement Access Fund: If you are enrolled in an appropriate course and authorized for CPT, Bellarmine may be able to fund your work, with certain restrictions.

The Women's Council Academic, International, and Service Student Support Fund: some expenses related to service or research activities may be available, but the activity should not be happening off-campus.

Unfortunately, F-1 international students are not eligible for the Bonner Leaders Program because it is funded through federal work-study. Remember that any of the above funding may be taxable.