Seeking Knowledge in the Service of Humanity
An Ignatian Service Learning Pilot Program for Loyola Academy Juniors and Seniors

SERVICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A VITAL PART of a Loyola Academy education. Each year, hundreds of Ramblers serve others through our Arrupe Service Program and at summer service sites throughout the country and around the world.

Our Ignatian Service Learning Pilot Program takes the service experience into the classroom — enabling students to learn about social justice issues in academic courses across the curriculum, apply their new knowledge to real-life situations through community service and then engage in reflective exercises, discussions and projects to process the experience.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, we will be piloting four Ignatian service-learning courses for Loyola juniors and seniors:

- Honors Environmental Science
- Justice Seminar
- Sociology
- Spanish 4

How does service learning happen? Here’s one example: Ramblers study U.S. immigration trends in a social studies class and engage in direct service with immigrant families resettling in the Chicago area. The students reflect on their service experience and create a short documentary film about the social issues that these families faced in their countries of origin and as “strangers in a strange land.”

This integration of classroom learning, direct service, reflection and synthesis projects helps students process what they’ve learned on a deeper level, so that they have a better grasp of the course content and a more personal, nuanced understanding of social justice issues in the world today.

In short, Ignatian Service Learning engages our students’ hearts and minds, creating a profound and unforgettable learning experience that will change the way they think about the world.

My service learning experience with StandUp For Kids, which helps runaways and at-risk teens, has opened up a whole new world for me. Before this experience, I never would have known that an epidemic of homelessness was occurring just 13 miles away from Loyola Academy. I learned about real-life issues and helped solve real-world problems. I really connected with these kids, even though I was afraid we’d have nothing in common.

— Madison McCarthy ’14

What is service learning and how does it work?

Service learning is a teaching methodology that combines classroom instruction with meaningful and relevant community service. It enhances the academic rigor of our curriculum, helps meet critical community needs and encourages Ramblers to assume leadership roles in academic and civic endeavors while living out their call to be women and men for others.

Course Content
Class readings, concepts, theory and knowledge

Synthesis Projects
Projects that integrate course content with community context, challenging students to apply what they’ve learned to the goals of our community partners

Reflection
Ongoing reflection about course content, community context and the Jesuit concept of a faith that does justice

Community Context
Learning experiences with community partners

Service Learning Outcomes

- Students participate in quality learning experiences in sustained community partnerships that address community goals and needs
- Students analyze community needs through the lens of course content emphasizing social inequality
- Students complete a proposal or project that meets the needs of a local community
- Students engage in ongoing reflection about their service learning experience in the context of an Ignatian-centered “faith that does justice”
- Our Service Learning Team evaluates students’ progress toward meaningful lives of leadership and service
From the Classroom to the Community
Experiential Learning with an Emphasis on Social Justice

OUR VISION FOR EVERY RAMBLER at Loyola Academy is rooted in the Jesuit tradition of forming women and men for others who will use their gifts and talents to meet the world’s most pressing needs. Through our service learning pilot program, Loyola juniors and seniors will have an opportunity to deepen their experience of the school’s Ignatian mission by engaging in a minimum of eight service experiences per semester at partner organizations throughout the Chicago area. By serving as an extension of the classroom, our community partners will provide an experiential context for learning that:

- enhances comprehension and retention of course content
- makes course content more meaningful
- enables students to apply academic theories to real-life situations
- promotes learning in ways that are impossible to replicate in a classroom
- fosters leadership and civic responsibility
- provides a lived experience of social justice issues
- supports the goals and missions of partner organizations

Learning that Leads to Transformation

According to the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, transformative learning is situated in a specific context, rooted in previous experience and enhanced by new learning experiences, dependent on and deepened by reflection about those experiences, made more meaningful when new knowledge is put into action and reinforced by evaluation to determine the effectiveness of a chosen action and the degree to which learning has occurred.

The Ignatian Service Learning model incorporates all of these elements into its methodology. Through journaling and seminars, students are given opportunities to reflect on the course content, their community service experience and wider issues of social justice. The model also allows the dissonance and challenges that may emerge from the community experience to transform the learner and the learning experience.

Students will also complete synthesis projects, which are designed to help them make meaningful connections between their classroom learning and community experiences. These projects will address the goals and needs of our community partners as students use their problem-solving, collaborative and creative skills to address real-world issues. Synthesis projects can take many different forms, from oral narratives, demographic analyses and research projects to film-making for public relations and educational purposes.