Faith-Justice Institute
The Faith-Justice Institute (FJI) at Saint Joseph’s University was founded in 1977. It serves the University as a center that promotes social analysis and critical thought around faith and justice issues. The Institute explores contemporary issues of faith and justice through academic courses, public forums, and experiential field seminars. These initiatives seek to critically analyze the sources of and reasons for injustice and to actively fashion more just communities at local, national, and global levels. Such efforts should be rooted in a spirituality that takes seriously the world as it unjustly exists and that fosters hope and commitment to keep working to reshape that world in the light of Gospel values.

What is Service-Learning?
The Service-Learning Program, housed in the Faith-Justice Institute, is an interdisciplinary academic program. Service-Learning is a form of experience-based education where students engage in service as part of their academic course work. It is believed that doing service work can help students better understand the abstract concepts presented in their classes. Likewise, the ideas learned in class can help students make sense of the human and social problems they encounter through their service work.

The Service-Learning Program at Saint Joseph’s University is based in the Ignatian Tradition. In our courses this perspective is actualized by five core criteria seeking to foster a commitment to developing the whole person of conscience, competence and compassion.

A Service-Learning class combines academics with experience and reflection. Lectures, texts, and tests are enhanced by community based work engaging schools and non-profit agencies that are making a difference in the Philadelphia area. Topics such as poverty, AIDS, violence, mental illness, and racism are explored both in the classroom and in the community.

Service-Learning is different than other service programs because it allows students to participate in experiential learning by integrating learning inside and outside of the classroom while presenting a guided reflections to process their experiences.

**Mission:** In line with the Jesuit mission of Saint Joseph’s University, the service work will engage students with a particular marginalized population such as men and women who are homeless, people who are economically poor, adults suffering with mental or physical disabilities, the elderly, or children attending inner-city schools.

**Courses:** Freshman Service-Learning classes are offered in full-year course sequences all SJU students are required to take including First Year Seminars, English, Economics, Philosophy, Theology core courses and Social Sciences courses. For Education majors, we have designated Service-Learning course sequences to accommodate your major specific requirements. Students of all majors can choose to take one of these courses as a
Service-Learning class (in a small setting with a lot of support) or without the Service-Learning requirement.
Upper level courses are offered over one semester and range in content and department. These courses are offered in three different formats: traditional relationship-based Service-Learning (direct service), project based learning developed with Community Partners, and immersion experiences in the context of community.

**Relationship-based service:** Students attend class two or three times a week and serve weekly for three hours with our Community Partner Organizations. Freshmen year-long courses invite year-long commitment for service during both fall and the spring semesters, and upper level students serve for one semester either the fall or spring. Relationship-based service stresses the important of presence and human interaction over assigned tasks. Service time fulfills an agency need, relates to course content and provides opportunities for students to develop appropriate relationships with agency clientele.

**Reflection and Connection to Coursework:** We place students at Community Partner Organizations serving populations that are relevant to a course’s theme or objective and meet a community need. For example, a class focused on healthcare will be offered opportunities at service placements supporting or community members valuing dignity in healthcare, hospice care, or residential facilities.

**Service-Learning Program Support:**

**Service-Learning Staff**
Danielle Critelli: Community Partnerships Administrator, Supervisor of Placement Liaisons
Ann Marie Jursca Keffer: Director, Faith-Justice Institute
Jill Amitrani Welsh: Associate Director, Supervisor of Service Scholars

**Community Partnerships Administrator (CPA):** The CPA develops and deepens partnerships with Community Partner Organizations to offer reciprocal experiences for both partners. Our hope is that our students are benefitting the organization in some way with their presence through service and participation, and in turn offering students an out-of-class learning experience. The CPA then works with faculty to arrange meaningful and appropriate community experiences for each individual course. The CPA envisions ongoing relationships with all Service-Learning community partners and facilitates the student placement logistics.

**Placement Liaisons:** Placement Liaisons are student leaders who assist with the organization and deepening of Service-Learning community partner relationships. They collaborate with assigned Community Partner Organizations to foster open communication and reciprocity. Placement Liaisons also support Service-Learning students with placement orientation and logistical needs. Placement Liaisons are full time students, balancing academic coursework with this professional community. As undergraduate students, boundaries are set strictly to professional partnership between the Community Partner Organizations/Site Supervisors and Placement Liaisons.

**Service-Scholars:** Service Scholars are student leaders who facilitate social justice themed discussions and serve as peer mentors, in all Service-Learning courses. They work with assigned faculty members to foster classroom environments that promote critical thinking and reflection on service, social problems, and how the works of faith respond to social injustices.

**Training and Supervision:** The Faith-Justice Institute provides Placement Awareness Training for all Service-Learning students to complete before beginning service. It introduces
students to our philosophy and expectations for Service-Learning, and gives logistics such as clearances, transportation, emergency protocol, and missing service.

Providing an optional orientation for the students on the first week of service is important to the service experience. This is helpful so the community partner can provide a clear set of expectations they have for the student experience. This is a time where the community partner can give a brief overview of the organization’s mission, staff, policies and procedures, goals for the partnership, and a brief tour.

General Service-Learning Information:

**Placement Procedure:** Freshmen students select Community Partner Organizations assigned to their courses over the summer before beginning the school year. The CPA matches up students in pairs or groups, as we do not allow our freshmen students to attend service on their own. Upper level students register for a placement assigned to their course during a 24-hour period of web registration. Student who do not register are assigned a placement that fits their academic, work, and D1 athletic schedules.

**Clearance Process:** Please communicate which clearances, health forms, and volunteer applications are required for student volunteers and when they are due. We will inform students of all clearances that their assigned Community Partner Organization requires before service begins. Additionally, SJU requires students to complete clearances depending on their Service-Learning assignment. Service-Learning students are required to attend training before they begin service and this is when they are given instructions and deadlines for clearances. Students are required to hand in physical copies to their Community Partner supervisors, as well as meet SJU requirements. We mandate all students working with children under eighteen to watch a University-specific video on mandated reporting.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** Service is canceled due to inclement weather when the University cancels classes or closes, the CPA anticipates inclement weather and/or student traveling is unsafe, or the Community Partner Organization closes or cancels services. Service cancelled by the University, Placement Coordinator, Education Field Placement Office or Community Partner Organization due to inclement weather is not required to be made up.

When service has not yet been canceled by the university or CPA and a student driver and/or student passengers have concern for traveling, students can determine they will miss service and make service up as per the missed service procedure (below). If a decision is made not to attend service, the students are responsible for contacting their supervisor to inform of their absence, and will ask when to make up service at a later date.

**Missed Service Procedure:** Service can be missed because of family emergency, personal illness and inclement weather only. If service is missed for a personal illness, the time must be made up at the convenience of the Community Partner Organization. Students in the Freshman Service-Learning classes cannot go to service alone. However, if there are 3 partners going to service and one person is sick, the other two students should still attend service. Students are required to notify your community partner organization several hours in advance.

**Mid-Semester Attendance and Evaluation:** Attendance is an important way of tracking students’ participation at service. Placement Liaisons will start each semester by sharing an attendance log that we ask to be printed for each student serving with you. Please have these at a main entrance for the students to access each week.
Each semester, the Placement Liaison assigned to your organization will reach out to gather mid-semester attendance and end of year evaluations. The purpose of the mid-semester attendance is to check in that students are going to service weekly, and have not missed service more than twice. Placement Liaison will report any missed attendance, which could affect the students Service-Learning portion of the course grade.

At the end of the semester, Placement Liaisons will share with supervisors a link to complete a student evaluation for each Service-Learning student that attended their organization. This evaluation will be sent to the students faculty member so he/she can incorporate it into their final course grade.

**Academic Calendar**: At the start of each semester, the Placement Liaison will share an Academic Calendar detailing important dates for our Service-Learning students, such as the start and end of service and holidays when students will be excused from attending service. Please share important dates with your Placement Liaison or Service-Learning students affecting their attendance and participation with your organization.

**Transportation**: Freshmen Service-Learning students are assigned University vehicles to travel to and from service. All freshmen must serve in groups of two or more. Upper level students are responsible for coordinating their own transportation to and from service. We connect students traveling to the same Community Partner Organizations and encourage carpooling. SEPTA tokens are provided for students taking public transportation to and from service. The FJI requires all students taking public transportation as their method of transportation to and from service to return to campus by 6:00 PM.

**Tips for being a supportive Service-Learning Supervisor**:

**Open Communication**: Through a reciprocal partnership, we hope that our Community Partners can honestly share with us ways to strengthen our work together and find other ways to work together collaboratively. If there are concerns regarding our students or their work at your organization, we will take all steps necessary to ensure the experience is resolved and the experience is beneficial.

We have found successful Service-Learning experiences happen when the site supervisors and the students have open communication. We cannot provide student contact information to our Community Partners, but students can provide contact information, so that if anything were to unexpectedly arise, you can communicate directly with the student.

**Support**: One expectation for our Community Partner Organizations is that a staff member is present as supervisor while Service-Learning students are present for service. This ensures students’ proper participation, active initiative, comfortability and safety while at your organization. We have given students training for beginning their Service-Learning experience and protocol for handling emergency situations, but expect site supervisors to be present for the students if they have a question or hesitation while at service and step in if an emergency were to occur or they .

**Clear Expectations**: Through Placement Awareness Training, we have informed students of our expectations regarding attendance, participation, transportation, and reflection. If there are specific instructions or expectations for your organization, please inform the students of these so there is a higher possibility for success for all stakeholders in this partnership.
Reflections on Service-Learning

What do community partners say about Service-Learning?
"Service-Learning students have the opportunity to cross social, emotional, economical and racial boundaries if they make the effort to do so. Their perspectives and experiences in life allow for an informal discussion to take place that is needed in today’s society. Learning through service in real time about another person’s culture, background, or personality is crucial when creating positive change and empathy within a community. Once the exchange is complete, both sides involved in the Service-Learning project are able to reflect and hopefully appreciate the opportunity to grow…

I have a solid understanding of what the outcomes could be when this type of learning is done with genuine intent as well. I felt that all of the students we had from St. Joe’s this semester made efforts to engage with my students in a genuine and healthy way.” - Kamal Marell, Coordinator: Out of School Time, People's Emergency Center

“Project HOME officially incorporated in 1989, and St. Joe’s has been with us, I can imagine if not the entire wa, almost the whole way. SLR students have always been connected at Project HOME as far back as I can recall as a St. Joe’s student, so the institutional partnership between the Faith-Justice Institute and Project HOME is really a strong one.” – Scarlett McCahill ’06, Talent Recruiter, Project HOME

“A common refrain from some of the SJU students is that they have been able to learn and to grow much more so from our children than what they have been able to pass on in terms of helping to tutor with english or spanish literacy or long division or whatever they may be working on… In the process and the relationship of working with the Faith-Justice Institute I’ve always very much appreciated that our voice as a Community Partner Organization has been genuinely valued.” – Alexandra Wolkoff, Director of Education, Puentes de Salud

What do students say about Service-Learning?
“As an international relations major, I have always been concerned with the big picture. It is way easier to speak and write about injustices that are happening in faraway places. Service-Learning...gave me an opportunity to meet members of the community, from all areas of life. I was lucky enough to have meaningful, genuine dialogues with the people at my service site. I was able to talk and write about these dialogues in my Texts and Contexts class, but really, in all of my classes and activities on campus. I have made long lasting relationships with people in my class and people in my community that have definitely made my transition to Philadelphia worth it. Service-Learning gave me a new perspective, and taught me that injustices aren’t reserved for faraway lands and third world countries. There are grave injustices in our backyard.” – Bridget B.

“Through Service-Learning courses you will find yourself learning more and more about not only the people at your service site but also yourself and the society that we are all apart of. These lessons go beyond the classroom and serve as a text that you will be able to reflect on, write about, and converse about within and outside of the classroom. If you enjoy to write, reflect, and learn, then Service-Learning is definitely for you. You will learn a multitude of things that no standard classroom environment can teach you. With the information or lessons you are taught you will want to reflect on your past and your current being. In writing your thoughts you can bring Service-Learning beyond a single year course and look back at your thoughts that you applied to paper and relive this enlightening experience. Service-Learning can also serve as a break from the daily class, homework, and library sessions. I was able to take this break and rejuvenate myself...’ – Matthew B.

“The thing with Service-Learning is that it often takes you out of your comfort zone and it really puts you in a place where it challenges different conceptions you have, and mainly about yourself. Knowing in an academic environment and in a place where you are forming
relationships with people, that’s something that has continued to shape how I interact with the world.” – Julian P.

**What do faculty members say about Service-Learning?**

“And when you put students in vulnerable situations, particularly when you have for example an eighteen year old student teaching somebody or tutoring somebody who might be old enough to be their parent or even in some cases their grandparent, that really can have a powerful effect... This isn’t about doing something just for somebody else, as though you have some to give them. It’s also a work where you are getting something from other people as well.” – Dr. Tom Brennan, S.J., Associate Professor, English

“When students are outside of the classroom and making connections with people, it makes them think about the content they are learning in the classroom in a different way. It makes it more personal for them.” – Dr. Susan Clampet-Lundquist, Associate Professor, Sociology

“The mission isn’t just for people to have academic learning, its for them to have social conscience and awareness of their responsibility for community and there is nothing like experience to deepen that... There’s a great extra advantage if the students in the class are getting to encounter people who don’t have the same background they do. If I want the students to really come to grips with what is just and what is not just, and what is treating people with dignity and what isn’t, in the context of seeking revenge, seeking retribution, restorative justice, personal forgiveness, there is no substitute for some kind of experience that they don’t have.” – Dr. Elizabeth Linehan, R.S.M., Associate Professor, Philosophy

“One of the fundamental missions is to create engaged citizens who are going to be critical thinkers and lifelong learners.” – Dr. Eric Patton, Associate Professor, Management