



2025/2026 COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING ABRIDGED EVALUATION REPORT

Forward from the Director

The 2025/2026 academic year was another impactful year for CSL's students, community partners and instructors.

Participation rates from all constituents in CSL remain relatively high for these kinds of surveys, and certainly can be said to be representative, in general terms, of how CSL is being experienced by these groups.

Volunteering in the community, of course, is connected to time and money, or the student's reservoir of both. CSL is one of the most accessible forms of experiential learning on campus. Oscar Baron-Ruiz, CSL's evaluation coordinator and the author of this report, notes that 44% of CSL students are 'first generation', meaning that their participation in university is a first for their family. This is significantly higher than the value for the wider university (33%). This has become a consistent finding for the program. There are a number of reasons for this, including the faculties from which our students are drawn. Students from equity-deserving backgrounds see quite quickly that CSL can be a way for them to pursue higher education in a way where their knowledge and abilities can be in service of their communities. CSL both attracts and develops students who realize that the purpose of higher education is not only to gain a better income as an individual. It is to make our world more just and fair for all.

Many thanks to Oscar, PhD candidate in Engineering and CSL Evaluation Coordinator, for this report. The results from our surveys suggest CSL remains an important and valuable academic experience for many at UAlberta, while as always showing us areas where we can continue to improve. The Faculty of Education no longer requires its students to complete CSL in their first-year classes, which has led to a decline in student numbers this year. But we look forward to new models of engagement with the faculty and, indeed, all partners on campus and beyond.

Any positive results here represent the collective labour of instructors, students, community partners, and CSL staff.

Dr. David Peacock
CSL Director

Methodology

The University of Alberta CSL program distributed surveys at the end of the term to CSL opportunity-based students, classroom-based students, instructors, and community partners. The surveys were completed online through Google Forms. Students and instructors filled out their evaluations during class time at the end of term, and community partners were emailed a link to complete the survey on their own time at the end of term.

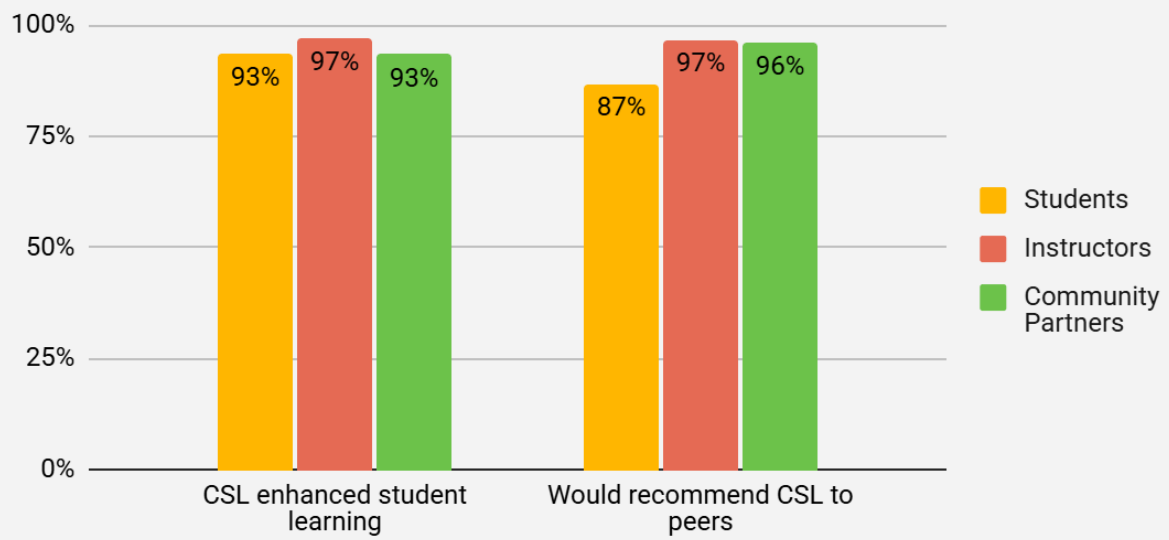
The CSL Evaluation Coordinator used the programming language R to analyze the quantitative data. The analysis included calculating descriptive statistics, summarizing response distributions, and comparing frequencies from previous years.

Statistics at a Glance

CSL Opportunity-based Students	Instructors	Community Partners
1,012 opportunity-based students 462 responded to the evaluation survey 71% women, 23% men, 6% two-spirit, non-binary, or other gender 87% are under 25 years old 44% are first generation University students¹ 11% are international students 71% in a CSL course for the first time 21% are working towards a CSL certificate	40 different instructors 32 responded to the evaluation survey 38% taught a CSL course for the first time 17% had 1-5 years of experience teaching university courses 42% were contract academic staff	112 community partners 76 responded to the evaluation survey 29% mentored a CSL student for the first time

¹ These are students with the highest level of parental education less than a baccalaureate degree. The educational achievement levels of a student's parent(s) or caregiver is sometimes used as a proxy measure of socio-economic status.

FIGURE 2. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH CSL



Student Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

93% indicated that CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy²

87% would recommend CSL to peers

87% indicated that CSL helped them understand some of the complexities of social issues

Student quotes on understanding of social change and social issues

"My opportunity [...] was incredibly impactful for me, and I believe that went both ways. As a mature student who is an immigrant with ADHD (and receiving accommodations), as well as a visibly transgender person, I believe that I was able to be a role model for students who were able to relate to my lived experiences in some way, shape or form. I was able to connect with every student I worked with, while remaining professional, and it was so rewarding seeing even the quietest students open up to me within a short period of time. On a personal level, seeing how accepting and understanding these kids are (more so than many adults I've encountered) really healed something in me. [...]"

"[...]. I learned about reciprocity and committed to building reciprocal relationships with members from my opportunity [...]. I have built strong reflective habits that I will carry with me throughout my daily life."

"I learned about the Francophone community here in Edmonton, and their contributions to the cultural diversity of Alberta. My eyes were also opened to their struggles due to them being the minority group here [...]"

"My team and I developed a mobile application to help families access important information they may need to live better, easier lives. [...]. I feel as though I have gained a healthier understanding of the world and how complex things can be, but in a good way that makes me want to help out where I can."

Program structure and communication

Involvement with community organization fit well with interests in the course	85%
I had enough information about the requirements of CSL	78%
There was adequate communication between my instructor and me	84%
The communication I had with my community partner helped me understand and complete the CSL opportunity.	87%
My project team and I received an appropriate amount of guidance from my community partner organization	74%

²Percentages in this section represent the share of respondents who indicated that they "agree" or "strongly agree" with a statement about CSL.

Connections between course learning and CSL opportunity learning

This experience provided the opportunity to use my academic knowledge in the community	83%
Course work and class instruction enhanced my ability to understand my community experience	82%
My community project experience provided a useful context to think through course material	85%
This experience in the community provided the opportunity to better contribute to class discussions and assessments	80%

Student quotes on learning from their CSL opportunity

"I gained a significant amount of practical experience that allowed me to connect course concepts to the real world. I was able to see primary and secondary aging in effect, and the overall heterogeneity of aging. This allowed for deep reflection on my own personal biases associated with age."

"I definitely gained some knowledge about the history of Gaza and got to know my community partner a bit more (as in what makes him interested in serving [this community] and how [he] became [involved] in this path) [...]."

"I learned that I learn and gain knowledge from my participants as much as they do from me, if not more. I also learned that the social and community aspect of the programs is equally as important and valuable to participants as the physical activity aspect."

"I gained a better understanding of the supports available for women in the francophone community in Alberta and the labour and love that goes into retaining these connections and culture."

"I gained skills in communication, teamwork, and networking. I learned how to work with older adults and better understand how community organizations support people in need. The experience helped me become more confident and responsible."

Instructor Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

97% indicated that CSL enhanced student learning

97% would recommend CSL to peers

91% indicated that CSL helped students understand some of the complexities of social issues

Connections between course learning and CSL opportunity learning

Course work and class instruction seemed to enhance CSL students' ability to understand their community experience	83%
During the course, I provided CSL students with opportunities to reflect on and learn from their community project experience	83%
CSL enhanced the learning environment	94%

Instructors' most commonly used strategies for integrating CSL into courses

Check-ins with students	87%
Inviting partners to class (e.g. to see student presentations)	60%
Student assessment	83%
Check-ins with partners	57%
In-class presentations/workshops by community partners	67%
Translation of CSL partners' material	3%

Community Partner Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

93% indicated that CSL enhanced student learning

96% would recommend CSL to peers

92% indicated that CSL helped students understand some of the complexities of social issues

Community partner quotes on understanding of social change and social issues

"CSL students [...] have been able to not only bring educational access to students who live in conflict zones (e.g. Ukrainian children, women and girls in Afghanistan), but also allow these students to see that they are not alone. These students experiencing conflict see that people around the world, such as at the University of Alberta, are thinking of them through these dark times, providing them with hope for the future."

"This semester, our organization was affected by the Alberta Teachers' strike, and we had to cancel a few weeks of programming. Due to this, we scheduled a few letter-writing volunteer shifts to help CSL students achieve their hours. CSL students wrote letters to our students to share more about their experiences at university and help them feel welcome and connected here. It was beneficial for our kids to have a further connection to students here on campus."

"The CSL students were very helpful to us. We always have preliminary work to do [...], so having students available to do that work helps keep the workload off our staff and volunteers who would otherwise have to do it. Further to that, one of our students liked the program so much that she stayed beyond her mandated 20 hours AND recruited a friend, so come and volunteer with her. We've been trying to engage more young people and students, as our volunteering caters mostly to retirees due to our operating hours, so it's been a great way to get some younger faces in our shop, [...]."

"The CSL students have made a huge impact in assisting with fostering a sense of inclusion, community and assisted with supporting Canadian and UofA acculturation. The CSL students brought innovative ideas and were responsible for curriculum design, event plans and facilitating lesson plans [...]. They introduced popular North American games, such as Jeopardy and Trivia nights. Students covered topics ranging from key Canadian pop culture icons, Gen Z slang trending at the UofA, hockey culture, Canadian foods, Edmonton festivals, and UofA-related trivia. They introduced many other interactive games where students could practice and gain more confidence [...]. The CSL students were very mature, even while hosting events, even in front of undergraduate, graduate and PhD students. Some students also introduced cross-cultural elements into their events, [...]. Finally, students assisting our displaced Palestinian students on campus were culturally sensitive, inclusive, extremely knowledgeable and empathetic with regard to all our events to ensure students felt a sense of belonging and connected with the UofA campus community. I found all the students to be extremely responsible, mature, and to deliver a high quality of work with everything they did. [...]. I highly recommend to everyone that there are so many benefits of working together with CSL. Thank you for the opportunity!"

Program structure and communication

There was adequate communication between community partners and students	85%
If needed, CSL staff provided assistance and support in integrating CSL into my work	51%
I knew enough about the aims of CSL	78%

Community partner benefits of participating in CSL

CSL helped me develop relationships with students, instructors, and the university	82%
CSL helped me develop mentoring skills	59%
CSL helped our organization accomplish some of our project needs	86%

Community partner quotes on benefits of participating in CSL

"As an entirely volunteer-run organization, we have been able to accomplish so many of our administrative, communications and governance goals with the enthusiasm, knowledge and valued time of Community Service Learning students. Leveraging student expertise allows us to focus our limited volunteer resources on mission-focused tasks."

"It was an absolute privilege to work with the CSL students over the course of the semester. The students were engaged and enthusiastic about the opportunity to tell our story. [...] These interviews allowed our clients to speak to their experiences while dispelling the common misconception surrounding our meal services."

"[CSL Students] assisted in front-facing programs [...] by helping facilitate activities, engaging participants, and providing one-on-one support. This allowed staff to focus more on individualized care and improved overall program quality."

"What began as a short-term opportunity evolved into a long-term relationship. Recognizing their potential, we were thrilled to bring them onto our team, where they continue to play a key role in driving innovation and supporting new initiatives. [...] The program didn't just support a project — it helped us find an incredible team member who continues to make a meaningful impact every day."

"[CSL students] made a meaningful contribution to our organization by translating key environmental curriculum documents, significantly increasing their accessibility and reach. As a small organization with limited capacity, completing this work internally would have taken considerable time and resources. The students' work not only accelerated our timelines but also ensured greater clarity and consistency across materials used by educators and partners."

Conclusions

Key findings of the 2025-2026 CSL Evaluation at the University of Alberta include the following:

1. There is a general consensus that community-service learning is an effective teaching and learning strategy. 93% of students, 97% of instructors, and 93% of community partners reported that CSL enhanced learning.
2. Compared to other stakeholder groups, community partners are most likely to report they would recommend CSL to their peers (97%). In comparison, 87% of students and 94% of instructors report that they would recommend CSL to their peers.
3. Satisfaction with CSL staff support remains high among instructors, though there was a notable decrease among community partners. All instructors (100%) who sought assistance reported receiving the support they needed, up from 96% in the previous year. In contrast, 51% of community partners who sought support reported receiving the type of support they were looking for, down from 70% in the previous year.

4. Compared with the previous year, a smaller proportion of community partners (86%, down from 94%) reported that CSL students helped the organization accomplish some of their project needs, though this remains a strong majority.
5. First-generation students and women are overrepresented in CSL compared to the overall U of A undergraduate student body: 44.3% of CSL students are first-generation (compared to 33.0% of the overall student body) and 71.2% identify as women (compared to 58.5%). In contrast to previous years, Indigenous students are slightly underrepresented in CSL, with 4.9% of CSL students identifying as Indigenous compared to 5.8% of the overall student body.

To view the comprehensive 2025-2026 CSL Evaluation Report, please contact our Evaluation Coordinator at cslinfo@ualberta.ca. To learn more about the CSL program at the University of Alberta, please visit our website at uab.ca/CSL