

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM BENEFITS STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY

The UC Davis Extension Center for International Education, International English and Professional Programs, launched their Service Learning Volunteer Experiences program this past fall quarter. The program combines academic study with volunteering, creating a significantly broader international student experience.



International student Masa Shibamoto snaps a photograph of firefighters visiting third graders at North Davis Elementary School. Shibamoto volunteered with students in the after-school reading and homework clubs.

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“Service learning deepens the linguistic, social and cultural discoveries of international students,” states Janis Williamson, Ph.D., director of the International English and Professional Programs.

“The program also provides a way to give back to the local community.” Placements so far have included serving local schools, senior citizen homes and administrative support to some of the region’s non-profit organizations. Participating students have come from Taiwan, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Academic director, Peter Hendricks, noted the program not only improves student language acquisition, but also teaches civic responsibility and provides useful outreach to participating communities. In addition, students gain work experience and a better understanding of themselves within a professional setting. “Gaining experience in the workplace, working collaboratively, learning to solve problems and make decisions help students prepare for their future school-to-work transition,” observes Hendricks. “They also have an opportunity to explore fields, such as teaching and health care, and begin maturing professionally.”

The goal of the program is to develop a lifelong commitment to service and leadership by building essential leadership skills and exploring occupational options.

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