

Stanford University **Student Programs**

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The Haas Center for Public Service established the Public Service Scholars Program in 1994 to help community-engaged students at Stanford University connect their public service commitments and passions with their academic work and research interests. Each year, the Public Service Scholars Program selects a cohort of senior-level students from a range of academic programs to examine critically what it means to practice academic research as a form of service to communities beyond the campus. With the assistance of their faculty thesis advisors and input from community partners, students design and implement a research study that is both academically rigorous and beneficial to the community. Students' individual research efforts include public interest and policy-oriented scholarship, design research, activist scholarship, and community-based participatory research.

Students in the program enroll concurrently in their departmental honors program and a yearlong, credit-bearing Public Service Scholars Program seminar titled "Urban Studies 198: Senior Research in Public Service." In the seminar, which is co-facilitated by Haas Center staff and students, participants explore the theory and practice of research as a form of service and engage in opportunities to share their writing in small groups, solve problems collaboratively, and provide critical feedback on each other's thesis plans. Students also consider what standards, in addition to those expected of traditional academic research, apply to research conducted as a form of public service. A significant task for students is developing community-based translations of their research, including the creation of a public service plan outlining the rationale and means for sharing their research with relevant community organizations and constituents. Students are expected to formulate multiple strategies for action—such as service, advocacy, and policy change—and to respond thoughtfully to explicit and implicit obligations to community partners.

Two activities allow students to publicly disseminate their research to external audiences and to engage in important intellectual dialogue and community building. An engaged research thesis presentation offers Public Service Scholars Program students the opportunity to share not only their research design and results, but also the context and personal motivations for their interests. Students articulate the significance of their research to

both academic and community audiences—including community partners—describing the actions they have taken, or will take, to share their research findings. A Public Service Scholars Program graduation ceremony serves as a culminating activity in which students critically reflect on the significance of their work and are honored for their achievements.

A significant goal of the program is to complement students' academic training and research skill development with an interdisciplinary, civic learning curriculum grounded in an appreciation of valued civic leadership competencies. These competencies include a strong understanding of principles of ethical and effective service; adeptness in integrative and reflective thinking; an ability to self-reflect on how one's core values, assumptions, and motivations are reflected in one's civic and professional work; and a willingness to develop a disposition of humility and commitment toward the communities in which one lives and works.

The Public Service Scholars Program has over 150 alumni to date and continues to attract students whose civic values motivate them to pursue an honors thesis with an intentional public purpose.

For more information, contact

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