

Developing a Faculty-Facing Resource for Experiential, Interdisciplinary, Undergraduate Teaching



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What skills do students need to be successful in 21st century careers^{1,2?}



Are our students learning these in our courses?
If not, what can we do?

Experiential Learning

“Learning from experience or learning by doing”³

- “Occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis, & synthesis.”⁴
- “Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, & be accountable for results.”⁴
- “The learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, & constructing meaning.”⁴

But experiential learning is often inaccessible to those with less privilege in higher education.⁵

Let’s change that!

Playbook + Toolkit = Playkit for creating experiential learning courses

1 GORP⁶

- Gravity: design the course around a problem or challenge that matters to students
- Ownership: give students ownership of their work and autonomy in the course
- Relationship: the instructor should position themselves as a coach rather than a gatekeeper of knowledge/solutions
- Place: connect the problem or challenge to a location

3 Assessment

- Student will come into the course with expectations about grading. Challenge those!
- Consider both deliverables and the process for assessment
- Include regular opportunities for students to reflect on their progress
- Consider using written and open-format reflections

2 Course Planning

- Select a theme or problem that is difficult to solve & can benefit from many disciplinary perspectives
- “Goldilocks”-sized problem: not too big that students would need a whole career to solve or too small that only students in the course are impacted by solutions
- Create learning goals that extend beyond a single discipline
- Consider local or national partnerships to make the projects real and have the potential to make change

4 Research related to the course

- Novel methods or theories related to the instructors’ disciplines
- Student outcomes
- Changes in student identity or affect
- Research projects we’ve done:
 - Student and faculty reflections⁷
 - Student response to interdisciplinary group work in experiential courses

Prototype courses that informed our Playkit



Snare to Wares
(Spring 2019)



Food Waste
(Spring 2019)



Wildlife Sanctuary
(Spring 2019)

What instructors are saying

“ [The playkit] has been a helpful resource for planning and engaging in interdisciplinary teaching and learning activities.

-Ben and Juliet
Instructors of a current course using the playkit

Experiential Learning doesn’t have to mean extracurricular opportunities. We’re making it part of the standard curriculum and helping faculty design their own experiential learning courses.

1 National Research Council. Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. (2012).

2 World Economic Forum. New vision for education: Unlocking the potential of technology. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (2015).

3 Lewis, L. H., & Williams, C. J. Experiential learning: Past and present. New directions for adult and continuing education, 1994(62), 5-16. (1994)

4 What Is EE, Association for Experiential Education, www.aee.org/what-is-ee. Accessed February 5th, 2021

5 Rose, J., & Paisley, K. White privilege in experiential education: A critical reflection. Leisure Sciences, 34(2), 136-154. (2012).

6 Heinrich, W. F., Lauren, B., & Logan, S. (under review). Interdisciplinary teaching, learning and power in an experiential classroom. Submitted to College Teaching, July 2020.

7 Heinrich, W. F., Louson, E., Blommel, C., & Green, A. R. (in press). Who coaches the coaches? The Development of a coaching model for experiential Learning. Innovative Higher Education.

