

Making UWM a Destination Campus throughout the Midwest for Experiential Learning

Why Focus on Experiential Learning at UWM?

Experiential learning is a key differentiator for university education, enhancing more traditional learning with meaningful practice in a wide range of contexts. Students who participate in experiential learning report greater satisfaction and results related to workplace engagement, and employers prefer students who have engaged in these activities¹. UWM is also uniquely well situated to provide a wide range of opportunities to our students, as we sit in Wisconsin's urban and economic center, surrounded by corporations, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and school systems that can serve as a "classroom-outside-of-the-classroom." We already lead the way among Southeastern Wisconsin institutions of higher education in terms of partnerships within all sectors, and have the opportunity to become a destination campus for highly engaged learning.

Experiential learning can help students close gaps between their own perceptions of their career readiness and those of employers of recent college graduates. For example, 79.4% of recent graduates believe they are proficient in oral and written communication skills, compared to employers, who report only 41.6% of recent graduates as proficient. Similarly, only 55.8% of employers consider recent graduates proficient in critical thinking and problem solving, whereas 79.9% of recent graduates rate themselves as proficient².

UWM should become a premier destination campus for experiential learning, meaning all students, faculty, staff, and administrators will view EL as essential to the UWM experience. Further, parents, industry leaders, and legislators should associate experiential learning with the UWM experience and as part of the identity of our graduates. This will be done by implementing specific changes at UWM:

1. Beginning in Fall 2021 a new EL graduation requirement will provide each student with at least one meaningful EL academic experience during their undergraduate career.
2. UWM internal and external marketing will promote UWM as a destination campus for experiential learning. The audience includes potential students, their parents, and the community.
3. Creating a faculty culture that embraces and supports engaged teaching and learning practice and student success.

FAQs:

How is experiential learning defined?

Experiential learning is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience. EL occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis, experimentation, and syntheses. (Association for Experiential Education).

What types of experiential learning will UWM engage in?

Experiential learning types will broadly fall under one of eight "buckets".

- 1) Undergraduate Research
- 2) Study Away
 - a. Alternative Spring Break
 - b. Study Abroad
 - c. Outdoor Education

¹ Ortiz, Twila; Holloway, Beth M.; Harris, Michael; Pluckebaum, A; and Jamieson, Leah H. "Experiential Learning: Student Participation and Future Engagement" (2015). School of Engineering Education Faculty Publications. Paper 35.

² National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018 Job Outlook Survey at [InsideHigherEd.com Feb. 18, 2018](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/18/2018-job-outlook-survey)

- 3) Leadership Experiences
 - a. Residence Assistants, Peer Mentors, Campus Ambassadors
 - b. Student Athletes
- 4) Internships
 - a. Selected Student Employment Programs
 - b. Selected External Internship Programs
 - c. University Legal Clinic Student Paralegal Program
- 5) Creative / Entrepreneurial
 - a. Performance Arts
 - b. Entrepreneurial Programs such as Start-up Challenge
 - c. Student Artist in Residence Programs
- 6) Service Learning
 - a. Course-based Applied Projects
 - b. Community-Based / Service-Learning Courses
- 7) Professional
 - a. Clinical Experiences
 - b. Cooperatives
 - c. Field / Practicum Experiences
 - d. Student Teaching
- 8) Technical / Vocational
 - a. Apprenticeships
 - b. Vocational Training

How will this new graduation requirement be handled logistically?

An audit of all of the schools and colleges during the summer of 2019 revealed that approximately 80% of campus already has some sort of EL requirement as part of their normal course of study. These existing requirements live primarily in the professional schools, and cover such experiences such as student teaching, clinicals, field placements, co-ops, and service learning. Additionally, many departments that do not have a specific requirement encourage experiences such as internships, study abroad, or undergraduate research. The campus is currently devising how courses can be designated as EL, similar to how service-learning courses are currently designated in PAWS as an attribute. Additionally, co-curricular programs that provide rich learning experiences (such as certain student employment situations, outdoor education programs, or travel study programs) will be able to apply to be an EL Designated program, and students who participate, and do who do not meet the requirement through some other academic experience, will be able to enroll in a one-credit, hybrid course that connects their applied learning experience to skill building, networking, career discernment, and professional and personal development.