



Experiential Education: New Opportunities for Transforming the Student Experience

April 2014

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Introduction

Experiential education opportunities have a clear role to play in the University of New Brunswick's efforts to provide an exceptional and transformative student experience and in our efforts to build a better province. The main benefits of experiential education opportunities for our students include enabling them to apply their knowledge and gain hands-on experience in a real world setting, to develop their leadership skills, to serve the community, and to get started on their careers. The province benefits as students/graduates are better prepared to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the province.

Experiential Education opportunities currently exist in a variety of formats, including co-operative education, internships, placements, study abroad, and service learning in most faculties at the undergraduate and graduate level.

For example, there are four co-operative education programs on the two main campuses, in Engineering, Computer Science and Business. While these programs are of high quality and of high value to our students, each operates independently. Our strategic plan commits us to "review the structural arrangements of our various academic units so as to produce the most intellectually fertile, academically stimulating and administratively efficient environments in which faculty, staff and students may thrive in their individual and collective activities".

This project was undertaken to gain an understanding of current experiential education opportunities at UNB and to make recommendations to enhance the role of experiential education in UNB's exceptional and transformative student experience.

Steering Committee/Working Group

Mandate

Reporting to the President, the Senates and the Board of Governors, on a regular basis, the role of this bi-campus steering committee was to:

- Define and identify experiential education opportunities that are or could be offered at UNB;
- Consider ways and means of better coordinating our current programs;
- Consider ways and means of creating new experiential education programs;
- Build understanding and awareness within the university community of the benefits of increased experiential education programming;
- Consider the value of integrating some aspects of experiential education programs within a university-wide "one-stop shop";

- Communicate all findings to the university community.

Membership

A Steering Committee was appointed, co-chaired by Laurelle LeVert, Associate Vice-President Saint John, and Shirley Cleave, Associate Vice-President Academic Fredericton and consisting of members from both campuses with experience in the various formats of experiential education. A larger Working Group was also created with representatives from all faculties on each campus as well as the Senates, the Board of Governors, and the Alumni. Both groups were supported by Katie Skead, Project Manager. The membership of each group can be found in Appendix 1.

Activities

The work of this project was undertaken in five stages, each of which involved preliminary work by the Steering Committee followed by consultation with the Working Group.

Stage 1 – Review of Literature

Based on a review of the literature and the expertise of the members, the following descriptions and principles were adopted.

Experiential Education

Experiential education is a philosophy and method that includes a variety of approaches in which educators intentionally engage with learners using direct and authentic or real experiences and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values and develop learner's capacity to contribute to their professions and communities. Regardless of the experiential activity, both the experience and the learning are fundamental. In the learning process and in the relationship between the learner and the facilitator(s) of learning, there is a mutual responsibility. Facilitators often include the academic educator and the experience provider from an organizational partner. The facilitator(s) of learning are expected to take the lead in ensuring both the quality of the learning experience and of the work produced, and in supporting the learner through the use of the principles which underlie the essence of experiential education. It is expected that there will be a benefit for the partner organization.

Principles of Good Practice:

A summary of good practices of experiential education is provided below; a more detailed description of each practice can be found in Appendix 2

1. **Intention** – All parties must be clear from the outset about why the experience is the chosen approach for the learning that is to take place and the knowledge that will be demonstrated, applied or result from it.
2. **Preparedness and Planning** – Participants must ensure that they enter the experience with a sufficient foundation to support a successful experience.
3. **Authenticity** – The experience must have a real world context
4. **Orientation and Training** – For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator(s), it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate.
5. **Reflection** – Reflection is the process that transforms simple experience to a learning experience.
6. **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement** – Any learning activity will be dynamic and changing and the parties involved all bear responsibility for ensuring that the experience continues to provide the richest learning possible, while affirming the learner.
7. **Assessment and Evaluation** – Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes.
8. **Acknowledgement and Transference** – Recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes through reporting, documentation and sharing accomplishments.

(Source: Adapted from National Society for Experiential Education. Presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting, Norfolk, VA)

Stage 2 - Inventory of Current Programs

In the second stage in the process, all faculties, departments and units currently providing experiential education opportunities at UNB were invited to complete an online survey. The survey asked for information regarding:

- Format of experiential opportunity
- Human resources used
- Non Salary resources used
- Organizational details
- Graduate or Undergraduate
- Domestic or International
- Credit or non-credit
- Optional or mandatory
- Objectives and outcomes
- How many students participate over the course of a year
- Opportunities or challenges with administration

Over 100 surveys were completed. This information was used to develop an inventory of the formats of experiential education programs currently being offered on both campuses.

Stage 3 - Review of Experiential Education Formats

In the third stage, smaller Task Groups were developed from the main Working Group to review the information collected through the online survey. These Task Groups were developed based on commonly used experiential education formats as indicated below:

- Co-op experiences
- Internship experiences
- Practicum experiences
- International experiences
- Clinical experiences
- Service learning experiences
- "Authentic" task experiences such as collaborative projects, student research, capstone and creative experiences, and problem-based learning experiences

The Task Groups ranged in size from two to six people and some included participants who were not members of the Working Group. Each Task Group was chaired by a member of the Working Group who was responsible for calling meetings as needed and reporting to the Project Manager. Membership of the Task Groups is included in Appendix 3.

The Project Manager compiled the data from the survey based on the formats listed above and provided the appropriate data set to each Task Group. The Task Groups reviewed the information and prepared a report addressing the following tasks.

- Define the parameters of the experiential education experience
- Identify the benefits
- Identify the relevant/promising practices (UNB and elsewhere)
- Identify the challenges
- Consider ways and means of addressing the challenges, if appropriate
- Consider ways and means of expanding or strengthening the experience, if appropriate
- Consider ways and means of coordinating the experience, if appropriate
- Consider ways and means of increasing awareness of the experience within the university community and outside
- Provide any other relevant information

Stage 4 Results

In the fourth stage, the Steering Committee synthesized the reports of the Task Groups. Based on the reports, the Steering Committee prepared a summary of the current status of experiential education, developed a set of definitions/descriptions for the various formats of experiential education at UNB and identified common themes with respect to the benefits and challenges. The results were subsequently reviewed by the Working Group and appropriate modifications were made.

Current Status of Experiential Education

The results of the review undertaken clearly show a) there is a significant amount of experiential education happening currently on campus and b) there is considerable room to enhance the student experience, expand the opportunities, and provide appropriate pedagogical and administrative support.

The inventory that was developed through the online survey included over 100 experiential opportunities. These undoubtedly represent the vast majority of the opportunities on both campuses, although there are a few opportunities that are known to the Committee that weren't included in the responses. Experiential education opportunities are offered in all faculties on both campuses in a variety of formats including co-op programs, internships, practicums, and a range of international experiences. Most experiential education opportunities are offered at the undergraduate level, but some faculties also provide graduate level experiences. In most cases, experiential education opportunities are optional, but some are mandatory, such as placements in education and nursing.

The organizational structures and the resources committed to experiential education vary widely across the institution. At one end of the spectrum, there is a program office with dedicated staff and budget; at the other, the program is managed by individual faculty members who volunteer their time and scrounge for resources. Several programs fall somewhere in between with some administrative support and/or financial resources provided. Regardless of the structure or the available resources, all respondents indicated that more support was needed. Despite feeling stretched and stressed, respondents showed a genuine enthusiasm for, and commitment to, their experiential education programs. They also saw the potential to enhance the experience and expand the opportunities if more resources were available.

Definitions/Descriptions of Experiential Education Formats

The first step in this project was to define and identify experiential education opportunities that are or could be offered at UNB.

Currently, there are several formats of experiential education opportunities offered at UNB under a variety of labels, but the work of the task groups clearly showed a lack of consistency in the use of these labels. Before we can enhance our experiential education, we need a common understanding of the various formats of experiences and the labels we will use at UNB.

While experiential education opportunities are structured in a variety of formats, each operates as a partnership with the student, the university and normally another organization (agency, institution, business, etc.). All formats provide

- An opportunity to relate and integrate theory with practice,
- A real-life context in which to acquire and apply knowledge,
- A purposeful and authentic experience within the student's area of study, and
- Recognition within the student's academic program (e.g., grade, mark, credit).

Each format also has its unique or defining characteristics as described below.

Co-operative Education – an academic program in which the curriculum is designed so that the student spends alternating terms in study on campus and paid employment in a workplace setting

Internship – a full-time placement (e.g., 35 - 40 hours/week) within an organization with a staff member who is designated as a mentor; usually for one term and usually unpaid, although expenses are sometimes covered

Practica – either a stand-alone course (e.g., 3 credit hours or 6 credit hours) or a component within a course for which a grade is assigned; unpaid, but direct expenses are sometimes covered

Practice Based Component – a required, unpaid and substantive (often up to 24 credit hours) learning experience in a practice setting under the direct guidance of practitioners such as in nursing and education

Service Learning – volunteer experience within a community based organization in which the student makes a specific contribution to the organization and/or the community; can be a component within a course or an immersion (i.e., full-time) experience

International – each format described above occurring in an international setting which then adds a cross-cultural perspective to the experience; also includes exchange

programs in which a student studies abroad for one or two terms and travel study in which a course is taught in a condensed time frame (usually 3 or 6 weeks) in a setting that is relevant to the content (e.g., ancient history in Greece or Rome).

Authentic Experiences - It is important to note that many of the “opportunities” that were identified through the online survey did not fit into structured, traditional notions of experiential education. However since respondents had deemed these opportunities to be forms of experiential education, it was important to consider them in light of the mandate of this project. Therefore, the “Authentic” Experience Task Group was convened to review these “opportunities”. Based on their work, this group noted the need to differentiate between experiential education and experiential learning. The former is a philosophical approach that is manifested in a variety of programs while the latter forms the backbone of “good teaching” and should be considered the foundation upon which all other forms are built, including problem-based and team-based learning, case studies, independent research, field courses, art and performance, and hands-on experiences. These can be integrated into courses, either as independently-graded assignments or as part of the overall curricular experience, and vary widely by discipline. Such components may involve intellectual, emotional and/or physical engagement informed by social, cultural and/or historical contexts.

Benefits

Experiential education offers an assortment of valuable benefits to the learner, the educator, and the community. The benefits that were identified by each of the Task Groups included many that are common to all types of experiential education, and others that are more specialized. The benefits that are common are grouped according to the primary beneficiary – student/learner, community, and the educator/university.

Student/Learner Benefits

- Increase academic motivation and engagement which encourages self-directed learning
- Explore the relationship between academic theory and practice which can lead to increased clarity about academic goals
- Understand diverse workplace cultures and communities
- Develop professional networks
- Gain job/career related experience which can clarify employment and career goals
- Enhance leadership, technical and professional skills
- Increase confidence, maturity, and self-management
- Improve problem-solving, critical thinking, research, communication, and teamwork skills
- Provide potential earnings to assist with financial responsibilities
- Develop responsible citizenship skills

Community Benefits (Business, Government and Not for Profit Organizations)

- Coordinate access to students with appropriate knowledge and skills
- Increase diversity, energy and enthusiasm in the workplace
- Foster the potential for additional collaboration with the university
- Raise the profile of the community's opportunities and challenges
- Provide a fresh perspective to the delivery of programs, services and products

Educator/University Benefits

- Increase recruitment and retention of students due to the range of learning opportunities
- Enhance reputation in the employment community
- Improve rate of employment of graduates
- Increase alumni engagement as community partners
- Increase partnership opportunities and financial support from community partners
- Increase educator satisfaction leading to additional innovation in teaching
- Improve UNB's international academic network and visibility

Challenges

Just as a variety of opportunities within the broad area of experiential education were identified by the task groups, a variety of challenges associated with each of the opportunities were also identified. From the challenges brought forward, four central themes emerged, although not all programs encountered all the challenges to the same degree. The following outlines the themes and areas of focus for each.

1. Inadequate **Promotion** of:
 - a. the values, potential and opportunities available to students through experiential opportunities
 - b. the benefits to businesses, departments and community organizations as a result of providing experiential education opportunities
 - c. the benefits to faculties of incorporating experiential education in their programs
 - d. the range of experiential education opportunities available for use in teaching at all levels
 - e. the variety of experiential education opportunities offered on both campuses of UNB

2. Inadequate **Coordination** of:
 - a. the variety of opportunities for students ranging from co-op to service learning
 - b. requests from businesses and community groups for student involvement
 - c. programs and courses either requiring or providing optional experiential education opportunities
 - d. development and maintenance of standardized definitions and criteria for the various formats of experiential education
 - e. ongoing relationships with participating businesses and community organizations
 - f. the overall experiential education system at UNB
 - g. research and current thinking in relation to experiential education

3. Inadequate **Assistance** at Unit level with
 - a. establishing and maintaining relations with current and potential partners
 - b. preparing students, faculty and practitioners to be involved in experiential opportunities
 - c. ensuring faculty and staff availability to monitor and evaluate experiences, guide student development and facilitate student reflection and processing of the experience
 - d. building partnerships with non-local organizations, businesses and agencies
 - e. training of field mentors and supervisors currently involved or wishing to be involved in experiential programs
 - f. professional development for faculty and staff wishing to learn more about aspects of experiential education such as reflection, self-learning, processing and transfer

4. Inadequate **Resources** for:
 - a. administration and management of units with experiential education programs
 - b. promotional initiatives required
 - c. administrative support with functions such as responding to inquiries, coordination, data base maintenance and tracking
 - d. research and external contracts for workshops and training
 - e. professional development for individuals both on and off campus who are involved or wished to be involved in experiential education
 - f. support of students while participating in unpaid experiences such as internships and international trips in the form of bursaries or loans

Stage 5 Recommendations

In Stage 5, the Steering Committee developed a series of recommendations based on the review of the literature and the results of the Task Groups. The recommendations were reviewed by the Working Group and their feedback clearly showed two things. First, there is genuine interest in enhancing experiential education opportunities at the unit level. Second, there is not sufficient support to move forward with a 'one stop shop' for experiential education at this time. The Steering Committee took the feedback from the Working Group and developed a new set of recommendations to support the development of experiential education in the short term.

1. The need for support at the Unit level was identified by all of the Task Groups. To meet this need and to encourage Units to develop their programs, an Experiential Education Fund of up to \$50,000 should be established for the next 3 years. Interested individuals and groups from both campuses could apply for support for experiential education initiatives such as student bursaries, new program development, and professional development workshops for mentors/supervisor and for students. Requests for funding would be accepted once per year and adjudicated by a panel of four individuals representing different formats of Experiential Education (e.g., co-op, internship, practica, international). The Teaching and Learning Priority Fund on the Fredericton campus could serve as a model for the fund.
2. The Co-op Task Group included representatives from both campuses and all faculties currently offering co-op programs. They identified data management as a critical challenge to the operation of their programs. To support the growth and development of co-op programs and to foster collaboration among the various units, funding should be provided to purchase and maintain access to appropriate software. It is estimated that the costs would be approximately \$30,000 for the initial purchase and \$10,000 for the annual fee. One-time funding will be sought from an outside source (e.g., PETL Action Funds) to assist with the customization and implementation of the new software. If outside funding is not available, one-time funding will need to be provided from university resources. A small project group consisting of three or four members of the Working Group should be formed to implement this recommendation. Tasks to be completed include confirming the appropriate software (Orbis has been suggested); developing operating policies and procedures; and working with ITS and other relevant units to install and support the software. While initially provided to support co-op programs, the software chosen should be flexible enough to support other forms of experiential education.

3. In order to support the development of new experiential education opportunities and to enhance existing programs, the Centre for Enhanced Teaching and Learning (F) and the Teaching and Learning Centre (SJ) should include relevant initiatives within their programming. Such initiatives could include opportunities for university wide conversations involving all stakeholders, professional development workshops for faculty and staff, and guest speakers from successful programs at other institutions.
4. It is anticipated that the first three recommendations will have a positive impact on experiential education at UNB and will lay the groundwork for further growth and development. To ensure that the momentum created is sustained, a new Steering Committee/Working Group of stakeholders should be created within two years' time to review the status of experiential education and make recommendations regarding all forms of support for experiential education, including possible continuation of the Experiential Education Fund.

Epilogue

The Steering Committee recognized that this may not be an opportune time to move forward with their initial recommendations, but believe that the information contained in many of them could prove useful for subsequent reviews. Therefore, some of the original recommendations are included in Appendix 4.

Resources

Associations

Canadian Association for Co-operative Education <http://www.cafce.ca/>

Canadian Association for Co-operative Education Atlantic <http://cafceatlantic.dal.ca/>

National Society for Experiential Education <http://www.nsee.org/>

International Association for Service Learning and Community Engagement
<http://engagedscholarship.ca/>

American Educational Research Association <http://www.aera.net/>

Association for the Study of Higher Education <http://www.ashe.ws/>

Journals:

Journal of Service Learning and Civic Engagement
<http://www.partnershipsjournal.org/index.php/prt>

Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement
<http://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/index.php/jheoe>

Michigan Journal of Civic Learning <http://ginsberg.umich.edu/mjcs/abou>

University examples:

Center for Global and Community Engagement – University of Ottawa
<https://servingothers.uottawa.ca/>

Center for Community Partnerships – University of Toronto
<https://www.ccp.utoronto.ca/>

Community Engagement Center – York University <http://cec.info.yorku.ca/>

Service Learning Center – St. Francis Xavier University
http://www.stfx.ca/academics/service_learning/

Active Citizen Program – Tufts University (USA) <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/acs/>

Campus Compact in USA – University of North Carolina as an example member
<http://www.compact.org/>

Office of Service Learning – University of Delaware
<http://www.servicelearning.udel.edu/>

APPENDIX 1

Membership

Steering Committee

There shall be a Steering Committee that will be responsible for facilitating the work of the Working Group and be composed of the following members:

1. Laurelle LeVert, Associate Vice-President (Saint John) - designate for Dr. Robert MacKinnon, Vice-President (Saint John)
2. Shirley Cleave, Associate Vice-President Academic (Fredericton) - designate for Dr. Anthony Secco, Vice-President Academic (Fredericton)
3. Dominic Blakely, Director and Senior Advisor, Office of the President
4. Katie Skead, Engineering Outreach Coordinator (Project Manager)
5. Anne Forrestall, Executive Director of Student Affairs and Service
6. Kevin Bonner, Director of Student Services
7. Brenda Collings, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Business (Saint John) - representative from a Faculty that currently offers a co-op program
8. Cynthia Stacey, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology - representative from a Faculty that offers another form of experiential education (e.g., clinical placements)

The Steering Committee will be co-chaired by Dr. Robert MacKinnon, Vice-President (Saint John) or designate and Dr. Anthony Secco, Vice-President Academic (Fredericton) or designate.

Working Group

The Working Group will include members of the Board, the Senate, student, staff and faculty representatives.

Other members may be appointed by invitation of the president, or by invitation of the Steering Committee.

1. Laurelle LeVert for Robert MacKinnon, Vice-President (Saint John)
2. Shirley Cleave for Anthony Secco, Vice-President Academic (Fredericton)
3. Dominic Blakely, Director and Senior Advisor, Office of the President
4. Katie Skead, Engineering Outreach Coordinator (Project Manager)
5. Anne Forrestall, Executive Director of Student Affairs and Services
6. Kevin Bonner, Director of Student Services
7. John Hasson, Faculty of Engineering
8. Patricia Meng, Faculty of Computer Science
9. Valerie Whyte, Faculty of Business Administration (Fredericton)
10. Brenda Collings, Faculty of Business (Saint John)
11. Chantal Richard, Faculty of Arts (Fredericton)

12. Rob Moir, Faculty of Arts (Saint John)
13. Nadya Ladouceur, Renaissance College
14. Heather Hunt, Faculty of Science, Applied Sciences and Engineering
15. Joan Kingston, Faculty of Nursing
16. Cynthia Stacey, Faculty of Kinesiology
17. Janet Austin, Faculty of Law
18. Jennifer Paziienza, Faculty of Education
19. Linley Jesson, Faculty of Science
20. Marc Gauvin, Student Union
21. S.M. Rezwanur Rahman, Student's Representative Council
22. Cathie Hurley, Saint John Senate
23. Allan Reid, Fredericton Senate
24. Larry Hachey, Board of Governors
25. Margaret Grant-McGivney, Executive Director Associated Alumni
26. Ed Biden, School of Graduate Studies
27. Dan Coleman, International Relations Office

APPENDIX 2

Principles of Good Practice for Experiential Education:

1. **Intention** – All parties must be clear from the outset about why the experience is the chosen approach for the learning that is to take place and the knowledge that will be demonstrated, applied or result from it. Intention represents the purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge and, as such, is deeper than the goals, objectives and activities that define the experience.
2. **Preparedness and Planning** – Participants must ensure that they enter the experience with a sufficient foundation to support a successful experience. They must also focus from the earliest stages of the experience on the identified intentions, adhering to them as goals, objectives and activities are defined. The resulting plan should include the intentions and be referred to on a regular basis by all parties involved. At the same time it should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations as the experience unfolds.
3. **Authenticity** – The experience must have a real world context. This means that the experience should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by it, or in response to a real situation.
4. **Orientation and Training** – For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator(s), it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate. Once the baseline knowledge is addressed, ongoing structured development opportunities should also be included to expand the learner's appreciation of the context and skill requirements of her/his work.
5. **Reflection** – Reflection is the element that transforms simple experience to a learning experience. For knowledge to be discovered and internalized the learner must test assumptions about the outcomes of decisions and actions taken, then weigh the outcomes against past learning and future implications. This reflective process is the pivotal step in experiential education and is integral to all phases, from identifying intention and selecting the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Reflection is also an essential tool for adjusting the experience and measuring outcomes.
6. **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement** – Any learning activity will be dynamic and changing and the parties involved all bear responsibility for ensuring that the experience continues to provide the richest learning possible, while affirming the learner. It is important that there is a feedback loop related to learning intentions and quality objectives and that the structure of the experience be sufficiently flexible to permit change in response to what that feedback suggests.
7. **Assessment and Evaluation** – Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes.
8. **Acknowledgement and Transference** – Recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring

processes through reporting, documentation and sharing accomplishments. All parties to the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. Culminating documentation and recognition of the transference of learning help provide closure to the experience.

(Source: Adapted from National Society for Experiential Education. Presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting, Norfolk, VA)

APPENDIX 3

TASK GROUPS:

Co-op Task Group

- Erin Gillespie, Faculty of Business (Saint John)
- Val Whyte, Faculty of Business Administration (Fredericton)
- Patricia Meng, Faculty of Computer Science (Fredericton)
- John Hasson, Faculty of Engineering and Science (Fredericton)
- Margaret Grant-McGivney, Director of Associated Alumni
- Shelley Rinehart , Faculty of Business (Saint John)
- Katie Skead, Project Manager

Practicum/Clinical Experience Task Group

- Janet Austin, Faculty of Law (Fredericton)
- Joan Kingston, Faculty of Nursing (Fredericton)

Service Learning Task Group

- Brenda Collings, Faculty of Business (Saint John)
- Ann Sherman, Faculty of Education (Fredericton)
- Joan Kingston, Faculty of Nursing (Fredericton)
- Cynthia Stacey, Faculty of Kinesiology (Fredericton)

Internship Experiences Task Group

- Chantal Richard, Faculty of Arts (Fredericton)
- Allan Reid, Faculty of Culture and Language Studies (Fredericton Senate Representative)

International Experiences Task Group

- Kevin Bonner, Director of Student Services (Saint John)
- Dan Coleman, Assistant Vice President (Academic) (Fredericton)
- Nadya Ladouceur, Renaissance College (Fredericton)
- Charlotte Roederer
- Pascale Schicks, International Relations Coordinator, (Fredericton)

“Authentic” Experiences Task Group

- Heather Hunt, Faculty of Science, Applied Science and Engineering (Saint John)
- Linley Jesson, Faculty of Science (Fredericton)
- Cathie M. Hurley, Faculty of Business (Saint John Senate Representative)
- Jennifer Paziienza, Faculty of Education (Fredericton)

APPENDIX 4

Recommendations from Steering Committee for Future Consideration:

The overarching goal of the recommendations was to provide guidance for transforming the current state of experiential education programs in various levels of development to a campus-wide movement where experiential education is valued and considered as an important component of the UNB student experience. Experiential education provides a substantive and unique learning opportunity and all UNB students should have the option to take part in experience-based learning. The recommendations presented are intended to take advantage of the benefits and address the identified challenges by ensuring leadership, expertise, integration and strategic development is provided for experiential education at UNB. The recommendations focus on raising the profile and collective presence of experiential education opportunities on both campuses; fostering broad-based support for experiential education and expanding the opportunities across campuses; and coordinating, supporting and enhancing the excellent work currently being done at the unit level.

Promotion

A review of the inventory from both campuses revealed a wide variety of experiential opportunities across many disciplines and courses. From this inventory, it is evident that the experiential approach is supported and implemented, but there is very little promotion of the important role it currently plays at UNB. For this reason, the Steering Committee strongly recommends that a concerted effort be made in the communication and promotion of experiential education at several levels.

First among these is the need to increase awareness about the current uses of experiential education on both campuses. Such promotional efforts should be directed on the campuses as well as to alumni, friends of the universities and current and potential community partners. There is also a need to do a better job of recognizing and publicly thanking the businesses, organizations and agencies that partner with the campuses to make the learning experiences possible. An experiential education week each year, an alumni publication focusing on different learning partnerships and an award for successful experiential partnerships are examples of actions that can be taken.

The Steering Committee also recommends that a greater effort be made to increase the level of understanding about the benefits of experiential education among students, educators and community partners. Presentations, print material, media releases and a web site presence would all assist with this.

In addition, it is recommended that emphasis be placed on increasing the level of knowledge among faculties about the variety of experiential education formats possible, how they can be used, and the benefits of each. This could be accomplished through various means such as compilations of best practices, workshops, conferences and speakers.

Coordination

The Working Group reports drew attention to several challenges encountered in relation to the coordination of experiential education on both campuses as a whole and at the unit level. To address some of these challenges it is recommended that an overall strategy for the growth and development of experiential opportunities be created. Within the strategy would be a long-term vision for experiential education and supporting objectives and measurable action items to provide guidance and evidence.

It is also recommended that standard definitions and criteria be developed for the various experiential education formats in use on both campuses. Preliminary work on this has been included in this report. Once established every effort should be made to ensure adherence.

A standard understanding of the various formats would then aid in data collection and management. It is recommended that a central database of relevant information pertaining to experiential education such as type and number of opportunities; participation by units, students, and partners; inquiries; and local, national and international contacts be maintained. Building from the data-base, it is recommended that consideration be given to establishing a central point of contact to give the external community better access to the opportunities offered on the campuses and to give campus units access to information and expertise. It is also recommended that every opportunity be taken to conduct research and disseminate information pertaining to experiential education at UNB.

It is further recommended that an increased effort be made to provide training and guidance to all involved with experiential education. This would entail providing training to the units currently offering experiential opportunities or those wishing to in such topics as evaluation, portfolio development, assignments, reflection, and compliance with established standards and guidelines. Training and guidance should also be provided to current and potential community partners in relation to expectations, mentoring, supervision and evaluation of students. Finally, enhanced training and assistance should be made available to students seeking or preparing for experiences. While some programs currently provide training for their students, this is not the case across the university. Student training should include a range of topics such as resume

writing, interviews, reflection, expectations, and work-place culture. It is recommended that, where possible, existing expertise on the campuses such as that available from CETL(F), TLC(SJ), Student Affairs and Services (F) and Student Services (SJ), Renaissance College, international offices (F) and (SJ) and ITS be drawn upon to provide the training.

Unit Level

The Working Group reports also brought forward several benefits as well as challenges identified by the various units on both campuses involved with experiential education. The challenges were mainly associated with a lack of assistance in attempting to work in isolation with limited human and financial resources. The benefits were related to the student learning gained from the experiences, the relationships developed and the connections to the community. Based on these results, the Steering Committee recommends, that in order for experiential education to continue to be a vital component of learning at UNB, assistance be provided to the units currently involved and for those wishing to be involved. This assistance relates to the broad areas of funding, promotion, coordination, training and research.

Organizational Structure

To address the challenges identified and to implement the recommendations offered, the Steering Committee is proposing an integrated model be considered. In such a model, some responsibilities would be met at the institutional level, some at the unit level, and some shared between the levels. One office with a presence on both campuses could be developed to provide strategic direction and champion experiential education, to be the primary point of contact for external organizations, and to oversee the macro level coordination of experiential education at UNB. The units would have direct involvement with the experiential education opportunities they provide, including such functions as establishing academic requirements, matching students with opportunities, providing supervision of students, maintaining relations with community partners, and evaluating student performance.

To illustrate a potential integrated model, the functions that could be provided at each level are identified below.

Institutional Level

- Provide strategic direction for experiential education in keeping with the UNB Strategic Plan and lead implementation of strategic initiatives

- Advocate for experiential education both on campus and within the wider community to raise the profile and obtain appropriate resources
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with appropriate units within UNB (e.g., Marketing & Communications, Information Technology Services, Centre for Enhanced Teaching and Learning, International Relations Office, Teaching and Learning Centre, International Students Services) to leverage existing expertise and resources
- Develop and maintain a centralized contact and opportunity database to support experiential education
- Carry out marketing and communication functions to encourage participation by students and potential agencies and organizations
- Establish standards and guidelines for all formats of experiential education and ensure compliance
- Seek Accreditation for formats as appropriate (e.g., Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE))
- Coordinate and/or provide professional development opportunities for faculty/department mentors/supervisors and agency/organization mentors/supervisors
- Coordinate professional development opportunities for students (e.g., work with Student Employment to hold cover letter/resume writing workshops)
- Oversee development of budget portfolio and ensure appropriate management and accountability
- Mentor faculty and staff involved in Experiential Education in the Units

Unit Level (i.e., Faculty/Department and international offices)

- Establish academic requirements (e.g., assignments) and ensure compliance with all academic regulations and processes
- Match individual students with opportunities
- Provide mentoring/supervision of students
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with agency/organization mentors/supervisors
- Ensure professional development opportunities are provided for faculty/department mentors/supervisors and agency/organization mentors/supervisors by accessing centrally provided programs or providing unit specific programs
- Provide appropriate professional development opportunities for students, including accessing centrally provided programs
- Evaluate/assess student performance
- Encourage student participation
- Assist in the development of new experiential education opportunities
- Work with the Director to support initiatives related to experiential education

Shared Functions:

- Develop and foster collaborative working relationships among the faculties/departments offering experiential education
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with external organizations, agencies, etc.
- Actively seek new experiential education opportunities

Funding

The Steering Committee recognizes that if UNB is to fully engage in experiential education as one strategy to provide an exceptional and transformative student experience as outlined in our strategic plan, then sustainable funding must be in place. To establish experiential education as a hallmark program at UNB, multiple sources of funding should be explored including the upcoming fundraising campaign, PETL funded programs, relevant foundations, and corporate and community partners.