

Designing an Experiential Learning Environment at WOU



Western Oregon
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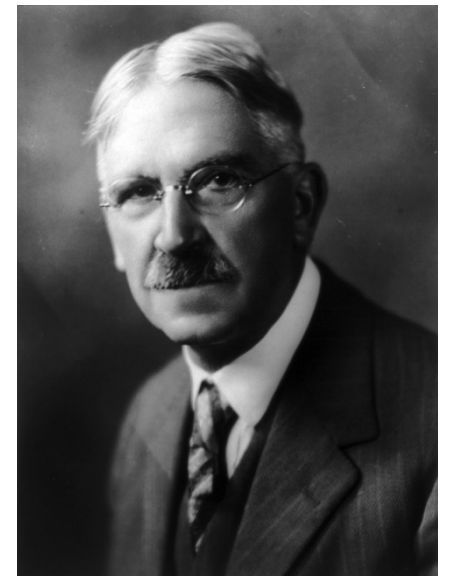
“Connecting students with communities through engagement in service, experiential learning, creative problem-solving opportunities and co-curricular collaborations.”

(Forward Together, page 2)



DESIGNING EXPERIENCES

- A connection between learning and active engagement in society is fundamental to democracy.
- “we never educate directly, but only indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose, makes a great difference”. (John Dewey , 1916)



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (EL)

- The best forms of experiential learning are framed by guidelines that serve all the parties involved, but that put learning first
- As experiential educators we are informed and guided by a body of knowledge, research and pedagogical practices recognized by and specific to the field of experiential education, including reflection, self-authorship, assessment and evaluation, civic engagement, and the development of personal and social responsibility. (National Society for Experiential Education, Guiding Principles)
- “Experiential learning is being able to demonstrate the intentionality in the way a student approaches the experience, how they learn by meeting objectives, document, describe what they would do different next time, and formally work through all the processes they are presented (Patrick Clarke, SUU)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

- WOU's mission is clear in its commitment to personalized and transformative learning; experiential learning epitomizes this mission
- All pillars in the strategic plan support the creation of an EL program, but the most prominent are
 - **Community Engagement** (1.1 – 1.3, 2.1 – 2.6)
 - **Student Success** (1.1 – 1.3, 3.1 – 3.3, 4.4)
 - **Academic Excellence** (1.2, 2.2, 2.4, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1-5.4).

CURRENT EL PRACTICES AT WOU

- Great examples, but sporadic
- Uneven student access and benefit
 - Students vary in their preparation and social capital that informs their ability to seek out and engage in EL.
- Our programs vary in diversity and availability of offerings

To design an equitable, accessible and optimum environment for WOU students, our community needs to band together, informed by best practice and training to thoughtfully build our EL capacity together

THE TIME IS RIGHT – EXPRESSED INTEREST

- A recent survey revealed
 - High level of interest in employing experiential learning pedagogy and practices
 - Large gaps in knowledge and shared understanding about what kinds of experiences and environments constitute EL
 - Faculty also reported lacking time and know-how when it comes to aspects of EL, such as creating community connections, pedagogy, and logistics
 - Faculty reported wanting training, resources and support.

THE TIME IS RIGHT – INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

- Strategic Action Team
 - Current members faculty and staff (David Foster, Ava Howard, Adry Clark, Kathryn Plummer, Maureen Dolan, Lars Soderlund, Ermie Buncal)
- General Education
 - First Year Experience Courses
 - Upper division
 - Integrative Learning PLC
- Center for Academic Excellence
 - Focus on capacity building and pedagogy
 - Focus on community engagement

PLANNED STEPS

- ✓ Strategic Action Team on Experiential Learning meets to coordinate trainings and conversations, beginning October, 2018 (formerly ad hoc group of enthusiasts)
- ✓ Receive administrative backing and funding to bring experts to WOU for training and consultation to inform campus wide conversations and planning, November 30, 2018
- Design conversations, showcases and workshops to develop initiatives and programs, Winter and Spring terms, 2019.
- Send a small group of faculty and staff to an Experiential Learning Leadership Institute in Utah in June, 2019
- Create pilot programs for Fall, 2019 (pending budget proposal approval)

NOVEMBER 30 – EL EXPERTS ON CAMPUS

DR. PATRICK CLARKE AND DR. TODD PETERSON, SUU

- 9:00 Meet with **Experiential Learning Strategic Action Team**.
Are you interested in joining the Experiential Learning Strategic Action Team? Please complete this interest [form](#)
- 10:00 “Integrated Learning” Learning Outcome, **PLC**
- 10:45 **Departmental Consultation**. Consultants will help two pre-identified departments/programs solve EL design problems and build a road map for implementation of EL framework within their specific curricula. To nominate your department, please complete this [form](#)
- 1:30 **General Session** - EL Overview to provide the community of WOU a clear and working understanding of EL, what it is and how it benefits our students and programs.
- 3:30 **Open workshop** for individual consultation/conversation

For more information, visit wou.edu/slcd/experiential-learning

Experts from Southern Utah University

Nationally recognized Experiential Learning program
National Society of Experiential Education, Academy Faculty



Todd Petersen

Assoc Chair/Dir, Project Based Learning; Professor, English

Specializing in experiential learning, visual narrative theory and film adaptation



Patrick Clarke

Dean, Integrative and Engaged Learning; Asst Prof, Education

Founder, The Experiential Learning Leadership Institute (ELLI)

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED...

- Attend November 30 training – **General Overview, at 1:30 – 2:30 PM**
- Consider having your department be one of two to work with trainers to develop/improve an Experiential Learning related program, course(s), or activities. Examples:
 - Develop high impact First Year Seminar curriculum
 - Design project based assignments
 - Improve access and practices for service learning/study abroad/undergraduate research/internships
 - Adopt best practice for incorporating community engagement into course/program
- Join the **EL Strategic Action Team** and meet the trainers for strategic planning – 9:00 AM
- Bring a question, idea, project to drop-in workshop, 3:30-4:30 PM

WHAT COULD AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT LOOK LIKE AT WOU?

What we will create as a community will be unique to WOU and our population. Here are examples from other institutions:

- A “center” where students can access opportunities in a transparent fashion.
- EL is integrated into the curriculum; at least one course in each program meets guidelines and is approved for an EL designation. EL course development funds and expertise available to faculty wanting to develop an EL designated course.
- Faculty can incorporate service learning into a course and work with EL center staff to develop opportunities. The center staff manages contracts and logistics.
- EL center helps match faculty to students interested in research