

Applying

I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom

Participating in experiential learning is a vital "Big Six" experience because it bridges the gap between academic theory and professional practice, allowing students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-world settings. This practical application significantly boosts students' confidence and preparedness for the job market, making them more likely to secure full-time employment upon graduation. Furthermore, the impact is long-lasting: graduates who complete an internship that utilizes their skills are roughly **1.5 times more likely** to thrive in their overall well-being and **twice as likely** to be engaged in their future careers compared to those who do not.

This section focuses on ways faculty can support applied learning, whether through co-ops and traditional internships, sponsored courses and capstone courses, and community-based service learning. Each approach is student-centered and emphasizes putting academic knowledge into practice. To learn more about experiential learning from a research-based framework, the place to start is "[Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development](#)," written by David Kolb, who is considered to be the father of experiential learning.

Actionable strategy	How to implement it	Resources/examples
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Work-Integrated Learning (Co-ops & Internships) Primary focus: Employment Key Feature: Paid, full-time, integrated into the academic calendar.	These are structured work experiences that allow students to apply classroom knowledge in professional settings, often resulting in higher starting salaries and job offers. Examples: • Cooperative Education (Co-op): Paid, full-time, career-related employment that alternates with periods of full-time study. • Internships: Structured experiences focused on exploring career paths and building professional networks. • Micro-Internships: Short-term, professional assignments (e.g., Texas A&M University San Antonio - See memorandum of understanding (MOU) for Template. Recent Research and News • First-generation college students lag behind their peers in internship participation (Higher Education Today) • Insights from Business Higher Education Forum Report (2024) ○ Individuals of color, first-generation students, community college students, and those who are financially vulnerable face some of the worst odds of securing an internship.	Strategic Improvements: Wage Replacement: Establish programs to ensure equitable access to internships. Work-Study: Reimagine work-study roles to be "high-impact" and career-relevant. Feedback Loops: Use NACE competencies to ensure employer feedback remains structured without being onerous. (Download Assessment Tools) Implementing Industry-Integrated Feedback The primary goal of "Experience 5" is to ensure that external work is not just a job, but a laboratory for classroom concepts. To achieve this, faculty should focus on three implementation pillars: 1. Standardizing Competencies (The NACE Framework) Rather than asking employers to grade academic theory, faculty should utilize
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	○ Almost half of college students who want an internship cannot secure an internship ○ The primary motivation (49%) employers have for offering internships is attracting talent (future recruitment) ○ The economy (26%) is a large reason why employers may not offer internships	the NACE Career Readiness Competencies. This ensures feedback is structured and professional without being "onerous" for the employer. ● Action: Provide employers with a simple rubric focused on: ○ Critical Thinking/Problem Solving ○ Professionalism/Work Ethic ○ Oral/Written Communications ○ Teamwork/Collaboration 2. Building "High-Impact" Feedback Loops To move beyond a simple "satisfactory/unsatisfactory" checkmark, faculty can embed reflection into the course structure: ● The Sponsor Liaison: For sponsored courses, designate a "Sponsor Liaison" who provides a mid-point check-in. This allows students to pivot their project based on real-world professional needs before the final grade is issued.

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		• External Evaluation: In performance-based or entrepreneurship courses, involve external "judges" or "clients" to evaluate the final product (e.g., a minimum viable product or a gallery show). This simulates the professional "pitch" environment. 3. Equitable Access & Wage Replacement Faculty play a key role in advocating for the "High-Impact" nature of work. • Strategy: If an internship is unpaid, work with the department to identify "Wage Replacement" grants or scholarships. This ensures that all students—regardless of socioeconomic status—can participate in the internships that lead to higher starting salaries. • Internal Internships: Reimagine on-campus work-study roles as "Internal Internships." If a student works in the IT department or the campus marketing office, faculty

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		can coordinate with those supervisors to align the work with the student's academic major.

Experiential & Performance-Based Courses Primary focus: Hands-On Learning Key Feature: Practical application in fields like nursing, education, and the arts.	These courses bridge the gap between theory and practice by emphasizing "learning by doing" through external evaluations and public demonstrations. Examples: • Performance Practicum: Common in Arts and Mass Communication; includes music recitals, theater productions, gallery shows, and student-led digital media. • Entrepreneurship & Innovation: Courses that guide students through the entire business lifecycle, from ideation and market research to launching a minimum viable product. • Service Learning: Partnerships with civic organizations where students share their skills with the larger community (e.g., K-12 arts outreach).	<u>CUNY's plan for expanding Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELO):</u> 1. Define and Categorize: Adopt a university-wide definition of ELOs—including internships, service learning, and research—to ensure consistency across all campuses. 2. Assess Capacity: Survey colleges to identify existing infrastructure and highlight successful models, such as LaGuardia's co-op programs. 3. Systematize Tracking: Form a technical working group to build a central data repository for tracking student participation and addressing legal liabilities. 4. Support Faculty: Launch professional development initiatives and an annual symposium to help faculty integrate hands-on learning into their curricula.
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		5. Expand Student Access: Centralize information databases and create flexible opportunities (like winter intersession programs) to accommodate working students. 6. Streamline Employer Partnerships: Establish a "front door" for external partners to easily navigate the university and tailor strategies for high-demand sectors. 7. Keep Participation Voluntary: Focus on expanding access rather than instituting a graduation requirement, which could hinder students with tight schedules. 8. Monitor and Refine: Use tools like the National Survey of Student Engagement to continuously evaluate the quality and impact of these experiences. ---

Culminating & Preparatory "Practicums" Primary focus: Synthesis Key Feature: Final project requiring integration of all previous coursework.	These courses are typically final experiences or the essential bridges required before entering a professional field. Examples: ● Capstone Courses: Culminating projects taken at the end of a program, requiring students to synthesize knowledge from various disciplines and present findings to stakeholders. ○ Capstone Design Conference (Join a network of faculty, administrators, industry representatives, and students active in capstone engineering design courses.) ● Apprenticeship Courses: Focused on observing industry skills before practicing them (e.g., methods courses in education). ● Pre-Practicum Courses: Preparatory labs or simulations (e.g., Amberton University's mental health simulations or Miami University's counseling skills lab) designed to build foundational skills before a full practicum.	Experiential learning at Loyola University Chicago: 1. Adopt the Framework: Build your course around Ignatian Pedagogy and Community-Based Learning, viewing community partners as co-educators. 2. Select a Model: Choose the format that fits your discipline: Service-Learning, Academic Internships, Undergraduate Research, or Learning Portfolios. 3. Meet "Engaged Learning" Criteria: To qualify as an Engaged Learning course, you must include structured outside experience, critical reflection assignments, and a final synthesis project. 4. Implement Portfolios: Use a platform to allow students to document and reflect on their growth across disciplines. 5. Access Research Funding: Guide students to apply for fellowships and funding.
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		6. Showcase Results: Encourage students to present their work at the annual Undergraduate Research and Engagement Symposium.
Sponsored & Career-Specific Pathways Primary focus: Readiness Key Feature: Focused on observation and foundational skill-building (e.g., labs).	Programs are designed in collaboration with industry to meet specific professional requirements. Examples: • Sponsored Courses: Courses developed with external companies that include feedback from sponsor liaisons and professional clients. • Preprofessional Tracks: Programs that integrate major requirements with professional school prerequisites (e.g., UF Center for Experiential Learning and Simulation).	Effective Practices for Building Long-Term Strategic University-Industry Partnerships University of Minnesota's 6 Steps for Developing Successful and Sustainable Industry Partnerships - includes short videos from UM's Corporate Engagement Center explaining key points related to forming Industry Partnerships White Paper on "Principles and Guidelines for Large-Scale Collaborations between the University and Industry, Government, and Foundations" from UC Berkeley, examining a wide range of possible issues that may arise in future University-industry partnerships

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