

Academic Success Council Report 25-26

Report: Analysis of Experiential Learning Across Academic Departments

Executive Summary

This report analyzes data collected from 16 academic departments regarding their experiential learning (EL) offerings, requirements, and logistical structures. The findings reveal a diverse landscape of experiential opportunities, with **internships being the most common form of EL**. Participation is heavily concentrated in the **junior and senior years**. While half of the reporting departments require EL for graduation, the majority offer optional opportunities and have dedicated coordinators to manage these programs.

Types of Experiential Learning Offered

Departments offer a variety of experiential learning formats to students. The most frequently cited categories include:

- **Internships:** Offered by 11 departments.
- **Practicum:** Offered by 6 departments.
- **Field Experience:** Offered by 6 departments.
- **Clinicals:** Offered by 5 departments.
- **Student Teaching:** Offered by 4 departments.

Some departments provide a combination of these formats, such as a mix of internships, practicums, student teaching, field experiences, and clinicals.

Requirements and Participation Rates

The data shows an even split regarding graduation requirements:

- **Requirements:** **50% of departments (8 out of 16) require students to complete experiential learning**, while the other 50% do not.
- **Optional Opportunities:** 62.5% (10 out of 16) of departments provide optional EL opportunities for students.
- **Completion Percentages:** Student participation varies significantly by program. While several departments (8) report **100% completion rates** (often because it is a requirement), others report rates as low as **5% to 25%**.

Logistics and Coordination

Departments employ various methods for arranging placements and managing the EL process:

- **Coordination: 10 departments have a dedicated experiential learning coordinator**, while 6 do not.
- **Placement Responsibility:**
 - **9 departments** report that students find and arrange their own opportunities.
 - **10 departments** use a department-arranged assignment system.
 - **8 departments** have prearranged experiential learning sites available.
 - Some departments use a combination of these methods

Student Timeline

Experiential learning is primarily an upper-division activity. The breakdown of when students participate is as follows:

- **Seniors:** 16 departments report senior participation.
- **Juniors:** 13 departments report junior participation.
- **Sophomores and Freshmen:** Participation is minimal, with only 2 departments reporting activity in each of these years.

The most common model, reported by 10 departments, is for students to complete their EL during both their **junior and senior years**.

Distribution of Completion Rates

- *Completion Rate Clustering:* Most programs cluster in the 75–100% completion range, showing strong experiential learning integration.
- *Gap in Mid-Range Completion:* No programs fall in the 50–74% completion range, highlighting a clear divide in experiential learning participation.
- *Low Completion Focus:* Programs need more support to improve experiential learning access

Surveyed Departments

The data includes responses from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to:

- Biology
- Teacher Education (PreK-12 and SEPD)
- Nursing and Public Health
- Kinesiology (Exercise Physiology, Sport Management)
- Psychology and Sociology
- Communication and MMPS
- Mathematical Sciences

How could the experiential learning process be improved?

- 4 of 16 respondents said the current process is working well.
- 5 of 16 reported needing more internship opportunities.
- 2 of 16 reported needing more faculty/coordinator support
- 1 suggested better promoting experiential learning to students
- 1 suggested having departments oversee internships for their students, rather than having this done at the college level.
- 1 suggested having a campus-wide internship coordinating office that would maintain relationship agreements with the university

What supports/resources would you need to improve student experiences?

- 7 out of 16 said they need additional faculty or staff coordinators to manage experiential learning (e.g., release time, dedicated staff coordinator)
- 2 of 16 said there should be a centralized place for internship information (e.g., Handshake, using an AI matching app to pair students with internships)
- 1 said more internship sites are needed

Any additional relevant information about your experiential learning opportunities within your department

- Some internships are "in-house" with students working with faculty on projects within departments.
- Setting up and maintaining agreements with internship sites and placing students is very time-intensive, especially for programs that require specific experiences (e.g., nursing). This must be considered, especially when considering expanding programs.