

PANEL DISCUSSION ON INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUPPLEMENT THE CURRICULUM WITH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

PROPOSAL AUTHORS Jacqueline Elcik, Providence College | Angela Hersch, Suitable

jelcik@providence.edu
angela@suitable.co
Panel Discussion
Experiential Track

ABSTRACT

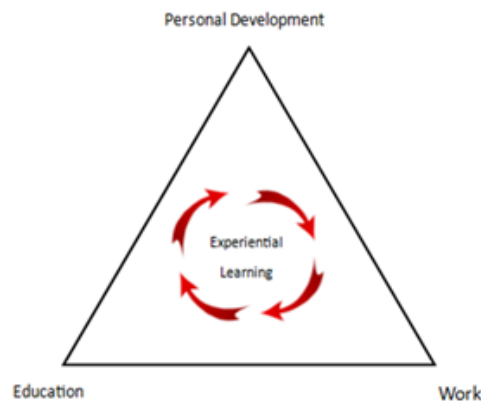
A college education used to be one of the ways a future employee could stand out among the many applicants. Now, the number of jobs that require a minimum of a bachelor's degree has increased. Moreover, a good GPA and a completed bachelor's degree is no longer enough. Experiential learning and skills development is becoming increasingly more important to employers when screening resumes (Job Outlook 2023, 2022); resulting in colleges and universities developing signature and high impact practices, as well as other activities to support out of classroom learning.

This presentation/session will share research on the benefits of experiential learning and will feature examples from three well established Colleges/Schools of Business; that have developed an experience-based approach to supporting students' professional and personal development. Additionally, the Colleges/Schools have partnered with Suitable to share how they use technology-based tools to support these initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Although there are many types of learning – organizational, problem-based, action, cognitive, behavioral, and experiential learning (Sofa, Yeo, & Villafane, 2010) – this proposal will focus on experience-based education – action and experiential learning. Research shows that people “learn from their experience, and the results of that learning can be reliably assessed and certified for college credit (Kolb, 1984).” Kolb (1984) developed an experiential learning model that created a framework for examining and strengthening the linkages among education, work, and personal development (Figure 1), as depicted below.

FIGURE 1
Kolb's Experiential Learning Model



This model shows the potential linkages between the “real world” and the classroom. Kolb’s model builds upon early research from well-known theorists such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Arthur Chickering. Chickering (1977) emphasized “higher education can do more than develop verbal skills and deposit information in those storage banks between the ears. It can contribute to more complex kinds of intellectual development and more persuasive dimensions of human development required for effective citizenship. It can help students cope with shifting developmental tasks imposed by the life cycle and rapid social change.”

Building on previous research and Kolb’s model, we propose to use the following experiential learning definition to guide the remainder of the proposal. “Experiential learning utilizes hands-on, interactive tasks and opportunities outside of the classroom (such as work experience and exposure to work force leaders) to provide students with firsthand understanding of essential concepts, practices, and skills in a particular field.” Additionally, these experiences can be embedded in classes or

part of the co-curricular offerings within colleges and universities. Examples of experience-based education are internships, field placements, work/study assignments, structured exercises (e.g., case analysis), role-plays, gaming simulations, study abroad, etc.

- Colleges report that student engagement in experiential activities, partnered with integration of action-based learning in the curriculum, result in the following student outcomes:
- Soft skills development through professional face-to-face interaction
- Written and oral communication proficiency
- Results oriented teamwork by additional opportunities to work in teams
- Awareness of businesses making business decisions
- Exposure to diverse cultures and thoughts
- Understanding of the various business governance models
- Introduction to the variety of industries and individual's roles in companies
- Learning the role values and ethics play in business
- Increase in their overall business efficacy

These experiences provide students with ways to apply theory to practice; helping them to become better prepared job seekers and sought out by employers. Research suggests that engaged students become engaged employees. Engaged students provide three hiring benefits to employers:

1. More likely to possess soft skills, which translates to workplace success/preparedness (Peck & Preston, 2017)
2. More likely to be engaged in the workplace, which translates into more productivity (Gallup, Inc., 2014)
3. More likely to stay at the company, which translates to better retention (Gallup, Inc., 2014)

Further, recent reports indicate a skills gap between where college students think they are proficient and where employers rate their proficiencies (*2022 NACE Student Survey, 2022*). This presents the need for institutions to focus on developing these skills and equipping students with the ability to articulate their development. Experience-based education has increasingly become a more widely accepted method of instruction across the nation.

Experiential learning helps to bridge the gaps between theory and practice, while also helping students gain skills and a better understanding of business industries. Students are able, through Sutable, and other technology platforms, to track and share their experiential learning activities through co-curricular transcripts, badges, and other credentials. This real time tracking and access to information allows students to leverage their engagement by providing them with a structured framework to use when articulating and highlighting their development to employers. Institutions can further configure the technology to assist students in their conversations by implementing competency frameworks so that students can speak in the same language as employers when it comes to the skills they are looking for. The technology must also be flexible enough to allow Institutions to implement these experiential programs in various ways and at various entry points that work best for their faculty, staff and students and best support the curriculum. During the presentation, we will examine the approaches that the three institutions take to infusing experiential learning into their students' curriculum and college experience.

PRESENTATION FORMAT

Four panelists will lead a discussion on the importance and relevance of experiential learning in undergraduate business education, following the outline below. Additionally, we will share an overview of each panelist's College/Schools or companies' approach and/or role in supporting experiential learning. We have also highlighted the bios and experiences of the four panelists.

Agenda

1. Overview, definition, and history of experiential learning
2. Case studies shared from each institution of experiential learning activities for undergraduate business students, including challenges and successes
 - Handout to be provided to attendees that will include case study synopsis and best practices and challenges when developing experiential learning activities (e.g. financial resources, staff and faculty support, technology solutions and scalability).
3. Best practices in technology solutions and how to use these tools successfully in experiential learning, and examples from Sutable

4. Audience participation through either sharing their experiential learning opportunities or an active simulation and group activity (time allowing)
5. Q&A

SAMPLE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

Providence College School of Business introduced the Friar Leadership & Immersion Program (FLIP) to their students in Fall 2019, at First Days at Friartown, summer orientation program and then First Year Workshops. FLIP was designed to be a four-year program, to enhance the curriculum, by encouraging co-curricular and active learning. FLIP, powered by Sutable, is a high-impact program, developed in collaboration with the PC Chirico Career Center. The program has been very successful among first year students and is starting to see growth in participation among second- and third-year students, as they introduce PCBiz Basics and Advisory Tracks. The program overall, through engagement activities, provides the opportunity for students to be exposed to careers and industries and to develop proficiency in professional skills to excel in the workforce.

University of Florida's Heavener School of Business introduces career competencies to students in their first semester on campus during Warrington Welcome, their Introduction to Business Course. Gator Ready, the name for the initiative, was designed to help students track their skill development across these competencies and provides evidence to employers of their dedication to skill development. Throughout their time at Heavener, students work at their own pace to earn digital achievements for their engagement in each of the career competencies. Participation in certain programs at Heavener also requires students to meet minimum engagement requirements, while also displaying a depth of their engagement.

University of South Florida's Bellini Center for Talent Development offers the Bellini Certification Program, a four-level series of competencies that develops a student's foundational skills, starting in their freshman year, and progressing toward a mastery of knowledge upon graduation. The program is a compilation of employer-led workshops and skill development modules integrated into the curriculum, geared to develop the soft-skill competencies that employers are looking for in the workplace. This guarantees that all Muma students will graduate with a foundation of employable skills needed to enter the workforce.

Sutable provides a mechanism for students to catalog their experiences and highlight their achievements digitally and incrementally. Access to this information anytime, anywhere, empowers students to leverage their co-curricular transcript and tell their professional development story. Institutions can customize their competency framework to align with their Institutional learning outcomes and give students a way to easily articulate their development. Sutable's gamification empowers students with the direction they need by providing a virtual roadmap to scaffold their development while still optimizing for their individual needs as they progress through their academic years.

The three institutions on the panel all leverage Sutable's mobile first technology platform to track and assess student engagement in activities outside of the classroom. Through Sutable, students experience a gamified approach to their development. As they participate, the application automatically and incrementally creates a record of their engagement that is organized by competencies, skills, and achievements. This record provides students with a holistic visualization of their skill set based on their unique involvement journey. Students can also collect relevant work products, evidence, and other portfolio items with ease, right alongside the rest of their co-curricular and experiential learning data. Institutions have access to all engagement and development data to help them assess learning outcome achievement, identify programming gaps, and inform them of critical student engagement metrics for decision-making.

PANELIST BIOS & EXPERIENCE

Catherine Coe - Director of Competency Development and Program Evaluation, University of Florida, Heavener School of Business

Catherine has been a professional at UF for over 15 years, working in advising, instructional design, and now experiential learning. Catherine is also a triple, soon to be quadruple Gator, with her BSBA-Economics, MA-Economics, MEd-Higher Education Administration-Student Personnel, and currently ABD in her PhD in Education Technology. Catherine designed and launched the Gator Ready platform for business students at UF to be able to track and develop their career readiness competencies, and she's currently working on growing the platform to include micro-credentialing.

Jacqueline Elcik, Senior Associate Dean, School of Business, Providence College

Jacqueline has over twenty-five years of experience in higher education, and nearly twenty years of experience working in undergraduate and graduate business education. She has worked at Providence College for more than ten years, and her previous positions were at The Ohio State University, University of Cincinnati, and Miami University. Jacqueline holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Cincinnati, an M.A. in Higher Education from The Ohio State University, and a B.A. in Psychology and Sociology from Case Western Reserve University.

Angela Hersch, Vice President of University Success, Suitable

Angela leads Suitable's University Success team, which supports Suitable's partners as they construct and/or enhance their institutional student development initiatives. She has helped hundreds of institutions implement their student development programs nationwide. With a passion for continuous improvement, Angela frequently analyzes both the quantitative and qualitative data to provide best practices and insights to partners before, during and after launch. She ensures all institutional partners are successful with Suitable and supervises all university service and support operations.

Doug Meyn, Program Director, University of South Florida, Muma College of Business

Doug Meyn is the program director of the Bellini Center for Talent Development in the USF Muma College of Business. In this role, he develops and oversees the Bellini Certification Program helping students identify and achieve their own career goals. Prior to joining the Bellini Center team, Doug served as a career coach in USF's Career Services for seven years, supporting undergraduate and graduate students of the Muma College of Business. Prior to joining USF, he enjoyed an extensive career in a wide range of leadership positions in the telecom and retail industries, with national and global scope. Doug also teaches the Professional Development Practicum in the MBA program at the University of Tampa, where he began his "encore career." Doug earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of California and a Master of Education from Northcentral University.

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