



Florida Atlantic University
Quality Enhancement Plan
Experiential Learning: SEED for Success

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Focus

The Florida Atlantic University Quality Enhancement Plan, Experiential Learning: SEED for Success, will enhance student learning by developing an institutional culture that supports experiential learning (EL) while providing enriching educational experiences (EEE) and active collaborative learning (ACL) for students at FAU. Increasing EL opportunities with special emphasis on the expansion of study abroad and academic service-learning will support FAU's mission in the areas of academic and personal development, discovery, and lifelong learning through innovative teaching, public engagement, and cultural alliances. The benefits of these opportunities directly relate to three goals of the FAU Strategic Plan: Goal 2: Meeting Statewide Professional and Workforce Needs, Goal 4: Meeting Community Needs and Fulfilling Unique Institutional Responsibilities, and Goal 7: Increasing the University's Visibility. Furthermore, these opportunities will strengthen student learning at FAU by allowing students to become engaged learners through authentic experiences while developing relevant academic and professional skills to meet their educational goals. Upon graduation and as a direct result of these experiences, FAU students will successfully transition to the larger community as engaged global citizens.

Extensive research by Kuh (2008) suggests increased rates of student engagement when implementing high impact practices such as research with faculty, internships or field experiences, academic service-learning, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences. Together, these practices form experiential learning opportunities. Experiential Learning is one of several educational activities that offers "deep learning" and builds reflective learning skills and self confidence. Experiential learning allows students to engage in EEE and ACL through the application of course work encompassing real-world tasks in diverse settings. Additionally, students are able to critically reflect on how these experiences have affected learning.

The concept of EL has played a keystone role in the development of the modern American public education system. In the early 20th century, philosopher John Dewey called for the development of EL as a theoretical framework to counter-act the static nature of educational systems that were built merely on tradition, (Dewey 1933 and 1938). In this theory of learning,

...contextually relevant knowledge [is] acquired through "hands-on" problem solving, critical reflection, discussion, and decision-making. Experiential learning broadens, extends, and deepens the intellectual content of instruction by integrating theory and practice, increasing student motivation through the experience of applying knowledge, and encouraging students to develop their skills as independent scholars (Millenbah & Millsbaugh, 2003).

As such, EL is an educational focus on praxis, the dialogue between theory and practice where each informs, and builds upon, the other. Kolb and Kolb (2005) asserted that providing students with the opportunity for EL must involve more than providing them with "experiences from which they can learn"; as others state, "mere activity does not constitute experience" (Hutchings & Wutzdorff, 1988). Experiential learning must involve educating students with the theoretical information that will be used, providing the experiences for practice, and guiding students to ensure that theory and practice inform each other.

This QEP encompasses the major forms of EL and measures the following student learning outcomes adapted from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education:

- 1. Knowledge acquisition, integration, construction and application**
Outcome: Students will acquire and apply both knowledge and skills to real world settings in local, national and/or global communities.
- 2. Critical and Reflective Thinking**
Outcome: Students will demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving and the ability to reflect throughout their experiential learning experiences by using a critical inquiry process.
- 3. Intrapersonal Development**
Outcome: Students will engage in self-appraisal for decision making in the areas of professional goals, ethical reasoning and accountability.

4. Practical Competence

Outcome: Students will exhibit initiative, self-reliance, and effective communication and technology skills to demonstrate professional competence.

5. Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Competence

Outcome: Students will model global citizenry by demonstrating social responsibility, intercultural competence, and effective leadership skills through working collaboratively with diverse groups.

In addition to the student learning outcomes above, FAU undergraduate students will have the opportunity to participate in engaged scholarship and research which in turn supports the development of the next generation of engaged scholars. Through EL, the use of methods such as collaborative university-community research strengthens traditional academic research (Nyden, 2006) as well as the development of research skills and shared knowledge within a community followed by reflective practice (Boyer, 1990).

This QEP offers opportunities to faculty and students to use innovative strategies to transform both teaching and learning across disciplines and campuses. At the end of the QEP 5-year period, over 25% of FAU undergraduates will have participated in some form of EL allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate growth within the identified student learning outcomes. With time, it is anticipated that all FAU undergraduate students will participate in at least one EL opportunity during their academic career, which will define and distinguish FAU graduates as engaged citizens in a global society.

Data to Support Experiential Learning: SEED for Success

The evaluation of a variety of data sources has identified areas of weaknesses in student learning, which directly or indirectly relate to the lack of EL opportunities at FAU. First, the 2011 QEP surveys offer insight into the abilities and attributes of FAU students that need improvement. According to both the 2011 FAU QEP Employer and Alumni Surveys the education from FAU failed to provide students with essential abilities and attributes such as awareness of global issues and events, ability to give effective oral presentations, ability to set priorities and manage time, and application of leadership skills, all of which scored lower in comparison to other abilities and attributes (Table 1). A disconnect exists in that faculty indicated high importance ratings for some of these abilities and attributes that were rated as weaknesses on the other surveys. Additionally, the abilities and attributes of which faculty deemed less important to instill through the undergraduate curriculum were skills employers viewed as essential educational outcomes (such as application of leadership skills) and of which they rated FAU students poorly. These abilities and attributes tie directly to the CAS student learning outcomes and have the potential to be enhanced through EL opportunities.

TABLE 1: Summary of 2011 FAU QEP Surveys.

(employer and alumni surveys use similar scales of 1=low, 4= high; faculty survey rates only importance of - not ability of students - and is a 3 point scale)

Abilities & Attributes	Faculty Survey	Employer Survey	Alumni Survey
Awareness of global issues and events	2.62	2.86	2.96
Ability to critically evaluate information for decision making	2.89	3.05	3.43
Ability to work effectively as a part of a group or team.	2.51	3.36	3.39
Application of leadership skills.	2.25	3.01	3.18
Ability to set priorities and manage time	2.83	3.12	3.22
Ability to write clearly and logically	2.94	3.12	3.39
Ability to give effective oral presentations	2.53	2.96	3.19
Ability to demonstrate understanding and application of professional/ethical standards	2.77	3.30	3.35
	Faculty rating of importance (3=very important)	Employer rating of FAU graduates (4=excellent)	Alumni rate contribution of their FAU education (4=a great deal)

Second, STEM employer panelists at the FAU Day Institute: “Exploring Civic Engagement Through the Lens of STEM” hosted by FAU in February 2011 echoed the same sentiments as those documented in the 2011 QEP Employer Survey stating that beyond the technical skills of job requirements, there is a need for “soft skills” such as leadership capacity, ability to work in groups, effective communication, problem solving, out of the box thinking, and social interaction with others. Research results published in the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2011 Report indicated (2010), “Concern over communication skills has been a consistent theme...for a number of years and implies that many students are graduating with a limited set of skills that are highly valued in the job market” (p. 27).

Third, the 2010 National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) addresses the critical issue that FAU students have significantly lower opportunities for participation in Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) and Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) than students at comparable institutions and Carnegie peers. Aside from participation in extensive Freshman Learning Community programs which yields strong ratings on EEE at the first-year, students indicate that they have not participated in EEE beyond the first-year and are lacking in opportunities to be actively involved in learning (ACL). Experiential learning offers complementary learning opportunities (EEE) and actively involves students in their own learning whether working individually or with others (ACL).

Fourth, statistics from the Office of International Programs (OIP), the Weppner Center for Civic Engagement and Service (WCCES), and the Career Development Center (CDC), indicate that study abroad, academic service-learning, and cooperative education/internship are underutilized as EL opportunities at FAU. While some growth has occurred over the past few years, only about 10% of FAU students enroll in any form of EL each year (Table 2).

Table 2. Experiential Learning Opportunities for Fiscal Years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

		FAU Student Enrollment	% of Enrollment	FAU Courses	% of Courses
FAU Enrollment & Courses <i>(unduplicated head count, all levels)</i>					
	2008-09	35,179	n/a	2,984	n/a
	2009-10	35,609	n/a	3,035	n/a
Experiential Learning at FAU					
Study Abroad	2008-09	257	0.73%	300	10.05%
	2009-10	294	0.83%	295	9.72%
Academic Service-Learning	2008-09	1,089	3.10%	75	2.51%
	2009-10	1,249	3.51%	90	2.97%
Co-op/ Internships	2008-09	2,327	6.61%	212	7.10%
	2009-10	2,309	6.48%	185	6.10%
Total for FAU EL Opportunities					
	2008-09	3,673	10.44%	587	19.66%
	2009-10	3,852	10.82%	570	18.79%

Last, the FAU Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis (IEA) prepared a study of student enrollment to graduation and reported that FAU student graduation rates are significantly below all other SUS institutions as well as below the median for our identified peer institutions (Ronco, 2008). As a larger concern for the University, a FAU presidential priority has been placed on increasing graduation rates and time-to-degree, especially for first-time, full-time students. Research indicates that increased student engagement in learning is a key factor in lowering attrition rates and increasing graduation rates (Kuh, 2001 & 2008, Tinto, 2006).

In summary, the data findings presented clearly demonstrate the necessity for FAU to institutionalize EL to better engage students in enhanced learning opportunities and to deepen their learning experiences while providing development in each of the aforementioned areas. In Year 5, the wide reach of EL at FAU will impact at least 25% (over 9,000) students up from 10.8% (3,852) students currently. Through this sustained

institutional model, growth will continue beyond year 5 to provide EL opportunities for all undergraduate students.

Scope of Experiential Learning: SEED for Success and Implementation Timetable

The broad scope of FAU's Experiential Learning: SEED for Success QEP includes growth and development while sustaining existing programs. The SEED conceptual framework emphasizes the strengths of existing EL programs while expanding the opportunities for undergraduate students and will Sustain our existing successful programs, Expand upon these programs, Evaluate the effects of program growth on student learning and Deepen the quality of these programs and student experiences.

The vision entails a Planning Year in 2011-2012 and a five-year implementation plan from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 as outlined below. At the conclusion of Year 5, FAU's institutional culture will have undergone a full transformation reflecting the advocacy and practice of experiential learning.

Planning year, 2011-2012

- Hire QEP faculty director and QEP associate director to develop Center for Experiential Learning (CEL) and guide creation and implementation of written Quality Enhancement Plan
- Integrate directors of existing EL units (OIP, WCCE, CDC) as part of CEL management team
- Hire new CEL team members (Program Assistant, graduate assistants, and IT specialist)
- Prepare position descriptions for Faculty and Student Fellows positions
- Consult with an assessment specialist and design final assessment plan and tools
- Create student, faculty and community surveys with assistance from IEA
- Map existing EL opportunities across FAU and begin database for tracking EL experiences
- Develop QEP website and social media sites
- Inaugurate CEL in May 2012 at first-annual Summer Faculty EL Development Program

Year One, 2012-2013

- Form a CEL Advisory Board of FAU Trustees, faculty, deans, students, community and business leaders and institutional partners to provide guidance and make recommendations to broaden engagement by our stakeholders
- Hire new EL coordinators for each cooperating unit (OIP, WCCE, CDC) to aid EL program expansion and CEL activities
- Recruit College based Faculty Fellows to serve as mentors for faculty (2 year commitment)
- Recruit College based Student Fellows to serve as mentors for students (1 year commitment, can be renewed once)
- Administer pre EL experience surveys to all students engaged in EL
- Sponsor Fall Faculty Development Symposium to share best practices and research on EL
- Administer post EL surveys to and conduct focus groups of students, faculty, community partners and employers participating in EL
- Establish assessment baseline on student learning outcomes and tweak assessment tools as needed for subsequent year assessment activities
- Support faculty travel to develop new study abroad and exchange programs
- Support faculty and student research and conference travel on EL and award EL student stipends
- Present Spring Student Showcase of EL projects and research and recognize community partners

Years Two through Five (ongoing), 2013-2017

- Continue previous year's implementation efforts
- Increase Faculty Fellows mentoring into departments within each college and Student Fellows to broaden scope and engagement of faculty and students
- Disseminate information across university and to partners through various media
- Continue simultaneous expansion, evaluation, and improvement of EL and student learning outcomes using a variety of data sources

Year 3, 2014-2015:

- Re-administer alumni, employer and faculty surveys conducted in 2010-2011 for QEP selection process to gauge change in respondents' perceptions on student abilities and attributes
- Designate EL courses in University catalog and online schedule
- Apply for Carnegie classification for Community Engagement

Year 4, 2015-2016:

- Launch fundraising initiative through Advisory Board, CEL, and FAU Foundation to support FAU Experiential Learning student scholarship fund and related EL activities

Year 5, 2016-2017:

- Plan and host FAU National Experiential Learning Conference to highlight FAU's new national role as a leader in EL
- Re-administer alumni, employer and faculty surveys conducted in 2010-2011 for QEP selection process to gauge change from Year 3 in respondents' perceptions on student areas of weaknesses
- Complete mentoring tasks of final cohort of Faculty and Student Fellows
- Prepare final report to be released at a concluding meeting of CEL and Advisory Board
- Merge a smaller ongoing core set of CEL activities and staff into the Center for Teaching and Learning as of Summer 2017

Assessment Plan for Experiential Learning: SEED for Success

Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies collected from a variety of sources will be used to measure the five previously identified student learning outcomes adapted from the CAS Standards and hence, the success of this QEP. Qualitative research data from focus groups, self-reflection, and open ended-questions will provide a holistic perspective. Quantitative data from pre- and post-surveys of students involved in EL, post-surveys of faculty perceptions of student learning, and community/employer feedback surveys will provide measureable changes in student engagement and learning.

Student self assessment is a key piece of the assessment model as well-constructed reflection and assessment prompts a deep approach to learning. In designing a conceptual framework in the context of professional development and EL, Heron (1981) provided a clear rationale for self assessment. He based this on the importance of learners accepting responsibility for their learning and on the need for the development of self assessment skills for professional life.

Table 3. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Target Measures.

Assessment tools	How they will be assessed	Target Measure
Student Survey	Individual EL units will modify current assessment tools to measure the five QEP SLOs	Students will demonstrate growth in 4 out of 5 of these outcomes
Student reflection and self assessment	Students will complete EL post reflection and self assessment. Random selection of these will be evaluated by Faculty Fellows using a rubric to determine demonstration of the five SLOs as exemplary/satisfactory/or emerging	Eighty percent of reflections evaluated will demonstrate proficiency in the five SLOs at the level of exemplary or satisfactory
Faculty survey	Faculty will determine at what level (exemplary, satisfactory, emerging) students demonstrated the five SLOs through their EL experience	Faculty will evaluate student proficiency in the five SLOs to show that 80% of all students participating in EL performed at the level of exemplary or satisfactory
Employer & Community partner surveys and focus groups	Employers and community partners will complete surveys and participate in focus groups to identify SLOs demonstrated by FAU students participating in EL	Community partners (where applicable) and employers will evaluate student proficiency in the five SLOs to show that 80% of all students participating in EL activity performed at the level of exemplary or satisfactory
QEP surveys (<i>initially done in 2010 -11</i>)	Replicate faculty, alumni and employer QEP surveys in years 3 & 5 to correlate with the five SLOs to measure increases attributed to EL	Alumni/employer surveys will indicate an aggregate change of 0.5 on 80% of the abilities and attributes measured; Faculty survey will indicate 0.25 change on 80% of the ratings of importance for items listed

Assessment of National and Institutional Expansion

The implementation of Experiential Learning: SEED for Success at FAU will be assessed through national and institutional data. Data include: NSEE survey; FAU retention and graduation rates; and expanded EL opportunities—growth of student and faculty participation; designated EL courses, community and employer partnerships; international programs and university partners.

Institutional Target Measures (to be achieved over the 5-year QEP period):

- 10-25% growth of EL student participation annually (*Table 4*).
- 25 courses added annually (from 570 in 2009-10 to 695 by 2016-17).
- Increases in self-reported NSSE ratings on EEE for FAU seniors and ACL for both freshmen and seniors to the median by the end of Year 5.
- Retention rates for second to third year students will increase from 60% to 70% by end of year Five. Both 4-year (15%) and 6-year (38%) graduation rates will increase by a minimum of 5 percentage points by year 5.
- Based on identification of current levels of community engagement and service through EL, by Year 5, 25% growth in benefits to the community will be reached as measured by hours served.

Table 4. Experiential Learning Projected Outcomes for Student Participation.

Experiential Learning at FAU	# of Students enrolled in EL courses
Current (<i>Pre-CEL/QEP</i>)	3,852
Planning Year (<i>10% growth</i>)	4,237
Year 1 (<i>10% growth</i>)	4,661
Year 2 (<i>15% growth</i>)	5,360
Year 3 (<i>15% growth</i>)	6,164
Year 4 (<i>20% growth</i>)	7,397
Year 5 (<i>25% growth</i>)	9,246

Resources Needed to Implement Experiential Learning: SEED for Success

A six year QEP budget plan is attached to this proposal. Three types of human and fiscal support will be needed to implement the QEP:

Dedicated QEP Funds:

Multi-year budget totaling \$4.5 million to provide faculty development and support, Experiential Learning program development, student development & support, data management and assessment, and QEP Management Team (Center for Experiential Learning)

FAU Unit In-Kind Support:

Suitable office space for the CEL will need to be identified. In-kind support at least equal to the amount requested over six years from cooperating units at FAU (e.g. OIP, WCCE, CDC, IEA, FAU Foundation and FAU Alumni Association) represent staff time dedicated to the pursuit of expanding EL activities and working cooperatively with the CEL.

Fundraising Initiatives:

Fundraising initiatives through Advisory Board, CEL, FAU Foundation, and FAU National Alumni Association will support FAU Experiential Learning student scholarship fund and related EL activities. Faculty engaged in scholarship in this area will write grant proposals to support their work and the FAU National EL Conference planned for Year 5. Any savings of QEP budgeted funding as a result of external funding will be reinvested in student and faculty support.

Sustainability of QEP's Vision and Goal:

By summer 2017, the EL Director will be assigned to the Center for Teaching and Learning. Three permanent hires for EL coordinators in OIP, WCCE and CDC will remain to handle resulting increase in programs and students engaging in expanded activities. Ideally, the goal of raising outside donor gifts and funds to support student scholarships and additional EL activities will have been realized.

Experiential Learning: SEED for Success Institutional Constituencies

The Experiential Learning SEED for Success QEP represents the collaboration of faculty, students, and staff across FAU's campuses, colleges, and communities to allow students to be engaged learners, develop relevant academic and professional skills, meet their educational objectives and upon graduation successfully transition to the work place as engaged global citizens. Constituencies within and outside of FAU are described below.

Constituencies within FAU

- QEP Proposal Team represents a cross-section of the University, including faculty from the Colleges of Arts & Letters, Business, Design and Social Inquiry, Education, Engineering and Computer Science, Honors College, Nursing, and Science. Offices represented include OIP, WCCES, CDC, and the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS).
- QEP development, implementation, and evaluation will involve the CEL Management Team, CEL Advisory Board, Institutional Effectiveness & Analysis departments as well as other partners/departments across the institution.
- QEP implementation will expand collaborative efforts with a myriad of internal partners (e.g.: CLASS, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Scripps Institute, Max Planck Florida, College of Medicine, Louis and Anne Green Memory & Wellness Center, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, the Office of Community Relations for FAU's Broward Campuses, Pine Jog Environmental Educational Center, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, etc.)
- Faculty and Student Fellows will represent each College for a multi-disciplinary approach and promote peer-to-peer education/awareness.
- Reach is extended to faculty and students across colleges and campuses through a variety of planned events (e.g.: Summer Experiential Learning Development Conference, Fall Faculty Symposium, Spring Student Showcase).

Constituencies outside of FAU

- Reach is extended to communities and employers locally, nationally, and globally through a variety of planned events and EL opportunities (e.g.: Fall Faculty Symposium, Spring Student Showcase, Academic Service-Learning projects, Study Abroad, Internships and Field Experiences, Cooperative Education, etc.)
- International Partner Institutions located in countries (e.g.: Ecuador, England, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain and Thailand)
- U.S. Fulbright Program (Gilman, Boren and Fulbright Study Abroad Grants)
- D.A.A.D.-German Academic Exchange Program
- Florida Campus Compact and South Florida Campus Compact Alliance (e.g.: Broward, Palm Beach State, Miami-Dade, and Indian River Colleges; Lynn, Nova Southeastern, and Barry Universities)
- Non-profit Community Partners (e.g.: Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civic Engagement; Spirit of Giving Network)
- Employers (e.g.: Enterprise Holdings and Walt Disney World)
- Broad reach to national and international participants through attendance at the FAU National EL Conference

As one can see, this is clearly a proposal worthy of being the Quality Enhancement Plan for Florida Atlantic University. There is both depth and breadth in the constituents that will be reached by this plan as well as the impact that this plan will have in helping to reach the strategic goals of FAU over the next six years. This QEP will set FAU apart as a leader in civic engagement and experiential learning, and most importantly, in impacting student learning at its deepest levels.

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