

Proposal for an Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR)

Introduction and Background

In its 2007 report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*, the National Council on Leadership for Liberal Education and America's Promise of the American Association of Colleges and Universities reiterates the need for an integration of theory and practice. According to the report, institutions should

...help students become “intentional learners” who focus across ascending levels of study and diverse academic programs on achieving the essential learning outcomes. But to help students do this, educational communities will also have to become far more intentional themselves –both about the kinds of learning students’ need, and about effective educational practices that help students learn to integrate and apply their learning (AAC&U, p.4).

As outlined in SLRP I, “Guilford Challenge, [now Guilford Connects], will provide students an unprecedented opportunity to be intentional about both the breadth and the depth of skills development they can expect from their college education,” providing a “holistic view of education in which curricular and co-curricular aspects of the student experience contribute to leadership development and the achievement of desired academic outcomes” (SLRP I, p. 20-21).

SLRP II builds upon this idea of intentionality, supporting expanded opportunities to engage in experiential education. Specifically, Guilford Connects will support these strategic outcomes:

- *Learn experientially*—Students will develop skills, knowledge, and values through “hands on” activities in and out of the classroom. Integrative and experiential learning encourages personal and intellectual growth.
- *Communicate effectively*—Digital portfolios serve as intentional space for the documentation of academic and co-curricular work as well as structured reflection on students’ experiences.
- *Engage responsibly*—Experiential education encourages students to be active in their campus, community, and beyond. They reflect on issues and social problems, and connect their experiences with their academic foundation

Experiences outside of the classroom enhance students’ understanding of their academic studies and provide valuable opportunities for students to reflect on how those understandings connect to the post-college world. The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) 2007 Annual Report, *Experiences that Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success*, supports the notion that experiential learning better prepares students to engage in complex principle-based problem solving:

... it can be life changing to study abroad, participate in service learning, conduct research with a faculty member, or complete an internship or other field experience such as student teaching. That is why doing one or more of these activities in the context of a coherent, academically challenging curriculum that appropriately infuses opportunities for active, collaborative learning increases the odds that students will be prepared to – in the words of William Cronon – “just connect.” Such an

undergraduate experience deepens learning and brings one's values and beliefs into awareness; it helps students develop the ability to take the measure of events and actions and put them in perspective. As a result, students better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world, and acquire the intellectual tools and ethical grounding to act with confidence for the betterment of the human condition. (p. 8)

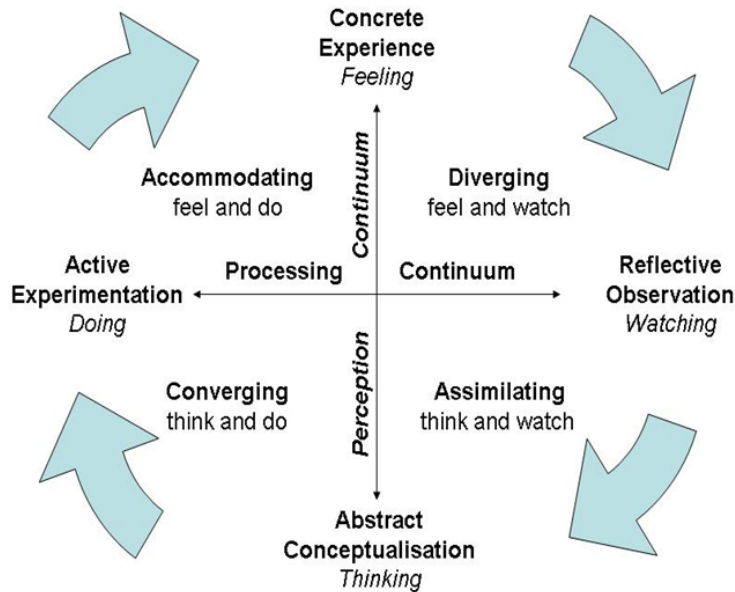
These activities or experiences form an essential piece of the transformative liberal arts education offered by Guilford College.

The Guilford Connects and Career Development subcommittee of SLRP II looked at several models at other institutions. We began with a review of peer and aspirant institutions. We also looked at regional private colleges and cross-applicant competitors. Through our search we were able to identify additional programs of interest that had strong experiential education programs. The institutions we examined through this process are included in Appendix C. Additionally Purdue University Calumet conducted a recent survey on experiential education requirements at colleges and universities. Though their official report is not yet published, they shared some preliminary findings, which we have included in Appendix D. The preliminary data does not provide much depth in breaking down what kinds of institutions have experiential learning requirements, but it does provide some national context

Defining Experiential Learning

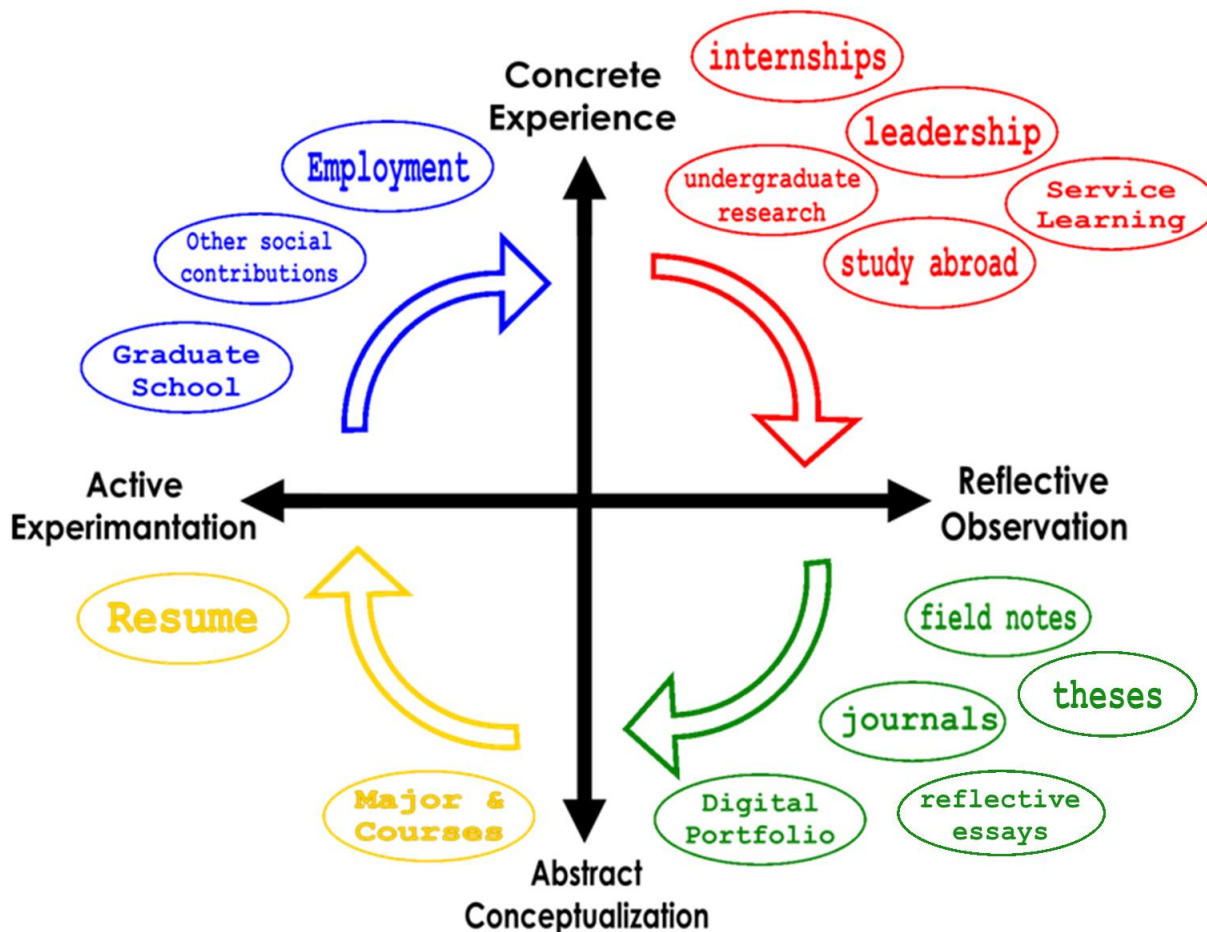
“Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop. The theory is called “Experiential Learning” to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process, an emphasis that distinguishes ELT from other learning theories. The term “experiential” is used therefore to differentiate ELT both from cognitive learning theories, which tend to emphasize cognition over affect, and behavioral learning theories that deny any role for subjective experience in the learning process” (Kolb in Sternberg and Zhang, 2000, p. 193).

David Kolb describes a cycle that illuminates the process of experiential learning.



Experiential education in a liberal arts setting is grounded in the personal experiences of each student and effectively framed through reflection, abstraction and application. Interdisciplinary knowledge informs the experience through the personal lens of the learner.

Ideally, experiential education intersects the curriculum through an interdisciplinary lens of each student. Often themes and theories present in students' courses will provide context as they engage in *reflective observation* and *abstract conceptualization*. Ultimately, however, experiential education is grounded in no single discipline, but is a process by which experience is thoughtfully examined for personal development and transformation. Below is an example of how practices at Guilford College fit the Kolb Cycle in a way that connects experience with student learning.



An example of what experiential education looks like from a Kolbian perspective.

A student embarks on an internship. She is prompted by her faculty sponsor to engage in reflection through the use of reflective journaling. At the end of the internship the student reads her reflective journals and creates a digital portfolio on her experience. As she examines the critical issues that may have emerged during her internship she pulls from courses she may have taken in her major, but also pulls from connections she may have made outside of her major. Her digital portfolio may contain her reflections, but it also may include an essay on how her experience may have impacted others, or may impact them in the future. Moving beyond her reflections to examine how her experience may cause ripple effects that may change the way she sees her own future is the substance of abstract conceptualization. She uses her experiences and digital portfolio to construct a resume that she can use to seek additional experiences such as graduate work, full time employment or service work.

Proposal

The Guilford Connects and Career Development subcommittee of SLRP II suggests to the Curriculum committee, in its ongoing review of the general education program, the following changes to the Guilford College curriculum to formalize the role of experiential education for each student at Guilford College.

Experiential learning can and should take many forms at Guilford College. The question of delivery, however, requires that we understand what minimum level of administration and process is required to ensure sufficient quality and success for our students. Instituting an Experiential Learning Requirement for Guilford College students is not meant to supplant existing experiential opportunities that our students currently have and use. Rather, the goal of this change in delivery is to provide each Guilford graduate with key experiences “linking core values; academic and liberal arts excellence; and community and global involvement. . .” SLRP II goes on to describe how experiential learning ensures students “achieve personal and career goals.”

Some Guilford students will continue to engage in experiential learning in order to fulfill career and personal goals as they have for many years. The new Experiential Learning (EL) requirement goes further and seeks to provide a guaranteed experiential learning opportunity for every student. Every student may not have personal goals requiring experiential learning. However, every student at Guilford has a major field of study and career goals related to that field. Connecting the EL requirement to these career goals speaks to a common need for all Guilford students and also provides an additional bridge between a student’s major field and the general education program of the college. An “EL in the major” delivery model also reflects design principles within the LEAP program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which advises colleges to better connect general education to a major through integrated learning outcomes, sequential progression and engaged high impact practices.

An EL in the major requirement focused on career goals reflect a number of advantages.

- First, cooperation and coordination between faculty and administrative support offices (Career and Community Learning, Study Abroad, Undergraduate Research, etc.) will promote cooperation and coordination in meeting student demand, establishing major-specific learning outcomes, establishing scheduling and meeting expectations of employers.
- Second, students will not be left to determine how to fulfill an EL requirement on their own. Because a set standard will be communicated to students in each major, students will understand better what experiential learning will best support their likely career goals linked to their major field of study.
- Third, when the experiential requirements are determined by staff and faculty working at the departmental and program level, the requirement can be best set to reflect the existing resources and availability of staffing appropriate for each department. In a time of stretched budgets and limited staffing, setting this requirement at a level that can be properly supported demonstrates integrity and a commitment to excellence lacking in some general education requirements unconnected to majors at present.
- Finally, by establishing custom experiential learning requirements for each department and program, the learning associated with the requirement reflects the passion, interest and commitment of the faculty and students within that program. Many departments and programs already require an internship, study abroad, or service learning of their majors; many more have experiential learning happening in key courses. Retaining and affirming experiential learning within majors allows for a more immediate connection between faculty, staff and students and a major field’s best experiential learning opportunities to continue.

The subcommittee recognizes five distinct categories of experiential learning in which Guilford students already participate that fit modern definitions of experiential education. These five categories offer a wide range of options for both traditional and adult students. Students will fulfill this requirement by participating in one of the following six activities and completing a reflective portfolio.

Students at Guilford College already participate in experiential education in significant numbers. At Guilford's current student population, around 700 students a year will have to participate in experiential learning which represents only a slight increase over current levels, as illustrated in Appendix B of this proposal. Additionally, each Experiential Learning Requirement option listed below describes the departments responsible for the support and tracking of the requirement. Each of these departments is already charged with promoting these various forms of experiential education, and provides resources and support to those ends. There are of course students who engage in multiple forms of experiential education currently. Among students who engaged in study abroad, internships, substantial community service and theses in 2010-11, roughly 15% participated in more than one activity.

- **Internships.** The term internship refers to a 144-hour activity in which students undertake a position in an off-campus public or private agency or company for academic credit. Internships must be registered through the Career Development Center before the desired start date. Internships already have a faculty sponsor who develops synthesis-oriented assignments during the internship. To satisfy the ELR for an internship students must engage in the internship for at least one semester and complete a reflective digital portfolio.
Responsible Office: Career Development Center
- **Study Abroad/Away.** Study abroad is an academic endeavor that fuses content with setting while teaching cross-cultural competency and providing global experiences and perspectives. Students may choose one of the programs recognized by the Office of Study Abroad as well as other non-Guilford programs with prior approval. To satisfy the ELR for a study abroad/away experience, students must complete a reflective digital portfolio.
Responsible Office: Study Abroad.
- **Substantial Service Commitment.** The Bonner Center for Community Service and Learning wants all interested students to have access to resources that support their work in the community, including placement assistance, transportation, meaningful work, tie-in to academics, opportunities for reflection, and chances to relate their work to a consideration of larger social issues. For the purposes of this proposal, Service-Learning is defined as community service used as a pedagogical tool in a class setting to deepen an understanding of curriculum and connect theory and practice. Accordingly, Service-Learning Courses will categorically fit the Experiential Learning Course category described below. Engaged service of at least one semester and completion of a reflective digital portfolio is required to receive credit for the ELR.
Responsible Office: The Bonner Center for Community Service and Learning.
- **Undergraduate Research.** Student Undergraduate Research includes any "inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student under the direction and supervision of a faculty or staff member that makes an original, intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline" as defined by the Council on Undergraduate Research. Student research can include student assistance on faculty research projects or faculty supported student projects at Guilford.

One example of undergraduate research is the successful completion of senior-level thesis as well as participation in the Guilford Undergraduate Symposium. Students must complete a reflective digital portfolio to satisfy the ELR requirement.

Responsible Office: faculty advisor (current model) Possibility of Director of Undergraduate Research

- **Experiential Learning Project.** Experiential learning courses are courses that involve significant engagement outside of the classroom and deliberate reflection. Courses that use pedagogy involving substantial out-of-class experience will be designated as Experiential Learning Courses. Faculty will be encouraged to look at current course offerings and find where experiential components are already integrated. For those students with extensive work experience prior and during their matriculation at Guilford, a reflective seminar on these experiences would satisfy this requirement. These courses may connect to certain kinds of community engagement and professional involvement; provided that they revolve around a common theme and are of enough substance as to provide an opportunity for substantial reflection and learning on the contribution of the experience to their education.

Responsible Office: Faculty/Academic Department

To satisfy the Experiential Learning Requirement as proposed, students must engage in one of the above-described activities and a structured reflection related to the experience in a digital portfolio. Responsible offices will provide verification of completion of the experiential learning requirement to the college registrar and faculty advisor.

(Note on Outcomes—Perhaps these change when the ELR lives in the departments? Do these serve as baseline questions for every department?)

The Experiential Learning Requirement will have two program outcomes and echo a series of educational outcomes associated with each experiential education offering.

Program Outcome #1

100% of Guilford College students beginning with the cohort entering Fall 2013 will complete at least one Experiential Learning opportunity before graduation.

Program Outcome #2

The Experiential Learning Requirement will increase the total number of students who participate in experiential learning each year beginning in 2013-14 over a period of four years.

Program Outcome #3

Each unit directly engaged in providing or supporting the Experiential Learning Requirement will articulate at least two associated learning outcomes consistent with the institutional mission, SLRP II and their departmental mission.

UNIT	Learning Outcome
Internships	<p>Through participation in internships students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate theories learned in their majors with practical experiences; 2. Develop deeper insight into their individual career goals; and 3. Examine the professional customs and practices of their site setting.
Study Abroad	<p>Through participation in a study abroad experience, students will demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultural awareness and sensitivity—respecting people and traditions from cultures other than their own. 2. Tolerance for ambiguity and the unexpected—navigating successfully amidst uncertainty in a foreign country. 3. Intellectual flexibility—solving problems creatively in new situations. 4. Communication skill—developing mutual understanding between people of different cultures.
Substantial Service Commitments	<p>Through participation in a substantial service commitment students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop their skill sets in several identified areas: leadership, personal and professional 2. Deepen their knowledge on the span and range of social justice issues that affect the Greensboro community 3. Clearly describe the key concepts of social justice, activism and advocacy through their leadership project 4. Formulate a clear action plan on how to impact change at their community service site 5. Clearly articulate their understanding of the significance of civic engagement and its connection to the social justice issue associated with their community service sites 6. Develop their ability to assess and analyze community needs
Undergraduate Research	<p>Through participation in an undergraduate research project students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Propose a mentored research/creative works project specific to the guidelines of their discipline, department or program; 2. Conduct their proposed research/creative works project to the specifications of their mentor; and 3. Present their research at a minimum of two different undergraduate venues (i.e. GUS, NCUR, SNCURCS, etc.)
Experiential Learning Projects	<p>Through participation in an experiential learning course, students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate the ability to connect relevant experience and academic knowledge. 2. Use a digital portfolio and engage in self-reflection on their experience and how it relates to their personal and career goals.

Experiential Education Requirement and the Five Academic Principles

The Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR) addresses the five academic principles in the following manner:

Innovative, student-centered learning

The Experiential Learning Requirement offers a great deal of choice for students to select from six “categories” to fulfill the experiential learning requirement. The digital portfolio is a tool specifically for students to not only document their college experience, but also to engage in self-reflection. This program offers students opportunities to engage the world outside of Guilford and then connect those experiences to their classroom knowledge, both in seminars and through technology.

Creative and critical thinking

Students will be required to participate in self-reflection as they complete their experiential learning requirement. Critical thinking is at the very core of a Guilford College education and will be emphasized in the structured reflection.

Cultural and global perspective

Experiential learning provides important opportunities for connections to diverse viewpoints outside of the classroom. While study abroad offers the strongest link to this academic principle, other opportunities will expose students to new cultural and global perspectives.

Values and ethical dimensions of knowledge

The Experiential Learning Requirement allows students to examine why they are learning what they are learning as well as understand the College’s core values in context. For example: What does community mean to a student who has participated in service? The reflective component in the portfolio is also significant in this process.

Focus on practical application: vocation and service to the larger community

This is the very essence of the Experiential Learning Requirement. It allows students to take theories and knowledge gained in the classroom and apply them outside of the classroom. Their service to the larger community remains grounded at Guilford, but students can explore the world around them. This practical application leads to stronger engagement not only at Guilford, but also in the world for which the College is preparing them.

Timeline for implementation:

For the class entering in the fall of 2014, this will become a graduation requirement.

Appendices

Appendix A outlines departments requiring experiential learning as part of the major

Appendix B shows data on the number of student who have participated in various forms of experiential learning.

Appendix C provides comparison data on experiential learning programs at selected schools.

Appendix D shows results from a recent survey on Experiential Learning Requirements conducted by Purdue University at Calumet

Appendix A: Departments requiring experiential learning as part of the major.

Currently, there are thirteen majors that require some sort of experiential learning as a Major requirement:

<u>Department/Program</u>	<u>Experiential Learning Requirement</u>
African American Studies	Internship/Independent study
Art (B.F.A.)	Senior Thesis
Criminal Justice	Internship
Education Studies	Student teaching
Sports Studies	Internships
Foreign Language	Study Abroad
International Studies	Study Abroad
Geology	Field camp for B.S. degree
Health Science	Internship
Peace and Conflict Studies	Internship
Physics	Thesis
Political Science	Senior Individualized Project (SIP)
Theatre Studies	Practicum
Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies	Internship

**Departmental honors often results in independent work that may satisfy the Experiential Learning Requirement.

Appendix B: Student Participation in Experiential Learning

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Internships (including student teaching)	202	196	201	197
Study Abroad	114	100	108	113
Substantial Service Commitments				135
Undergraduate Research	60	80	100	120
Experiential Learning Course				
TOTAL	438	441	474	636

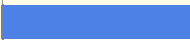




Appendix C: Experiential Learning Programs at other institutions

Institution	Experiential Requirement	Internships	study abroad	undergraduate research	service learning	leadership development	other
Elon University	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	individualized learning
Salem College	yes	yes	yes			yes	
Kalamazoo College	yes			yes			
St. Olaf College	no						
Monmouth University	yes	yes	yes		yes		experiential ed. Course
Allegheny College	no						
Wells College	yes	yes	yes			yes	student teaching
Purdue University Calumet	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		cooperative education
Hendrix College	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		artistic development
Southern Utah University	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	entrepreneurship
University of New Haven	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		
Lynchburg College	no	yes	yes	yes	yes		art and understanding

Appendix D: Preliminary data from Perdue University Calumet's national survey on Experiential Education Requirement



Statistic	Value
Total Institutional Responses	86

What is your estimated FTE?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	100 - 4,999		55	56%
2	5000 - 9999		14	14%
3	10,000-14,999		8	8%
4	15,000 - 19,999		7	7%
5	Over 20,000		14	14%
	Total		98	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.09
Variance	2.23
Standard Deviation	1.49
Total Responses	98

Does your institution require some form of experiential learning as a graduation requirement? (internship, practicum, service learning, volunteerism, cooperative education, etc)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		45	46%
2	No		53	54%
	Total		98	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.54
Variance	0.25
Standard Deviation	0.50
Total Responses	98

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007). *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Washington, D.C.: The National Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise.

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