

Integrating Experiential Learning into our Programs/Curriculum at Cal Lutheran

In our last WASC review, we focused on three themes: 1) challenging students; 2) engaging students in the learning process; and 3) enhancing diversity (through demographic, improved culture and integration in the classroom). One of the ways we have focused on challenging and engaging students is through our new focus on research and experiential learning.

CLU seeks to challenge students in the classroom, expand opportunities for Experiential Learning and, increasingly, make a mark in their fields through scholarly and creative accomplishments (CFR 2.8). We view research, like all forms of Experiential Learning, as a “purposeful form of education” that encompasses application, reflection, and feedback—all to support learning goals and objectives. We are careful to realize that the term “research” implies a certain exclusivity of disciplines. Therefore, when we define research we explicitly include research, scholarship, and creative work that is appropriate to the field under study. We have recently added three significant areas related to research: The Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship, funded summer research programs, and a weeklong celebration of research event titled Festival of Scholars.

Research and Creative Scholarship

CLU has a recent history of providing opportunities for its students to participate in research experiences which have led to subsequent in-depth projects and enhanced course curricula (CFR 2.8 and 2.9). Our Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship (OURCS) was formally developed in July 2008. The idea was initiated after CLU was accepted into the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) workshop program on Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research. CLU provided course release and a summer stipend for a Director and

a \$50,000 budget for the OURCS. This office facilitates a campus culture in which mentored undergraduate research can thrive and provides programs and activities that support and celebrate scholarly activities by all students. It assists faculty in the creation and application of pedagogical techniques that incorporate/utilize research and scholarship, identifies and coordinates student research scholarships which incorporate community needs, and integrates undergraduate research and creative scholarship with other key university objectives (e.g., diversity, service learning, and civic engagement).

CLU's graduate programs skillfully integrate theory, research, and practice with curriculum that emphasizes real-world experience (CFRs 2.8 and 2.9). In our Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership program, students are taught strategies and ethics of research that provide the basis for designing research questions, selecting data collection strategies, and conducting basic data analysis. Their program culminates with both a research seminar and a dissertation defense. Our Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (PsyD.) is a five-year program that integrates theoretical and practical approaches to prepare graduates for careers as licensed clinical psychologists. The curriculum includes six core courses that provide an in-depth developmental examination of major diagnostic categories, with an emphasis on research-informed practice.

The campus-wide initiative to institutionalize undergraduate research has helped to strengthen and reinvigorate the student experience (CFRs 2.8 and 2.9). Research is significant in the following ways:

1. It goes beyond what is taught in the classroom and enables students to apply the knowledge they are learning in their classes to a more question in their discipline
2. It creates meaningful student-faculty interactions
3. It enhances critical thinking skills and stimulates a culture of intellectual curiosity

The success of undergraduate research at CLU is a measure of the important role played by creative inquiry in our institution's scholarly culture—it indicates the way faculty skillfully mentor their research students (CFRs 2.8 and 2.9). But this hasn't always been so obvious. Previously the mere presence of engaged-research practices in our Capstone, Honors, and Independent Study courses did not guarantee significant impact either to reach all students—particularly those in the Arts and Humanities—or to produce substantial learning .

Summer Research Programs

Tangential programs include several summer research programs and a smaller, more targeted, academic-year program housed in the Religion Department (CFRs 2.8, 2.9 and 2.11). Funded summer research programs include those focused on the natural sciences, chemistry, applied scientific computing, economics, civic engagement, and a university-supported program that supports undergraduate research and creative scholarship in disciplines not supported by our other research programs. In 2008, Jim and Sue Swenson funded five science summer fellowships at \$5,000 each. Additional support has been secured from the Hugh and Hazel Darling Foundation (\$250,000) and the John Stauffer Charitable Trust (\$500,000) to support undergraduate research experiences. Today the Swenson's support 15 students in all disciplines across the Natural Sciences. In 2014, 26 students were funded to perform full-time research projects over the summer months. It is estimated that an additional 40 undergraduate students across a wide range of disciplines performed summer research voluntarily.

Festival of Scholars

Many of the abovementioned activities culminate in a formalized, weeklong research symposium. This event, termed the Festival of Scholars (<http://www.callutheran.edu/festival-of-scholars/>), showcases scholarly work of undergraduate and graduate students across the entire

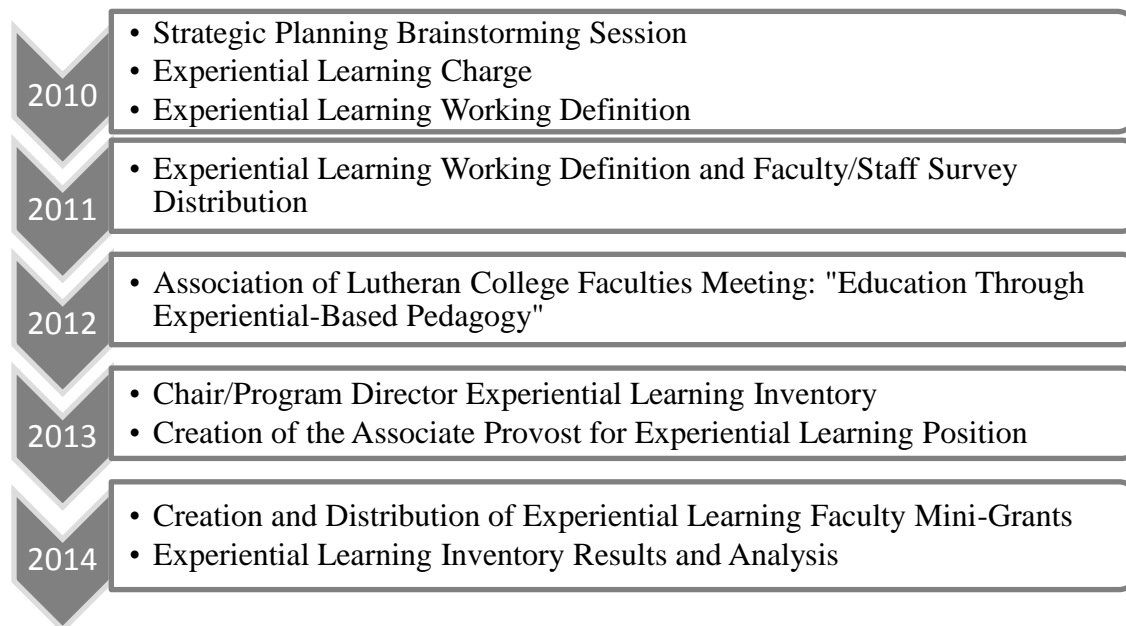
university (CFRs 2.9 and 2.11). Often, the research presented is related to a particular class. In other cases, students present their Senior Capstone projects or research completed independently of the curriculum. All projects reflect months or even years of focused work with faculty mentors. Sessions within the Festival offer a variety of presentation styles. Poster presentations offer large visual representations of the project and allow for one-on-one interaction with the student presenter. Many sessions comprise a collection of oral presentations or a panel discussion. Last, some sessions involve an exhibition of the scholarship such as a teaching demonstration, multimedia display or art exhibit.

Experiential Learning: Overview and Outcomes

In the next five years CLU will guide students to discover and live their purpose with real-world learning experiences, excellent academic and career mentoring, and a campus environment that promotes inclusion (CFR 1.1 and 1.4). Because CLU is committed to academically rigorous Experiential Learning in many forms, including research and fieldwork, internships and practicums, study abroad, civic and community engagement, and service learning (CFR 2.1 and 2.11), Experiential Learning will be incorporated into every academic major field of study and general education and every major co-curricular program so all students at CLU will participate. Use of accommodations, modifications, and alternative activities will be recommended for students who cannot participate in Experiential Learning activities relevant to the student's area of disability or difficulty (CFR 2.13).

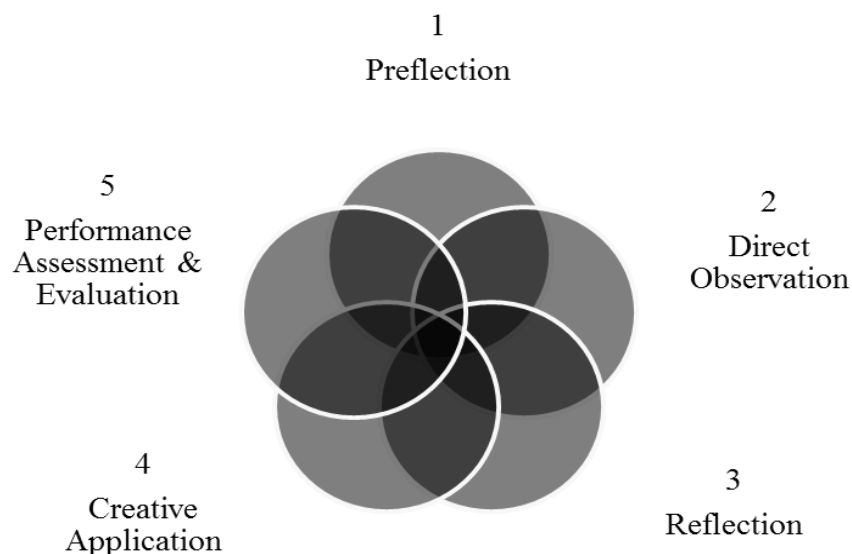
As shown in the diagram below, the Strategic Planning process was a starting point for the ongoing conversation about Experiential Learning—how we utilize experiences to promote and enhance learning in the curriculum and co-curriculum (CFRs 2.2 a). Over the past four years, data has been gathered through internal faculty/staff surveys, campus informational sessions and

national meetings to finalize a CLU definition of Experiential Learning and to obtain a better perspective of the role of Experiential Learning on student outcomes (CFR 4.1 and 4.2). In 2012, a group of six faculty members and now Associate Provost for Experiential Learning, Dr. Grady Hanrahan, attended the Association of Lutheran Colleges Faculties Meeting titled “Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Lutheran Higher Education through Experience-Based Pedagogy.” Sessions/workshops were devoted to the effective use of experiences in and out of the classroom, measuring Experiential Learning outcomes and assessing the overall impact of Experiential Learning on students.



Because of these efforts, a university approved definition of Experiential Learning was developed—it reads: “Experiential Learning is the process of student learning from observational and/or applied experiences.” The figure below highlights the interactive steps involved in this process. Experiential Learning immerses students in opportunities such as (but not limited to): student- and faculty-driven research and fieldwork; internships, practicum, and work experience; service-learning; civic or community involvement/partnership; study abroad and travel

programs; cultural engagement; and creative applications. Simultaneously, Experiential Learning seeks to foster, strengthen, and challenge student understanding and personal vocational growth (CFR 1.1).



As part of this evolving campus initiative, an Experiential Learning Inventory was constructed and administered to all department chairs and program directors across the college and graduate schools (CFR 4.2). The purpose of the inventory was largely three fold: 1) to determine which courses meet the University approved definition of Experiential Learning; 2) to improve the tracking of Experiential Learning courses and co-curricular activities; and, 3) to assess the support/resources needed to allow faculty to initiate and deliver Experiential Learning opportunities. The full complement of results can be found at

http://www.callutheran.edu/assessment/student_learning_outcomes/ExperientialLearning.php.

Summarized data for the Experiential Learning Inventory indicated that 37% of all courses across all programs of the University met the CLU definition of Experiential Learning—based partly on associated course elements (see table below). Interestingly, the Natural Science Division—disciplines heavy in laboratory and field exercises—only reported a value of 36%.

This is compared to the Creative Arts Division which reported an overall value of 56%. The lowest reported undergraduate major, Business, reported a value of just 6%. At the graduate level, the SOM, the GSoE and the GSoP reported overall values of 35%, 44% and 22%, respectively.

Experiential Learning Course Elements (as stated on the Experiential Learning Inventory)
1. This course has a lab component
2. This course is a service-learning course
3. This course is available as a study abroad option
4. This course involves civic or community involvement/partnership
5. This course involves student/faculty research/fieldwork
6. This course involves internships
7. This course involves practicum or practica
8. This course involves cultural engagement
9. This course involves creative applications
10. This course involves other forms of Experiential Learning

Chairs and program directors were asked to comment on the barriers to enacting Experiential Learning elements in their respective courses. Personal time constraint was the

largest reported barrier (25%), following by the elements: courses already contain too much content (22%), lack of logistical skills needed to integrate Experiential Learning into courses (22%), Experiential Learning is not pertinent to courses (10%), difficult to assess Experiential Learning elements (8%), difficult to match student skill set with Experiential Learning (6%), lack of knowledge about creating Experiential Learning elements into courses (4%), lack of connections to create an Experiential Learning project (2%), and lack of technical skills needed to integrate Experiential Learning into courses (2%).

Are our students participating in Experiential Learning? The answer is a definite yes when following students over the course of their academic studies. It is obvious from this inventory, however, there is much to learn and research about the characterization and effectiveness of the experiential pedagogy. In this context, to determine the best practices in Experiential Learning, it is necessary to first define Experiential Learning. We have accomplished this feat. However, identifying and specifying outcomes of Experiential Learning is problematic. Then there is the question of how to evaluate and structure the assessment of Experiential Learning. Over the next academic year, we will draft a set of best practices for review, and develop effective ways to assess experiential activities, both external and internal (CFR 2.7).