

# EL Bulletin #2



## **BENEFITS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Discussions of experiential learning (EL) tend to focus mainly on the numerous benefits afforded to students. While certainly the vast majority of benefits may in fact be student-focused, the rewards of EL should extend to all involved stakeholders. This includes students, instructors, the educational institution and any community partners. Following are the most commonly cited benefits for each of these invested partners of EL.

### **STUDENT BENEFITS**

#### **“Academic, Professional and Personal Outcomes”**

- ✔ Solidifies and accelerates learning by integrating classroom/textbook theories with practical application.
- ✔ Transforms passive knowledge into knowledge-in-use.
- ✔ More nuanced understanding of subject matters and development of transferable intellectual and employability skills (such as communication, analytical, problem-solving and interpersonal competencies) that are not possible through classroom study alone.
- ✔ Improved higher-order and critical thinking abilities in complex and dynamic settings. Develops a tolerance for ambiguity.
- ✔ Opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses through reflection and self-assessment.
- ✔ Fuels students’ motivation, commitment and curiosity.
- ✔ Moves students beyond just school and job skills and inspires continuous, lifelong learning.
- ✔ Offers clarity and direction surrounding academic, career and life goals.
- ✔ Personalizes the learning experience.
- ✔ Encourages student ownership and responsibility for actions and consequences which leads to greater effort, attention and maturity.
- ✔ Requires students to monitor their own understanding and to recognize and grapple with alternative perspectives.
- ✔ Enhances self-esteem, sense of self efficacy, empowerment and willingness to take initiative.
- ✔ Personal connections and desire to succeed in the field creates enhanced levels of self-management and caring.
- ✔ Develops a sense of social responsibility and productive citizenship.
- ✔ Increases likelihood to engage in prosocial behaviours and decreases likelihood of engaging in at-risk behaviours.
- ✔ Develops and nurtures relationships: learner to self, learner to others, and learner to the world at large (Association for Experiential Education).

*“Student engagement in learning matters and some educational experiences are more impactful than others.”*  
(Kuh, Donnell, & Schneider, 2017)

## INSTRUCTOR BENEFITS

### “An Evolving Role”

-  The role of the instructor in EL settings is different than in traditional classrooms. Instructors must assume the role of mentor, guide, cheerleader, trusted resource and supporter.
-  Energizes faculty with new perspectives and relevant connections.
-  Gain opportunities to evaluate and improve curriculum content.
-  Accelerates student growth and improves engagement, participation and retention.
-  Identifies potential research opportunities and community partnerships.
-  Can generate funding opportunities to support lean instructional and budgetary resources.
-  Monetary and professional support.

## INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

### “Meaningful Connections”



-  Builds and maintains positive relationships with business, government and community organizations.
-  Strongly aligns with government priorities.
-  Contributes to economic and community development.
-  Promotes the value of diversity by uniting different social, ethnic and economic segments.
-  Recruits new students by extending profile and meaning within the community.
-  Attracts and retains high quality students through enriched curriculum and expansive learning opportunities.
-  Allows schools to remain current and connected with trending marketplace and societal realities.
-  Enhances institutional reputation and brand equity.
-  Increases alumni engagement.
-  Boosts external support and nurtures new partnerships and possible funding opportunities.

*“Experiential education promotes the value of diversity and brings together people of different social, ethnic and economic classes, preparing students for entry into the world at large.”*

*(Cantor, 1995)*

## COMMUNITY / SOCIETAL BENEFITS

### “Strategic Giving & Receiving”

- 👍 Invites positive interactions with post-secondary students and institutions.
- 👍 Delivers tangible contributions from enthusiastic and motivated students.
- 👍 Offers cost-effective productivity.
- 👍 Participating students offer fresh ideas and perspectives and are guided by mentoring faculty.
- 👍 Assists in preparing the future workforce through practical experiences and job-ready training.
- 👍 Facilitates future employee recruitment and access to pre-screened, qualified job candidates.
- 👍 Contributes to continuous pedagogical improvements through the sharing of contemporary and relevant insights.
- 👍 Promotes the development of productive and responsible citizens.

*“Theory lacks meaning outside of practice.”*  
(Eyler, 2009)

## SELECT REFERENCES

- ★ Brock University - Centre for Pedagogical Innovation
- ★ University of Waterloo – Centre for Teaching Excellence
- ★ Ministry of Education
- ★ Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility (2016)
- ★ Cantor, J. A., Association for the Study of Higher Education., ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, W. D., & George Washington Univ., W. D. G. S. of E. and H. D. (1995). *Experiential Learning in Higher Education: Linking Classroom and Community*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7.
- ★ Eyler, J. (2009). The Power of Experiential Education. *Liberal Education*, 95(4), 24-31.
- ★ Kuh, G., O'Donnell, K., & Schneider, C. G. (2017). HIPs at Ten. *Change*, 49(5), 8-16.

---

For more information please contact Dr. Denyse Lafrance Horning, Nipissing University  
Teaching Chair Experiential Learning at [denyseh@nipissingu.ca](mailto:denyseh@nipissingu.ca)