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Developing an Experiential Learning Program: Milestones and Challenges

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College and University faculty members have increasingly adopted experiential learning teaching methods that are designed to engage students in the learning process. Experiential learning is simply defined as "hands-on" learning and may involve any of the following activities: service learning, applied learning in the discipline, co-operative education, internships, study abroad and experimental activities. This paper includes a general discussion of the organizational and assessment activities that were required to implement the Experiential Learning Scholars Program (EXL) at a large public university. The program was developed over a three-year time period and was fully implemented in five years. After almost ten years operation, the EXL Scholars Program has become institutionalized on the campus and is a valued and high profile initiative that engages students in learning.

Developing an Experiential Learning Program: Milestones and Challenges

Faculty members at institutions of higher learning have increasingly adopted teaching methods that are based on best practices for student learning and on developing methodologies that engage students in the learning process. One such approach to engaging students in learning is experiential learning. Experiential learning is simply defined as "hands-on" learning and may involve any of the following activities: service learning, applied learning in the discipline, co-operative education, internships, study abroad and experimental activities.

This paper provides theoretical evidence for the value of experiential learning for both students and faculty and offers a process for developing a campus-wide experiential learning program. Specifically, the literature review provides support for experiential learning as a pedagogical technique, provides examples for the development of the definition of experiential learning over time, and offers some guidance for institutionalizing an experiential education program. Based on studying the literature, the program developers made initial plans and then developed the structure, budgeting, curriculum development activities, marketing, and assessment activities for the program. These activities are explained in the paper along with some conclusions about milestones and challenges related to the program development.

Literature Review

Following is a discussion from the literature of the various ways experiential learning has been defined and operationalized in practice, an evaluation of the value of experiential learning to the learning process, and issues related to institutionalizing an experiential learning program at universities.

Experiential Learning Defined

Katula and Threnhauser (1999) identified experiential learning as one of the most notable trends in higher education during the past thirty years. During this time, a definition for experiential learning has been developed and refined. A wide range of definitions have been developed for experiential learning over the years. Some of the accepted definitions of experiential learning are included in Table 1.

Kolb and Kolb (2005) provide more insight into the definition of experiential learning through propositions of experiential learning theory. These propositions include:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
2. All learning is relearning.
3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. (p. 194)

Kolb draws on the work of philosopher John Dewey, one of the "foremost exponent of the use of experience for learning" (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 17). Dewey (1944, p. 74) noted that experience alone did not produce learning and required "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience that adds to the meaning of that experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience," therefore emphasizing the reflection aspect of experiential learning to create knowledge. Higgins (2009) also discusses "critical reflection" as "an important facet of experiential education" (p. 49). Beard and Wilson (2006) define experiential learning as "the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment" (p. 19). Based on a review of these definitions and the propositions, it is clear that

Table 1
Definitions of Experiential Learning

Author	Year	Definition
Dewey	1971	"The student learns by doing: or to put this in other words, he test hypotheses in the laboratory of real life" (p. 10).
Kolb	1984	"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38).
Cantor	1995	Active learning – the learner takes responsibility in the learning process
Cantor	1995	A "process of learning and a method of instruction, immersing students in an activity and asking for their reflection on the experience; learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied"
Katula & Threnhauser	1999	Making "knowledge into know-how" (p. 240)
Katula & Threnhauser	1999	"That learning process that takes place beyond the traditional classroom and that enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student. Such education can occur in a wide variety of settings, but it usually takes on a 'learn-by-doing' aspect that engages the student directly in the subject, work or service involved." (Northeastern University as cited in Katula and Threnhauser, p. 240)
McKeachie	2002	"Experiential learning refers to a broad spectrum of educational experiences, such as community service, fieldwork, sensitivity training groups, workshops, internships, cooperative education involving work in business and industry, and undergraduate participation in faculty research," (p. 246).
Kolb & Kolb	2005	A "learning cycle or spiral where the learner 'touches all the bases'- experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting-in a recursive process…Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for the observations and reflections"
Lee	2007	"Experiential learning is a broad term referring to multiple programs and systems for providing students in educational institutions with work-based applied learning opportunities," (p. 38).
Eyler	2009	"A process whereby the learner interacts with the world and integrates new learning into old constructs," (p. 1).
Eyler	2009	Service-learning is "a form of experiential education that combines academic study with service in the community" (p. 1).
Qualters	2010	Experiential education "assists students in translating classroom knowledge into meaningful learning for their future…Experiential education needs to be viewed as a unique form of pedagogy involving deep reflection, collaboration, and assessment," (p. 95).
Association for Experiential Education	2013	"Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies, in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities."

Note: Citations for definitions are listed on the reference page.

experience and reflection are two critical aspects of experiential education, as suggested by Katula and Threnhauser (1999) and by Kolb and Kolb (2005).

Value of Experiential Learning to the Learning Process

Some critics question if experiential learning programs enhance student learning. Katula and Threnhauser (1999) found that cooperative education experiences that are stand alone and not effectively integrated with the academic discipline do not enhance student learning. There is also concern that study abroad experiences may not lead to any greater learning than a personal trip abroad (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Sometimes service and learning are totally disconnected in service-learning programs and learning goals are not achieved (Cone, 2003). It is also possible that some service-learning arrangements are more quid pro quo arrangements rather than opportunities for students to give back to the community (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999).

Alternatively, many researchers strongly believe that incorporating experiential learning into academic courses enhances student learning. Experiential learning practices have been identified by Kuh (2008) as high-impact educational practices that have been shown through research to increase student retention and engagement. In this top 10 list of high impact educational practices, four are directly connected to experiential learning: diversity/global learning (which often is accompanied by study abroad or other experiential learning in the community), internships, undergraduate research and service learning/community-based learning. Also Kuh provides data that shows service learning and study abroad both are perceived by students to be high-impact in terms of deep, general, personal and practical learning.

One common form of experiential learning is the internship/cooperative education program. Internship students learn to make connections between what they are learning in courses and their on-the-job experience. Steffes (2004) suggests that an internship helps students explore whether they are suited to a particular setting and/or career path. They also discuss that students who complete internships have found professional benefits after college such as greater job satisfaction. Purdie, Ward, Mcadie, King, and Drysdale (2013) found in their survey study of 716 undergraduate students in the UK that students who had participated in work-integrated learning (interns, practicum, clinicals, etc.) reported significantly higher confidence in goal setting and goal attainment. They suggest this may enhance the student's ability to establish and achieve goals in the workplace. Simons et al., (2012) conducted a multi-method study of learning outcomes of students enrolled in an intern program. Their qualitative data revealed that all field supervisors and all students felt the internship helped the students acquire an in-depth understanding of the academic content.

Another common form of experiential education is service learning. Cantor (1995) says developing a respect for diversity is an outcome of service learning programs. Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) studied the impact that a service learning program has on teacher education candidates' respect for diversity. Their findings suggest that service learning is a positive influence on teacher candidates' willingness to teach in diverse school settings. Teacher candidates "even began to question societal inequities that they encountered," (Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill, 2007 p. 326). Other studies have found that service learning positively impacted freshman students' esteem and motivation to volunteer for professional growth (Eppler, Ironsmith, Dingle, & Errickson, 2011) and developed work-based competencies and global citizenship (Ramson, 2014).

Following are some of the positive outcomes about experiential learning that have been identified in research projects. Research shows that experiential learning helps students understand how to apply theory (Bucher & Patton, 2004; Eyler, 2009) and can improve students' reasoning skills (Coker, 2010; Knecht-Sabres, 2010). Coker (2010) conducted pre- and post-tests of occupational therapy students who completed a one week experiential learning, hands-on therapy program. She found that increases in the students' post-test scores on the Self-Assessment of Clinical Reflection and Reasoning and California Critical Thinking Skills Test were statistically significant ($p < .05$) after completing the program. Victor (2013), in a qualitative study with participants of an outdoor experiential course in literature, examined the long-term impact of the experience-based course. Regarding the course's long-term impact, four themes were found from participant interviews. These included that the course "nurtured creativity; increased collaboration skills; developed self-confidence/self-knowledge; and reinforced the importance of having a relationship with the outdoors" (p. 93). These benefits are also supported by a qualitative study conducted with participants in an Outdoor Adventure Education course (D'Amato and Krasney, 2011).

Other student outcomes often associated with experiential education include: increased student readiness for self-directed learning (Jiusto & Diabiasio, 2006); self-confidence (Knecht-Sabres; 2010; Lee & Dickson, 2010; Simons, et al., 2012); personal, civic, and professional development (Aldas, Crispo, Johnson, & Price, 2010; Simons et al., 2012); increased working relationships and collaboration among faculty and students (Retallick & Steiner, 2009); and experiences that help students gain employment such as professional networking contacts (Hart, 2008; Lee & Dickson, 2010; Simons, et al., 2012).

Institutionalizing the Experiential Education Program

The difference between experiential education programs that enhance student learning and those that do not is likely the approach used by the university to develop the program. Experiential learning programs that educate faculty in best practices are supported by committed administrators, and those who understand that translating experiential learning into the higher education curriculum is a work in progress (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999) are more likely to be successful. Faculty members need to be mentors to their students so that students can understand the importance of civic learning, and faculty must take time to listen to students as they work through questions that are part of the experiential learning process (Cone, 2003). Woods (2001) refers to this faculty mentor role as a shepherd who "provides a safe space for learning to occur and

encourages learners to recognize the opportunities for growth available." Kolb and Kolb (2005) observe, "One can develop a state of the art learning-focused curriculum that is doomed to failure if faculty members are not on board with it philosophically and technically" (p. 209). They also advocate that "a coordinated institutional approach can provide the synergy necessary for dramatic organizational change" (p. 209).

Administrative challenges may make institutionalizing experiential education programs difficult. For example, experiential education programs may be seen by some faculty as taking time away from the discussion of discipline theories. Also, administrative demands, such as requirements for productivity in research or larger class sizes, may complicate the ability of institutions to institutionalize experiential learning programs. In some cases, administrators put too much emphasis on numbers to the neglect of the quality of the program (Cone, 2003). Bucher and Patton (2004) argue that curriculum, service and mission must be simultaneously considered if experiential education programs are to be successful. If only two of the three are considered in developing and operating experiential education programs, the results are one of the following: programs requiring knowledge for knowledge's sake, curricular faddishness, or forms of experiential education that do not provide learning. Donovan, Porter, and Stellar (2010) provide several strategies for successful experiential education programs such as defining experiential learning, engaging faculty in planning and oversight, developing learning goals, establishing some type of quality control (i.e. course review), developing communities of practice, seeking "inside/outside expertise" (i.e. bringing in speakers or attending conferences) and showcasing student work (p. 93). The challenge for administrators and faculty who want to make these programs successful and accepted as part of the university is that considerable time and effort must be spent on planning and implementation.

The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) offers several principles of good practice ("intention, preparedness and planning, authenticity, reflection, orientation and training, monitoring and continuous improvement, assessment and evaluation, acknowledgement") that should be considered in development of an experiential education program (National Society for Experiential Education, 1998). According to Cantor (1995) institutions must adequately support the program financially by providing budgets and appropriate faculty course loads. Campus infrastructure should be developed to support these activities, such as a centralized office that reports to the chief academic officer, monetary incentives, and recognition of participants (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). The NSEE principles state, "[A]ll parties to the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. Culminating documentation and celebration of learning and impact help provide closure and sustainability to the experience." Cowart (2010) defines an integrated experiential learning program as one that has student support, a visible number of faculty delivering courses, a "formal institutionalized mechanism" for growing the program and some level of funding (p. 66).

Results from an evaluation of the experiential learning literature can be used by universities/colleges to define and begin to operationalize experiential learning programs, to understand the values of experiential learning to the learning process and to provide insight into how these programs can be institutionalized. This approach was used in 2005 to begin the process of development of experiential learning at a large, public university located in the southeastern United States. Development and implementation of that program is discussed in the following sections of this paper.

Defining the Program and Initial Planning

Development of the program discussed in this paper was an initiative for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation. A committee of approximately thirty faculty, administrators, community leaders and students was established to plan a large scale project that would enhance student learning on campus. Whether an experiential learning program is developed as part of an accreditation effort or as an initiative without accreditation oversight, the initial planning and definition of the program is critical to future success. During the early discussions, it is important for the campus community to consider its mission and goals and how experiential learning fits the university. Experiential learning should be included in the institution goals to ensure that financial resources will be available and that administration will view the program as essential to the university's day-to-day work. Some colleges/universities may also have hands-on learning at the core of the institution's history. For example, the history of an institution as a normal school (mission for hands-on training of teachers) or a history of a strong study abroad program may be the impetus for engaging the university community in the value of developing a formal experiential learning program. Considering the institution's strengths early on is also important. If the institution has faculty who have expertise in experiential learning, an office that already focuses on some aspect of hands-on learning and financial resources already focused on activities such as study abroad or service learning, these strengths are likely to be positive forces in building commitment to development of a campus-wide experiential learning program.

Specifically defining what is meant by experiential learning and the determination of the breadth of the

program should be discussed after an assessment of university history, mission, goals and strengths so that the program can be organized in a way that best fits the institution. The experiential learning program discussed in this paper is called the EXL Scholars Program; it is a comprehensive program that includes student activities in study abroad, internships, laboratory classes, teacher education experiences, service learning and applied learning. After a thorough study of the literature, program developers selected a definition that would guide development of the program. Based upon a definition used by Northeastern University, experiential learning is defined as:

> That learning process that takes place beyond the traditional classroom and that enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student. Such education can occur in a wide variety of settings, but it usually takes on a 'learn-by-doing' aspect that engages the student directly in the subject, work or service involved. (as cited in Katula and Threnhauser, 1999, p. 240)

This definition kept the program developers focused on developing a program that would enhance students' "personal and intellectual growth," emphasize "learning by doing," and engage students "directly in the subject, work or service involved." In addition, the definition was helpful in keeping program developers specifically focused on ensuring that experiential learning classes would require experiences/activities in addition to regular classroom activities.

Planning is a critical process, and it may take as much as three years to implement a comprehensive experiential learning program. During the initial planning stage, the campus, the community and local community leaders (business, education, non-profit) should be involved, and students should be an integral part of the process. Specific student learning outcomes, program outcomes and assessment activities should be developed early in the planning because they will guide development and implementation activities. It is also important to have regular discussions with campus leadership and to build commitment of the institution community early on in the process. Developing a marketing plan, logo and a memorable name for the program will also help to build awareness and excitement for the program. As the planning process develops, plans will change from general, over-arching ideas to specific, stated objectives and processes. Careful planning and definition of the program will be beneficial in the long term because it will ensure that implementation will stay on track, and comprehensive planning will help the program to be institutionalized more quickly.

Development of the Experiential Learning Scholars Program

The Experiential Learning Scholars Program (EXL) required a three-year planning process. During the development process, planners determined the structure of the program including issues related to coordination activities, budgeting, curriculum development, marketing and assessment needs. Specific information for planning follows.

EXL Program Structure

EXL Planners decided to develop a comprehensive, university-wide program for experiential learning. Students may elect to take courses that have an EXL designation indicating they are hands-on learning classes that meet the EXL criteria, or students may become EXL Scholars by completing a series of courses and activities prescribed that lead to an EXL certification that is put on the students' transcripts. (The EXL certification is explained in more detail later in the paper.) Courses in the EXL Program include these categories of experiential activities: co-operative education/internship, study abroad, applied experience, service learning, creative activity, teacher education and laboratory course. EXL planners worked with administrators and faculty in existing institution programs such as study abroad and service learning to coordinate plans for EXL so the existing mission of those programs is enhanced. In addition, a budget was developed for a five-year implementation time frame. Forms were developed for a variety of activities related to the program, and a website containing information about the program and forms for faculty, staff and community members were included in the website. Plans called for a part-time director and as program needs increased, a full-time director.

Curriculum Issues

To implement the EXL Scholars Program, it was necessary to develop student learning outcomes, a process for approval of EXL designated courses, requirements for the EXL program designation/certification, an EXL capstone course and assessment activities. These are described briefly below.

Student learning outcomes. Six learning outcomes were developed for the program based on a study of the experiential learning literature (quoted from EXL website):

1. Students will develop an experience-based knowledge of their disciplines and demonstrate the ability to apply theories and concepts to practical problems.

2. Students will engage in systematic reflection and demonstrate the ability to critically examine their experiences and to create connections between those experiences and disciplinary knowledge.
3. Students will make contributions to their communities and learn the value of making these contributions (good citizenship); students will develop as individuals including understanding the needs of others, learning cultural awareness, and appreciating the differences in others.
4. Students will develop and demonstrate managerial skills including planning, organizing, problem solving and communicating.
5. Students will develop and demonstrate leadership skills including interpersonal skills, ability to direct others and teamwork.
6. Students will develop and demonstrate research skills that will help them be successful in graduate programs (Experiential Learning Student Learning Outcomes, n.d.).

Assessment processes (including rubrics and surveys) and an assessment completion time schedule were developed for each of the learning outcomes (explained below).

EXL designated courses. EXL Planners developed a specific list of criteria for each of the types of EXL courses (e.g., study abroad, service learning) and set a requirement that faculty would select at least four learning outcomes for each EXL class. To receive approval for a class to count for EXL credit, faculty complete a form with information about learning outcomes that are part of the class along with details about the experiential project that would be completed in the class. After approval by the EXL Director, a designation is included on the course section to indicate it is experiential. Students can see this designation in the online registration system and on their transcripts. The institution also has three EXL prefix courses: EXL 2010/3010 (Service Learning Practicum), EXL 2020/3020 (Leadership Studies Practicum), and EXL 2030/3030 (Civic Engagement Practicum). These EXL prefix courses are available to faculty who have special projects or initiatives that do not fit a regular class in their discipline.

Courses required for EXL designation. Students who elect to earn the EXL designation on their transcripts must complete the following:

1. 16 to 18 hours of EXL designated classes. EXL classes include co-operative education/internships, study abroad, applied learning, service learning, creative activity, teacher education, and laboratory experiences.
2. At least one external activity. (Project that requires the student to interact with people external to the university or a research project in which students must interact with people outside their department or outside the campus community.)
3. MTSU internal service component. Students may complete this requirement in one of three ways: participate in a leadership role in a campus sponsored charitable activity, volunteer with a campus office to assist other students, or be a campus leader.
4. Documentation of completion of EXL activities via an E-Portfolio.
5. Participation in assessment activities for the program (surveys and class activities) (Experiential Learning Program Requirements, n.d.).

EXL capstone course. Students who want to earn the designation must complete a one-hour independent study course that requires the development of an e-portfolio. Students create a website that includes examples of their work in EXL classes and demonstrates they have met the learning outcomes for the program. Reflection is an important component of the e-portfolio. These e-portfolios are graded by the EXL director with a rubric, and students use the e-portfolios as part of the package of information they provide to potential employers.

Assessment activities. An approach for assessment was developed for each student learning outcome. Some outcomes were assessed by rubrics and others by surveys. A specific schedule was developed for assessment with some assessments being completed every year while others may be completed every two or three years. In addition, the assessment schedule was phased in over a five-year time frame, so that all assessments were not completed the first year. This allowed for incremental implementation of the program. The approach to assessment for each learning outcome along with the initial assessment during implementation of the program is shown in Table 2.

In addition to direct assessment of the learning outcomes, several indirect assessment activities were also completed. For example, students completing the EXL Scholars Program certification were asked to complete a survey of their perceptions. EXL faculty and community members who work with EXL students also complete surveys. These surveys provide information to assist the EXL director in improving the program. In addition to student learning outcomes, the program planners developed several program outcomes to assess the general success of the EXL Scholars Program. Some of the program assessments that are evaluated each year include: number of students taking EXL classes, number of EXL faculty, number of EXL courses offered each semester and number of EXL students earning the EXL certification each semester. There is also an assessment of the dollar value that is

Table 2
Plan for Five Year Implementation of Assessment and Continuing Schedule

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Initial Timetable	Continuing Assessment Schedule
Students will develop an experience-based knowledge of their disciplines and demonstrate the ability to apply theories and concepts to practical problems.	Rubric, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year one	Yearly assessment
Students will engage in systematic reflection and demonstrate the ability to critically examine their experiences and to create connections between those experiences and disciplinary knowledge.	Rubric, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year one	Yearly assessment
Students will make contributions to their communities and learn the value of making these contributions (good citizenship); students will develop as individuals including understanding the needs of others, learning cultural awareness, and appreciating the differences in others.	Course survey of activities, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year two	Yearly assessment
Students will develop and demonstrate managerial skills including planning, organizing, problem solving, and communicating.	Rubric, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year four	Assess every two years
Students will develop and demonstrate leadership skills including interpersonal skills, ability to direct others, and teamwork.	Rubric, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year four	Assess every two years
Students will develop and demonstrate research skills that will help them be successful in graduate programs.	Rubric, end of program student survey	Assess at the end of year five	Assess every two years

contributed to the region through the efforts of EXL students.

Planning and Implementation Challenges

Over the five-year planning and implementation timeframe, the program developers encountered a number of challenges. Initially, determining the scope of the program was problematic. What kinds of activities would the program cover? Some committee members preferred that the program be set up as a service-learning program, while others wanted a more comprehensive program that included laboratory courses, study abroad, applied learning, etc. Developers learned very quickly that a broadly defined program would be more difficult to define, organize and monitor due to the variety of activities that would be included in the program. Throughout the development and implementation process, planners had to continually think of ways to keep the program streamlined while developing effective processes, forms, and assessment measures. Developing surveys, assessment measures and processes that could apply to the variety of experiential learning activities in the program also required some consideration of ways to incorporate the variety of activities into one series of documents that could be easily used by instructors and program leaders.

While developing the student learning outcomes was not difficult (these were based on the experiential learning literature), determining how to measure them and developing the rubrics were challenges. Additionally, getting faculty to complete the rubrics and developing consistency in scoring the rubrics across the campus (variety of courses and variety of types of experiential activities) required lots of discussion and training. Building faculty interest during the first two years was easy since faculty who already had an interest in experiential learning opted into the program; adding faculty during later years required some education and discussion. Finally, building interest and knowledge about the program among students was difficult. Since students are at the university for a relatively short amount of time, finding a way to ensure students knew about the program required development of several marketing approaches (EXL branded items, participation in student picnics, use of social media, stories in the student newspaper, etc.). The best

marketing approach was to get buy-in for the program from faculty and have them introduce students to EXL. Through dealing with these challenges, the program planners were able to develop a cohesive program that meets the needs of the campus community.

Institutionalizing the Program

The EXL Scholars Program was developed over a three year time period and was fully implemented in five years. During implementation of the program, data was collected for student learning outcomes and program outcomes. This data was used to understand issues related to student learning and to make improvements in the program. Some of the data is provided in Appendix A to indicate the types of data that were part of the implementation phase of the program.

After initial implementation, the program became an integral part of the campus. Several initiatives were developed that help to keep the program up-to-date and ensure that the program continues to be relevant to the institution community. Some of these initiatives include:

1. Development of an EXL Advisory Committee made up of faculty – This committee advises the director, reviews applications for grants/awards and develops policies for the program.
2. Award to recognize an outstanding graduating EXL student – The student award is provided at a university awards ceremony, giving visibility to the program.
3. Grants available to faculty for EXL class activities – These grants encourage new faculty to join the program and provide money to help students with projects.
4. Award to recognize an outstanding EXL faculty member – The faculty award encourages faculty to be involved in the program and provides visibility for the program among faculty and the university community.
5. Recognition by the president of EXL certificate graduates at commencement (students wear special cords to signify their achievement) – Students who receive the EXL designation are recognized at commencement and information about the EXL program is provided in the program. There is also a designation the students' transcripts indicating completion of this program.
6. The EXL Program is now housed within a college and the director reports to a dean – At the end of five years of operation, a full-time director was hired and the program was moved to the University College.

Conclusions

After almost 10 years of implementation, the EXL Scholars Program has become institutionalized and is a valued and high profile initiative on the campus. This is due in part to creating a centralized office as suggested by Bringle and Hatcher (2000) as well as involving faculty in each phase; establishing learning goals; requiring course review; and showcasing student work which are all strategies affirmed by Donavan, Porter, and Stellar (2010). Furthermore, the program supports the NSEE Principles of Good Practice (1998) by engaging faculty during the course proposal and review process in a discussion about "intention, preparedness and planning, authenticity and reflection." The EXL Office also conducts orientation and training for faculty and departments and program assessment and evaluation as well as acknowledges outstanding EXL student and faculty as suggested by the NSEE Principles (1998).

The program has built-in demand, meaning that students ask faculty to set up their courses as experiential learning courses. Employers know about the program and seek out EXL graduates. Impact on the community is measured by calculating the number of hours students spend volunteering each semester when organizations would otherwise have to hire employees. By the fifth year of the program, calculations were that student EXL activities provided a yearly impact of $1.5 million to the region. In addition to time spent by students and dollars saved by organizations through EXL student efforts, more opportunities are available to community members who need basic service assistance from the community.

This program was developed as a way to enhance student learning and has been successful as demonstrated by the student learning outcome data as well as the reflections presented by students in their EXL Scholars e-portfolios. Student learning outcomes are measured each year in a way that allows the university community to understand the value of experiential learning to their specific students, and the data provides information to faculty for continuous improvement activities. It is evident after ten years of operation that experiential learning engages students in the learning process, that faculty are also actively engaged in their teaching, and that these programs have the capacity to change the culture of learning on a college campus.

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Appendix A
Selected Student Learning Outcomes and Program Outcomes for Five year Implementation

	2006 – 2007	2007 – 2008	2008 – 2009	2009 – 2010	2010 - 2011
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES					
Experience-based knowledge of the discipline (rubric benchmark = 80 % proficient)	84 %	79 %	83 %	89 %	86 %
Systematic Reflection (rubric benchmark = 80 % proficient)	80 %	78 %	81 %	90 %	90 %
Develop Leadership Skills (rubric benchmark = 80 % proficient)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Rubric developed	86 %
Develop as individuals (survey benchmark = 80 % perceive their development)	N/A	N/A	Test of Survey	Interacting with people from other cultures = 67% Understanding others' needs = 91 %	Interacting with people from other cultures = 80% Understanding others' needs = 92 %
Managerial Skills (rubric benchmark = 90 % proficient)	N/A	N/A	N/A	85 %	90 %
Research Skills (rubric benchmark = 80 % proficient)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Rubric tested and developed	90 %
PROGRAM OUTCOMES (Academic Year)					
Participating Departments	10	16	18	19	21
New Courses Approved	59	13	20	22	35
Class Sections Offered	122	218	236	247	314
Faculty with Approved Courses	54	64	69	93	168
Student Seats Filled in EXL Classes	1,727	3,126	3,367	3,927	5,194
EXL Certificate Graduates	0	15	99	126	148
Hours Spent on Community Projects	N/A	136,904	139,561	160,040	193,638
Number of projects completed	N/A	2,094	2,185	2,911	3,040
Value of Volunteer Efforts to Community ($8 hour)	N/A	$1.095 million	$1.11 million	$1.28 million	$1.55 million