



THE CAREER CENTER
Division of Student Affairs

AACE | Gadsden, AL 2016

Career Readiness through Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs)



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What is experiential learning?

Learning in action, active learning, hands-on experience

Applied knowledge and skills



An in-depth, typically semester-long experience related to a student's major(s) that builds his/her real-world problem solving skills under the supervision of an experienced practitioner. Examples include:

- **Internship** – part or full time during any semester
- **Externship** – job shadowing
- **Preceptorship or clinical**
- **Co-op** – full-time employment that alternates non-summer semesters of work and school
- **Professional practice** – full time, single-semester, non-summer employment
- **Apprenticeship**
- **Fieldwork**
- **Research or independent study**
- **Student teaching**
- **Study abroad**

Experiential learning and quality enhancement

Benefits colleges, students, employers



- Institutions with access to federal funds must meet accreditation standards
- At UA, faculty, staff, and students selected experiential learning, “Learning in Action,” around which to focus the current Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that is required to meet these standards
- The plan is to develop in students real-world problem solving abilities through high-quality **experiential learning opportunities (ELOs)**
- ELOs can bolster the education quality and reputation for colleges and universities and prepare students for jobs or further education
- Graduates prepared to handle ambiguity, and other difficulties found in every job, are attractive to employers

Experiential learning and career services

Advancing applied knowledge and skills

Common goals

Experiential Learning:

- Focused on best practices: intention, preparedness, monitoring, reflection, assessment, evaluation
- Improve student learning through participation
- Prepare students for graduate or professional education, and equip them with job-related knowledge and skills
- Produce real-world problem solvers prepared to apply discipline-based skills toward complex problems after graduation (on the job)

Career Services:

- Help students to discover their career interests and competencies
- Serve the career-related needs of diverse majors and programs of study
- Collaborate with campus constituents to offer programming that supports career readiness through experiential learning
- Engage students in preparation for employment through experiential learning opportunities (ELOs)
- Advise students on how best to apply ELO experience toward professional documents and job searches



Build career readiness competencies (as described by NACE)

Why promote internships or other ELOs?

Recruiters want experience

Employers need:

- New talent ready for potential employment
- Branding and name recognition with a new generation who can be excellent campus ambassadors following a positive experience
- Top talent in a competitive recruiting environment

Students need:

- Clarity on academic and career goals
- Realistic expectations before committing to full-time employment
- Industry contacts, job references, performance feedback in a trial setting
- A successful work history that leads to permanent job offers



Employers seek real-world problem solvers prepared to apply discipline-based skills toward complex problems after graduation (on the job)

What do employers expect in eligible hires?

Career readiness through 7 key competencies, per NACE

- 1. Critical thinking/problem solving:** Make decisions with sound reasoning, originality, and inventiveness
- 2. Professionalism/work ethic:** Demonstrate personal accountability, effective work habits (punctuality, productivity, time management, work image), learn from mistakes
- 3. Teamwork/Collaboration:** Work well within a team structure of diverse colleagues and customers; negotiate and manage conflict
- 4. Oral/written communication:** Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside the organization
- 5. Information technology application:** Select and use appropriate technology to accomplish tasks and solve problems
- 6. Leadership:** Leverage strengths of others to achieve common goals, use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others, assess and manage emotions; guide and motivate with empathy; organize, prioritize, and delegate work
- 7. Career management:** Identify and articulate relevant skills, strengths/areas for growth, knowledge, and experiences; take necessary steps to self-advocate and pursue opportunities in the workplace

Students as staff

Low cost, low risk, high return



- Fill temporary or part-time staffing needs with motivated and diverse students in all majors
- Multiply your efforts – recruit and train prospective employees and gain exposure among the new generation of talent through word of mouth
- ELOs are easy and customizable – there is no obligation beyond the experience; typically, no rigid format
- Create a supervised practical experience according to your business needs and students' career interests and skill development in various occupations

Getting started – employers

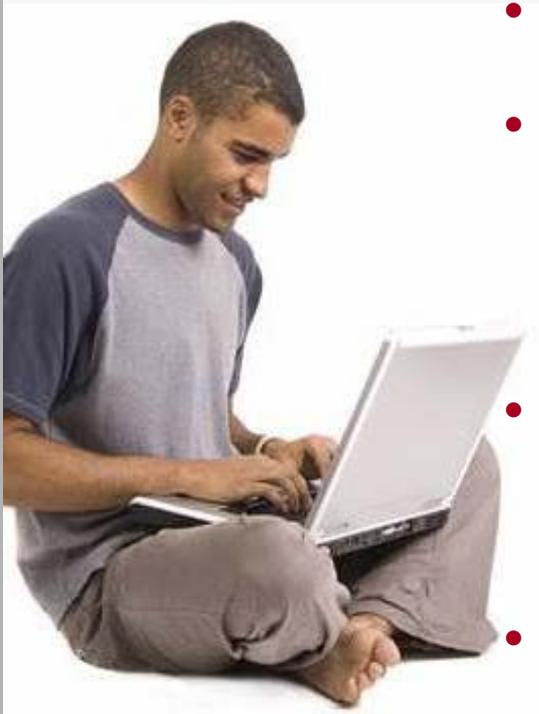


Nothing established? Get creative

- If your organization's headquarters or home office has a formal student leadership, volunteer, or internship program, use that job description/rotation and tailor it to your branch
- Find a competitor's description and use it as a model for your own
- Ask your division managers for a description of projects with which students can assist or coordinate
- Seek interested students to participate in drafting a description proposal according to his/her learning objectives
- Hire a student to work in your office and use the experience as a pilot project
 - ✓ Have the student identify work projects that may offer quality skill development for future students
 - ✓ Have the student outline an internship or ELO and/or begin a student manual
 - ✓ Ongoing semester partnerships should improve with time as supervisors and students refine projects and processes

Connecting students and employers

Recruiting



- Many Career Centers offer a range of employer services
- They may include a web-based recruiting system, on-campus interviews, and career fairs, as well as campus visits for information sessions and opportunities for corporate sponsorships
- With web-based recruiting systems (Symplicity, Handshake), each student has an account where they can search and apply for positions you post there
- Positions posted are typically internships or full-time jobs for all majors in the state, region, country, or even internationally

Position considerations for employers

Manage expectations

- Check the institution's web site for initial information about recruiting or requirements
- Your job descriptions should include specifics of your anticipated projects and duties (with limited clerical work), duration dates and weekly work hours, compensation type and amount, as well as your organization's name and physical address, and the phone number, name, and title of the person who will supervise the student
- For credit internships, faculty typically evaluate positions for educational value and rigor; often students must train under supervision for a minimum number of hours per week and for a certain length of time
- With college permission beforehand, students may count pre-approved positions for course credit, subject to tuition, and can simultaneously earn academic credit *and* wages
- Implement ELO best practices when possible in partnership with a campus coordinator

ELO best practices

for transformational learning

1. Intention: Well-designed on- or off-campus experience with opportunity to apply knowledge and skills to solve complex, real problems that may be ambiguous, with multiple solutions, and the possibility of solution failure

2. Preparedness: Training should include an orientation to the real-world context with an explanation for the chosen experience and for the complexities of the situation

3. Monitoring: Regular formal or informal performance feedback that may take the form of assignments, evaluations, and/or meetings

4. Reflection: Before, during, and after the experience on the experience itself, what was learned, future applications, connection with academic program, how problems were encountered, resolved, and how problems may have been handled differently

6. Evaluation: A holistic review of the ELO content (orientation, assignments), process (communication, logistics), student perceptions. Did the experience meet intentions? Improvements?



Compensation – consult with HR

Internship programs under the Fair Labor Standards Act

Compensation arrangements are as diverse as the companies and organizations that offer ELOs and internships. Although the emphasis is on experiential learning, some type of compensation is encouraged to recruit candidates and to cover the expense of course tuition for students enrolled to earn academic credit. Students can simultaneously earn wages *and* academic credit for an internship.



- Hourly wages
- Stipends
- Commission
- Tuition reimbursement
- Scholarships
- Lodging
- Meals
- Mileage reimbursement
- Formal training
- Workshops / conferences
- Perks and products
- Travel



<https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

Prepare to exchange feedback with students

Encourage your students to speak up



- Students' grades are based, in part, on employers' written evaluations plus any assignments required of the students.
- You may be asked to rate students based on his/her initiative, attitude, quality of work, adaptability, and punctuality, as well as compliance with the rules of your work environment
- In turn, students will likely be required to turn in to the school an assessment of the internship experience for a grade; it may not be available to you
- Please exchange regular feedback with your student(s) throughout the internship
- Conduct an exit interview to share suggestions for mutual growth and improvement, and discuss connecting on LinkedIn when appropriate

What variables should students consider?

Plan ahead (especially for formal internships)



- **Deadlines** – start early; many high-profile summer internships are filled as early as October. Keep an application list and organize it by dates (application, deadline, follow up)
- **Duration, timing** – check rolling deadlines
- **Qualifications, requirements** – GPA, other minimums?
- **Academic credit** – required for participation, or optional?
- **Location, housing** – will students have guidance on making these arrangements?
- **Orientation, training** – will students have a mentor or supervisor who will structure their work or will they be expected to work independently?
- **Evaluation** – how often will students receive performance feedback? Will supervisors serve as references for future applications?

What is a sample timeline for students?

Start Date	June 15 th	Allow enough lead time
All last minute details completed	May 15 th	1 month prior to starting
Finalize all living plans, obtain work permits, visas, credits, and so on	April 15 th	2 months prior to starting
Have and accept offer	March 15 th	3 months prior to starting
Begin sending out applications	January 15 th	5 months prior to starting
Begin researching opportunities	December 15 th	6 months prior to starting
Get an early start	October - November 15 th	7 - 8 months prior to starting

How can students network to find ELOs?

Networking or prospecting letters



- Career fair attendees, LinkedIn, campus and community partners, and hometown contacts often make good starting points for networking
- To encourage a positive response, students should inquire about “summer jobs,” “seasonal projects,” “part-time work,” OR “internships” (lastly) to convey the idea of relevant experience
- Leading out with “internships” may deter a potential employer if they know that their company or organization does not already have a formal program
- Students should primarily communicate their desire to gain experience and then offer ideas for how to partner once they gain interest from an individual

Before the ELO – students must manage expectations

Reflect and evaluate

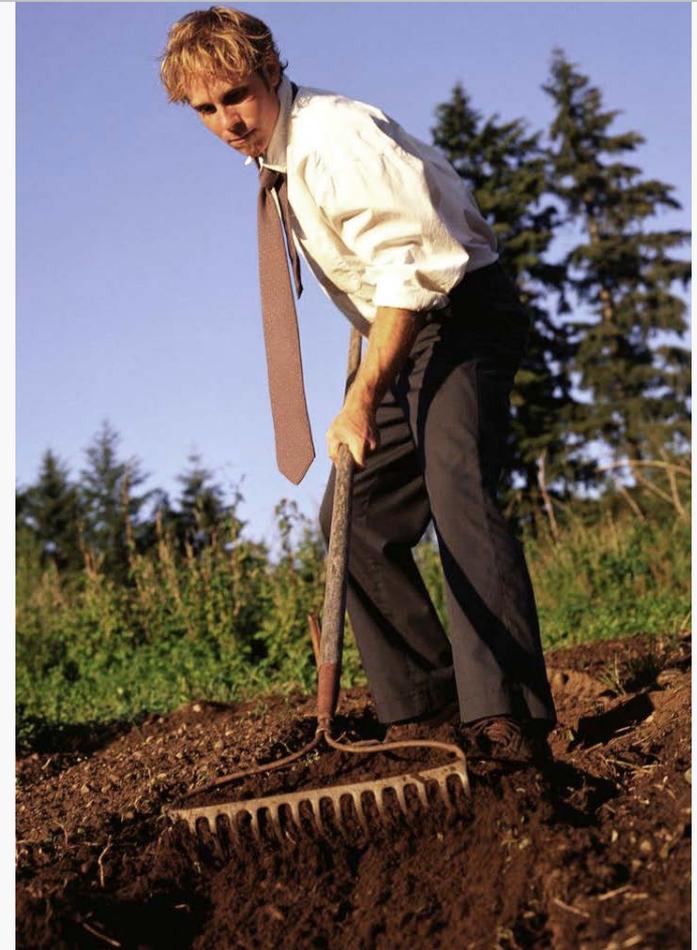


- Have students describe the experiential learning opportunity they will be participating in and what about it interests them.
- Not every experience has a clear connection with academic and career goals, but there is always some connection. How can this experience build their *transferable* skills?
- In every situation there are problems, concerns, issues, or difficulties. What is a problem the student expects to face during the experience, and how may s/he try to resolve it?
- Again, ongoing semester partnerships should improve with time as supervisors and students refine projects and processes

During the ELO – students must be proactive

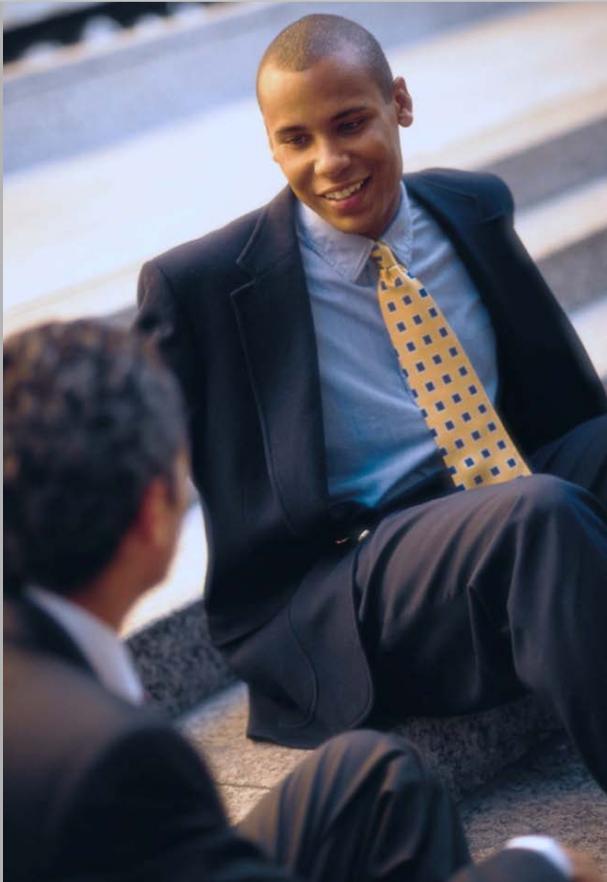
Act in anticipation of problems, needs, or changes

- What surprises or lessons have students discovered so far and what do they still hope to see and do before the position ends?
- How do the lessons they're learning or the experience as a whole, so far, connect to their majors and career paths?
- What is the biggest problem they're experiencing? They should let someone know and ask when in doubt.
- How are they solving this problem, and what is the reaction? If the reaction is not as they expected, what will they do next or how will it inform their future directions?



Also during the ELO – students must communicate

Take advantage of the opportunity



- Have students identify how their ELOs can be improved – and benefit from their own advice
- Encourage regular supervisor feedback
- Have students concentrate on 4-5 of their own learning objectives and take action to meet them
- Students should adapt themselves to the work/office culture
- Students can add value to the experience by asking to observe and sit in on meetings
- They should be aware of verbal and non-verbal cues and consider the impression they want to leave
- Students should be conscientious; performing well at small tasks will likely garner more responsibility
- Professionalism at all times is critical for what may be an interview in progress

After the ELO – how will students benefit?

Update the resume and get supervisor final feedback



- Assuming the experience was positive, students may ask supervisor(s) to connect on LinkedIn and ask for recommendations there
- Students should consider questions that future supervisors or potential employers may ask about this ELO
- How has the ELO helped students to determine work they do or do not want to do?
- Have students describe the most important lesson they learned and how they will use it, or the overall experience, to advance academic/career goals
- What was the biggest problem students faced?
- How did they go about solving this problem, and what was the reaction? Again, If the reaction was not as expected, what did they do next?

What are pre-internship and alternate options for students to get experience?

Offer individual recommendations

- **Go abroad**
<https://studyabroad.ua.edu/>
<http://www.goabroad.com>
<http://www.transitionsabroad.com>
- **Related job**
<https://career.sa.ua.edu/>
<http://www.uastudentjobs.ua.edu/>
- **Externship/job shadowing, leadership programs, short-term projects**
<http://myculverhouse.ua.edu/cc>
<http://www.twc.edu/internships>
- **Research**
<https://www.glassdoor.com/>
Use down time to build a career action plan, interview skills, resumes and cover letters, professional etiquette/attire, consult with campus staff

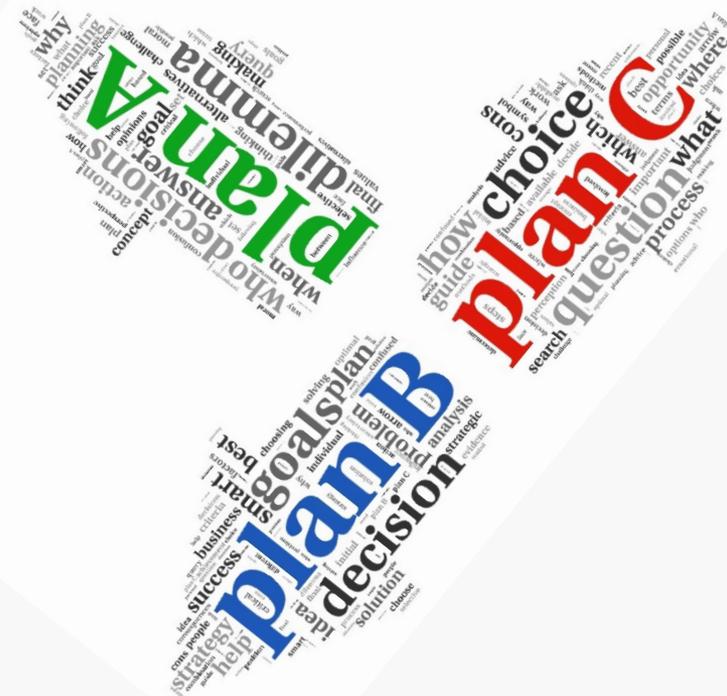


Staying local?

Assist with campus and area options

What resources do you have?

- Freshman Forum leadership development program
<http://fye.ua.edu/freshforum.cfm>
- Student organizations
<https://ua.collegiatelink.net/organizations>
- Student involvement & volunteerism
<http://studentinvolvement.ua.edu/>, <http://volunteer.ua.edu/>
- Center for Community-Based Partnerships
<http://ccbp.ua.edu/>
- Creative Campus
<http://creativecampus.ua.edu/>
- Intercollegiate athletics marketing
<http://www.rolltide.com/ot/marketing.html>
- Spanish Outreach
<http://mlc.ua.edu/spanish/spanish-outreach/>
- Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility
<http://cesr.ua.edu/about-us/service-learning-opportunities/>
- Crossing Points
<http://crossingpoints.ua.edu/>



Articulating experience on a resume

*Adapted from *How to Create a Winning Resume* by Laszlo Bock of Google

Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z]

Lead with an active verb, numerically measure what you accomplished, provide a baseline for comparison, and detail what you did to achieve your goal

Ex. 1 College student who is a leader in her sorority

- Managed sorority budget
- Managed **\$30K spring semester** budget and invested idle funds in appropriate high-yielding capital notes
- Managed \$30K spring semester budget and invested **\$10K** in idle funds in appropriate high-yielding capital notes, **returning 5% throughout the year**

Ex. 2 College student participating in a leadership program

- Member of Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT)
- Selected as **1 of 230** for this **18-month** professional development program for high-achieving diverse talent
- Selected as 1 of 230 **participants nationwide** for this 18-month professional development program for high-achieving diverse talent **based on leadership potential, ability to contribute to the MLT cohort, and academic success**

Questions? Feedback?

Feel free to reach out to me directly

I'd love to hear
your thoughts...



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