Learning Through Experience

Fostering Tenacity Through Experiential Education

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

INNOVATION HUB

EDUCATION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The University of Toronto (UofT) prides itself on producing excellent students who can become excellent employees, community members, and citizens who apply their learning beyond the classroom. As outlined in UofT's white paper "Rethinking Higher Education Curricula", research has shown that Experiential Learning provides multiple positive impacts on students beyond their classroom learning as well as on the community and broader society[1]. These impacts include increased academic engagement as well as personal and professional development of students, complemented by community and economic benefits.

To this end and supported by both the Federal and Provincial Governments[2], UofT continues to advance Experiential Learning (EL) opportunities[3] that encourage learning beyond the classroom, promoting EL integration into courses and programs in order to ensure that students continue to excel at the university and after graduation.

BARRIERS TO EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

There are critical challenges in implementation, coordination, and participation in experiential learning at UofT for all involved, including students, instructors and staff, as well as community organizations and workplaces.

Challenges include issues of access and inclusion of all students in these opportunities as well as the costs and load of supporting opportunities by instructors and community or workplace partners[4].

As a result, EL opportunities can also exacerbate equity issues when the benefits do not translate to all students because they are unable to participate or the experience is not of the quality necessary to benefit everyone. In alignment with the recommendations set out in Rethinking Higher Education Curricula, we set out to understand EL at UofT further to consider how the design of education might make the impacts of EL universal for all students and supported for instructors and partners.

METHODS

WE SET OUT TO UNDERSTAND EL EXPERIENCES AT UOFT
WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE AND, AT TIMES, UNIQUELY CHALLENGING

Our methodology, which **draws on long-form open-ended ethnographic interview techniques**, focused on:
- Grasping the complexity of problems within experiences of students as well as other stakeholders
- Exploring the core needs for all those involved and how these needs might be further supported
- Generating depth of understanding rather than the breadth of large representational sampling

We identified instructors and opportunities offering EL experiences in a range of types:
- In-class practicum projects
- Work-study & work-integrated learning
- Research experiences and more

Based on these, we recruited different stakeholders in EL:
- Students with EL experiences
- Instructors carrying out EL
- Staff supporting EL programming in a variety of courses

Participants were from a wide range of programs and fields:
- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- STEM and Applied Sciences

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

We conducted long-form interviews with 21 participants. We asked open-ended questions so participants could guide with their stories of how they had been involved in EL and their own unique perspective on this experience.

We have developed a deeper understanding of EL at UofT. Even further, our learnings about EL reflect back on education more broadly, asking about how education, both traditional learning that contrasts with EL as well as EL itself, can be made "experiential" such that the positive impacts can occur everywhere and for everyone.

Our hope is both to support and complement the critical work being done on EL around the university, such as the development of the Experiential Learning Hub and further efforts to support students, instructors, and staff in making EL excellent at UofT.

KEY FINDINGS

THROUGH THE DATA, WE LEARNED THAT THE KEY TO EL IS FOSTERING TENACITY

When EL stakeholders foster tenacity in students, in themselves and in the process, they learn through novelty, interdependence, and positive failure, leading to not only more tenacious stakeholders, but a strengthened approach to learning and education at the university.

### We found that fostering tenacity was organized under three themes:

Securing New Know-How: involves the need to recognize the newness that comes with learning experiences for students, instructors, and the university as they move out of the classroom into novel learning spaces that require different—often new and unrecognized—skills.

The Whole Is More Than The Parts: addresses the need to foster relationship-, partnership-, and connection-building in the learning process, which requires working with others, whether that be students working on teams or instructors and staff working with workplace- or community-partners.

Encouraging Positive Failure: suggests that learning involves taking risks, sometimes making mistakes and failing, and working through the uncertainty and discomfort to foster determination to try again and learn to do it better.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOSTERS TENACITY

THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE PARTS

ENCOURAGING POSITIVE FAILURE

SECURING NEW KNOW HOW
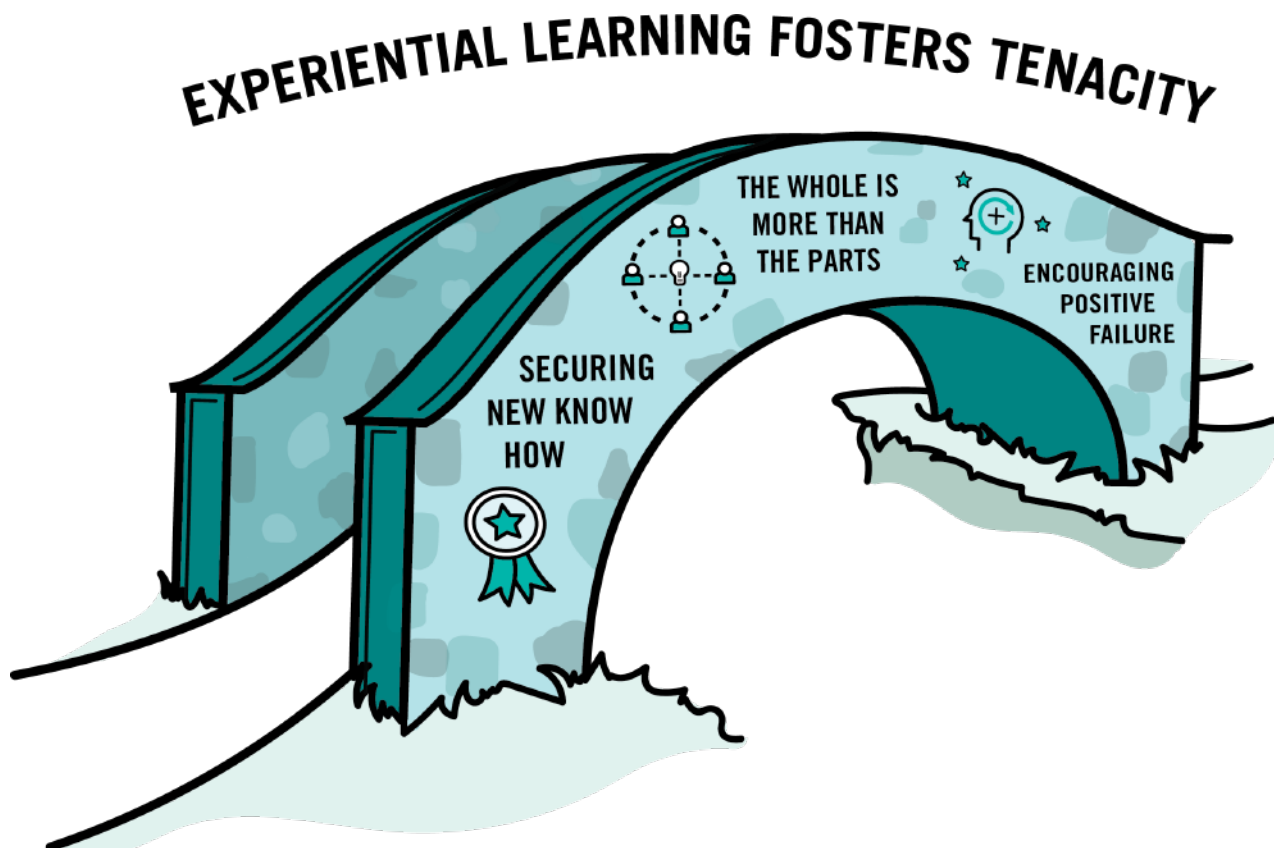
SECURING NEW KNOW-HOW

Students and instructors are keen to try new learning experiences and want to be secure in the process. EL provides them with exciting opportunities to learn new things, especially ones that are different than material provided in the classroom. The challenge becomes how can stakeholders be made to feel adequately supported in this newness so they feel excitement and confidence rather than being overwhelmed and feeling fear.

SHAKING UP TRADITIONS

Stakeholders expressed excitement in the possibilities gained from new EL experiences. They also noted that it can take time experiencing and excelling at classroom material in the traditional mode first for both students and instructors to generate excitement and initiative for trying new EL. Once this is achieved, EL can reconnect the students with their learning at the university by generating new understandings of the classroom material.

> "The longer you teach, the more you as an educator want to do different things. You start, to be perfectly honest, you start to question the utility of having nothing but book learning...and so you start trying to get [students] to engage in their world. [...] So that's just been part of a process of maturing as an educator."

A difficulty that emerges is navigating structures of expectation at UofT that are seen as traditional and thus resistant to innovation. If students are expecting a traditional lecture format when they enter the classroom, they might be less willing to engage in the EL experience. Even further, students reported that they contend with expectations of excellence in their classrooms as well, especially through grades and the impact grades can have in their future access to POSts, programs, and future jobs. Instructors interpret this resistance as traditional students who are overly focused on grades or who check out when they have to try something new.

> "I think undergraduate students aren't necessarily expecting that kind of learning when they come into school. A lot of people, especially those that seem to select UofT as a program tend to be traditional as students. They work hard, but they work hard in a traditional lecture."

> "The big [barrier] is that culture of 'You're here to learn, get good grades.' And the easiest way to do that is to read the texts, do the test, that sort of thing. To get them to approach a more experiential component of the class seriously, as part of their education, as something meaningful, can be difficult."

EL can be exciting when it involves learning by trying something new or in a new manner or context outside the classroom. However, EL can also produce anxiety or apathy in students when the security and structure of the classroom are not in place. Trepidation is experienced by students as well as instructors. Fear can turn into resistance when students and instructors are not clear on how the experience allows them to succeed. This issue is especially difficult if the EL experience is not immediately successful or does not allow students to excel in terms of traditional modes of assessment.

> "I think a level of comfort, training, creativity, [is] involved [among faculty]. [...] It's scary, it's different. And sometimes we don't always have the luxury from research standpoint of piloting those."

> "It's easy to set up, kind of a bunch of placements, and then just say, 'Go, and you'll learn on the fly.' But I find that that doesn't work."

> " [The students] they go, 'this is unlike any other course I take, I love it. [...] It's the thing that keeps me going.' Then we got students who just despise it, they just cannot like, they don't like it they complain about the subjectivity of the grading or, or, or the fact that they have to work with a team or whatever it is and they're just not ready, that's a fairly large group, unfortunately"

EL invites novelty at UofT; it takes time to put these new opportunities in place and have those involved become familiar with this new tradition in learning. Ultimately, there is recognition that, when stakeholders invest the effort, EL can strengthen UofT and lead to better university connections and innovation.

A HELPING HAND

EL experiences require students to develop new skills most often of a personal nature, causing them to experience anxiety. This requirement puts pressure on the instructor to guide the students in these personal and "soft" skills acquisition—a process that itself is usually personal.

"In the wintertime I'll see them terrified because they have to go meet the client. And we have to go over things like how to make that first phone call. Set up the meeting, how to shake hands or introduce yourself when you first get to the meeting, and things that people who work in a professional environment take for granted but the students have never had it. So, we're almost starting from zero. So that in itself can be a challenge."

"There's a lot of interpersonal time that spent talking to people that doesn't look like you're learning. […] You also need to give people a lot more feedback along the way of a personal nature. [...] Experiential learning requires a lot of talking and interacting."

As a result of this interpersonal nature of the experiences, instructors express some anxiety in terms of the time or effort it takes to aid students, often using the paternalistic term "hand-holding" to describe this support. How can instructors be supported so they can provide this personal feedback to students in EL experiences?

"We become impatient with students and then we're not empathetic to when they are anxious, to helping them deal, or when they have not anxiety but certain problems that require a longer time period—it's difficult to give them the time."

"People say that we need to hand-hold students a lot. And it's true because the projects can be so different. It's hard to address student needs all at once or to scale addressing student needs. So, it requires a lot of time."

"I have […] colleagues who are very dismissive of students' capacities and say things like you have to do so much work scaffolding and guiding. You are giving them the false perception that they're actually generating their own learning and research and so forth. [...] I want to say I'm more willing to see where it goes. Or try."

Instructors also speak about the support they would like with these more demanding new teaching needs. When feeling unsupported, instructors discuss the need for more funding, time, or administrative support. They might equally abandon EL if unsupported. Worse, they can become burnt-out and embittered at the university.

"The tacit resistance occurs because systems and structures aren't set up to help people who want to expand experiential learning. [...] If you don't have the time, if you don't have the commitment, if you're easily deterred, those resistance barriers can be insurmountable. And you just go 'Okay, I'll just go back to regular didactic education instead.'"

All of this interplay of resistance is exacerbated when the stakeholder—student or instructor—is already stretched thin or has too much going on at the university or beyond.

NOT GETTING NEW EXPERIENCES

Students who have other competing experiences, including jobs or other obligations, find that they cannot engage in EL as easily. Students who have disabilities also experience barriers to accessing and engaging in EL opportunities. Barriers to participation highlight that access to EL is an equity issue and raises the question of who EL is privileging.

> "If I'm saying to my students, you're going to be working for a community partner for free to start with, yeah, and it's 50 to 70 hours of your time. When my students are taking other courses, they have a job because they have to sometimes pay for their tuition fees themselves. […] All my students have a job. I don't remember talking to a student who says, 'I don't have to work,' […] . So this is a big commitment."

> "The flipside is that it is a big commitment and some of them just do not have the time to do it. But those who do it are totally committed and they are looking for the professional experience. They are looking for it because they want to be able to say, 'Well, I have this professional experience at work with this particular organization.'"

Students who work or who are caregivers alongside their studies may also be experiencing their own form of "EL" insofar as they experience the personal and job-related development entailed in these responsibilities. However, this experience does not count towards their education and may not be in the specific areas they seek to gain professional experience, possibly exacerbating the inequity that higher education is intended to ameliorate.

> "We just have far too many students who after a day of courses in lab work, have to run home to caregiving or have to run to a job. And I'm worried that if it's a co-curricular activity, it will benefit those who are already privileged."

Instructors can also face similar equity issues when they are similarly pressed and precarious. Several interviewees spoke to the difficulty of being sessional or graduate student instructors, adjuncts, teaching stream or not yet tenured. These instructors can be excited by EL and pressured to undertake EL due to the need to innovate their teaching. But EL can be a risky undertaking for them given some compete to teach courses, their teaching may be more contingent on student evaluations, they may have higher teaching loads and less access to teaching resources, or they are otherwise insecure in their employment.

> "I'm a precarious academic. I don't have much opportunity to think about innovation or about experiential learning when I'm spending half of the semester looking for my next job...there's just conditions that make it difficult […] to push the kind of outside-the-classroom experiential learning environments that I would, that a lot of us, would like to do for our students."

Despite the difficulties, many instructors and students expressed being keen to pursue EL experiences. This interest speaks not only to the passion of those participating, but also the tenacity involved in this new form of learning. How can those involved be continually supported in order to expand even further and secure the novelty of this learning for everyone?

THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE PARTS

EL pushed all stakeholders—students, staff, instructors, and EL partners—into new situations of working with others, empowering them through these connections and collaborations, ultimately building tenacity together. Because of the personal connections between students, instructors, and community or workplace members, interdependence in the learning process is a given. All stakeholders learn from others, so the experience can be mutual and synergistic, but this interdependence can become difficult for moments where connection-making does not happen.

MAKING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

EL involves learning from and through personal connections. This learning relies on forming relationships, working on teams and in collaboration, and the skills involved in these person- and relationship-based practices. This process takes time for students but also all others involved to realize and build, but many interviewees reported the memorable impact it can have on them.

> "Students forget what they learn in classroom but not what they experience in person."

> "I've got one paper that I'm writing on [ceramics] at the [city museum] and the professor's said if we wanted a meeting with the curator to get a closer look at the object […] That was a great opportunity. I found myself so much more interested in my paper. I think it just felt much more personal. […] it got me a lot more excited about being able to write about this and gather some more knowledge."

> "The kind of extra relationship-building […] that emerges with experiential learning creates a bit of a challenge in terms of time, energy, passion, etc. and students sometimes feel uncomfortable."

EL experiences tend to highlight teamwork, collaboration and relationship-building. Not all students immediately have these skills or realize they are required to learn or practice them. Students expressed becoming anxious where teamwork and relationship-building is part of their assessment. On the other side, this learning becomes difficult for instructors to assess, especially when assessment is individually based.

> "I was tasked with the role of project leader. So, I had to arrange my group members because I, although I wasn't very experienced in the field, I was the most experienced out of my group members, which is a bit annoying… it was an interesting experience. It could have been better if I'm being honest. But it was a very useful and interesting experience."

> "I think sometimes some of the obstacles might be that in a lot of experiential learning courses students do group-related work, and collaborative work, and students are not entirely comfortable with that […] especially the stronger students, they're worried about their grades, because they know they've always done well doing what they do. And now their grade is dependent on others. And they're the ones who have the biggest struggle."

> "The challenge with an instructor is, you can't guarantee that collaboration has value to the students […] how are you going to assess that?"

How can EL be recognized as being about more than grades, but also how can the assessment of "soft" skills, especially of working with others, be made more transparent and manageable for all involved?

FROM PERSON TO NETWORK

EL can have synergistic impact on students' and instructors' personal connections, providing new networks of engagement. That the learning requires these networks and network-building makes it dependent on such connections. Students who are already familiar with such network-building may have a leg up and require less support, while students who do not might struggle more in making these connections. Instructors spoke to these troubles with making these connections and relationships on behalf of students.

"Experiential learning from my perspective is a lot about relationship-building. And that relationship-building takes time. And it takes energy. The better relationships I have with community organizations means better experiences for my students and more opportunities. But it also means that I'm asked to attend events or to go to board meetings or whatever it might be. There's lots, there's lots of requests of my time [and energy]."

EL can also reveal isolation or disconnection on the part of the instructor, who, if they do not have connections, may struggle with setting students up or put the onus on students to connect.

"I think experiential learning gives you a tool to connect your work to what's happening in the city or the world around you in ways that sometimes [...] kind of feel isolating or sort of disconnected in some ways."

"It's difficult, right, because I think that requires a lot of work from the faculty member. I didn't grow up in Toronto. [...] And my research as a graduate student wasn't really Toronto-based either. So I really had to develop a lot of relationships."

"We don't have a lot of chances to share those experiences, we tend to sort of do our own thing a lot [...] that if there are more venues for sharing more opportunities, more incentives to like, develop these peer networks, that would probably be a good thing"

In sum, stakeholders build relationships and learn relationship-building skills through EL. When they have these skills and networks, they can be ready to hit the ground running. When they do not, they can be more anxious to engage, but ultimately can build them even if disconnected and reluctant at first.

COMMUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

The personal and positive connection-making of EL spans beyond the university, building strong networks or relationships. Many stakeholders pointed out that this requires making sure that reciprocity for everyone is built into the process.

"Thinking through how to ensure that the communities that we work with, are treated as partners rather than as recipients of students or as places in which we can extract knowledge and bring into the academy."

"The potential for the students causing some kind of trouble, or, or just making life harder for organizations is there. And the ability to prepare students to go out into communities, it's hard to do."

"It's always a bumpy road finding committed qualified mentors. You know, you think that they're qualified and committed and then the student tells you a month later that all they're doing is filing papers and making coffee runs. And so this is the danger about viewing all experiential education as educational."

Ultimately, the interdependence that is fostered in the process of EL connects and creates strong community as well as the people within and connected to it. The reliance on others is a challenging process, but it is the necessary ingredient for building and maintaining these networks.

ENCOURAGING POSITIVE FAILURE

Stakeholders underscored the importance of learning through failure and the need to persist through these experiences for full learning. Failure, however, can be difficult on all stakeholders when it comes to assessment outcomes, the rationale to continue, and shorter timelines. How can we get stakeholders not to give up too early? How can failure be transformed into something positive, even successful?

LEARNING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY & DISCOMFORT

EL takes stakeholders out of their comfort zones and requires degrees of discomfort and uncertainty. Many interviewees spoke to how this discomfort was an essential ingredient to the learning process as well as what makes it hard.

> "[As a student] There's a few times where I feel like, should I go to these events [at the EL organization]? Like, do I belong here?"

> "I've definitely had some students who had pretty eye-opening experiences by working in neighbourhoods that they probably would have avoided. For both good and bad...they're exposed to people who have different lived experiences and themselves and that can be shocking or disquieting for the students."

> "I say to students, well, the good news is we know you're going to be uncomfortable and being uncomfortable is not a bad thing, you know, I would argue if you're not uncomfortable you're not learning anything."

The difficultly becomes transforming discomfort into learning. Stakeholders suggested that it requires processing these feelings, countering imposter syndrome, and incorporating reflection on what has been learned.

RISKING MISTAKES

Students learn to take risks, sometimes making mistakes or failing, but still learning through these experiences. This learning sometimes takes longer, but those involved suggested that it fosters creativity.

> "Experiential projects require students to be creative, require them to take risks, require them to sometimes fail and recognize the value in failure, the inevitability of failure, the non-stigmatized reality of failure that goes beyond the immediate of 'learn this research method', 'do this interview', 'build this collaborative project', that sort of thing that I hope has something of a life lesson to it."

> "So the idea of embracing applied learning I think itself embraces failure. The idea that you're supposed to make mistakes, you know, good quality mistakes, is part of that process. A lot of the process does require uncertainty as well. And, that's challenging."

Failure can be difficult to fit with evaluations and with security in teaching position. Stakeholders discussed flexibility and understanding are involved in making a 'good quality mistake.'

"Yeah, I encourage them to take risks. You know, I, of course, I will let them resubmit assignments, based on feedback […] it's built in as a mistake process where you know, when they do this, I tell them to make mistakes."

"If you have a failed experiential component to the class, an administrator might say, well, you just told the students to go for a walk in [neighbourhood], like what do you expect?... If you get lukewarm teaching evaluations, but you teach the content and you don't piss anybody off. That's, that's the best way to do it."

"Sometimes you come up with a great project and for whatever reason it was poorly conceived, the students weren't into it. City Council meeting was adjourned early, whatever like this. And you have to have the institutional space, the security, and your job to feel like you can take risks."

In sum, positive failures, that is, failures with the potential to transform into learning and future success, require a secure environment in which to make them, both on the part of the student, instructors, and ultimately, the university. EL at UofT is exciting, it is new in many cases, but it has this potential—even in failure—to build new connections and communities, and ultimately, ones with strengthened tenacity.

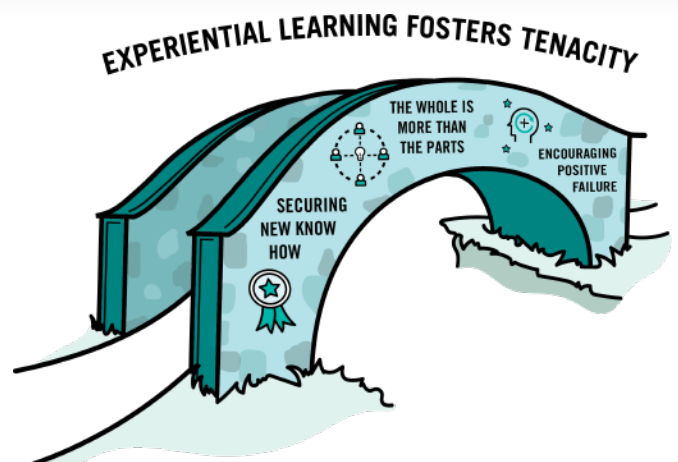# EXPANDING THE IMPACTS OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

EL enhances UofT's educational excellence. We found that EL fosters tenacity in all those involved by securing new know-how, recognizing that the whole is more than the parts, and encouraging positive failure.

However, this approach to EL assumes that students are not necessarily gaining the impacts of EL elsewhere in their university experiences. Even further, if they have access, UofT students are going into these opportunities lacking tenacity and without the necessary skills to excel. What could be done to strengthen and extend tenacity throughout education at UofT and beyond EL? Our findings reflect the experiences that occur within EL, but they also offer a further reflection on the wider experience and structure of education at UofT.

HOW COULD EDUCATION BE MADE EXPERIENTIAL BROADLY?

How could the benefits of EL occur throughout students' whole time at the university? How could education be made experiential throughout, extending the benefits of EL beyond the specific opportunities, even preceding or enhancing these specific EL opportunities?

By extending and strengthening education such that it is experiential throughout, we can foster tenacity in learning as a whole, making the impact of experiential education universal and accessible for every student at UofT.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOSTERS TENACITY

THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE PARTS
ENCOURAGING POSITIVE FAILURE
SECURING NEW KNOW HOW

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
FOR LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Here we offer design principles aimed at making learning experiential throughout the student experience, whether in the classroom or in EL opportunities. In this way, we can provide the impact of experiential learning to more students and in more ways without compromising access and inclusion.

EXCELLENCE INVOLVES NOVELTY

Learning entails encountering something new for students, whether it is new content, skills, contexts and more. For some students, there may be more that is new than for other students, based on what students have had access to in their life experiences. Excellent learning embraces this novelty in the process, fostering students to respond with confidence and creativity even in uncertainty and ambiguity. Innovation in learning involves letting go of and even challenging what students might be used to, what is expected, and traditional ideas we have about how learning is supposed to happen. Allowing for this novelty leads to excellent learning for students and allows them to be creative about how to define excellence.

BRAVING UNCERTAINTY

Students brave a lot to be at the university and take risks in their learning by putting themselves out there, trying out new ideas, practicing new skills often for the first time. For many students, the risks can be even higher if they are from communities who are underrepresented at the university or for whom certain opportunities have been historically inaccessible. Because of the unfamiliarity generated by novelty in learning, students frequently express uncertainty and fear. Uncertainty is a part of student lives and learning, and so giving them skills for managing this uncertainty as well as continuing to work in it, fosters their continued development and self-assurance. Having student recognize, practice, and celebrate this courage to learn even in the unfamiliar is vital for developing their self-conviction.

PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS

Learning entails doing something actively. Students gain new skills by practicing and doing them more than once. This practice is activated by student initiative, which in turn activates trying. Trying skills out takes theoretical and abstract concepts and makes them come alive for students, making the concepts relevant and engaging student learning more deeply in the world. This student learning can also be challenging when the concepts are changed by the world, new contexts, and more, and requires patience and support. The best and bravest learning happens in a hands-on manner by getting involved in the complexity of the world, sometimes failing in the process, but also asking for a helping hand when it is necessary.

EXPERIMENTING WITH EXCELLENCE

Learning involves students discovering and experimenting with their own diverse strengths. This discovery can be personally transformative for students as they hone in on these unique strengths, learning about themselves and exploring and refining their unique future journey. In this way students learn to redefine excellence in their own terms through the various opportunities they explore. For some students, experimenting and discovering their strengths, thereby defining excellence on their own terms, can be challenging and require extra support.

CULTIVATING CONFIDENCE

Students gain not just skills from learning, but also the confidence to practice and experience using them. This confidence in turn takes practice through taking risks with trying out new skills in order to lead to their development. Students learn that confidence is not something one has or does not, but something that is practiced and gained alongside with skills and strengths.

FAIL FORWARD

Given that learning involves students trying to practice skills, it also involves failure. In fact, this failure is critical for the learning process, especially when it is transformed into positive insight on how to do a task more successfully next time. The result is failing successfully. Failure, however, can be costly, especially for students who are risking a lot to be at university, and ensuring that failure is successful and safe is critical to supporting students in the learning process. Recognize that learning happens in many spheres of life, including in failure, and that all learning is valuable.

REFLECTION IS LEARNING

A key element of learning for students is reflecting on the process: on what students did, what they might have done differently, and how they were changed in the process. Ensuring there is space and time for this reflection leads to learning, even when there have been challenges or failure. Reflection makes the learning process happen.

START SMALL TO GROW

Given the potential failures, uncertainties, and risks involved, adopting a prototype mindset ensures low-stakes, small-scale learning where trial and error can happen in a secure environment prior to higher stakes situations. Adopting the approach of piloting smaller scale learning counters an all-or-nothing approach that heightens everyone's anxiety about the uncertainty of learning and its benefits. Once errors can be addressed or handled at a small safer scale, those involved in learning can have the knowledge of how to handle various issues and the confidence to take on learning opportunities or even in applying their learning in real world scenarios.

HUMANIZING LEARNING

Learning happens with people and in relationships, growing students' personal connections and networks as much as students themselves. Thus, learning is personal in two ways: transforming students personally and connecting them with persons. Making this learning more personally relevant to the students, such as centering their personal growth (e.g. goal and strengths development) strengths their learning. On the flip side, learning involves teamwork and collaboration with people, so be conscientious to them as well.

RECIPROCAL BENEFIT

Many different partners in the broader community, not just students, are involved in learning at UofT, all of whom have stakes in process. Ensuring that everyone gains from the learning is essential for commitment, trust, and future learning partnerships. When considering the expected gains, it is crucial to be realistic, acknowledging that sometimes longer-term benefits must be considered as opposed to immediate advantage or lack thereof. Where there is mutualism and reciprocity in all the relationships such that everyone gains something, this community learning ensures its success and continuity.

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2 - We are using Experiential Learning (EL) as a capacious term that is synonymous with the term Integrated Learning Experiences as outlined by UofT, which includes modes of experiential learning as defined by Kolb (1984) as well as work-integrated and community-engaged learning. (for more, see: Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall; University of Toronto. (2017). Rethinking Higher Education Curricula: Increasing Impact Through Experiential, Work-Integrated, and Community-Engaged Learning. https://experientiallearning.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/UofT-WIL-EL-White-Paper-July-2017.pdf).

3 - University of Toronto. (2017). Rethinking Higher Education Curricula: Increasing Impact Through Experiential, Work-Integrated, and Community-Engaged Learning. https://experientiallearning.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/UofT-WIL-EL-White-Paper-July-2017.pdf. Drawing on research, the white paper lays out how academically, EL increases student engagement in theoretical material, understanding of complexity, analytical, critical and problem-solving skills and cognitive development. Personally, EL develops student identity, moral development, social, civic, and community responsibility and interpersonal and professional skills. EL also allows student to explore career paths and build networks and experience prior to graduation, leading to increased employability, smoother school-to-job transitions, and higher starting salaries EL has also been shown to have social and community benefits, such as enhanced connections with the university, scholarship and faculty, and resources.

4 - Stirling, Ashley. (n.d.) Access and Accessibility. University of Toronto Experiential Learning Hub. https://experientiallearning.utoronto.ca/faculty-staff/learn/course-and-program-resources/access-and-accessibility/

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