

To: The Faculty Assembly Executive Council
CC: Provost Beth Barnett
From: Cherrie Kassem, Chair
Re: Task Force on Experiential Learning
Date: March 28, 2007

Task Force Membership:

Cherrie Kassem (chair); Madhu Govindaluri, Susan Kurzmann, Jennefer Mazza, Carol Morrison, Katarzyna Potocka, Bernard Roy, Sharon Rubin, Matthew Swarts.

Task Force Charges:

In preparation for the strategic planning process and for the Middle States self study, Provost Beth Barnett convened the Task Force on Experiential Learning (TFEL) to reaffirm the College's commitment to experiential learning (EL) by completing the following tasks:

1. Review previous committee reports on EL and revise its definition;
2. Develop a vision statement for EL;
3. Set College and student learning goals for EL;
4. Offer recommendations on the assessment of EL goals;
5. Make recommendations about current EL requirements, with particular attention to the EL component in the CEP; and
6. Recommend processes for high quality EL activities.

Task Force Processes:

The TFEL was comprised of representatives from: each School, the Dean's Council, the Cahill Center, and the Provost's appointee. The TFEL reviewed the following documents in preparation for completing the charge: the mission statement of Ramapo College; previous committee work on EL; the last Middle States self-study report; David Kolb's work on the experiential learning cycle; articles on service-learning; and sample EL Programs from numerous other institutions, most notably Alverno College in Wisconsin.

The TFEL was charged by the Provost in November 2006 and met approximately bi-weekly to complete its charge by the deadline of April 1, 2007. Some portions of the Task Force's work were accomplished via email. Task force members also met with members of the larger campus community on March 7, 2007, for "Pillar Talk." Feedback from that meeting was incorporated into the final report.

Task Force on Experiential Learning Report

Definition

Experiential learning is a purposeful process of engaged, active learning in which the student constructs knowledge, skills, or values by means of direct experiences in authentic, real-world contexts.

Experiential learning often includes the following components:

- Hands-on or minds-on engagement
- Facilitated, guided practice
- Multi-dimensional growth/development
- Reflection
- Application of theory/classroom knowledge
- Student learning goals, assessments, and documentation
- Service to a larger community

*Experiential learning goes beyond the conventional “comfort zone” of college course activities such as reading texts, doing homework, writing papers, performing studio or lab work, etc.

Vision

The Task Force on Experiential Learning believes that EL always has been, and still is, a fundamental mission of Ramapo College. Toward that mission, the Task Force envisions:

- A full-spectrum view of EL that includes service-learning, cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, field mentors, and other hands-on learning experiences.
- Students as lifelong learners.
- A clear, explicit, organic integration of EL into content majors by means of College, program, and/or course outcome statements.
- Systematic and explicit assessments of College, program, and course EL goals.
- Assessment standards that are developmental, challenging students to move from simple to more complex tasks and understandings.
- Data collection to document achievement of EL goals.
- That the faculty develop mechanisms to oversee College/course EL goals and assessments.
- That faculty participation in EL activities may be a consideration in the tenure/promotion process.
- That the College supports the resources, time, and professional development needed for faculty and staff to implement the EL component of the College mission.

Goals

With respect to goals that support the experiential pillar of the College, the Task Force on Experiential Learning suggests that:

1. That EL opportunities are designed to enhance students': civic engagement, pre-professional, global/intercultural, and real world problem-solving perspectives.
2. The College provides students the opportunity to share and/or exhibit their EL achievements, and to be recognized for them.
3. That EL equips students with the spirit and skills of lifelong learners.
4. That EL is an explicit, integral component of all College content majors and/or programs, as evidenced by learner outcome statements.
5. That assessment and evaluation of EL are required at all levels of the curriculum.
6. That evidence of EL is documented by students and submitted to faculty.
7. That assessment of EL goals is part of each convening group's five year review process, the results of which are submitted to Deans and to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.
8. That College-wide implementation of EL opportunities is developmental, progressing from greater faculty oversight to greater student self-monitoring.
9. That College resources for the professional development of faculty and staff are augmented.
10. That orientation sessions for new faculty provide information on EL.
11. The new students are oriented to the EL pillar of the College (in first-year seminar, for example).
12. That Ramapo College's partnerships with external agencies, service providers, and businesses are strengthened.
13. That the Cahill Center continues to coordinate EL placements and documentation support.
14. That the CEP requirement for "experiential learning" be renamed and re-conceptualized.

Assessment

The Task Force on Experiential Learning offers the following suggestions with respect to the assessment of **College** EL goals:

1. That assessments are aligned with College goals and with external standards.
2. That data analyses focus on the patterns of performance expected, given a developmental implementation model.
3. That multiple methods of assessment are used.
4. That data provide meaningful feedback to faculty, staff, and the public regarding the experiential learning goals of the College.
5. That assessment data inform organizational policies and practices.

The Task Force on Experiential Learning offers the following suggestions with respect to the assessment of **student learning outcomes**:

1. That learning goals are aligned with College/program goals.
2. That learning goals are clearly stated and articulated in order to help students develop the experience-based knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate for their disciplines.
3. That assessment criteria and standards are communicated to students prior to the experiential learning activity.
4. That student reflection is a component of the learning process and outcomes assessment.
5. That multiple methods of assessment are used to determine whether or not students have met learning goals.
6. That programmatic assessment data are accumulated and studied for the purpose of organizational development.

Examples of Ways to Obtain Evidence of Experiential Learning (Learning Processes)

After exploration of experiential learning opportunities at other institutions, the Task Force on Experiential Learning offers these possible means of attaining evidence that experiential learning goals have been met:

- Demonstration of skills learned via experience.
- Direct observation of students performing in the learning environment.
- Evaluation of projects that resulted from experiential learning.
- Evaluation of products (paper, collage, etc.) that resulted from experiential learning.
- Oral presentations by students regarding their learning experiences.
- Personal interviews of students regarding their learning experiences.
- Work samples or simulations of the direct learning experience.
- Oral or written student reflections on the learning experience.
- Oral or written examinations (traditional assessments).