CLOSING THE GAP IN
EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Information for Faculty, Staff, and Advisors

From 2021-2023, with the assistance of a post-doctoral student and PhD student, the Pomerantz Career Center analyzed pre-existing data as well as collected new data via focus groups, surveys, and interviews with students, faculty, staff and specific academic departments to identify barriers and solutions to undergraduate student gaps in experiential education participation.

The first year of assessment confirmed trends between Senior Exit Survey Data and Post-Graduation Placement data, with qualitative data then pointing towards students' need for paid work conflicting with their ability to participate in experiential education.

The second year of assessment confirmed the conflict between paid work as well as the potential for student-employment experiential education interventions by analyzing point in time data, 8 years of student-employment data, as well as SERU and UI GROW data. While information and potential interventions are also being shared with administrators, the information and recommended actions herein are tailored for faculty, staff, and advisors.

Data Sources:

- 48 faculty/staff participants in focus groups, interviews, or informational meetings
- 17 student participants in focus groups or interviews
- 246 Experiential Education Student Survey student participants
- **SERU (Student Experience in the Research University)**

- **UI Senior Exit Survey**
- **UI Post-Graduation Data**
- UI GROW Data Dashboard
- Fall 2022 On-Campus Student Employment Data
- 2014-2022 On-Campus Student Employment Data

Knowledge Gained:

- Gaps in experiential education participation exist by First-Generation status and by certain academic departments *(UI Senior Exit Survey & UI Post-Graduation Data)*
- Those who self-identified as 'low income' or 'working class' reported participating in experiential education at lower rates than respondents overall *(Experiential Education Student Survey)*
- Both First-Generation students and students in departments with lower participation in experiential education work paid jobs on campus at higher-than-average rates, and First-Generation students also report more negative impacts from food insecurity *(On Campus Student Employment Data; SERU)*

- Students with GPAs below 3.0 report lower access to opportunities *(Qualitative Data)*
- Students report needing information regarding experiential education and wanting it earlier in their academic career *(Qualitative Data; Experiential Education Student Survey)*
- Students report not knowing what UI resources exist for networking and building social capital while at UI *(Experiential Education Student Survey)*

Recommended Actions:
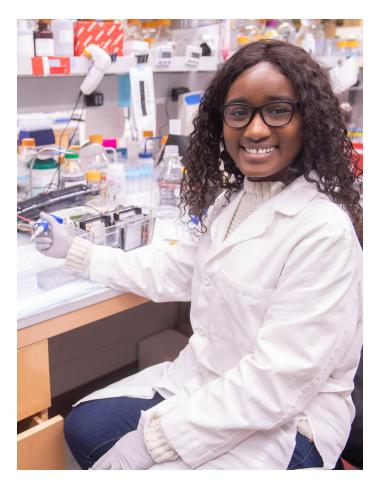
✓ Remove Systemic Barriers

- Ensure that your department's experience courses (independent studies, undergraduate research, special projects, capstones, practicums, internships, study abroad, etc.) are available to those with a GPA below 3.0

- Create embedded experiential education courses where students do not have to take significant time away from paid work to find a site or to participate (Examples: community-engaged courses, service-learning courses, consulting projects, vs. 40 hour a week practicums or internships)

- If creating an experiential education course requirement for graduation, ensure that there are course options during the academic school year and that any summer requirement has a 0-credit option in order to reduce financial burdens on students. This is especially important for any requirements that would keep students past 8 semesters of course work for degree.

✓ Embed Early Preparation

- When advising, use student friendly language of "gaining relevant experience" and "building connections" to dispel pressure to only do an internship or relieve stress associated with the word "networking"

- Ask students early in their academic careers what experiences they plan to participate in and how they are building connections with peers, faculty/staff, and professionals in their field

- Partner with Office of Study Abroad, Office of Undergraduate Research, Leadership, Service & Civic Engagement, or Pomerantz Career Center, for information or preparation workshops in classes, student organizations, programs, or department meetings

- Collaborate with employers, alumni, community partners, peer leaders, or the Career Center to support student networking skills and foster connections in classes, student organizations, programs, or department-sponsored events

- Join the Experiential Education Community of Practice (coming Fall 2023) through the Center for Teaching if designing or teaching experiential courses.

✓ Make Referrals

- Refer first and second year students to **engage.uiowa.edu** for an overview of different experiences and access to the support offices for these experiences, as well as to search options within MyUI for finding experiential education courses

- Inform colleagues in your department about **engage.uiowa.edu**

- Refer students early in their academic career to **Financial Literacy Services** to budget for an experience

- Refer students (especially low-income and/or first-generation students) to the **Hawkeye Experience Grant**

- Inform department alumni and donor networks of the Hawkeye Experience Grant as a giving option, and/or continue to steward your department's own experience fund