

Shared Competencies Course Tagging Toolkit for Existing Courses

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Office of Academic Affairs

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A letter from your colleagues

In December 2018, the University Senate approved six Shared Competencies and corresponding framing language to serve as a campus-wide set of undergraduate student learning goals. These learning goals will not only help students identify common connections between seemingly different learning experiences but will also help the University meet the Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation standards.

Course tags have several benefits for students.

- They highlight key knowledge domains and skill sets students can expect to learn in a course.
- They enable students to see, reflect on, and explain connections between individual courses, assignments, and experiences.
- They suggest useful language and highlight tangible examples to discuss during their job or graduate search processes.
- They aid students in navigating various New York State, external accreditation, and major requirements, while developing a course schedule that produces an enriching learning experience.

Course tagging presents an opportunity for academic departments to ensure continuity across course sections and allows faculty to engage in collaborative conversations about course design and curricula. Several of Syracuse University's peer and aspirational institutions engage in similar processes:

- [Columbia University](#)
- [Harvard University](#)
- [Stanford University](#)
- [University at Buffalo](#)
- [University of Chicago](#)
- [University of Maryland](#)
- [University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill](#)

If you have any questions or would like to meet and discuss the process, please contact us!

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Shared Competencies & Framing Language

Syracuse University prepares undergraduate students for professional and personal success through six institutional learning goals called Shared Competencies. The Shared Competencies enable students to communicate their learning experience, provide pathways for academic development, and integrate different aspects of a Syracuse University education.

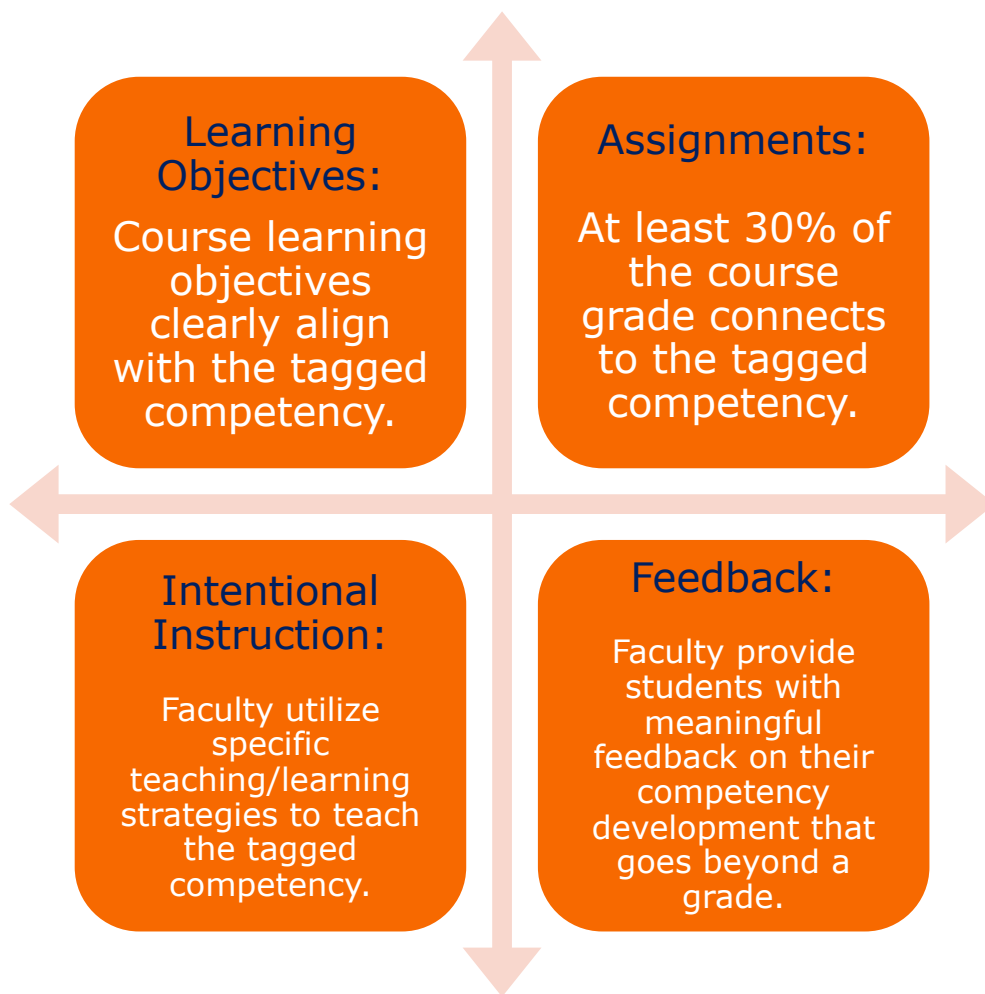
Competency	Framing Language
Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion	Reflection on the dynamic relationships among power, inequality, identities, and social structures. Thoughtful engagement with one's values, intersectional identities, experiences, and diverse perspectives and people. Application of ethical and inclusive decision-making in the context of personal, academic, professional, and collaborative pursuits.
Critical & Creative Thinking	Exploration and synthesis of ideas, artifacts, issues, and events to inform and evaluate arguments, develop new insights, and produce creative work. Reflection on, and application of divergent modes of inquiry, analysis, and innovation to research, knowledge, and artistic creation.
Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills	Application of scientific inquiry and problem solving in various contexts. Analysis of theories, replication of procedures, and rethinking existing frameworks. Supporting arguments through research, data, and quantitative and qualitative evidence that can generate new knowledge.
Civic & Global Responsibility	Knowledge, exploration, and analysis of the complexity surrounding interdependent local, national, and global affairs. Engagement in responsible, collaborative, and inclusive civic and cross-cultural learning, with an emphasis on public, global, and historical issues.
Communication Skills	Effective individual, interpersonal, and collaborative presentation and development of ideas through oral, written, and other forms of expression to inform, persuade, or inspire.
Information Literacy & Technological Agility	Identification, collection, evaluation, and responsible use of information. Effective, ethical, and critical application of various technologies and media in academic, creative, personal, and professional endeavors.

Conceptual Framework

The Shared Competencies enhance undergraduate education through an integrated learning approach. Integrative learning fosters a student's ability to learn, connect, and demonstrate the competencies across their experiences by:

- putting theory into practice;
- considering the perspectives of different disciplines to advance collaborative problem-solving;
- adapting the skills learned in one situation to problems encountered in another; and
- reflecting on connections made over time between academic, co-curricular, and preprofessional settings.¹

Undergraduate students develop competencies through their major degree requirements, liberal arts requirements, and experiences. Course tagging presents an opportunity for faculty to help students connect the dots between these learning experiences. Courses that are tagged should engage students in the following principles:



¹ Miller, R. (2005). Integrative learning and assessment. *Peer Review*, 7 (Summer/Fall 2005), 3/4.

Retrieved from

https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA137915258&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=15411389&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=nysl_ce_syr&aty=ip

Logistics

The deadline to complete the course tagging process is **October 27, 2023**. This deadline allows the Office of Academic Affairs to review submissions with enough time to follow up with departments to seek clarification if needed, allows departments to respond, and ensures course tags are included in the 2024-25 Course Catalog and course registration process. Faculty can utilize this checklist to navigate the course tagging process:

Documents You May Need:	
	Current course syllabus.
	Faculty approved/revised Discovery Template which mapped the program's student learning outcomes to the Shared Competencies. If faculty need a copy, please e-mail competencies@syr.edu .
	Current copy of the program's curriculum map.
Suggested Steps for Course Tagging:	
	Set aside time during a program faculty meeting to review the Shared Competencies and corresponding framing language on page 3 . Review the course tagging criteria on page 7 and discuss which courses are eligible for tagging.
	If courses have a teaching rotation or are taught across multiple sections, engage all faculty stakeholders in a conversation about how the course tags and assignments will be consistent year to year or across course sections.
	If a course is required for multiple academic programs within a school/college (for instance, ECS101 is required for all engineering majors) consult with your associate dean/program coordinator to determine how it should be tagged for the school/college.
	For each required course/experience or elective that may fulfill a distribution requirement, complete the online Course Tag Reflection Form for Existing Courses by October 27, 2023 . This single form allows faculty to designate a course with up to three tags.
	Review resources to guide course tag submissions: The rubric used to review course tags can be found on page 6 . A blank worksheet to guide discussions and can be found on pages 7-8 . A completed example form can be found on pages 10-13 .
	Consider using the syllabus as a motivating tool to help students connect the dots between course assignments, course learning objectives, and the course tag. Please refer to an example on page 9 .
	Consider the High Impact Practices listed on page 14 when identifying assignments in the online Course Tag Reflection Form for Existing Courses .
	Reflect on your curriculum map with your course tags in mind. Do students have the opportunity to learn and develop all six competencies through the required courses? If not, consider where students might develop the competencies either in liberal arts requirements and/or experiences.

Course Tagging Rubric

The Office of Academic Affairs will use the following rubric to approve course tags. Faculty can utilize this rubric to guide their submissions and craft responses to each course tag question. Course tag submissions must receive a total score of 4 or higher and each dimension must receive a score of 1 or 2. Faculty can revise and resubmit submissions to meet these criteria.

Dimension	Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Criteria Not Evident
	2	1	0
Course Learning Objectives Alignment	Responses identify multiple course learning objectives <u>from the syllabus</u> that are aligned to the competency for which the course is tagged.	Responses identify at least one course learning objective <u>from the syllabus</u> that aligns to the competency for which the course is tagged.	Course learning objectives do not align to the competency for which the course is tagged and/or do not match those listed in the syllabus.
Assignment Alignment & Weight	Responses explain the connection between specific assignment(s) and the specific competency in detail. Assignment(s) weight is greater than 30% of their course grade.	Responses state the connection between assignment(s) and the specific competency. Assignment(s) weight is equal to 30% of their course grade.	Connection between assignment(s) and the specific competency is not stated or the assignment weight does not meet the 30% threshold.
Intentional Instruction	Responses describe in detail multiple instructional strategies faculty employ to teach the specific competency (e.g., lecture, flipped classroom, small group activities).	Responses describe at least one instructional strategy faculty employ to teach the specific competency (e.g., lecture, flipped classroom, small group activities).	Specific instructional strategies are not described.
Competency Feedback	Responses explain feedback tool(s) faculty use to support students' competency development (e.g., rubric, oral critique, peer feedback, self-assessment, written feedback, one-on-one student meetings).	Responses state feedback tool(s) faculty use to provide general feedback (e.g., rubric, oral critique, peer feedback, self-assessment, written feedback, one-on-one student meetings).	Responses indicate feedback is only a numerical or letter grade.

Blank Worksheet

Faculty can utilize this blank worksheet to guide discussions on course tagging and copy information into the online [Course Tag Reflection Form for Existing Courses](#). Faculty can tag a course with up to three tags.

For each course, academic departments will need to provide the following information:

Primary Course Contact

This faculty/staff member will be the key point of contact for collaborating with the Office of Academic Affairs and communicating the course tag status to the academic program.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Additional Course Contact

This faculty/staff member will be another key point of contact for collaborating with the Office of Academic Affairs and communicating the course tag status to the academic program.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Course Information

Department: _____

Course Prefix and Number (Example: SYR 123): _____

Syllabus:

Upload the current course syllabus. Please include the course prefix and number in the file name, for example "SYR 123 Syllabus"

If this course has a teaching rotation or is taught across multiple sections, have the participating faculty engaged in a conversation about how the course tag and assignments will be consistent year to year or across course sections?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ This course does not have a teaching rotation

Course Tagging Criteria

At this time, course tagging applies to undergraduate courses that are

- Required (including electives that are part of distribution requirements)
- Offered regularly or at least once in three years
- 3 or more credits (required 1-2 credit courses can also be tagged)

Does this course meet the criteria?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

For each tag, academic departments will need to provide the following information:

Course Tag:

- ☐ Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion
- ☐ Critical & Creative Thinking
- ☐ Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills
- ☐ Civic & Global Responsibility
- ☐ Communication Skills
- ☐ Information Literacy & Technological Agility

Identify the course learning objectives in the syllabus that are clearly aligned to the selected competency and respective assignment(s).

Explain the connection between specific assignment(s) and the selected competency. At least 30% of the course grade must engage students in the selected competency for the course to be tagged.

Describe in detail the instructional strategies faculty use to intentionally teach the selected competency in the course.

Describe the feedback tool(s) faculty use to support students' competency development on the selected competency.

Syllabus Integration: Connecting the Dots for Students

The course syllabus is an ideal place for students to see how the knowledge, skills, and work produced in class connects to their course, major and institutional learning goals. This is currently not required, but a study of other college/university tagging efforts shows that this is a best practice. Below is an example from Syracuse University's MAX 302 syllabus which communicates the connection between the program learning outcomes, course learning objectives, assignments, and Shared Competencies course tags.

CCE PROGRAM VALUES & Learning Outcome Statements	MAX 302 Course Learning Objectives. This semester you will:	Course Assignments	Two Syracuse University Shared Competencies Stressed in MAX 302
VALUES & ETHICS – Students will be able to evaluate ethical practices of citizenship and civic and community engagement in light of different public philosophies, societal and community values, and their own experiences.	Train and get certified formally to conduct ethical social science research.	Reflection #3: CITI Training for Human Subjects Research	
RESEARCH & DISCOVERY – Students will be able to utilize social science research methodologies to discover community and societal facts and values.	Explore Civic Studies research and the research that is associated with your companion major(s).	Reflections #1 and #2	SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY & RESEARCH SKILLS: Application of scientific inquiry and problem solving in various contexts. Analysis of theories, replication of procedures, and rethinking existing frameworks. Supporting arguments through research, data, and quantitative and qualitative evidence that can generate new knowledge.
	Research and write an annotated bibliography, literature review and final research report.	Annotated Bibliography Literature Review Final Research Report	
	Learn about and practice social science research design.	Research Prospectus Revise & Resubmit	
COMMUNITY & CONTEXT – Students will be able to analyze and evaluate the development of civic life in specific locational settings, from global to local.	Identify, analyze, and evaluate facts and values associated with the community and organizations where you believe your MAX 401 Senior Action Plan will occur.	Reflection #4	
COLLABORATION & ENGAGEMENT – Students will be able to interact and work with diverse communities using appropriate and ethical practices.	Present orally the major findings of your research at a public poster session.	Research Poster and Public Presentation	
DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION – Students will be able to create a feasible and sustainable community and/ or civic engagement project or policy with a partner organization.	Create and use a research prospectus as the basis for a research project.	Research Prospectus	CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING: Exploration and synthesis of ideas, artifacts, issues, and events to inform and evaluate arguments, develop new insights, and produce creative work. Reflection on, and application of divergent modes of inquiry, analysis, and innovation to research, knowledge, and artistic creation.

Completed Course Tag Reflection Form Example

Below is an example of a completed course tag reflection form. More [approved examples](#) from SU faculty can be found on the course tagging website.

Primary Course Contact

This faculty/staff member will be the key point of contact for collaborating with the Office of Academic Affairs and communicating the course tag status to the academic program.

First Name: Anne

Last Name: Mosher

E-mail: amosher@syr.edu

Course Information

Department: Citizenship and Civic Engagement

Course Prefix (Example: SYR): MAX 302

Syllabus:

MAX302 Syllabus

If this course has a teaching rotation or is taught across multiple sections, have the participating faculty engaged in a conversation about how the course tag and assignments will be consistent year to year or across course sections?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ This course does not have a teaching rotation

Course Tagging Criteria

At this time, course tagging applies to undergraduate courses that are

- Required
- Offered regularly or at least once in three years
- 3 or more credits

Does this course meet the criteria?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Course Tag 1:

- ☐ Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion
- ☐ Critical & Creative Thinking
- ☒ Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills
- ☐ Civic & Global Responsibility
- ☐ Communication Skills
- ☐ Information Literacy & Technological Agility

Identify the course learning objectives in the syllabus that are clearly aligned to Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills and respective assignment(s).

Three CLOSs clearly align to Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills.

1. Explore Civic Studies research and the research that is associated with your companion major(s).
2. Research and write an annotated bibliography, literature review and final research report.
3. Learn about and practice social science research design.

The first CLOS helps students gain an overview of the research process as it is conducted in different fields of study. The second CLOS gives students practice in library research and the communication of different forms of literature. The third CLOS asks students to apply what they have learned as they carry out a pilot research project.

Explain the connection between specific assignment(s) and Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills. At least 30% of the course grade must engage students in the selected competency for the course to be tagged.

1. Reflection #1: Civic Studies: 5% Students reflect on the ways in which civic life is researched.
2. Reflection #3: CITI Training: 5% Students reflect on the ethics of human subjects research.
3. Reflection #4: Revisiting Civic Studies and the Other Major(s): 5% Students reflect on the ways in which different social science disciplines conduct research on civic life.
4. An Annotated Bibliography: 10% Students get practice doing a literature search to discover prior research and how they might apply to their anticipated CCE work.
5. A Literature Review: 10% Students communicate their discoveries about prior research and articulate how it might inform their CCE work.
6. A Final Research Report: 20% Students communicate a research question, a viable research design, and present the findings of a pilot research project.

55% of the course grade relates to this competency.

Describe in detail the instructional strategies faculty use to intentionally teach Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills in the course.

In this course, faculty hold in-class research design workshops and charettes, ask students to make presentations about the research process, facilitate discussions about the research process, and meet one on one with students. The course stages the research process in appropriate assignment-size pieces. Students get feedback at the completion of each stage and are invited to revise and resubmit, if necessary. This is to underscore the iterative nature of scientific research.

Describe the feedback tool(s) faculty use to support students' competency development on Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills.

In this course, faculty give direct verbal feedback on student's engagement with the research process during workshops and after presentations; faculty and peers give written feedback after workshops and presentations; and faculty meet once with each individual student for an hour outside of class to review feedback on a scoring rubric as part of a revise & resubmit exercise related to brief research proposal submitted midway through the course. Rubrics are used with all assignments and include space for written comments.

Course Tag 2:

- ☐ Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion
- ☒ Critical & Creative Thinking
- ☐ Scientific Inquiry & Research Skills
- ☐ Civic & Global Responsibility
- ☐ Communication Skills
- ☐ Information Literacy & Technological Agility

Identify the course learning objectives in the syllabus that are clearly aligned to Critical and Creative Thinking and respective assignment(s).

The following course learning objective from the syllabus that is most clearly aligned to Critical & Creative Thinking is: "Create and use a research prospectus as the basis for a research project."

Explain the connection between specific assignment(s) and Critical and Creative Thinking. At least 30% of the course grade must engage students in Critical and Creative Thinking for the course to be tagged.

Several assignments ask the student to create pieces of the research prospectus/final research report. They are:

- 1) Annotated Bibliography: students exercise critical thinking in selecting entries for inclusion and for extracting pertinent information: 10%
- 2) Literature Review: students exercise critical thinking and creativity in developing and presenting a narrative about the literature that they read to create the annotated bibliography: 10%
- 3) A Revised and Resubmitted Research Prospectus: students exercise critical and creative thinking when developing and writing their prospectus draft (grade not

included in final course grade), and then perform this work again in response to a request for revision and resubmission of the prospectus: 15% of course grade.

- 4) A Final Research Report: students exercise critical and creative thinking as they pull the requisite pieces of the final project together: 20%
- 5) Poster and Poster Presentation: students exercise creativity in designing both the research poster and the narrative that goes along with it: 15%

Total assignments related to this competency: 70%

Describe in detail the instructional strategies faculty use to intentionally teach Critical and Creative Thinking in the course.

Class visit Bird Library to select potential literature and present it to peers for validation. Storyboarding and storyboard presentation to class when putting together the narrative arc for the literature review. Revise and resubmit matrix used for prospectus revision; private meetings with students. Design charette workshops during which class and instructor discuss multiple iterations of the poster.

Describe the feedback tool(s) faculty use to support students' competency development on Critical and Creative Thinking.

All assignments are graded using a rubric that has room for open-ended comments. Instructor also provides margin comments, particularly on the prospectus draft so the student knows exactly what to include in the R&R table and revise for the final paper. Students also receive peer and instructor feedback during in-class workshops. Students meet privately with instructor to discuss their prospectus draft and to learn how to use an R&R matrix.

High-Impact Educational Practices



First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

ePortfolios

ePortfolios are the latest addition to AAC&U's list of high-impact educational practices, and higher education has developed a range of ways to implement them for teaching and learning, programmatic assessment, and career development. ePortfolios enable students to electronically collect their work over time, reflect upon their personal and academic growth, and then share selected items with others, such as professors, advisors, and potential employers. Because collection over time is a key element of the ePortfolio process, employing ePortfolios in collaboration with other high-impact practices provides opportunities for students to make connections between various educational experiences.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

