Preparing Students for Civic Life through Active and Experiential Learning

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Activity while we wait to begin:
Write down what departments or programs your institution is doing a good job in
1. Experiential learning
2. Integrating experiential learning with traditional classroom learning
3. Civic learning
Outline

● Introductions
● What employers are looking for
● Classroom learning, experiential learning, and civic life
● Data on student learning through experiential learning
● Connecting learning to civic life
● What are your strengths?
Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN)

PLEN’s mission is to increase the number of women in top leadership positions influencing all aspects of the public policy process.

Each year, PLEN brings hundreds of women from colleges and universities across the country to Washington, D.C. for a series of educational seminars in Washington, DC. which give them the skills, networking, and confidence they need to be successful policy leaders and bridge the gap between their undergraduate experience and the professional world.

Current seminar offerings include:

- Women, Law, and Legal Advocacy
- Women in Health Policy
- Women in Public Policy
- Women in STEM Policy
- Women and Congress
- Women in Global Policy
The mission of the Washington Internship Institute is to foster students' intellectual, personal, and professional development through individually tailored, quality internships and challenging academic coursework that take full advantage of the opportunities available in the nation's capital and reflect the best practices of experiential learning and liberal education.

Undergraduate and graduate students benefit from powerful internships that are purposefully designed and individually tailored. Students from all majors have successfully participated in rewarding internships that have helped them focus on and further their career goals. These internships are grounded in relevant and challenging coursework that integrates their professional and academic growth.

Program Structure:

- Internship: 4 days/week
- Courses: 1 day/week -- core course on policy issues; internship seminar emphasizing writing, reflection, and career skills.
What Employers Seek

- Able to effectively communicate orally
- Critical thinking/analytical reasoning
- Ethical judgment and decision-making
- Able to work effectively in teams
- Can apply knowledge/skills to real-world settings
- 93% of executives and 94% of hiring managers say that they would be more likely to hire a recent graduate who has held an internship or apprenticeship with a company or organization

AAC&U. Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work. 2018
...and what we need in civic life

- Able to effectively communicate orally
  - To fellow citizens
- Critical thinking/analytical reasoning
  - To analyze solutions to problems that affect society
- Ethical judgment and decision-making
  - To make decisions that are ethical and equitable
- Able to work effectively in teams
  - To work together as a society or community to address the issues facing it
- Can apply knowledge/skills to real-world settings
  - To effectively and pragmatically address real-world problems.
Classroom Learning, Experiential Learning, and Civic Life

Too often, learning inside and outside of the classroom is not integrated. Why?

- Lack of faculty experience
- Lack of time and resources
- Lack of obvious connections

What is lost?
Connecting Experiential and Traditional Learning in our Programs

- **PLEN**
  - Panels of current women policy leaders discussing their career paths combined with professional skill-building sessions, site visits, and “real-world” simulations

- **Washington Internship Institute**
  - Internship seminar emphasizes reflection of lessons learned in the internship and how to apply those lessons to future work
  - Core course combines traditional seminar structure with site visits, guest speakers, and connections to internship
Data from PLEN Alumni

● 63% report the program was influential or very influential in choosing a career path.
● 82% say they used the networking skills they learned at PLEN
● 57% say PLEN helped them gain confidence

"Attending the PLEN seminar enabled me to become a better student, leader, worker, and person. The people I met, skills I developed, and knowledge I gained will be beneficial throughout the rest of my life and I am so glad I had this wonderful opportunity!"
Data from WII Alumni

- 87% say they made connections between classroom learning and the working world
- 92% say they improved their professional skills
- 91% say participation increased their preparedness to enter the job market
- 87% networked and made contacts
- 91% gained insight into their career plans
Knowledge and Skills Gained through Our Programs

- Networking with peers and practitioners
- Effective communication with diverse groups
- Ability to work in teams and independently
- Knowledge of how policy and politics actually work
Connecting Learning to Civic Life

Schools typically educate students on civic life in several ways:

- Coursework
- Community service projects
- Extracurriculars
- Alumni connections
- Leadership development programs
Connecting Skills to Civic Life

- Networking
- Effective (and appropriate!) communication
- Critically looking at all sides of an issue -- including the source -- and communicating your views to others
- Engaging with those who don’t agree with you
- Building consensus
Building off Your Strengths

- What program does experiential learning well?
- What program integrates experiential learning with classroom learning well?
- What program educates students on civic life well?
- How can those strengths be extended to other programs or campus-wide?
Connect with Us

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Receptions
Tonight, 5:30-7:00pm
WII: Inman Room (LL3)
PLEN: Kennesaw Room (LL3)