

Final Report of the Experiential Education Task Force January 28, 2019

Background:

Increasing opportunities for experiential education is one of the University of Manitoba's institutional goals outlined in our strategic plan *Taking Our Place 2015-2020*. Specifically, references to “increasing opportunities for experiential learning” and “enhancing student mobility” are found in Strategic Priority I – Inspiring Minds, while “increasing opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to participate in outreach programs” and “increasing the diversity of outreach programs throughout the spectrum of communities the University serves” are identified in Strategic Priority V - Forging Connections.

Enriching experiential education, both locally and globally, has the power to transform the lives of students, faculty and staff. It is a pedagogical approach to learning that can advance teaching, research, and service and support our commitment to Indigenous Achievement. Experiential Education opportunities are valuable to undergraduate and graduate students. Over the last five years, the University has taken a number of steps to develop a campus-wide experiential education strategy that has focused on five priority areas: 1) community service-learning, 2) co-operative education, 3) international student mobility, 4) student entrepreneurship, and 5) undergraduate research and creative works. The recent mid-term progress report of the Strategic Plan provides additional evidence of the University’s continued commitment to experiential education:

- Five external administrative reviews were conducted between 2014 and 2016 in the areas of co-op and work-integrated learning, international student mobility, undergraduate research and creative works, student entrepreneurship and community service;
- The Co-operative Education Advisory Committee was established; and
- Service Learning initiatives have increased our focus on human and community needs in Indigenous communities.

The purpose of the Experiential Education Task Force has been to:

- consider University initiatives and programs to date ;
- explore emerging programs and practices at other Canadian post-secondary institutions; and
- provide recommendations to enhance curricular and co-curricular experiential education opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Manitoba.

In October, 2017, Dr. Mark Torchia (Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning), Executive Director, Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning) and Dr. David Mandzuk (Dean, Faculty of Education) were approached by Dr. Janice Ristock (Provost and Vice-President, Academic) to co-chair the Experiential Education Task Force. Between that time and the end of January, 2018, a number of faculty, staff and students were approached to serve on the task force and by the end of January, 2018, task force members were confirmed as follows:

Task Force members:

- Mark Torchia, Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning), Executive Director, Centre for Advancement of Teaching & Learning (Co-Chair)
- David Mandzuk, Dean, Faculty of Education, (Co-Chair)
- Krystyna Koczanski, Associate Dean (Student Experience), Faculty of Science
- Karen Wilson-Baptiste, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture
- La Royce Batchelor, Director, Stu Clark Center for Entrepreneurship¹
- Mark Garrett, Academic Clinic Coordinator, College of Rehabilitation Sciences
- David Sullivan, Faculty Field Liaison, Faculty of Social Work
- Susan Gottheil, Vice-Provost (Students) (Ex-Officio)
- Jakob Sanderson, Undergraduate student
- Resources to the Task Force: Gail Langlais, Director, (Career Services); Anny Chen, Service-Learning Coordinator, Student Life); Susie Taylor, Director, (International Centre)

Summary of the work of the Task Force:

The Task Force has met six times to date - February 7, March 2, April 13, June 11, September 26, and November 5, 2018 to discuss its role in recommending a path forward for experiential education at the University of Manitoba. During that time, the Task Force discussed the existing experiential education themes and programs that exist at the University and recognized that there are many existing and successful programs and projects. The Task Force also recognized that a SWOT analysis of experiential education had been completed approximately 4 years ago. It was agreed that a future SWOT analysis may be appropriate, with timing at the discretion of the proposed Experiential Education Advisory Committee (The difficulty of completing such an analysis, based on past experience, was also recognized.) The Task Force examined a variety of unifying models, best practices, and frameworks used at other Canadian universities including those from the University of Waterloo, the University of Victoria, and York University, and eventually landed on the model from York to act as the initial discussion framework. The Task Force discovered early on that language related to experiential education varies greatly across and within institutions, but agreed that it would not address the nomenclature as part of its work. A broad unifying definition of experiential education from York was also helpful in the Task Force's early conversations:

The application of theory to a concrete experience, either within the classroom or within the community, which advances the learning outcomes of a course or program and requires students to reflect upon their learning.

It was clear that a broad definition would need to be more focused by the advisory committee so that the exemplars of experiential education identified within the Strategic Planning framework (community service-learning, co-operative education, undergraduate research, and student exchanges) could be situated and further refined.

¹ Dr. Batchelor has since left the U of M.

The Task Force also became more familiar with the various types of experiential education that are commonly found at the post-secondary level. This includes experiential education that is: 1) student-initiated, 2) course or curriculum-focused such as in-course learning activities and in-course community-based learning, 3) community-focused such as within-community learning activities, academic community service learning, and community-based research, and 4) work-focused such as clinical and practicum placements, internships, and co-op education.

The Task Force believes that all dimensions of experiential education are important and should be supported by the University. It also acknowledges, as stated earlier, that there are many examples of innovative and meaningful experiential education *already* happening in many units across both campuses. Ultimately, the Task Force could not come to a consensus around a specific area of experiential education that should be emphasized more than others to maximize the impact on student learning. Instead, there was consensus that we should continue to support opportunities for a broad array of experiential learning which is consistent with *Inspiring Minds*, the first pillar of the UM's Strategic Plan; more specifically, (e) increase opportunities for experiential learning, and (i) increase opportunities for community service-learning, co-operative education, undergraduate research, and student exchanges.

Preliminary recommendations:

As a result of their discussions over the past year, the Experiential Education Task Force offers the following recommendations for consideration regarding experiential education at the University of Manitoba:

Recommendation #1: That the University create up to two new positions (“community-focused learning coordinators”) who will act as a point of contact for local community² partners and provide coordination among internal and external stakeholders. One individual will focus their work *internally* (within the University) making connections within and across units to investigate opportunities for curricular inclusion and identify instructors that could be early adopters of such opportunities. The other individual will focus their work *externally* looking for new local community learning opportunities. They will also support the Experiential Education Advisory Committee (EEAC) (see Recommendation #2) and the Inter-Faculty Collaborative Network (IFCN) (see Recommendation #4);

Recommendation #2: That the University establish an Experiential Education Advisory Committee (EEAC) which will continue the work begun by the Experiential Education Task Force, will conduct an environmental scan and maintain a database of current UM practices, will ensure the operationalization of the Task Force Recommendations, and prioritize the competitive fund (see Recommendation #5). The following individuals are recommended as EEAC members under the Chair: Krystyna Koczanski (FoS), Karen Wilson-Baptiste (Arch.), Mark Garrett (Col Rehab Sci), Colleen Webb (CATL);

² Note: The Task Force considers the term “community” to indicate any Manitoba organization, company, or other formal group.

Recommendation #3: That the University establish an Inter-Faculty Collaborative Network (IFCN) that will provide a venue for bringing together experiential leads from all academic units on a regular basis to discuss opportunities and challenges related to collaboration across units and with the community. The Chair of IFCN will be determined by EEAC;

Recommendation #4: That each academic unit including the Faculty of Graduate Studies, designate one individual who will act as a point person or academic lead for experiential education and serve on the IFCN (see Recommendation #4);

Recommendation #5: That the University establish a two-year \$350,000 competitive fund (\$175,000 per year; maximum \$10,000 per 2-year project) to promote and support new experiential education projects and programs or the expansion of existing projects and programs. These might include community service learning opportunities in underserved curricular concentrations such as Humanities or expanding on successful co-operative education programs such as those in the Faculties of Science, Engineering, and Business. More novel initiatives such as understanding ethics through the use of geocodes or recreating historical contexts through the use of augmented reality could also be investigated. Consideration should be given to making this a matching-dollar process with Faculties. Review and approval of the projects would be through the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning);

Recommendation #6: That the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (The Centre) develop and offer faculty development opportunities for instructors interested in incorporating experiential learning opportunities into their teaching;

Recommendation #7: That the EEAC create a set of metrics on which to measure the success of these Recommendations in encouraging experiential education opportunities and to identify benefits from such programming;

Recommendation #8: That a software platform be explored which could provide support for a 'match-making service' between the community and UM programs and students; and

Recommendation #9: That the University establish a yearly symposium where academic leads (#3) and individual instructors will be able to showcase experiential learning being undertaken in their respective units or courses.

Project Plan:

The first step in the operationalization of the recommendations is the immediate establishment of the EEAC by the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning). The EEAC will then begin work to support the roll-out of the remaining recommendations.³ –

An approximate roll-out schedule for responding to the remaining recommendations would be finalized by the EEAC, but initially it would include the following (note that time is indicated in months from time 0, the date on which the EEAC is established)

- Community-focused learning coordinators are hired (+2 mos.)
- Faculties establish EE leads (+2 mos.)
- The IFCN is established and holds its first meeting (+4 mos.)
- CATL begins to develop EE support materials (start +4 mos.)
- Provost's Office creates the EE funding opportunity after broad consultation (+5 mos.)
- ...remainder to be determined by the EEAC

It is anticipated that the roll-out of all recommendations would require approximately 12 months.

Concluding remarks:

These recommendations have been created to: consider a holistic approach to experiential education and value the current opportunities at UM, to provide supports to enhance those efforts, and to use limited University resources wisely while enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mark G. Torchia, Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)
Dr. David Mandzuk, Dean, Faculty of Education

³ Former Chairs of the Task Force (Mark Torchia and David Mandzuk will act as resources to the Chair of the EEAC on an as-needed basis.