

# High Impact Educational Experiences (HIEE)

## **Purpose of this Document**

The purpose of this document is two fold:

- 1) To provide a common framework for understanding high-impact educational experiences at Weber State University, which can ultimately help identify where in the curriculum and co-curriculum these experiences already exist and where there might be opportunities to expand them; and
- 2) To provide faculty and staff with a taxonomy that can be used to self-evaluate their educational practices and use these results to guide course and program design that will further enhance learning experiences for students.

## **Background**

For the last two decades, the phrase “high impact” has been used to describe educational practices researchers have found to be particularly influential for student learning and persistence to graduation (Kuh, 2008). Kuh’s list of ten “high impact practices” -- including research, community service, internships, study abroad, capstone, living learning communities, first year seminars, common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, and collaborative assignments -- has become the aspirational “high impact” standard at many institutions of higher education around the country. Accordingly, in the last several decades, Weber State University has established centers and offices to support and grow many of these particular practices - e.g. Office of Undergraduate Research, Career Services (internships), Center for Community Engaged Learning, Study Abroad, etc.

Not surprisingly, given Weber State’s student-centric approach to learning, other high impact educational experiences not included on Kuh’s list have emerged in both the curriculum and co-curriculum. Although a vibrant innovative culture for teaching and learning resulted, the development and use of high impact educational practices has not necessarily been well articulated or coordinated across departments and divisions. Therefore, it is unclear if all Weber State students have equal access and thereby benefit from these impactful learning experiences.

In November, 2017, the Commissioner of the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) recommended to the State Board of Regents “that the Board establish the goal that all students participate in two high impact practices during study at the undergraduate level: (1) one during their first 30 credits of enrollment (not including concurrent enrollment), and (2) one within their major, and that reports on progress toward these goals occur during institutional completion reports at Board meetings.” The main motivation for this recommendation is to ensure all students have equal access to high impact educational experiences.

## **Role of High Impact Educational Experiences in the Student Success Initiative**

Given Weber State's commitment to student success, we must ensure that all students have equal access to highly impactful learning opportunities. The Student Success initiative articulates engagement as one of four key pillars in an educational environment necessary to cultivate a successful student. As such, a goal of the initiative is to make high impact learning opportunities readily available to all students throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum to ensure students "actively engage in learning inside and outside the classroom" (WSU Student Success Vision, 2016). Much of this engaged learning is already occurring through the many high impact educational experiences at WSU.

It is the task of the Engagement Committee (a subcommittee to the Student Success Steering Committee) to identify a way of more systematically coordinating the development, growth and implementation of high impact educational efforts taking place both in and outside of the classroom. The necessary first step in this coordination process, however, is to share a common language about and understanding of high impact educational opportunities. A common language will help:

- identify where high impact opportunities already exist in our curriculum and co-curriculum which will enable advisers to guide students to these types of learning experiences;
- empower faculty and staff with a shared taxonomy to self-evaluate the learning experiences they currently provide and choose whether or not to enhance those experiences to be even more impactful for students; and
- create a coordinated system of educational experiences that ensures equal access to high impact learning opportunities for all students, especially underrepresented students.

### **Description of this Document**

This document represents the efforts of the Engagement Committee to develop shared language for high impact learning experiences at WSU. The 30-member committee collaborated in a six-month process to develop and vet a working definition and taxonomy of high impact educational experiences (HIEE) that can be used by educators in both Academic and Student Affairs.

A critical goal for educators is to create a rich learning environment that will help students be successful in their educational and life-long pursuits. Rather than limiting educators' choices of impactful experiences to Kuh's (2008) list of ten "high-impact practices," the committee decided to anchor Weber State's definition in eight impact strategies that are found in all of Kuh's high-impact educational practices (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2014). By doing so, educators can continue to be innovative and creative in their educational practices to ensure high quality learning experiences for their students and not be limited to an already predetermined list of "high-impact practices."

In other words, the committee found the nationally recognized language of "high-impact practices" limiting and, therefore, strategically chose language meant to be more inclusive of a variety of educational practices that can occur in either, or both, curricular and co-curricular experiences. Hence, the language of High Impact Educational Experiences (HIEE) was created.

**HIEE Definition**

**High Impact Educational Experiences** promote student learning through curricular and co-curricular activities that are intentionally designed to foster active and integrative student engagement by utilizing multiple **impact strategies**.

**Key Elements of High Impact Educational Experiences: Impact Strategies**

Research on good college teaching and learning (Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Ewell and Jones, 1996; Kuh and O'Donnell, 2014) has established that high impact learning experiences allow students to personally invest themselves, develop meaningful relationships with peers/faculty/staff through collaborative work, receive frequent feedback, actively pose and solve problems, experience real world applications of knowledge, reflect on their learning processes, disseminate what they have learned, interact with others who are not like themselves, and feel challenged to meet appropriately high levels of performance.

These key elements of high impact educational experiences (Kuh and O'Donnell, 2014) are what we are calling **impact strategies**. Incorporating the following into learning activities will amplify the impact of the experience on the students' learning:

1. Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels (*Performance Expectations*)
2. Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time (*Personal Investment*)
3. Interactions with faculty, staff and peers about substantive matters (*Meaningful Interactions*)
4. Experiences with diversity wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those which students are familiar (*Diverse and Inclusive Experiences*)
5. Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback (*Quality Feedback*)
6. Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning (*Opportunities to Reflect and Integrate Learning*)
7. Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications or through real-world/authentic experiences (*Practical Application*)
8. Public dissemination of learning experience (*Demonstration of Competence*)

**Assumptions**

1. Weber State University has the responsibility to provide a setting conducive to the use of impact strategies.
2. An engaged learning environment is a hallmark of a Weber State University education.
3. High impact educational experiences intentionally combine impact strategies to improve student learning.
4. Not all courses or co-curricular activities will utilize every impact strategy. But all faculty and staff are encouraged to incorporate as many appropriate strategies as possible, at the highest level possible, in all courses they teach and activities they facilitate.

5. The use of impact strategies in a course or event does not automatically equate to high impact educational experience; however, all high impact educational experiences regularly integrate impact strategies.

The figure below shows the list of impact strategies encouraged in all learning activities, a list of teaching methods and experiences likely to be high impact because they integrate the impact strategies by design (these are examples rather than an exhaustive list), and the list of general education and Student Affairs learning outcomes that the impact strategies are known to promote.



## Weber State University HIEE Taxonomy

This taxonomy is meant to be a tool to help each engagement opportunity be as impactful as possible. It is designed to highlight the different levels of impact that are defined as foundational, integrated and transformative connections with each student. Take the time to assess your programs, courses, activities, assignments, leadership opportunities and individual meetings and formulate what you can do to make your practices be more impactful for each student.

### Levels of Impact

	<b>Foundation</b>	<b>Integration</b>	<b>Transformation</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels</b>	Expectations for students are set at a <b><u>low level</u></b> . Students are exposed to new ideas and skills. Performance is articulated in an informal manner and may not be evaluated.	Performance expectations are set at a <b><u>modest level</u></b> and encourage students to integrate new ideas and skills. Performance is evaluated through the use of a rubric, checklist or other assessment tool.	Performance expectations are set at <b><u>appropriately high</u></b> levels and encourage students to move <b><u>beyond their current ability</u></b> . Performance is evaluated through the use of a rubric, checklist or other assessment tool.	This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.
<b>Personal Investment</b>	The engagement is purposeful: it involves a <b><u>minimal</u></b> commitment of time and effort.	The engagement is purposeful: it involves a <b><u>basic</u></b> commitment of time and effort. <b><u>Occasionally</u></b> bridges a student's personal interest to his/her academic program.	The engagement is purposeful: it involves the investment of <b><u>significant time and effort</u></b> by the student on <b><u>authentic, complex tasks over an extended period of time</u></b> (e.g., bridging personal and academic interests).	This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.

<p><b>Meaningful Interactions</b></p>	<p>The engagement opportunity helps students <b>build minimal relationships</b> and interact with faculty, staff, community partners and peers about <b>occasional matters</b> over extended periods of time during which relationships develop.</p>	<p>The engagement opportunity helps students <b>build conversational relationships</b> and interact with faculty, staff, community partners and peers about <b>functional matters</b> over extended periods of time during which relationships develop.</p>	<p>Students <b>engage in meaningful interactions</b> with faculty, staff, community partners and peers about <b>substantive matters</b> over extended periods of time. Students interact with others who share intellectual interests and are committed to student success.</p>	<p>This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.</p>
<p><b>Diverse &amp; Inclusive Experiences</b></p>	<p>This practice provides <b>minimal opportunities</b> for students to interact with diverse individuals, thoughts, and/or ideas that are different from which they are familiar (e.g., experiences, knowledge).</p>	<p>This practice provides some opportunities for students to interact with diverse individuals, thoughts, and/or ideas. Provides <b>some opportunities</b> for students to connect with experiences with which they are unfamiliar.</p>	<p>This practice <b>fosters experiences with diversity</b> where students are provided with <b>multiple opportunities</b> to contend with people and circumstances that differ from those which students are familiar.</p>	<p>This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.</p>

<p><b>Quality Feedback</b></p>	<p>The opportunity provides students with <b><u>minimal feedback</u></b>, not limited to the assessment of classroom work, but also including feedback about learning about themselves.</p>	<p>The opportunity provides students with <b><u>moderate feedback</u></b>, not limited to the assessment of classroom work, but also including feedback about learning about themselves and others. It provides students with <b><u>experience growth</u></b> as it relates to the students' development goals and is mindful of students' development progress from peers, mentors, advisors, supervisors and colleagues.</p>	<p>The opportunity provides students with <b><u>constructive, frequent, and timely feedback</u></b>. Feedback is not limited to the assessment of classroom work, but may also include feedback the student's learning about themselves and others. The feedback helps students grow towards their development goals.</p>	<p>This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.</p>
<p><b>Structured Opportunities to Reflect and Integrate Learning</b></p>	<p>The practice provides opportunities for students to <b><u>minimally reflect</u></b> on the person they are becoming.</p>	<p>The practice provides opportunities for students to <b><u>moderately reflect</u></b> on the person they are becoming. Reflection deepens learning and brings one's values and beliefs into awareness; it helps students develop the ability to take the measure of events and actions and put them in perspective.</p>	<p>The practice provides opportunities for students to <b><u>actively</u></b> reflect and integrate learning. This reflection should deepen learning and help the student to become more aware of their own values and beliefs. Reflection should help students to integrate concepts, events and actions and to put them in perspective.</p>	<p>This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.</p>

<b>Practical Application</b>	The engagement practice helps students test what they are learning in new situations and provides opportunities for students to see how they're learning works in different settings, on and off campus. These opportunities to apply are essential to <b><u>minimal learning</u></b> experiences.	The engagement practice helps students apply and test what they are learning in new situations and provides opportunities for students to see how they're learning works in different settings, on and off campus. These opportunities to apply knowledge are essential to <b><u>constructive learning</u></b> experiences.	The engagement practice provide students with opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications or through real-world/authentic experiences.  These experiences allow students to gain a <b><u>deep and meaningful</u></b> understanding of how their learning relates to the real-world.	This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.
<b>Demonstration of Competence</b>	Opportunities are <b><u>not provided</u></b> for demonstration of competence and are kept with the student and the supervising faculty or staff member.	Opportunities are provided for demonstration of competence on a small scale within a course, program or through <b><u>some</u></b> electronic means (e.g., email).	This practice provides <b><u>significant opportunity (or opportunities)</u></b> for a public demonstration of competence. Examples of these opportunities include open gatherings, broad electronic means (e.g., websites and blogs), conferences and other large forums (e.g. presentations).	This experience was not intended to incorporate this component.

*\*The Student Affairs SETF (Student Engagement Task Force) created the original version of this taxonomy and graciously collaborated with the Student Success Engagement Committee to modify it to include additional impact strategies.*



References:

Chickering, A.W. & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Ewell, P.T. & Jones, D.P. (1996). *Indicators of "Good Practice" in Undergraduate Education: A Handbook for Development and Implementation*. Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kuh, G.D. & O'Donnell, K. (2014). *Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.