

Final Report of the Task Force on Experiential Education

November, 2016



CONTENTS:

Introduction

Task Force Mandate and Scope

Experiential Education: Engagement Overview

Recognizing Barriers

Recognizing Benefits

Recognizing Best Practices

Task Force: Scale of Work and Methodology

Implementation Plan: a new framework for experiential learning

Appendices:

- A. Suggested Timelines with 3-year funding commitment
- B. Task Force Terms of Reference
- C. Task Force Membership
- D. New Brunswick Experiential Learning Steering Committee

References

Introduction

The Task Force on Experiential Education undertook its work as collaboration among universities, government, students and the economic sector (business, non-profit, etc.). The key objective of the task force was to make recommendations to the partner sponsors on actions which, when implemented, could result in a nationally recognized system of experiential learning as an inherent component of a university degree from a New Brunswick university. In the current shifting and vibrant environment that is experiential education, it was necessary to establish scale and scope to avoid letting variability in how elements of experiential education are defined and manifested prevent our development of a viable strategy. To that end, the Task Force recommendations will serve as the backbone of a multi-year implementation plan.

The striking of the task force is timely. New Brunswick's economy in recent years has struggled. According to statistics compiled by the New Brunswick Jobs Board Secretariat, real gross domestic product (GDP) growth has been mostly stagnant since 2008, and the number of employed New Brunswickers has dropped by 9,000 over the same timeframe. It is becoming increasingly clear that demographic trends are a major underlying driver of this economic underperformance. While the overall population of the province has remained unchanged over the past 20 years (0.5% cumulative population growth over the two decades), the number of New Brunswickers under the age of 40 has dropped by nearly one quarter while rising across the country as a whole. At the same time, population loss through outward migration continues unabated. In addition, declining school test scores and stagnant graduation rates further impact the numbers of students entering post-secondary education from New Brunswick high school.

As a province we need to do what we can to ensure young people have the opportunity to forge their post-graduation careers here in New Brunswick. One important way to do that is by exposing our university students to experiential learning opportunities such as co-op work terms, internships, practicums, community service learning, etc. while still in school. Expanding experiential learning would have additional benefits as a recruitment and retention tool as an increasing number of students are looking for such opportunities as an integrated part of their post-secondary learning experience. It will also serve to better connect international students to local employers as a means of retaining them as part of our workforce and communities after graduation. More must be done to engage and support youth in furthering their education, joining the work force, and remaining to help build New Brunswick's future.

The Government of New Brunswick's recently published *New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan* (September 2016) places the development and attraction of talent as one of its key strategic priorities. Under the first pillar, "People: strengthening our workforce", the action item for post-

secondary education is to “significantly expand the number of post-secondary students that gain relevant career experience while attending school” (p. 13). There is a clear commitment from both the government and our universities to make this a priority in the coming years. Pillar 5, “Agility: foster agility and nimbleness in the public sector and across the economy” seeks to make New Brunswick “a place where entrepreneurs believe they can make a reasonable return on their investment of time and money” (p. 20). How better to develop home-grown social and economic entrepreneurs than to expose students to the rich variety of experiential education that manifests when universities, industry, the non-profit sector, and government work together. To that end, the efforts of the provincial Task Force on Experiential Education have been to leverage the established relationships that already exist between and among those entities and chart a path for the future. For instance, New Brunswick already lags substantially behind Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in both the availability of and participation in co-op education experiences. In seeking to “scale up” current efforts, build on past success, and forge new relationships and experiential opportunities, the work of the task force is both visionary and practical.

The recent report by the New Brunswick Student Alliance (2016) similarly highlights the establishment of an experiential learning framework as a key recommendation. They suggest that such a framework would provide at least “one compensated experiential learning opportunity to every postsecondary student in New Brunswick, regardless of field of study” (p. 10). Engagement by the Alliance, and by La Fédération des étudiantes et étudiants du Campus universitaire de Moncton (FÉÉCUM) was instrumental in the task force’s defining of “compensation” as inclusive of financial remuneration, academic credit, certificate, transcript or similar acknowledgment. Such enhancement of opportunities could play an important role in increasing graduate retention rates, facilitating “necessary on-the-job skill development”, and potentially decrease “graduate un- and under-employment” (p. 10).

In 2015 the CAFCE Atlantic Research Committee issued a report entitled *Co-operative education in Atlantic Canada: An analysis of student participation and remuneration*. The research report relied on a comprehensive survey of all ten co-op offering universities in Atlantic Canada in spring 2014. The results were alarming for New Brunswick, and indicated that of 4676 work terms completed by students in Atlantic Canadian universities in 2013, New Brunswick students accounted for only 14% (NS: 50%; NL 34%; PE 2%). New Brunswick is underperforming in co-op placements. When viewed from an economic standpoint, the report also pointed out that the total amount of money earned by co-op students from Atlantic Canadian universities in 2013 was close to \$47M, and across all disciplines the average work term salary for a co-op student was \$10,780. The potential impact on regional economic development cannot be understated, and further research should be undertaken to determine why NB is falling behind in co-op placements.

As we seek to revision, develop and grow experiential education in New Brunswick, we must also facilitate the participation of Indigenous students, visible minorities, international students, students with disabilities and other under-represented groups.

Task Force Mandate and Scope

The primary role of the task force has been the development of an implementation plan to significantly enhance the volume and quality of experiential education for students enrolled in New Brunswick's four universities. The current scope of offerings in this area is already quite broad, encompassing co-op programming, internships, term work experiences, community service learning, clinical placements, applied research opportunities and more. Longstanding partnerships with the Government of New Brunswick and with members of the business community, non-profit organizations and other engaged agencies (all henceforth referred to as "partners") speak to the commitment already in place to support university students in developing skills and abilities.

At its broadest, the role of the task force has been to assess and, where feasible, reconsider experiential learning across the spectrum of the three levels – universities, government, and partners. However, experiential learning is a broad umbrella, and so care has been taken to not stray too far from the scope defined for the task force by its mandate. It is important to recognize the complexity within the field itself, as definitions and interpretations of "experiential learning", "experiential education", and "work integrated learning" (to name a few) serve to both expand and restrict. The outcome is not intended to be a literature review or work of scholarship; that has already been done by the institutions themselves, and more broadly. For instance, the Academica Group recently released a report on behalf of the Business / Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) entitled *Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada*. That report, and others, recognizes that there is little agreement and frequent overlap in the use of terms such as 'work-integrated learning,' 'work-based learning,' 'clinical education,' 'internship,' 'practicum,' etc. (p. 12). Suffice it to say that the waters are murky. The issue of definition has been carefully considered and in view of the wide variety of experiences generally included in the area of "experiential education", the task force has sought to provide a definitional framework under which to engage its work, and within which future growth and development can occur.

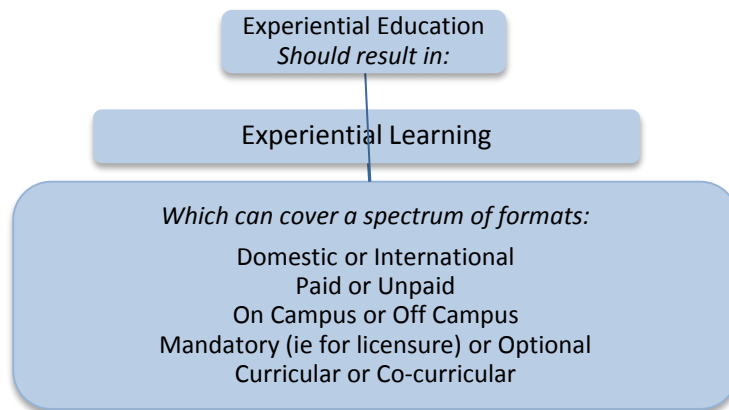
In view of the many partners engaged in the work of the task force, it was decided that there is little logic in devising yet another definitional matrix or in selecting one matrix over another. However, some framework is required within which to identify opportunities to expand the scope of experiential learning in New Brunswick, and to avoid the use of loosely defined terminology. Our approach has been to broadly group categories that will provide a structure under which to explore not only the provision of more experiences, but also how outcomes can be better defined

both for students and for the partnering organizations and institutions. The challenge of universally defining and codifying the range of experiential learning opportunities remains a persistent issue within the academic and practitioner literature. The New Brunswick Government's own 2007 report (in collaboration with the Canadian Council on Learning) entitled *An Exploration of Work and Learning Opportunities in New Brunswick* acknowledged that a "review of the research literature indicates that the work and learning opportunities available to students vary greatly in their scope and purpose; however there is a lack of consistent operational definition to describe them" (p. 2).

Experiences such as co-op, practicum, clinical placement and apprenticeships adhere to more regulated frameworks but can be defined in a variety of ways depending on the offering institution, the company or organization, or the jurisdiction. Even "Internship" and "Co-op" are at times used interchangeably. Clinical placements are often associated with regulated fields such as health (nursing, medicine, etc.). Service Learning likewise has a more robust framework and expected outcomes. Additionally, many other experiences that students engage in, be it study abroad, curricular or co-curricular assignments that have an experiential component, for credit or non-credit, graduate or undergraduate, optional or mandatory, may fall outside of clearly defined "experiential education" categories but nonetheless provide a rich and beneficial opportunity that reflects good pedagogy.

In essence, experiential "education" is what the universities provide or offer; experiential "learning" is what is hoped will occur as students engage in the relevant experiences, be they within a curricular offering, through a work placement (co-op, service learning, etc.). The learning is thus often engaged in with a partner outside of the university itself, be it an organization or company, a clinical partner, or an international university partner.

The National Association of Experiential Education describes Experiential Learning as "an approach in which educators purposefully engage with learners in a concrete experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop capacity to contribute to their communities" (<http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee>). Each institution offers its own scope of opportunities, organized and administered in different ways, both as part of as well as adjacent to curricular offerings; yet all offer opportunities that fit within a familiar framework. Each institution will establish its own benchmark based on current and anticipated offerings and focus on particular areas for growth and development.



The focus of the task force is on specific types of experiential education that members can best and most efficiently engage, and that is guided and organized by universities in collaboration with partners and students. The following guidelines for experiential education were agreed upon by all members of the task force:

- Off-campus, engaged with experiential learning partners including New Brunswick companies, community organizations and government;
- In the "workplace" (broadly defined);
- Compensated (for example, via financial remuneration, academic credit, certificate or transcript, etc.); and
- Inclusive of co-op, internship, community service learning, practicum/clinical placements, and co-curricular activities (ex. applied research, international experiences, etc.) insofar as they adhere to the principles of best practice as articulated by the *National Society for Experiential Education*.

Experiential Education: Engagement Overview

The task force has engaged in this initiative to contribute towards building a better province by investing in university students' experiential education opportunities. It is crucial that we not lose sight of this objective, and so engagement with student groups via the New Brunswick Student Alliance (representing students from University of New Brunswick, Mount Allison and St. Thomas University) and La Fédération des étudiantes et étudiants du Campus universitaire de Moncton has been an important aspect of the work. It is this student collaboration that kept our focus on

the main objective. Students emphasized that experiential education helps students to identify their academic and career directions, develop competencies, and grow their professional networks. It is recognized as an essential component to building a skilled and productive labour force.

In a collaborative submission to the task force from NBSA-AENB and FÉÉCUM, they emphasized the importance of establishing a benchmark of experiential education opportunities across the province and growth of opportunities regardless of program or field of study. Similarly, the issue of compensation (as defined above) is very important as a means of recognizing the efforts and impact of experiential education on students. Financial barriers such as cost of participation, equity and access were highlighted, as were ancillary costs including travel, materials and supplies, insurance, uniforms, and/or additional program fees.

Engagement by and participation of representatives the non-profit sector (United Way), the New Brunswick Business Council, and the Conseil économique du Nouveau Brunswick was also central to the task force's work. United Way of Central New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Business Council engaged with business, local charities and non-profits regarding barriers and benefits to participation in experiential education experiences, as well as key skill sets and competencies they require from students as they begin their experience with the agency. Feedback was sought via online survey and in two community conversations (October 1 and October 27, 2016) with approximately 30 community agencies. Information was then validated with two University Co-op Program Directors.

Agencies and private sector companies have generally found these experiential education experiences to be positive (74%), and to have many benefits for their organizations, and they have a strong desire to partner with universities in experiential education experiences. Those who are currently engaged in Co-op programs with Co-operative Education offices are also keen to continue this partnership.

For agencies, to enhance their work and be an effective partner, non-profit and charitable agencies require:

1. Clear expectations around mentorship and learning goals in order to ensure they have the appropriate capacity to participate
2. External funding for instances where experiences allow for paid placements or others means of compensation for the student.

In the case of private sector, to enhance their work and be an effective partner they require:

1. Guidance to ensure that the work experience is relevant and meaningful to the student

2. Onboarding process to ensure learning expectations are met
3. Confidentiality from students once their work is completed.

It is important to note, that much like agencies and community organizations, many small and medium size businesses also require financial grants or subsidies to help cover co-op student salaries. In the absence of financial support for small and medium business, many students miss out on excellent learning experiences with these smaller organizations.

Organizations were also surveyed to validate the competencies that were required for students engaging in an experiential education opportunity. It is interesting to note that the Top 4 required competencies (ranked Very Important or Extremely Important) were the same for both agencies and the private sector:

1. Ability to think critically and solve problems
2. Demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours
3. Work with others
4. Participate in Projects and Tasks

Recognizing Barriers

The task force recognizes and encourages the overcoming of barriers faced in the planning, implementation and realization of experiential learning.

Lack of awareness: A general lack of awareness is a key barrier to all parties participating. Additionally, the emphases on STEM and business related experiences tend to filter out a large segment of students in arts, social sciences, etc.

Universality: The task force is in agreement that opportunities should be available for students in all disciplines and programs, regardless of program or field of study.

The different constituencies engaged with experiential learning manifest these barriers in unique ways:

University Barriers: The key barriers faced by universities are related to the resources and time required to coordinate, market, place and supervise experiential education programming. While universities often have human and physical infrastructure for well-established programming, the development of new opportunities is difficult to resource and manage as many staff and faculty engage in these activities “off the side of their desks”.

Partner barriers: As noted by the Academics report, some of the barriers to providing experiential education opportunities on the part of employers and community partners include:

- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Costs involved, including time to supervise and mentor students
- Finding suitable placements and opportunities within the organization
- Finding suitable and qualified students for the role (BEHR, p. 42)
- In the absence of funding, the non-profit community and small business struggle to provide paid opportunities
- Partners often don't know how to connect with resources inside the University to create learning partnerships with Faculty
- Outcomes for the organization may not validate the training and supervision required

Student Barriers: Student participation rates in experiential education opportunities have been relatively stagnant in New Brunswick, due perhaps to some of the identified barriers by the Academica report. Some of the barriers include:

- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Perception of, or actual financial barriers to participation
- Ancillary costs such as travel, material, supplies, etc.
- Equity and access
- Concern about delaying completion of academic program
- Concern about finding a suitable placement (NBSA-AENB/ FÉÉCUM; BEHR, p. 43-44)

In addition, barriers include the bearing of additional costs associated with participation in opportunities, and concern that associated costs may limit participation to students with the financial and related resources. Compensation is another perceived barrier, but compensation can take many forms, inclusive of financial remuneration, but also academic credit, certificate, or other forms of recognition (eg. Co-curricular transcript).

Recognizing Benefits

Experiential education offers a range of benefits to students, universities and partners alike. The specific work and research that both UNB and Mount Allison undertook with their own task forces on this matter identified the benefits as follows:

Student / Learner Benefits:

- Increase academic motivation and engagement
- Explore the relationships between academic theory and practice
- Acquire skills to assess their own learning and development

- Learn how to learn – even from mistakes – in a safe, supportive environment
- Understand diverse workplace cultures and communities
- Develop professional networks and skills applicable to the workforce
- Gain job/career related experience
- Enhance leadership, technical and professional competencies
- Increase confidence, maturity, and self-management
- Improve problem-solving, critical thinking, research, communication, and teamwork skills
- Provide potential earning to assist with financial responsibilities
- Acquire values and habits that lead to enhanced citizenship and productive engagement in society

Community and Partner Benefits

- Engage in positive and mutually beneficial interactions with post-secondary institutions
- Attract and employ motivated and enthusiastic new workers or volunteers
- Coordinate access to students with appropriate knowledge and skills
- Increase diversity, energy and enthusiasm in the workplace
- Injection of energy and a fresh perspective into non-profit work
- Foster the potential for additional collaboration with the university
- Raise the profile of the community's opportunities and challenges
- Provide a fresh perspective to the delivery of programs, services and products
- Students will sometimes gain employment with the agency post-placement
- Connect students to local employers as a means to attract and retain talent in the region

University Benefits

- Increase recruitment and retention of students due to the range of learning opportunities
- Enhance reputation
- Align with institutional and community partner priorities and needs
- Improve rate of employment of graduates
- Increase alumni engagement
- Increase partnership opportunities and financial support from community partners
- Increase educator satisfaction
- Facilitate educator engagement and innovation in teaching

Recognizing Best Practices

All four universities already offer opportunities that adhere to the eight principles of good practice for all experiential education activities as per the *National Society for Experiential Education* (<http://www.nsee.org>). Our alignment in commitment to these principles forms the backbone of how we will proceed.

1. Intention: All parties must be clear from the outset why experience is the chosen approach to the learning that is to take place and to the knowledge that will be demonstrated, applied or result from it. Intention represents the purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge and, as such, is deeper than the goals, objectives, and activities that define the experience.

2. Preparedness and Planning: Participants must ensure that they enter the experience with sufficient foundation to support a successful experience. They must also focus from the earliest stages of the experience/program on the identified intentions, adhering to them as defined goals, objectives and activities. The resulting plan should include those intentions and be referred to on a regular basis by all parties. At the same time, it should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations as the experience unfolds.

3. Authenticity: The experience must have a real world context and/or be useful and meaningful in reference to an applied setting or situation. This means that it should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by or use it, or in response to a real situation.

4. Reflection: Reflection is the element that transforms simple experience to a learning experience. For knowledge to be discovered and internalized the learner must test assumptions and hypotheses about the outcomes of decisions and actions taken, then weigh the outcomes against past learning and future implications. This reflective process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Reflection is also an essential tool for adjusting the experience and measuring outcomes.

5. Orientation and Training: For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator(s), and to any involved organizational partners, it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate. Once that baseline of knowledge is addressed, ongoing structured development opportunities should also be included to expand the learner's appreciation of the context and skill requirements of her/his work.

6. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement: Any learning activity will be dynamic and changing, and the parties involved all bear responsibility for ensuring that the experience, as it is in process, continues to provide the richest learning possible, while affirming the learner. It is important that there be a feedback loop related to learning intentions and quality objectives and that the structure of the experience be sufficiently flexible to permit change in response to what that feedback suggests. While reflection provides input for new hypotheses and knowledge based in documented experience, other strategies for observing progress against intentions and objectives should also be in place. Monitoring and continuous improvement represent the formative evaluation tools.

7. Assessment and Evaluation: Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes. Assessment is a means to develop and refine the specific learning goals and quality objectives identified during the planning stages of the experience, while evaluation provides comprehensive data about the experiential process as a whole and whether it has met the intentions which suggested it.

8. Acknowledgment: Recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes and through reporting, documentation and sharing of accomplishments. All parties to the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. Culminating documentation and celebration of learning and impact help provide closure and sustainability to the experience.

(Retrieved from: <http://www.nsee.org/8-principles>)

Experiential education is at all times to be considered “education”, and its connection to curriculum and pedagogy is a central tenet to its success.

Task Force: Scale of Work and Methodology

The work of the task force included extensive consultation with neighbouring and analogous provincial jurisdictions regarding their own efforts in this regard. Task force consultations included NBCC and CCNB in New Brunswick, as well as the Business Council of New Brunswick. Discussions were also held with the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations, Opportunities NB and the Canadian Association for Co-Operative Education. The task force consulted with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Ontario and with Industry Canada. At the university level, discussions were held with Dalhousie University, Memorial University, Mohawk College and Brock University. The province of Nova Scotia was

particularly helpful, as a Task Force on Experiential Learning was established in that province in 2015.

The task force met via conference call some ten times, and in person for half or full day discussions six times (in Moncton, Sackville, Saint John and Fredericton). In addition, individual task force members held multiple meetings and discussions within their own organizations. The task force struck nine task groups to research and develop various components of the work. Those groups additionally met in person or by phone several times. Email communication was used by all parties to maintain frequent communication, and a Dropbox was set up to hold documents, reports, and affiliated research that was of interest to the task force.

A review was undertaken of the recently released comparative matrix of co-operative education and work integrated learning by the Association for Co-operative Education (BC Working Group). The matrix is fully inclusive of all experiences, curricular and co-curricular, work and education related, and is perhaps the broadest and most inclusive attempt to include all relevant “experiences” under one umbrella. Nonetheless, as we seek to better align the efforts of four separate universities with external partners, government and student groups, we acknowledge that there is still currently too much variability within popular understanding of what experiential learning is to seek to bind ourselves too rigidly; hence our commitment to the best practice principles with the acknowledgment that in time, the matrix may indeed become a foundation for universal understanding.

Implementation Plan: A new framework for experiential learning

The recommended implementation plan, a key outcome of the task force's work, is in fact a matrix of interrelated activities and structures that together will create a new framework for experiential learning in New Brunswick. This new framework will require substantial investment of time, effort, funding and cooperation of all parties. The task force is committed to the success of this initiative and has identified the key building blocks necessary.

Element 1:

Establish New Brunswick Experiential Learning Steering Committee

Action Step 1: A New Brunswick Experiential Learning Steering Committee would be established with a mandate to facilitate the development and growth of experiential education opportunities for New Brunswick students. The Committee would meet quarterly, though in the first two years, more frequent meetings are recommended. The Committee may establish sub-committees for various purposes and initiatives, and would submit an annual work plan and annual report of progress to the partners. Its key role would be to:

- Promote the development of experiential learning at NB universities so that all students studying at one of the Province's four public universities will have the opportunity to participate;
- Provide oversight to ensure a database of programs is maintained, records are kept, targets are set, and participation is tracked;
- Hold quarterly meetings to discuss current status updates and new developments in experiential learning programs;
- Facilitate collaboration among the four universities, industry and community partners, and government in offering and maintaining experiential learning programs in NB;
- Facilitate collaboration, sharing of resources, and the development of system-wide best practices to support instructors, administrators, and faculties offering experiential learning programs;
- Facilitate the participation of Indigenous students, visible minorities, international students, students with disabilities and other under-represented groups.
- Liaise with and share best practices with NBCC/CCNB;

- Continue to review and update the definition of experiential learning and common language for associated terms (co-op, internship, practicum, community-based learning, etc.) as these may change from time to time;
- Communicate with government and Experiential Learning partners (broadly defined as employers, not for profit organizations, community agencies, student groups, etc.); and
- Prepare an annual report.

The Experiential Learning Steering Committee would be accountable to the four university presidents and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour (PETL).

(See appendix for suggested membership)

Element 2:

University Coordinating capacity and better inter-collaboration

The four universities are each actively engaged and invested in experiential learning to differing degrees and within different programs. Accessibility and sustainability are two principles that the four institutions agree must be referenced in considering any growth in experiential education opportunities. All four recognize the need for institutional coordinating capacity and infrastructure that would serve several functions, to be established within each institution according to their respective policies, needs and capacities. The positions and infrastructure in question would provide strategic direction and champion experiential education, be the primary point of contact for external organizations, and oversee the macro-level coordination of experiential education at each institution. They would act as advocates for experiential education on and off campus, and leverage internal expertise, resources and relationships.

Internal focus:

- Serve as strategic nexus for institutional focus and growth in stated areas of experiential education
- Engage and partner with faculty and departments; develop ways to support faculty development and research in this area (ex. undertake research toward the implementation of a new opportunity in collaboration with faculty); outreach and awareness, training, development. For some institutions, this would serve as a central repository for opportunities and internal contact point. For other institutions, this internal focus would

serve to better coordinate current decentralized (and well established) functions.

- Work with other units, departments and faculties offering experiential education opportunities and assist in the development of new opportunities with areas that are seeking to be better represented in this realm (esp. areas outside of STEM and professional programs)
- Work with Faculties to devise (where appropriate) a framework of appropriate program, academic and other credit schemes or certification for experiential education components
- In collaboration with internal stakeholders and the standing steering committee, devise appropriate evaluation systems to track impact and outcomes and ensure continuous improvement.

External focus:

- Enhance coordination between and among internal and external stakeholders, especially at the unit level and with external partners
- Provide better cohesive outward “face” of experiential education, coordinate a central “landing spot” for external partners seeking students or exploring how to develop an opportunity for students
- Assist institutions with finding and establishing partnerships with external stakeholders; assist in the seeking of external supporters and funding to initiate new opportunities
- Collaborate with colleagues at the other institutions toward a shared vision of experiential education in New Brunswick universities
- Gather and collate reporting, track outcomes and participation based on upon a to-be-developed reporting framework, and contribute to an annual report of the provincial standing committee
- Coordinate marketing and communications to highlight the role of experiential education both within institutions and with partners and the NB public; work with colleagues at other institutions to jointly raise the profile this mandate in New Brunswick

Action Step: Tracking and Growing Experiential Education within New Brunswick Universities

The four university partners contemplated an “inventory” of current activity with an eye to what we would be reasonably able to invest in, grow, track, benchmark, measure and report on. Outcomes should be both quantitative (numbers of participants) and qualitative (testimonials and narrative). The agreed upon parameters above will serve to contain the scope of what is legitimately included in “experiential education” and not overly muddy the waters with the many “experiences” that while beneficial, do not meet the criteria established by practitioners and scholars alike in this field.

It is understood that the task force cannot impose common definitions on the institutions, and indeed the way the institutions themselves define and manifest experiences can vary widely. The framework below is an umbrella of experiential education opportunities that will adhere to both the guidelines agreed to and the best practices in the field. Future collaborations among the four institutions under the auspices of this task force will serve to fine-tune the language we used to describe experiential education as well as secure internal institutional understanding and buy-in.

The four universities are committed to the development, growth or enhancement of the following areas of experiential education:

| | Broad definition |
|--|--|
| Internship | Placement within an organization with staff member designated as mentor. Financial remuneration may be included, or student may earn academic credit or other credential. |
| Co-op | Academic program in which curriculum is designed so that students alternate study and work terms with paid employment and supervision / mentorship. |
| Practicum/Clinical | Involves practice-based work experience under the supervision of a professional. Can be a stand-alone or course component for which grade or evaluation is assigned. May or may not be mandatory. |
| Service Learning | Volunteer experience within community based organization in which the student makes a specific contribution to the organization and/or community; normally a course component. |
| Co-curricular: Development categories in this area will be unique to each institution | This category may include (but is not limited to) elements such as applied research, international experiences, community engaged learning, organized co-curricular learning, or other forms of experiential education that adhere to the <i>National Society for Experiential Education</i> |

Note: While there will be some variation in how institutions define and manifest these experiential education opportunities, all are committed to developing common definitional standards for the purposes of tracking on a provincial level, understanding that there may be challenges to measuring some outcomes or experiences.

Element 3:

Partner Engagement Portal – “First Stop” model

As we seek to grow opportunities for students the elements of increased awareness, education, outreach and engagement with current, possible and future partners must be a joint focus of universities, government, and the partners themselves. Currently universities engage with a wide variety of partners who perhaps work with a particular faculty or department (ex. for co-op placements, internships, practicum placements etc.). Others may engage with several universities and their departments depending on the specific need or opportunity they have. For instance, a large corporation may seek students to work in a variety of functions, from engineering to accounting to marketing and communications, and so reach out to multiple contacts within an institution or to multiple institutions. We want to leverage these efforts.

Action Step:

Engagement Portal:

Centralized capacity in each institution will serve to assist current partners who may wish to broaden their scope, and provide a central contact at each institution to begin their inquiry. But we suggest stepping back a further level and creating a virtual “first stop” in the form of a Partner Engagement Portal that would serve several functions:

- Web-hosted, first-stop location for partners, students, parents and the general public to learn more about what experiential education is and how it is manifested as a pivotal part of a university education in New Brunswick. This portal / website would be the responsibility of a sub-committee on Partner Engagement, of the steering committee
- Serves as a redirection tool to connect partners with the central resource at each institution who can vet and redirect the inquiry appropriately or work with partners to develop new opportunities
- Repository for material about experiential education, including high-level material on what types of opportunities already exist, what each institution’s areas of expertise and focus are, what to expect when engaging students in experiential learning, information on the benefits and challenges associated with experiential learning, and relevant data and statistics
- Profiles, testimonials, and other communication that raise the profile of the initiative
- Public posting location for annual report of the Steering Committee

Action Step: Culture Shift:

Success for this initiative is not entirely about changing logistics – it requires a change in the culture of how partners (including government) engage with universities and university students. They should feel that they are “missing out” if they are not connected. To do this, we must make the process of connecting so easy that non-participation is not an option. Examples of efforts thus far in this regard are UdeM’s and UNB’s recent adoption of the ORBIS platform to facilitate and centralize co-op offerings. Partners now have single institutional login access to an accessible portal, are able to collect resumes from eligible students, and can coordinate the many administrative tasks associated with hiring co-op students much more smoothly. The platform has likewise streamlined the student and university administrative functions on each campus and has been very positively received by all involved.

Element 4:***Develop and Implement Experiential Education Platform***

A working group of the task force explored the availability and serviceability of various software platforms used to facilitate experiential education. Several institutions are already using platforms for experiential education functions such as co-op, and all are interested in platforms that would support the development and growth of opportunities such as internship, service learning, co-curricular records, etc. Ideally, the same or compatible platforms would be put into place for consistency of experience by partners and students alike.

Element 5:***Student Funding Model***

Review student-funding model to best address student challenges and barriers to participation, and partner barriers. Current funding models such as SEED might be partially targeted toward experiential learning initiatives. For example, a certain number of spaces or “vouchers” could be allocated to students participating in approved experiential learning assignments, with vouchers assigned to each university to be used under specified conditions, and the program expanded based on performance results. This would serve to enhance opportunities for both students and partner organizations that require incentive to participate or whose current resources do not permit paid student employment. Other credit or certificate-based opportunities will continue to be developed with the enhanced coordinating resources at each university.

Element 6:

Establish Performance Metrics

Any investment in and development of experiential learning in New Brunswick needs to be measured and assessed against benchmarks. While there is clearly a significant amount of experiential education happening right now in our universities it is unlikely a baseline can be established by aggregating all the activity and segmenting into the categories established in this report. It is recommended that a baseline be developed moving forward to anchor ongoing metrics for the use and success of experiential education. This baseline may be established using the approaches proposed below.

There are three types of experiential education outcomes that could be measured: activity-based outcomes; effectiveness outcomes; and broader economic/labour market outcomes.

Action Step:

Establish activity-based outcomes:

This measure would track the actual involvement in experiential education by university students across the province. It is important to track experiential education as it is critical for goal setting. There are at least three ways to access this data:

- Track the number of university students using experiential education as part of their educational experience by type of experience, university program, and measure against a baseline.
- Track the number of New Brunswick businesses and organizations (experiential learning partners) involved by industry, region and measure against a baseline. Note: opportunities should not be restricted to in-province. If students connect to national or international opportunities aligned with their education focus that would substantially expand the pool of potential business and organization partners.
- Leveraging the *Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission* annual data collection and reporting.
- Track the number of students taking advantage of financial programs that support experiential education.

How to gather this information?

With enhanced university coordinating capacity and common tracking metrics, participation data could be gathered by each university. Additional tools to gather information regarding effectiveness could include a survey of university students. The University of Waterloo, a leader in experiential learning, conducts an annual survey of students to assess their participation in

specific work experiences while in school. In 2015, 62.5% participated in a co-op work term while another 15.6% of students participated in another form of experiential learning such as an internship or community service placement. Only 22% said they did not participate in any type of work experience during the year.

The number of businesses and organizations involved would be harder to track by a survey but could be gleaned by the student survey (i.e. what organization did you work with) or by tracking participation in the more formal experiential programs such as co-op work terms and internships.

Action Step:

Collecting data through Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission

The MPHEC already collects considerable data related to on-the-job training (OJT) associated with university programs in the region. However, this data is not standardized and currently not reported on by the MPHEC. Based on conversations with the organization, it would require significant data analysis and vetting the results with the universities before anything could be published. However, the MPHEC is willing to consider standardizing its data collection related to OJT and possibly broader experiential education – preferably for all universities associated with the Commission. Nova Scotia may be particularly interested in partnering in this area as their Experiential Learning Working Committee has done substantial work in this regard.

The number of students taking advantage of financial programs that support experiential learning should be relatively easy to track each year.

Action Step:

Establish effectiveness outcomes:

Beyond activity-based outcomes, metrics need to be designed that assess the effectiveness of experiential education efforts. It is important to track over time whether students, professors and businesses / organizations are perceiving value from the integration of experiential education.

This data is best gathered by survey:

- Student-assessed effectiveness: Professional benefits, personal benefits, academic benefits
- Faculty-assessed effectiveness: Professional benefits, personal benefits, academic benefits
- Employer-assessed effectiveness: Perception of benefits – during experience, lead to new hires, value for time/money invested

Action Step:**Establish broader economic impact outcomes:**

Finally it is important to determine over time if a broad expansion of experiential education in the province and its associated costs is leading to better overall economic and labour market outcomes. This data is harder to determine but could also be part of the broad surveying effort. There are many filters through which to consider the economic impact, including:

- The number of students with experiential education who remained in the province after graduation, and whether retention rate for these is higher than others. Tracking graduates after graduation has historically been a challenge but the community college system in New Brunswick does a good job of surveying graduates in and outside the province and have an approach that might be modelled.
- Determining if there is net employment growth among the firms that are involved in experiential education. Are firms saying that experiential education is boosting their ability to hire New Brunswick graduates?
- Have the entrepreneurship-oriented experiential education initiatives boosted the number of young people that get involved in entrepreneurship?

Experiential education metrics: Worth the cost and effort?

One of the main constraints to establishing and tracking metrics is the time and cost associated with survey design, data gathering, analysis and dissemination. The *Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission* with an established track record could be an important partner but it would still require additional funding and long-term commitment. However, the metrics must be seen as a fundamental part of the strategy to significantly expand experiential education around the province. We have many examples of education policy and programming that were well intended but a lack of metrics translates into an inability to truly assess value beyond anecdote.

Element 7:***Establish Incentive Fund***

A fund should be established to incentivize participation and new initiatives. Based upon established parameters and application process to the standing steering committee, this funding would be available to institutions, faculties and departments that sought to develop new experiential education opportunities or meaningfully enhance existing opportunities, and would support new partnerships and incentivize community partners and employers to participate.

Element 8:

Develop and Implement Communications and Marketing Strategy

Action Step:

Develop Communications and Marketing Strategy:

The senior directors of communications and marketing at each of the four universities have each engaged with this project, assigning staff to develop and write profiles and testimonials related to their institutions' specific offerings. We need to leverage this support and resource and develop a communications and marketing strategy for the future work of the steering committee and its related partners. This will require additional resources and commitment of time and expertise.

Action Step:

Resource and implement Communications and Marketing Strategy:

As the overall plan unfolds, communicating the activities and successes of the plan to internal and external stakeholders as well as the New Brunswick public will be central to keeping the issue of experiential education top of mind. Coordinating marketing materials, promotional activities, news releases and generating media engagement will take time and effort. Further work also needs to be done on promoting opportunities to students and partners alike, and raising awareness of the benefits of engaging in experiential education opportunities. This can be done largely through stories of success and demonstrating the win-win nature of such opportunities.

Call to Action:

The work of the task force on Experiential Learning has been rewarding, challenging and infused with hope. It is crucial that momentum not be lost at this important juncture. As a critical aspect of the implementation plan, the Government of New Brunswick would lead by example in announcing its commitment to experiential learning opportunities in every department, agency and Crown Corporation. By being an early adopter and key promoter of experiential education opportunities, GNB will demonstrate to New Brunswick and to Canada its commitment to youth development and talent growth. Community partners and employers must also play an active role in not only responding to but also driving initiatives and investment in the talent of today and the future of tomorrow. Only together can we succeed in making New Brunswick a national destination for experiential learning.

Appendix A: Suggested Timelines with 3-year funding commitment

Year 1:

- Establish Steering Committee
- Introduce Experiential Education week in NB and engage universities and partners in marketing and communications
- Develop process for partner engagement, begin development of partner engagement portal / website
- Universities establish central offices, coordinate with Steering Committee on development of benchmarks and metrics
- Begin implementation of experiential education platforms
- Marketing and communications strategy and development
- First progress report by Steering Committee

Year 2:

- Launch partner engagement portal / website
- Establish and confirm metrics and benchmarks for future ROI reporting
- Call for applications for incentive fund
- New student funding model in place
- Experiential education platforms operational
- Annual report by Steering Committee
- Ongoing marketing and communication to NB stakeholders
- Experiential Education Week in NB

Year 3:

- Continued marketing and communications to NB stakeholders
- Annual report by Steering Committee including metrics and benchmarks
- Experiential Education Week in NB

Appendix B: Task Force on Experiential Education

Purpose

The purpose of the Experiential Education Task Force is to develop an implementation plan to significantly enhance the volume and quality of experiential education for students enrolled in New Brunswick's four universities. Students and society increasingly expect post-secondary institutions to provide a high quality academic degree as well as some measure of hands-on application of that degree. Employers and taxpayers have expectations about educational outcomes, where university graduates are literate, numerate, and skilled but who also have social or soft skills, as well as a range of skills appropriate to the working or professional worlds they will enter.

New Brunswick universities are already offering an array of co-op programming, internships, term work experiences, community service learning, and applied research opportunities. The Government of New Brunswick offers a variety of programs and initiatives, from job creation and incentive programs to labour training and partnership arrangement with governments, communities and universities. Members of the business community offer an array of activities, from internships and summer work programs to partnership arrangement with governments, communities and universities. To a great extent the partnership is already formed.

There is much that is being done, but there is much more that can be done. For example, New Brunswick lags substantially behind NS and NL in the availability of co-op education experiences. The goal is that universities work more energetically and coherently with government and the business community to 'scale up' what is presently being done. The ultimate goal is to make New Brunswick a destination place for any student who wants this powerful combination of academic and experiential education.

Objectives and Deliverables

To make recommendations to the partner sponsors on actions which, when implemented, will result in a nationally recognized system of experiential learning as an inherent component of a university degree from a New Brunswick university. The recommendations will be made to the partners in the form of an implementation plan.

Elements of the Task

While not limiting the work of the task force, it is expected that the following elements will be addressed:

Expand the array and number of work placement, internships, applied research, and co-op placements during term time and summer terms.

Coordinate, re-purpose and re-think existing university and government programs so that they cohere to the experiential learning objective.

Devise a framework of appropriate program, academic and other credit schemes for experiential learning components.

Plan and implement an appropriate financial scheme to finance these activities – whether tax credits, direct grants, supplementary fees, fundraising etc. to bring new and sustainable resources to this effort.

Devise appropriate evaluation systems to track impact and outcomes and ensure continuous improvement.

Create an umbrella organization to permanently oversee this initiative, in a way that minimizes bureaucracy and red-tape and uses resources and finances efficiently.

Composition

The Experiential Learning Task Force will be composed of a representative from each university, from the business community, the Jobs Board and PETL. Consideration will also be given to the appointment of a representative from the voluntary sector.

Timing

The task force will be appointed for a period of 6 months, beginning in May, 2016. The task force will prepare periodic status and policy reports for consideration by the partners and will present its recommendations to the partners in the fall of 2016. The Task Force may recommend the initiation of pilot activity during its operation.

Partners

The partners or sponsors of the task force are the Presidents of the four New Brunswick universities, the Deputy Minister of PETL and the President of the Business Council of New Brunswick.

Activities

- The task force will, amongst other things:
- Survey and inventory the terrain of existing NB programs and opportunities.
- Review best practices in those Canadian provinces and American states that are leaders in this area.
- Consult and assess, with the parties, their high priority needs and opportunities.
- Consider organizational and financial models to scale up the existing situation in an efficient and sustainable manner.
- Reflect on possible ways to market New Brunswick as an experiential education destination place to Canada and the world.
- Develop a focussed pilot project for the fall of 2016; this could involve internships and co-op placements.
- Perhaps the process could adopt a Social Innovation Lab approach, to test concepts, identify solutions and the potential to scale up and out.

Appendix C: Task Force on Experiential Education Membership

Universities

Laurelle LeVert, Associate Vice President, University of New Brunswick (Saint John). Task Force Chair

Jean-Francois Richard, Vice-rectorat adjoint à l'enseignement et aux affaires professorales, Université de Moncton

Kim Meade, Vice President International and Student Affairs, Mount Allison University

Kim Fenwick, Vice President (Academic and Research), St. Thomas University

Partners

Adrienne O'Pray, President, New Brunswick Business Council

Thomas Raffy, Président-Directeur General, Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick

Jeff Richardson, Executive Director, United Way

Students

Robert Burroughs, Executive Director, New Brunswick Student Alliance

Roxann Guerrette, Présidence FÉÉCUM

Government of New Brunswick

Bill Patrick, Senior Policy Analyst, Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Government of New Brunswick

David Campbell, Chief Economist, Government of New Brunswick

Appendix D: New Brunswick Experiential Learning Steering Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose: The New Brunswick Experiential Learning Steering Committee exists to facilitate the development and growth of experiential education opportunities for New Brunswick students.

The Steering Committee's role is to:

- Promote the development of experiential learning at NB universities so that all students studying at one of the Province's four public universities will have the opportunity to participate;
- Provide oversight to ensure a database of programs is maintained, records are kept, targets are set, and participation is tracked;
- Hold quarterly meetings to discuss current status updates and new developments in experiential learning programs;
- Facilitate collaboration among the four universities, industry and community partners, and government in offering and maintaining experiential learning programs in NB;
- Facilitate collaboration, sharing of resources, and the development of system-wide best practices to support instructors, administrators, and faculties offering experiential learning programs;
- Facilitate the participation of underrepresented groups such as Indigenous students, visible minorities, international students, students with disabilities and other under-represented groups.
- Liaise with and share best practices with NBCC/CCNB;
- Continue to review and update the definition of experiential learning and common language for associated terms (co-op, internship, practicum, community-based learning, etc.) as these may change from time to time;
- Communicate with government and Experiential Learning partners (broadly defined as employers, not for profit organizations, community agencies, student groups, etc.); and
- Prepare an annual report.

Membership on the Steering Committee includes the following:

- One representative from the administration of each of the four universities represented;
- One representative from the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) and one representative from la Fédération des étudiants et des étudiantes du Centre universitaire de Moncton (FÉÉCUM);
- One representative from PETL;
- Two representatives from the business community; and
- One representative from community organizations.

Accountability: The Experiential Learning Steering Committee is accountable to the four university presidents and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour (PETL), and will submit an annual report to this body.

Note: The Steering Committee will require a coordinator (likely part-time, funded by PETL).

Updated February 8, 2016

References

Association for Co-operative Education: BC/Yukon. (2016). *Comparative matrix of co-operative education with other forms of work-integrated education and work-integrated learning.*

Business / Higher Education Roundtable. (2015). *Taking the pulse of work-integrated learning in Canada.* Retrieved from: <http://bher.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/BHER-Academica-report-full.pdf>

CAFCE Atlantic Research Committee. (2015). *Co-operative education in Atlantic Canada: An analysis of student participation and remuneration.*

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *An exploration of work and learning opportunities in New Brunswick: report #5.*

Conference Board of Canada. *Employability Skills 2000+.* (n.d.) Retrieved from: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/Libraries/EDUC_PUBLIC/esp2000.sflb

DeClou, L., Sattler, P., and Peters, J. (2013). *The University of Waterloo and work-integrated learning: Three perspectives.* Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Mount Allison University. (2016). *Experiencing success at Mount Allison University: Final report of the ad hoc committee on experiential learning.*

National Association for Experiential Education. (n.d.). Eight principles of good practice for all experiential learning activities. Retrieved from: <http://www.nsee.org/8-principles>

New Brunswick Student Alliance. (2016). *Postsecondary: The pathway to prosperity.*

[Nova Scotia] Experiential Learning Working Committee. (2015). *Experiential learning working committee recommendations.*

NBSA – AENB. *Submission to the experiential education task force: Student perspective.* (October, 2016).

The New Brunswick economic growth plan. (2016). Fredericton, NB: Province of New Brunswick. Retrieved from: <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/Economic%20Growth%20Plan/PDFs/EconomicGrowthPlan2016.pdf>

University of New Brunswick. (2014). *Experiential education: New opportunities for transforming the student experience.*

University of Waterloo. *Strategic plan in action*. Retrieved from: <https://uwaterloo.ca/strategic-plan/in-action/>