

High Impact Practices

Guided Pathways at MCC



*Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Orientation. Orientation may be a single event or an extended structured experience to familiarize students with one or more of the following: college resources, services, policies, and organizations; building a network of support; and developing an academic plan and individual goals.

Accelerated or fast-track developmental education. Accelerated courses or fast-track programs in developmental education are learning experiences designed to help students move more quickly through developmental coursework in order to move on to college-level work.

First-year experience. A first-year experience or freshman seminar is a course or a combination of in-class and out-of-class activities offered to students during their first term or first year at college. ("intentional/strategic combination")

Student success course. A student success course is a course specifically designed to teach skills and strategies to help students succeed in college (e.g., time management, study skills, and test-taking skills).

Learning community. A learning community involves two or more linked courses that a group of students take together.

Academic goal setting and planning. This type of advising creates a clear path to help students reach their educational goals. Defining this path is the work of academic goal setting and planning.

Experiential learning beyond the classroom. Experiential (hands-on) learning—such as internships, co-op experience, apprenticeships, field experience, clinical assignments, and community-based projects—immerses students in content, and it encourages them to make connections and forge relationships.

Tutoring. Tutoring is academic assistance that is provided outside of class, either in a one-on-one setting, in a group setting, or via technology.

Supplemental instruction. Supplemental instruction typically involves a regularly scheduled, supplemental class for a portion of students enrolled in a larger course section. Supplemental

instruction may be taught by the class instructor or a trained assistant, often a former student who was successful in the class.

Assessment and placement. Assessment and placement includes placement test preparation experiences, academic skills assessment, and proper course placement.

Registration before classes begin. Registration before classes begin is being registered for all courses prior to the first class day.

Class attendance. Class attendance is instructors' stating a policy that requires students to attend every scheduled class session for the courses in which they are enrolled and that has consequences for not attending. (Institutional policy can require instructors to take this action.)

Alert and intervention. Academic alert and intervention is a systematic process whereby instructors alert someone at the college when students in their classes are struggling academically, and that person contacts the students in an effort to get them the assistance they need.

NOTE: Structured group learning experiences. The Center (CCCSE) classifies five high-impact practices as structured group learning experiences: orientation, accelerated or fast-track developmental education, first-year experience, student success course, and learning community.

References

[High Impact Educational Practices](#), AACU

[High Impact Educational Practices Chart](#), AACU

[A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways](#), CCCSE