



## Experiential Learning Task Force Recommendations

In April 2022 a task force composed of faculty, staff, and trustees and tri-chaired by Darnell Parker, Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students; Merritt Crowley, Vice President for Advancement; and Karen McCormack, Associate Provost and Professor of Sociology, convened at the behest of President Whelan. The task force met weekly from April through the end of June. Below are the recommendations of the task force.

### Committee Charge

To present a detailed, bold, signature plan for a completely reimagined and transformational experiential learning education for all Wheaton students from first year to graduation. To imagine experiential learning as inclusive of entrepreneurial learning, for-credit and non-credit internships, laboratory and field research, service learning, domestic and global study away experiences, and LEAPS to recognize the many ways and many sites in which a liberal arts education can be applied. To create an experiential path for all students that strengthens and extends sophomore experience and MAPS, to ensure that the development of experiential learning works in concert with and strengthens the Compass Curriculum. To bring together the infrastructure to support experiential learning, from LyonsLink and Handshake to partnerships between academic departments and the Filene Center. To engage significantly more alumni and parents as virtual mentors, internship providers, job providers; to identify connections and possible partnerships with corporations; to clarify the developmental experiential opportunities for students in each year; to increase future students' job placement and networks.

At Wheaton, experiential learning provides students with a hands-on approach to education through action and reflection. Students will engage in opportunities that align with career aspirations and provide guidance in finding a sense of purpose and community.

Upon graduation from Wheaton, every student will have:

- Completed an internship or research experience
- Developed the skills to identify and pursue meaningful post-graduate opportunities
- Articulated how their education prepares them to contribute, in the forms of a resume, cover letter, portfolio or similar documents
- Developed a network of contacts with alumni, faculty, friends, internship colleagues and others
- Learned basic life design skills

Experiential learning comes in many forms, including but not limited to:

- Academic Courses with experiential components
- Co-Curricular Activities
- Service Learning
- Research
- Study Abroad/Away
- Internships
- Mentoring relations with alumni, parents and friends
- Senior Capstones

## Life & Career Design Center

Wheaton's bold new plan creates a Life and Career Design Center that will offer programming for all students that focuses on designing their Wheaton experience, including experiential learning, and designing their post-Wheaton life and career. Life design provides space for learners to explore work and career alongside other important elements of abundant life, including physical and mental health, relationships, and play.

The Life and Career Design Center can foster coherence and integration across the college by overseeing the MAP program (in partnership with Academic Advising), creating a space to develop a set of shared learning goals for student employment and

student leadership across divisions, support for Sophomore Experience and internships, and collaboration with student affairs.

Below is the suggested framework of year by year recommendations to ensure our students achieve a signature Wheaton experimental education.

### **Pre-Wheaton**

Students will begin to design their Wheaton experience. At 2022 orientation, students piloted a Design Your Wheaton workshop that will be fine-tuned for future classes.

### **First year**

Students are introduced to interdisciplinary thinking and collaborative work in the FYE. Students explore majors and connection of major areas to career, engage in the community (clubs, athletics, service), and begin planning sophomore experience.

#### *Recommendations*

- Add major exploration courses for undecided students
- Design Your Wheaton workshops and explore the possibility of for-credit classes
- Service learning opportunities
- Initial contact with the Life & Career Design Center (inc. develop initial resume)
- Initial conversation or workshop with alums

### **Sophomore Year**

In year two, students engage in experiential learning to begin to assess their strengths, test career and major ideas, engage in professional communication, and practice problem solving that has real world application (and consequences).

#### *Recommendations*

- Winter break 2-3 day Sophomore Experience Conference program, students return several days early from winter break to engage with alums, employers, internship fair
- Continued opportunity for Design your Wheaton class
- Plan for study abroad/away

- Introduction to and selection of LEAPS
- Leadership course/training for all student leaders (across Student Life & Academic Affairs), and available for students in any year

## **Junior Year**

By junior year, students have chosen a major and have completed the Sophomore Experience. Junior year provides a deeper dive into an area tied to career interests. This needs to be scaffolded by informational interviews, conversations within the academic departments, and connection to alums and industry.

### *Recommendations*

- Every student has a meaningful internship, research experience, or entrepreneurial endeavor tied to areas of interest. This can be credit bearing and we encourage all departments to consider the possibility of internships for credit toward the major.
- Students reflect on these experiences in structured ways for maximum learning
- Design Your Life workshops offered with possibly for-credit classes
- Introduction of mentoring program to juniors (and seniors) connecting interested students with alumni

## **Senior Year**

In the senior year, students continue to prototype, build their narrative/portfolio, build their network, and apply for jobs, grad schools, scholarships, fellowships, etc. They build a plan and also build contingency plans.

### *Recommendations*

- Life & Career Design Center works with academic departments to engage seniors across the majors (workshops, as a part of their capstone, etc.)
- In fall, some demonstration and celebration of the work done in junior internships
- Workshops on networking and how to know your value in the marketplace, financial literacy and more
- Intentional Career Panels and/or networking events (by industry)
- Expand alumni mentoring relationships, networking connections and opportunities

## Task Force Members

Tri-chair Karen McCormack – Associate Provost and Professor of Sociology

Tri-chair Merritt Crowley – Vice President for Advancement

Tri-Chair Darnell Parker – Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students

Shaya Poku – Associate Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Seth Hodge- Director of Residential Life

Matthew Wheeler – Assistant Director, Career Services

Alisha Flaxman '17 – Assistant Registrar for Transfer Credit

Janet Lebovitz '72, Board Chair

Indira Henard '03, Trustee

Katie Leiby Schneider '06, ABD President

Dolita Cathcart – Associate Professor of History; Coordinator for African, African American, Diaspora Studies

C.C. Chapman – Instructor of Business and Management

Imran Chowdhury - Diana Davis Spencer Chair of Social Entrepreneurship; Associate Professor of Business and Management