Experiential Learning

Definition
Experiential learning* is the process of making meaning from direct experience in a real world or an “out of the traditional classroom” context. Experiential learning is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify perspectives or values.

*Internships are not included as experiential learning for Metric 5. See Metric 6 for internships guidelines.

Types of Experiential Learning Activities
Possible examples include:

- Apprenticeships: opportunity to immerse oneself in a job or major initiative or project usually with an experienced professional in the field acting as a mentor; could occur on or off-campus (e.g., participating in an extensive externship or the Undergraduate Associates Program, serving as a judge in judicial court).
- Clinical Experiences: hands-on experience of a predetermined duration directly tied to an area of study (e.g., nursing students participating in hospital-based experience).
- Cooperative Education: paid professional work experience that spans at least one semester and is tied closely to the student’s academic work.
- Research or Field Work: opportunity to explore and apply content learned in the classroom in a specified field experience or intensive project away from the classroom (e.g., anthropological dig sites and laboratory settings).
- Practica: required component of a course of study; places students in a supervised and often paid situation.
- Service-Learning Courses: use action and reflection to meet needs and enhance learning through mutually beneficial, reciprocal partnerships. This practice infuses course content with community service.
- Student Teaching: opportunity to put into practice the knowledge and skills students have been developing in the preparation program; typically involves an on-site experience in a partner school for a semester.