

Five Methods of Experiential Learning at Athens State University



The university stakeholders have identified two synonyms that they related Experiential Learning to, those are Activity learning and Hands-On learning. These correlate well with some of the classroom instructions that are already taking place and how the stakeholders have reported as to what they consider to be Experiential Learning. There are five methodologies that have been identified:

1. **Workplace Learning** – this includes students participating in internships or having the opportunity to job shadow someone in a position that they have interest in making their own career. The students that earn an Education degree will need to participate in Field Experience Practicum where they work closely with a current teacher and assist in class preparation and have the opportunity to conduct a class. These opportunities are available when students are able to be physically located within an organization under their discipline that will allow for them to observe and even have the experience of being in that specific career. Another way that this opportunity is also available to students is when they are partnered with a community sponsor to work closely with them on a specified project and deliver the required results as if they had been hired to perform the tasks at hand.
2. **Learning through Research** – this includes students partnering with faculty members to conduct research in topics that are relevant to the community and/or discipline. The majority of the Research based experiential learning comes from the STEM fields. Students in the sciences work with specialized lab equipment, students in computing and technology work with the development of new applications and/or theoretical research that is later published in peer reviewed articles, and those in Mathematics conduct research associated to different areas of mathematics or learning how mathematics is used in other fields. These opportunities occur within the classroom and sometimes with the sponsorship of a community partner. These opportunities allow for the learner to attain similar skills as those in workplace learning environment, however more focused in theoretical aspects of a discipline along with hypothesis and proofs.

3. **Hands-On Learning** – the classes that incorporate hands-on projects come in many different forms. Students from the accounting department have to be able to create financial statements, while management students have the responsibility of running an electronic sensor manufacturing company through a simulator. Students in Drama have the experience from being casted into plays while technical theater students learn the techniques that are discussed and master skills by having the opportunity to build the sets required for different plays. These opportunities are completed in a controlled environment, such as a classroom, where faculty is present to be facilitators and active within the student's learning experience.

4. **Learning through Expeditions** – this includes students being able to get out of the classroom and being able to apply their skills and knowledge through activities that may occur during trips that are taken, whether locally, national, or international. Students in the Biology program have this experience through a partnership program located in Dauphin Island Sea Lab, and also through course trips into nature for studies that are done in consideration to the environment. Students in other programs will also have these types of experiences available to them through courses that are able to provide a Study Abroad experience.

5. **Community-Based Learning** – this includes classes that partner to work in collaboration with a non-profit community sponsor. This type of learning also occurs outside of the classroom through special groups, such as the Student Government Association, and other student organizations and programs, such as the Peer Mentoring program. These activities 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.