




TO: Deans, Chairpersons, and Faculty

FROM: C. Jack Maynard 
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

DATE: October 10, 2011

SUBJECT: Experiential Learning

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On September 9, 2010, the Board of Trustees charged each academic program to include a culminating, experiential learning requirement that requires the student to demonstrate higher order mastery of the discipline. The charge specifically stated:

In many disciplines, students will complete a professional experience such as an internship, practicum, co-op, student teaching, or advanced clinical practice. Others may have a senior recital or senior exhibit. Others may have a senior research project. The examples provided are not exhaustive. However, to be effective, each of these experiences should have clearly defined expected outcomes and a work plan that provides the student increasing opportunity to perform. The guiding principle is that students demonstrate higher order mastery of their discipline.

It is clear that each major is charged to review their curriculum to ensure that a significant, culminating, experiential learning experience is provided for each major. For those majors that do not meet this requirement, it is expected that the faculty will revise the curriculum as appropriate.

On October 20, 2010, I sent a memorandum to the faculty requesting that each major program review their curriculum to ensure compliance with this charge and that each Dean submit a report by May 1, 2011, indicating that the work had been successfully completed.

In May of 2011, each college submitted a report to Associate Vice President Rogers. These reports affirmed that a number of programs either were already in compliance or had initiated curriculum modifications to be in compliance. Some programs presented their current curriculum with no evidence to support that the program met the guidelines as defined by the Board. It is also clear that some programs totally ignored the Board's directives and little or no action was taken. In summary, the evidence is clear that we are not in compliance, as an institution, with the Board's directives.

At the June 17, 2011, meeting of the Board of Trustees, Associate Vice President Rogers presented an update on our work to the Trustees. At that time, Board Chairperson Ron Carpenter requested that Dr. Rogers and I continue to work with the campus to ensure that all programs are in compliance by the end of this academic year. We will provide a final report to the Trustees during their June 2012 meeting.

Responsibility for determining that an academic program has met the requirement must reside with the college. Each college should establish guidelines and a procedure for reviewing the experiential learning requirements in each academic program. Looking toward the future, this review should be incorporated into the routine review procedures for all new academic programs.

We, as a University, are committed to providing students with a high quality academic experience grounded in experiential learning and engagement. Our strategic plan, *The Pathway to Success*, clearly focuses on this commitment. The decision to include a culminating, experiential learning requirement has been made; our responsibility, as a faculty, is to determine how to best implement within the context of our programs. As stated in previous correspondence, academic programs can meet this requirement through a variety of experiences. Programs may also provide one or multiple options for students to meet the experiential learning requirement.

For example, some programs are meeting the requirement through student teaching, practicum, internships, or a similar practical experience in a professional setting. In others, programs enable students complete a research project, a senior performance/exhibition, and/or study abroad. Other options have been identified across the campus. A number of programs have not identified an option. Associate Vice President Rogers has several examples of how other institutions have implemented a similar requirement. Dr. Rogers and her staff are available to assist you as you address this directive. Please follow-up with her if you would like to learn more.

In order to meet the Trustees' deadline, I am asking each Dean to work with the faculty in their college to establish review procedures for the academic programs by December 1, 2011. Each academic program must be reviewed and the plan approved by March 1, 2012. A final report must be provided by the Dean to my office by May 1, 2012, that presents how each program will meet the expectation and assuring that all undergraduate programs meets this expectation.

I look forward to working with each of you as we take this exciting step to advance learning opportunities for our students.

kc

cc: AVP Rogers