

High-Impact Practices in the co-curriculum: Shifting the paradigm from 'do they go' to 'what do they know'

A case study of the partnership
between Virginia Commonwealth
University and Student Opportunity
Center

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Student
Opportunity
Center



VCU

Presenters



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“...all students will have a real-world experience as part of their VCU education. These experiences will become part of VCU’s overall curriculum, meaning that every student who earns a degree here will be well-regarded for their thoughtfulness and deep thinking [...] even before they hit the job market.”

2016 State of the University address

REAL: Setting an agenda



VCU's REAL initiative ensures that **all** VCU students engage in transformative, career-building activities that:

- **Connect** academic/disciplinary knowledge to real-world experience
- **Create** novel approaches to complex problems
- **Contribute** actions that benefit our educational, professional, and civil communities



Since 2018, REAL has set a vision and agenda for experiential learning that addresses equity and diversity through:

- Establishing **quality assurance and assessment expectations**
- Developing **academic policies and protocols**
- Addressing gaps in **data collection and analysis**
- Adopting a **shared governance model**





VCU REAL Timeline: Seven Challenges of Change

It's easy to get lost in a big, complicated change initiative such as what REAL represents. Understanding how our efforts aligned with a theory of change model helps make sense of what can seem overwhelming.

Activating Awareness: State of the University Address

"... all students will have a real-world experience as part of their VCU education. These experiences will become part of VCU's overall curriculum ... President Michael Rao

SPRING 2016

Creating & Sharing Possibilities: Steering Committee Report

"Making it REAL" report is shared with the VCU community. Report identifies 4 "themes" (Serve, Discover, Create, Career) and 10 recommendations covering governance, assessment and resourcing.

Spring 2017

Engaging Change Leaders: Steering Committee Convenes

19 faculty and professional staff from the Monroe Park and Medical College of Virginia campuses come together. "REAL" name is adopted; preliminary data gathering begins.

Fall 2016

Fall 2018

Empowering Visible Action: Opportunity Audit

1,000 + courses and co-curricular activities assessed using a new REAL Taxonomy. Themes are replaced by the 3Cs (Connect. Create. Contribute). Course codes & tracking mechanisms developed. Data portal allows for tracking enrollment trends.

Spring 2019

Stepping into a new, shared vision: REAL Launch

- AVP for REAL Hired
- REAL Task Force Convened
- Implementation plan drafted
- Year 1 actions initiated

Fall 2019

Integrating Systemic Change: REAL Council Convenes

Representation from each of the colleges/schools and key partners (R&R, IR, HIP units, etc.). RC workgroups charged with addressing critical implementation questions.

Sustaining Long Term: REAL Academic Regulation

RC workgroup proposal for REAL Academic Regulation, effective Fall 2021. Faculty-owned Curriculum Committee convenes & operationalizes a sustainable plan for maintaining REAL classifications. SOC fully integrated with student information and advising systems.

Fall 2020

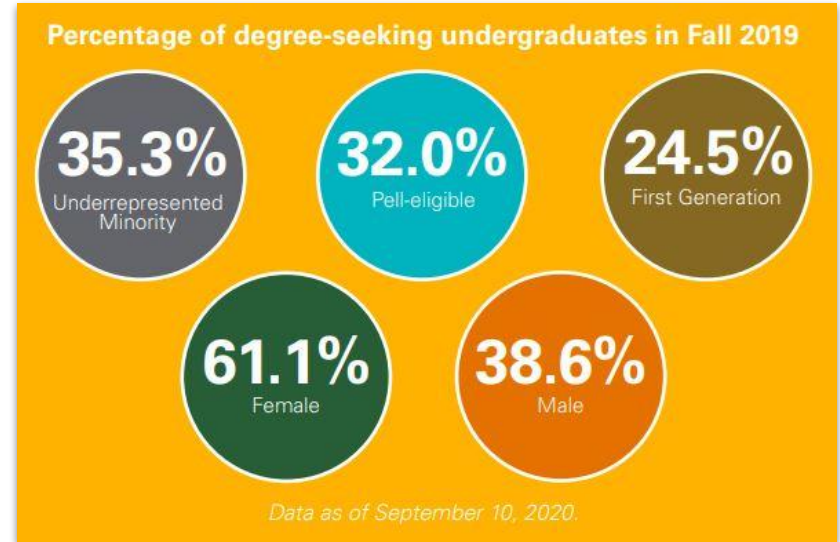
2021-2025

Pilot, assess, adjust

Student success

For VCU and the student populations we serve, the stakes are high.

This is a student success initiative for **all** students. We know that success gaps exist, and by the VCU mission, we're obligated to act on that knowledge.

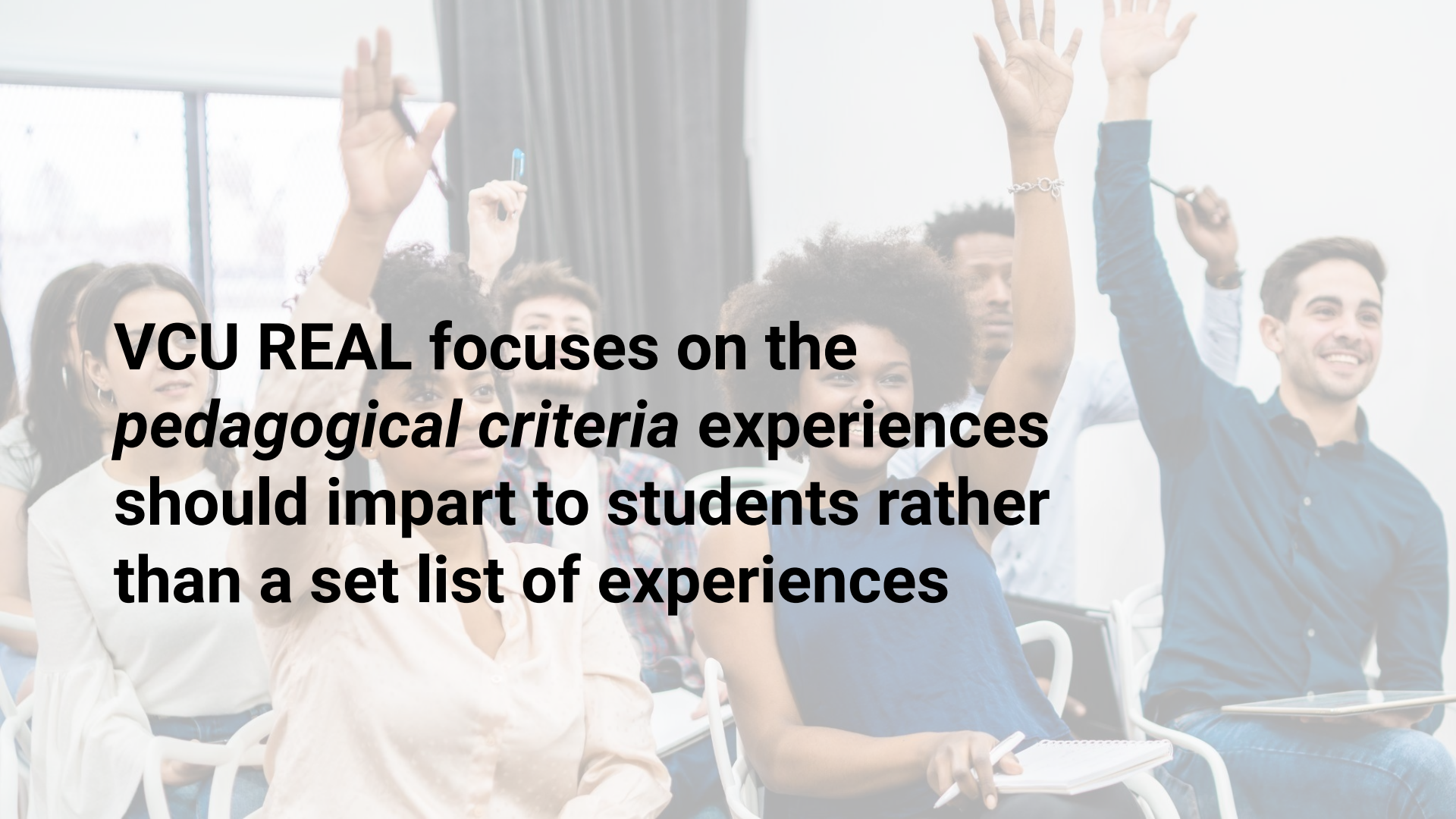


Research led by the Association of American Colleges & Universities offers considerable evidence that high-impact experiential learning has important benefits for learners who have been traditionally underserved by higher education institutions, including underrepresented minorities, students from low-income families, and first-generation college students (Finley & McNair, 2013).



VCU

Relevant, Experiential
and Applied Learning

A diverse group of students in a classroom setting, with several raising their hands. The students are of various ethnicities and are dressed in casual attire. The background shows a window with a view of trees and a building. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**VCU REAL focuses on the
pedagogical criteria experiences
should impart to students rather
than a set list of experiences**

Four Pillars of REAL

Hands-On Learning

Guided Reflection

Integrated Learning

Mentoring

1100

Number of students whose REAL requirements could
no have been met by curricular requirements alone.

79%

Of college students participated in student organizations during their senior year.

16,877

VCU students participated
in student leadership &
engagement programs in
2018-2019

Examples of REAL experiences:

- Capstone experience
- Integrative learning
- Career exploration activity
- Leadership education
- Co-op
- Living-learning communities
- Field experience
- Project-based learning
- Practicum
- Independent study
- Research
- Internship
- Service learning

Which of these occur both in
the curriculum and
co-curriculum?

Examples of REAL experiences:

- Capstone experience
- *Integrative learning*
- *Career exploration activity*
- *Leadership education*
- Co-op
- *Living-learning communities*
- Field experience
- *Project-based learning*
- Practicum
- Independent study
- Research
- *Internship*
- *Service learning*

The majority of these experiences are happening throughout a student's journey.

Where is your campus in this process?



Overview of REAL tagging & data synchronization process

SEEK
REAL level

Applicant applies for REAL level & type.

ASSIGN
REAL level

REAL committee reviews application & makes determination. If application is approved, REAL level assigned.

APPLY
REAL tag

REAL level applied:
Flexibility to centralize through SOC & use existing processes.

SYNC
data systems

External data systems sync weekly with SOC for REAL tagged events.

Moving from...



Lessons Learned

- Being prepared to recalibrate
- Activating awareness of an inquiry-based approach to scaling high impact practices and ensuring quality learning experiences for all students
- Creating opportunities for data sharing and norming
- Bringing value and attention to otherwise hidden aspects of the VCU educational experience
- Integrating sustainable reporting structures that can inform long-range, systemic change
- Planning for ongoing faculty and staff development

Next Steps

- Ongoing assessment of process and identifying areas for improvement
- Using a cohort model
- Definition of mentoring
- Develop a program assessment model
- Implementing several pathways



Any questions?

To contact us



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About SOC

SOC Story

Student Opportunity Center began when a group of Florida State University students noticed that many of their classmates wanted to participate in internships, research projects, study abroad, and similar opportunities but didn't know where to start. To connect students to these career-building opportunities, they created SOC—the nation's first and only database of experiential learning opportunities. Today, SOC has grown to be the country's leading provider of technology and consulting services for Experiential Learning (EL) and High-Impact Practices (HIPs) management.

SOC Technology

With more than 4,000 software integrations, SOC connects previously siloed on-campus and national datasets. Using the SOC Technology Suite, campuses can: centralize and organize opportunity listings; tag and track co-curricular and curricular experiential experiences; analyze disaggregated participation data; and manage experiential pathways and projects. SOC's technology suite is the only tool specifically designed to promote equitable participation, efficient assessment, and scaling of High-Impact Practices.

SOC Consulting

SOC accelerates the scaling of experiential education & High-Impact Practices through our Six Steps to Scale approach. SOC works with each of our campuses to create a custom plan to provide: services to centralize experiential learning opportunities; structures to embed experiential education in the curriculum; tools to connect underserved students with opportunities; and the data infrastructure to analyze disaggregated participation and learning outcomes data.



HIPs increase retention and graduation rates.

Students who participate in HIPs are more likely to persist and have higher overall GPAs than their peers. Studies show that, on average, the more HIPs students complete, the more likely they are to earn a baccalaureate degree within six years.



HIPs provide career advantages.

Recent research has shown that participating in HIPs is a statistically significant predictor of future career plans and early job attainment. Students who participate in HIPs gain advantages through transferable skill development and an improved ability to discuss their experience with potential employers.



Faculty care about HIPs.

Faculty care about HIPs. HIPs are different from other student success initiatives because of their connection to faculty's identity as teachers: Unlike many other student success initiatives, HIPs have a direct link to the classroom and connect to things that faculty care about.



HIPs help close equity gaps.

Research demonstrates that participating in experiential learning, such as High-Impact Practices, can improve success for first-generation students, transfer students, and students of color; however, despite known benefits, these approaches are not yet integrated into institutional practices.



SOC's Guiding Principles





SOC Subject Matter Experts



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