

# ELEVATING WORK IN THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PATHWAY

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## *AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION*

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### *EXTENDED ABSTRACT*

Guttman Community College has a commitment to making work-focused experiential learning central to the curriculum. Guttman's mission promises to support graduates in successfully completing their degrees and helping them prepare for jobs that will offer a family-sustaining wage. As the college celebrates its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have taken the opportunity to step back and review our experiential learning pathway and assess the extent to which it is supporting this goal.

#### About Guttman

Guttman Community College (GCC) opened its doors in 2012, offering a carefully orchestrated combination of research-based high impact practices such as mandatory summer bridge, interdisciplinary learning communities, intrusive advisement, extensive peer mentoring, guided degree pathways, and integrated academic and occupational learning. In the summer of 2014, GCC celebrated its first commencement with a 28% two-year graduation rate. Our three-year graduation rate for this cohort was 49%, 36 percentage points above our national peer institutions.

#### **Essential Employability Qualities Pilot**

The assessment of our experiential learning pathway was bolstered by our participation in the Essential Employability Qualities (EEQ) Pilot (QA Commons 2017). The EEQ Pilot is a project of the Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education funded through the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) under a grant from the Lumina Foundation. The EEQ Pilot required an assessment of whether graduates of the program were: Communicators, Thinkers & Problem Solvers, Inquirers, Collaborators, Adaptable, Principled & Ethical, Responsible & Professional, or Learners.

Though the pilot was focused on one program, the EEQ process encouraged GCC faculty, staff, and administrators to take a careful look at how EEQ learning was happening throughout a student's degree path. Two key EEQ Pilot criteria that drove our work were the following:

- The program addresses, develops, and assess each of the EEQs
- All students have opportunities to apply learning to work-relevant contexts

To assess whether the EEQs were being addressed in the curriculum, we mapped the EEQs onto our program and general education learning outcomes. We found that the EEQs mapped very well. Additionally, because of our commitment to scaffolded learning for our learning outcomes over the educational pathway, we were confident about meeting this EEQ criterion.

To assess students' EEQ learning in work-relevant settings, GCC pulled together various leaders in experiential learning and/or career learning from across the campus. Together we were able to construct the GCC Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELO) Pathway and identify key EEQ building experiences (indicated in blue).

ELO PATHWAY						
FIRST YEAR			PROGRAM OF STUDY			
	BRIDGE	ETHNOGRAPHIES OF WORK	OTHER		COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, SERVICE LEARNING	INTERNSHIP
REQUIRED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ELO Pedagogy</li> <li>Neighborhood project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EOW Weekly Field Work</li> <li>EOW Project</li> <li>LABS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts in the City</li> <li>City Seminar</li> <li>Embedded Community Days</li> </ul>	REQUIRED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Classes designated ELO with units including ELO in the discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required Internship (IT) Clinical Preparation/ Practica (HS)</li> </ul>
OPTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPCE Career Services: Resume Building, Career Counseling, Career Panels, Voluntary Internships.</li> <li>Campus-based work</li> <li>Chase Job Training</li> <li>Undergraduate Research</li> <li>Campus Leadership - Student Government, United Men of Color, Women of GRIT</li> <li>Global Guttman</li> </ul>			OPTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPCE Career Services: Resume Building, Career Counseling, Career Panels, Voluntary Internships.</li> <li>Campus-based work</li> <li>Chase Job Training</li> <li>Career Strategist Events and Meetings</li> <li>Undergraduate Resarch</li> <li>Campus Leadership - Student Government, United Men of Color, Women of GRIT</li> <li>Global Guttman</li> </ul>	
<b>GUTTMAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE</b>						

Our examination of the ELO Pathway through the EEQ pilot process demonstrated the strength of GCCs focus on work-based experiential learning throughout the first year in our Ethnographies of Work (EOW) course. EOW is a two-part, year-long course and set of experiences that give students tools for understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities they face in the labor market; it does so in both a theoretical and applied context by putting *work* at the center of learning. Students conduct ethnographic research—observing, mapping and interviewing workers in different fields—and use their ethnographic skills to investigate and explore workplaces and industries that they may one day enter. A paired course called, *Learning About Being a Successful Student* (LaBSS) explores academic majors, and develops some of the skills necessary to enter the workplace setting successfully.

Beyond year one, we learned that work-based experiential learning was variable. In programs that have required internship courses with a focus on EEQs, GCC was confident in meeting this criterion. However, in programs where there was no required internship experience, the applied learning around EEQs was unclear. The EEQ Pilot offered a critical opportunity for GCC to assess the commitment we made in our model and our mission to integrating occupational learning into the curriculum. What we learned pointed us toward a key next step: Continue to elevate work-based experiences throughout the pathway and develop an assessment plan that will help our institution continue to strive toward our goal of helping students build the skills and competencies necessary to thrive in today’s dynamic workforce.

### SELECT REFERENCES

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