

12/01/2019

WOU General Education Update

The interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning... We do not learn from experience... We learn from reflecting on experience.

John Dewey

Thank you to our guest columnist this month:

Dr. Adry Clark, Director, Service Learning and Career Development Center.

Would you like to share an idea or initiative related to General Education in our newsletter? Let us know at gened@wou.edu

Experiential Learning and General Education

What if students remembered what they learned in your class for the rest of their lives? If they did, it's probably because you applied a high impact practice (HIP), like experiential learning (EL), in your teaching. HIP and EL are key components of the GenEd program, as part of the Integrative Learning outcome. Through integrative learning, students pull together their entire experience inside and outside the formal classroom. HIP and EL lead to improved outcomes, retention, graduation and career readiness. Many incredible examples of EL can be found at WOU and we have several programs we can build on to create a strong EL environment at WOU. Additionally, faculty share feeling a lack of confidence and capacity to embrace EL and HIP practices. A survey of faculty and program chairs in 2017 and 2018, revealed a need and interest in developing EL pedagogy competencies such as reflection and assessment, and receiving support such as community connections and logistical assistance.

In order to support faculty development of EL, four faculty and a staff member attended the National Society for Experiential Education conference, in September 2019. Through funding from the University Budget Committee, it was possible for the group to fulfill the mission of the Experiential Learning Strategic Action team (ELSAT) this year, to increase interest and expertise in EL on the WOU campus.

ELSAT is excited to apply the learning from the conference to build more interest and expertise in EL on campus, through research and training. They have goals to demonstrate the effectiveness and satisfaction with EL in the classroom, by studying five courses that use EL, using a common survey instrument. They will also provide training via roundtable discussions and "play stations" that demonstrate different approaches to EL. A website with helpful resources is also in the works.

The culminating goal for ELSAT this year, is to develop a definition for EL at WOU. Once we have a common definition, we can pursue strategic goals related to EL. To facilitate that, members will visit division meetings and campus groups, and a townhall inviting campus and community members will be organized in late Spring '20.

We invite anyone interested in EL to participate in the ELSAT or participate in upcoming showcases of EL practices. For more information, please contact Adry Clark, clarka@wou.edu, ext. 88648.

New to FYS instruction?

We're so glad to have added some amazing new offerings to our already robust suite of First Year Seminar topics.

Keep an eye out for regular FYS instructor workshops and gatherings led by FYS coordinator Dr. Shaun Huston and enroll yourself in the Moodle course.

<https://moodle.wou.edu/course/view.php?id=1350>

First Year Seminar Spotlight

FYS 107: Play – It's not just for Kids.

Gay Timken is leading this First Year Seminar that explores the role of lifetime play from global to local through multiple lenses – historical, cultural, political, sociological, relational, psychological, and physiological. Gay and her students shared their experience with us.

Teaching this FYS on play has allowed me the freedom to shape ideas about play at a time / developmental level when play begins to take a back seat in life and when people start to buy into the false dichotomous narrative about work and play and adulting. Students are recognizing various forms of play that may be beyond their original definition, and it seems the play interview with someone over 45 was a powerful learning experience. The last theme of the term is on work and play, and play at work. Inviting colleagues from around campus to share their perspective on how their work life is also a form of play, in its many forms, has been eye opening for students. And ultimately, I hope the key takeaway is that the opposite of play isn't work; the opposite of play is depression.

What do students think?

- 'I like the type of assignments. They are new and exciting.'
- 'Feel better after class.'
- 'Fun to be in the group.'
- 'Very interactive class.'
- 'Learned something for real life scenario.'
- 'Connections between classmates.'

New First Year Seminar topics coming for 2020!

On November 19, the General Education Committee met and reviewed proposals for First Year Seminars to be included in the 2020-2021 topic roster. FYS Coordinator Shaun Huston is now hard at work planning the FYS roster for 2020-2021.

Fifteen new FYS 107 topics and seven new FYS 207 topics were approved for inclusion next year along with planned repeats of topics that are being taught this year. The trend of cross-disciplinary team-taught courses continued with the new topic applications, including a course that partners with The Research Institute. We're especially excited to be adding topics from departments that weren't yet represented in the FYS roster.

Learn more about all the amazing First Year Seminars at <http://www.wou.edu/gened/fys-schedule-card-view/>

gened@wou.edu
503-838-8348