

Division of Academic Affairs

Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL)

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1. History and Context

Introduction

The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) is dedicated to providing opportunities for undergraduates to engage in hands-on learning. Through OSEEL's undergraduate research, service-learning, themed learning communities, and other high impact practices, NIU students will develop critical thinking, use creativity, and employ multiple communication strategies while applying their skills to solve real world problems. As an outgrowth of the Curricular Innovations strategic plan, OSEEL works collaboratively across university divisions and colleges to create sustainable, relevant, student-centered, research-based programming which utilizes experiential learning, both in and out of the classroom to promote and sustain student academic success. Each of our programs align with the eight student learning outcomes of the Baccalaureate Review as we seek to enhance the cognitive, social, and academic skills of our students to prepare them to be life-long learners and responsible citizens in our ever-changing, global society.

History

January 2011, the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning was created to enhance and expand the number of engaged learning opportunities for undergraduate students. The office housed one full-time director, a FT administrative assistant and a graduate assistant. OSEEL initially was located in the Academic Advising Center, but with the planned growth of the staff and programs, the office was moved to room 110 in Evans Field House. Since 2011, the OSEEL staff has expanded to include a full-time director, one office manager, one full-time assessment coordinator, one associate director, one assistant director for undergraduate research, one engaged learning coordinator, one Americorp Vista and a host of graduate assistants and student interns.

There are three main pillars for OSEEL: undergraduate research, curricular initiatives and service-learning. In addition, OSEEL is charged with sharing student engagement best practices across the campus and highlighting those activities. We also monitor our progress through the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (every three years), and through a myriad of program assessment instruments. All of the program assessments are tied to the LEAP goals and AAC&U's research on high impact practice and align with NIU's baccalaureate goals.

There are many ways to define student engagement. For the purposes of this report and to guide the work of the OSEEL, we use AAC&U's definition of high impact practices. They identify ten educational practices that have high impact on student engagement because they devote time and effort to meaningful tasks; require student interaction with faculty and peers over substantive matters; challenge students to critically think and work with diverse others; offer ongoing, critical feedback about performance; provide the opportunity to experience learning in various settings; and prove to be potentially life-changing.

2. Mission, Goals and Objectives

Vision & Mission Statement

The **VISION** of the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning is to create intentional connections with the surrounding community in order to provide unique, hands-on learning experiences for undergraduates; to support NIU faculty by providing resources and training that is useful as they encourage engaged learning in the classroom and experiential learning outside of classroom; and to work with campus partners to create opportunities for students to engage in high-impact, co-curricular experiences.

The **MISSION** of the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning is to provide opportunities for undergraduates to engage in hands-on learning experiences, which assist in the development of critical thinking skills; the use of creative intellection; and the opportunity to enhance classroom knowledge through real-world application.

The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning defines **engaged** learning as a student's personal relationship with learning which results in their active participation in the learning process.

The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning defines **experiential learning** as the direct application and transfer of knowledge outside of traditional "learning environments," which involves learning that occurs through hands-on application.

In pursuing our vision and fulfilling our mission, we value:

- ***Working collaboratively with campus partners in order to create intentional opportunities for engaged and experiential learning.***
- Engaging students from diverse backgrounds with diverse perspectives.
- Providing resources for faculty and staff, which support further development of engaged and experiential learning opportunities for undergraduates.

We demonstrate our values by:

- Providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds taking into consideration the importance of ensuring an environment that provides both challenging experiences and intentional support.
- ***Recognizing the importance of working collaboratively with campus and community partners acknowledging our ability to better utilize our resources and to ensure quality through collaboration.***
- Taking seriously our ability to provide useful resources for the campus community and ensuring that OSEEL staff are abreast of new trends in the field.

Unit Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will promote and support engaged learning practices and programs at all levels of the university.

Objective 1.1. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will promote and market engaged learning programs to diverse populations of students.

Objective 1.2. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will support faculty, staff, and community partner efforts to engage students in integrative learning, research, and service.

Objective 1.3. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will serve as a campus resource and partner for engaged learning initiatives.

Goal 2. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate quality engaged learning programs that help students to experience high levels of academic achievement and satisfaction and to develop and refine soft skills.

Objective 2.1. Students who complete OSEEL programs will experience high levels of academic achievement (e.g., GPA), high rates of persistence (e.g., retention, time to degree), and high levels of satisfaction with OSEEL programs and Northern Illinois University.

Objective 2.2. Students who complete OSEEL programs will form meaningful relationships with other students, faculty and staff, and/or campus and community partners.

Objective 2.3. Students who complete OSEEL programs will develop and refine soft skills, including successful collaboration with diverse groups of people, effective oral and written communication, and self-sufficiency.

Goal 3. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate learning community programs that provide students with the opportunity to study a particular theme across courses in a community of their peers.

Objective 3.1. Students who complete Themed Learning Communities (TLC) will develop a deep understanding of a particular theme through integrated and interdisciplinary study across courses.

Objective 3.2. Students who complete Themed Learning Communities (TLC) will experience successful transition and acclimation to Northern Illinois University.

Goal 4. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate research programs that provide students with the opportunity to properly conduct academic research and artistry projects and draw reasoned conclusions in their work.

Objective 4.1. Students who complete research and artistry projects will expand and deepen their knowledge of a topic or subject matter of their choosing related to human societies and the natural world.

Objective 4.2. Students who complete research and artistry projects will conduct academic research that follows the guidelines of best practice, including developing clear research questions or problems, applying appropriate research methodologies, and adhering to the appropriate ethical frameworks.

Objective 4.3. Students who complete research and artistry projects will draw reasoned conclusions in the findings of their research.

Objective 4.4. Students who complete research and artistry projects will engage in reflective practice for the purpose of continuous learning and improvement, identifying lessons learned, strengths, and ways to improve.

Goal 5. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate service learning programs that provide students with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of global and local issues and that foster a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to the common good.

Objective 5.1. Students who complete service learning projects will expand and deepen their knowledge of global and local issues as well as the strengths, assets, and needs of the local community they serve.

Objective 5.2. Students who complete service learning projects will develop a deeper understanding of civic engagement and indicate a sense of the importance of personal responsibility to the common good.

Objective 5.3. Students who complete service learning projects will develop reasoned solutions to social issues and community problems.

Objective 5.4. Students who complete service learning projects will engage in reflective practice for the purpose of continuous learning and improvement, identifying lessons learned, strengths, and ways to improve.

3. Assessment Methods

Goals, Objectives, and Assessment Methods

GOAL 1. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will promote and support engaged learning practices and programs at all levels of the university.		
Objectives	Assessment Method(s)	Type*
Objective 1.1. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will promote and market engaged learning programs to diverse populations of students.	OSEEL marketing efforts will be evaluated using Program Evaluation and URAD evaluation questions that ask how program participants learned about the programs in which they have participated.	S, I
	OSEEL program diversity will be determined by demographics data acquired through Testing Services.	S, D
Objective 1.2. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will support faculty efforts to engage students in integrative learning, research, and service.	Faculty support will be evaluated using Program Evaluation and URAD evaluation questions that ask respondents to rate the level of support they experienced while participating in the program.	S, I
Objective 1.3. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will serve as a campus resource and partner for engaged learning initiatives.	The total number of URAD participants, including faculty, students, and attendees, will be tracked and reported using wrist bracelets.	S, D

GOAL 2. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate quality engaged learning programs that help students to experience high levels of academic achievement and satisfaction and to develop and refine soft skills.

Objectives	Assessment Method(s)	Type*
<p>Objective 2.1. Students who complete OSEEL programs will experience high levels of academic achievement (e.g., GPA), high rates of persistence (e.g., retention, time to degree), and high levels of satisfaction with OSEEL programs and Northern Illinois University.</p>	<p>Graduating GPAs, first to second year retention rates, graduation rates, and time-to-degree for students who have completed OSEEL programs will be acquired through Testing Services.</p> <p>Student satisfaction with OSEEL programs will be evaluated using Program Evaluation and URAD evaluation questions that ask respondents to rate their satisfaction.</p>	<p>S, D</p> <p>S, D</p>
<p>Objective 2.2. Students who complete OSEEL programs will form meaningful relationships with other students, faculty and staff, and/or campus and community partners.</p>	<p>Students’ formation of meaningful relationships on and off campus as a result of their participation in OSEEL programs will be evaluated using Program and Evaluation questions that ask respondents about their relationships.</p>	<p>S, I</p>
<p>Objective 2.3. Students who complete OSEEL programs will develop and refine soft skills, including successful collaboration with diverse groups of people, effective oral and written communication, and self-sufficiency.</p>	<p>Students’ development of soft skills will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students’ performance on a number of soft skill objectives.</p> <p>Students’ development of soft skills will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on a number of soft skill objectives.</p> <p>URAD presenters’ soft skills will be evaluated using the URAD judge evaluation that allow judges to rate students’ performance on a number of soft skill objectives.</p> <p>Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.</p>	<p>S, D</p> <p>S, I</p> <p>S, D</p> <p>S, I</p>

GOAL 3. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate learning community programs that provide students with the opportunity to study a particular theme across courses in a community of their peers.

Objectives	Assessment Method(s)	Type*
<p>Objective 3.1. Students who complete Themed Learning Communities (TLC) will develop a deep understanding of a particular theme through integrated and interdisciplinary study across courses.</p>	<p>Students’ knowledge and comprehension of the theme will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that ask faculty and students to rate how effectively TLCs foster understanding of the theme.</p>	<p>S, I</p>
<p>Objective 3.2. Students who complete Themed Learning Communities (TLC) will experience successful transition and acclimation to Northern Illinois University.</p>	<p>First to second year retention rates for students who have completed TLC experiences will be acquired through Testing Services.</p> <p>Student transition and acclimation to NIU will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that ask faculty and students to rate how the TLC impacted their transition and acclimation.</p>	<p>S, D</p> <p>S, I</p>

GOAL 4. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate research programs that provide students with the opportunity to properly conduct academic research and artistry projects and draw reasoned conclusions in their work.		
Objectives	Assessment Method(s)	Type*
Objective 4.1. Students who complete research and artistry projects will expand and deepen their knowledge of a topic or subject matter of their choosing related to human societies and the natural world.	Students' development of knowledge as a result of their research efforts will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.	S, D
	Students' development of knowledge as a result of their research efforts will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.	S, I
	Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.	S, I
Objective 4.2. Students who complete research and artistry projects will conduct academic research that follows the guidelines of best practice, including developing clear research questions or problems, applying appropriate research methodologies, and adhering to the appropriate ethical frameworks.	Students' adherence to best research practices will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.	S, D
	Students' adherence to best research practices will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.	S, I
	Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.	S, I

<p>Objective 4.3. Students who complete research and artistry projects will draw reasoned conclusions in the findings of their research.</p>	<p>Students' reasoning skills will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.</p> <p>Students' reasoning skills will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.</p> <p>Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.</p>	<p>S, D</p> <p>S, I</p> <p>S, I</p>
<p>Objective 4.4. Students who complete research and artistry projects will engage in reflective practice for the purpose of continuous learning and improvement, identifying lessons learned, strengths, and ways to improve.</p>	<p>Students' engagement in reflective practice will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.</p> <p>Students' engagement in reflective practice will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.</p> <p>Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.</p> <p>Research blogs</p>	<p>S, I</p> <p>S, D</p> <p>S, I</p> <p>F, D</p>

GOAL 5. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL) will manage and coordinate service programs that provide students with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of global and local issues and that foster a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to the common good.		
Objectives	Assessment Method(s)	Type*
Objective 5.1. Students who complete service projects will expand and deepen their knowledge of global and local issues as well as the strengths, assets, and needs of the local community they serve.	Students' development of knowledge of global and local issues will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.	S, D
	Students' development of knowledge of global and local issues will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.	S, I
	Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.	S, I
Objective 5.2. Students who complete service projects will develop a deeper understanding of civic engagement and indicate a sense of the importance of personal responsibility to the common good.	Students' understanding of civic engagement will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.	S, D
	Students' understanding of civic engagement will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.	S, I
	Students' change in beliefs over the course of their service-learning experience will be evaluated using a pre-post beliefs survey.	F/S, D
	Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.	S, I

<p>Objective 5.3. Students who complete service projects will develop a community engagement project that is guided by reasoned solutions to local community issues and problems.</p>	<p>Students' reasoning skills will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.</p>	S, D
	<p>Students' reasoning skills will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.</p>	S, I
	<p>Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.</p>	S, I
<p>Objective 5.4. Students who complete service projects will engage in reflective practice for the purpose of continuous learning and improvement, identifying lessons learned, strengths, and ways to improve.</p>	<p>Students' engagement in reflective practice will be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow faculty to rate students' performance on this objective.</p>	S, D
	<p>Students' engagement in reflective practice will also be evaluated using Student Performance Evaluation items that allow students to evaluate their own performance on this objective.</p>	S, I
	<p>Program design will be evaluated using Program Evaluation items that allow faculty and students to rate the extent to which the design fosters the achievement of this objective.</p>	S, I
	<p>Service-Learning blogs</p>	F, D

Assessment Method-by-Outcome Matrix

Assessment Method	Goal*				
	Goal 1 Promotion & Support	Goal 2 Achievement & Skills	Goal 3 Learning Communities	Goal 4 Research & Artistry	Goal 5 Service
Program Evaluation	S, I	S, D S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I
Student Performance Evaluation		S, D S, I		S, D S, I	S, D S, I
Demographics data from Testing Services	S, D				
Academic achievement data from Testing Services		S, D	S, D		
URAD headcounts	S, D				
URAD evaluation	S, I				
URAD judges evaluation		S, D			
Research blogs				F, D	
Service-Learning blogs					F, D
Service-Learning Pre-Post Beliefs survey					F, D S, D

* Goal alignment indicates assessment method is Formative (F) or Summative (S) and Direct (D) or Indirect (I) assessment.

Explanation of Assessment Methods

Assessment Method	Explanation			
	Description	Assessment-Level Target	When Data Will Be Collection	Person Responsible
Program Evaluation	Faculty, site supervisors, and students will complete a survey in which they provide comprehensive feedback on their satisfaction, the design of the program, etc.	This assessment includes a wide range of assessment items. Two key targets are 90% of respondents will report satisfaction and 90% of respondents will recommend OSEEL programs.	Program Evaluations will be administered at the end of each program, which will vary by program throughout the year.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
Student Performance Evaluation	Faculty, site supervisors, and students will complete a survey in which they evaluate the student's performance on a series of objectives relevant to the program they completed.	Faculty, site supervisors, and students will rate 90% of students as "Very good" or higher on each objective they assess	Student Performance Evaluations will be administered at the end of each program, which will vary by program throughout the year.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
Demographics data from Testing Services	Student demographics data (e.g., race, gender) will be acquired from Testing Services.	Participants in OSEEL programs will represent diverse backgrounds (e.g., race/ethnicity, income level, first generation, etc.) and will come from a wide range of academic areas.	Data will be acquired from Testing Services at the start of each academic term.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator

Academic achievement data from Testing Services	Student achievement data (e.g., retention, graduating GPA, time-to-degree) will be acquired from testing services.	GPA, retention and graduation data will exceed that of the campus averages	Data will be acquired from Testing Services at the start of each academic term.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
URAD headcounts	URAD participants will be tracked by distributing and counting wristbands.	We will aim for 900 annual URAD participants	Data will be collected within one week of the URAD event.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
URAD evaluation	URAD participants will complete a survey in which they evaluate their experience of the URAD event.	This assessment includes a wide range of assessment items. Two key targets are 90% of respondents will report satisfaction and 90% of respondents will recommend OSEEL programs.	The URAD evaluation will be administered the day of the URAD event and will remain open for one week.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
URAD judges evaluation	URAD judges will evaluate student performance on a number of objectives.	Judges will rate 90% of students as “Very good” or higher on each objective they assess	The URAD judges evaluation will be completed and the data aggregated on the day of the URAD event.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator
Research blogs	Students complete monthly blog entries in which they reflect upon their experiences, their performance, and their interactions with their faculty mentors	100% of Research Rookie participants will complete all assigned blog entries	Students’ blog entries are tracked on a monthly basis to monitor their completion	Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research and Program Partnerships

Service-Learning blogs	Students complete monthly blog entries in which they reflect upon their experiences, how their views evolve over the course of their experiences, and their interactions with campus and community partners.	100% of Service-Learning participants will complete all assigned blog entries	Students' blog entries are tracked on a monthly basis to monitor their completion	Associate Director and Community Engagement Coordinator
Service-Learning Pre-Post Beliefs survey	Students will complete a beliefs survey at the start of and the end of their service-learning experience.	90% of Service-Learning students will show growth from pre- to post-administration of the beliefs survey on all objectives	The Pre- beliefs survey will be administered at the start of service-learning programs in the fall. The Post- beliefs survey will be administered at the end of the service-learning programs late spring.	OSEEL Program Advisor and Assessment Coordinator