

Engagement Graduation Requirement Initiative: Phase One
The UCF Experience
Activities and Criteria

The goal of the Engagement Graduation Requirement Initiative is to enhance undergraduate student learning and career success, to create a hallmark UCF undergraduate experience, and to serve the central Florida community and beyond.

The vision of this initiative is for all UCF undergraduate students to participate in academic-based experiential learning, serving the interests of students, faculty, the university, and the community.

To meet this goal and mission, students will field-test classroom learning and skills in real world settings to enhance learning, and the products they create from these experiences will support their educational and career goals. Undergraduate experiential learning will augment faculty members' pedagogy, enliven their teaching, and support their scholarship. This requirement will further the university's goal of being America's leading partnership university and serve our region and state.

Activities that meet the proposed graduation requirement:

1. capstone courses that meet the criteria
2. clinicals
3. cooperative education
4. honors program
5. internships that meet the criteria
6. practica that meet the criteria
7. LEAD Scholars
8. service-learning
9. studies abroad that meet the criteria
10. undergraduate research that meets the criteria

Implementation Plan :

Upon approval by the university, departments will determine the means for students in their programs of study to meet the engagement requirement. Programs may provide details about any of the examples of engagement given above or other examples to the Engagement Council, proving that they meet the engagement criteria and are worthy of certification by the Council as a "UCF Engagement Activity."

Criteria to be met by new or existing engagement activities to qualify as a graduation requirement:

- a. activity shall be credit-bearing (a minimum 1 credit hour)
- b. activity shall demonstrate personal growth, civic engagement, and/or academic engagement
- c. activity shall be of appropriate duration (a minimum of 15 hours of engagement)
- d. activity shall have faculty or other professional direction or mentoring
- e. activity shall have a structured student reflection
- f. activity shall have clearly stated learning objectives
- g. activity shall have approved assessment design

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Background and Goals

Identifying and shaping “The UCF Experience” has been discussed at UCF for more than a decade. The UCF Strategic Plan advocates this goal: “Make recommendations for the undergraduate UCF Experience that are both curricular and co-curricular, are consistent with the UCF mission, and will produce desired student outcomes.”

One aspect of this experience is to leverage the advantage that UCF has by its location, situated in a region of 3.6 million people with UCF as the only comprehensive university. This advantage provides opportunities for students to engage in co-operative education, internships, research, and service-learning--opportunities adequate for an undergraduate student population of 42,000.

The goal for our university, therefore, is to inspire and reward our students to exploit this institutional advantage, enriching their personal lives, academic careers, and civic experiences.

Other institutions understand the value of such engagement opportunities, and a civic service requirement is not unusual for undergraduate students. The UCF challenge is to design an engagement experience that provides learning experiences for the diversity of our student population, colleges, disciplines, and programs while simultaneously supporting an institutional mandate. We have learned that at UCF one-size seldom fits all.

The proposed design, therefore, includes the more traditional civic engagement activities and adds other experiences to foster academic success and personal growth. All these activities, however, have a common set of goals:

- To encourage students to be involved in their education
- To structure student contacts with faculty members and professionals on a one-to-one basis
- To build sustainable learning communities inside our large institution
- To increase the retention rate among undergraduate students
- To support faculty members in their need to grow as teachers and researchers
- To provide a common “UCF Experience” for all undergraduates that supports our goal to be “America’s leading partnership institution”
- To design “The UCF Experience” as a means to differentiate UCF from other institutions of higher education

A longer-range goal of “The UCF Experience” will be to supplement this graduation requirement with a blue-print for a more extensive engagement experience, one that evolves over a four-year

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undergraduate student career (two years for transfer students). This more intensive model subscribes to a developmental design for student engagement, supporting personal growth with an ever increasing complexity of experiences during an undergraduate career.

Realizing the ambitious nature of such a four-year plan, the present proposal is limited to Phase One of “The UCF Experience”: a requirement that all undergraduate students participate in a single engagement experience in order to graduate.

Engagement Graduation Requirement Initiative: Phase Two
The UCF Experience
Overview and Guiding Questions

The very concept of engagement suggests a need for context. When we ask you to engage with college, community, and career, we must not make this request without context or reference to our institutional structure. We must model the kind of intellectual effort we want you to make by demonstrating the act of engaging through our own process of recognizing and taking advantage of the resources available on our campus.

The engagement movement at UCF must include an academic element, as our curriculum is finally where we best communicate our intellectual values, but it must also be connected with other crucial elements of your experiences on campus and beyond. For that reason, we recommend that the university make engagement a cross-curricular and co-curricular endeavor by promoting a culture of engagement throughout your experiences.

Freshman Year/Campus Stage: Connecting with the Campus. Coming to college is an exciting and sometimes overwhelming experience. It's important for new students to connect with UCF, which is one of America's largest universities, but also a place where individual students matter. During this first year, you get involved in campus activities, including service opportunities through Volunteer UCF or LEAD scholars; social networking through our amazing range of clubs and organizations; athletic activities like intramural softball or Frisbee; cultural experiences like theater performances, art exhibits, concerts, readings, and speakers; and political or leadership activities like Student Government Association or College Republicans or College Democrats. During the Campus Stage you consider your life experiences, matching what you do on campus with your personal and professional goals.

Sophomore Year/Community Stage: Connecting with the Community. As you become comfortable on campus, it's time to integrate your activities with your surrounding community, Orlando and the region of central Florida as a place with distinctive features, needs, and resources. It's time to begin to think of yourself and UCF as a part of a community with the attending responsibilities and opportunities. In this stage, you engage in service-learning courses and co-curricular volunteering opportunities. You will find opportunities to apply what you're learning in your classes while you also continue to learn about yourself. .

Junior Year/Profession Stage: Connecting with your Field of Study: During this year of focused course work in your major, you will find opportunities to engage in professional development activities through CO-OPs, internships, field-based service-learning courses, job shadowing, participation in professional societies, undergraduate research, study abroad, and capstone courses. These activities will help you to understand the relevance of your work beyond the classroom and grasp your professional options in the community.

Senior Year/Synthesis Stage: Putting it all Together. You now will have experienced campus, community, and professional connections. In this final year, the capstone experience should provide

evidence of their journey of personal growth, synthesis of professional knowledge, and synergy between campus, community, and professional connections.

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The Engagement Context Guiding Questions

Here are questions to guide you in thinking about the "hows and whys" of your engagement experiences.

Campus and Synthesis Stage: What have been the steps in your personal journey toward understanding your individual uniqueness within the context of your role as a student and as a professional?

Community Stage: Who is a community leader in your planned field of study and how did s/he develop the required strengths and talents of a person who makes a difference? Describe a role model and their career path to their present leadership role. What are the civic roles of people in my planned profession?

Field of Study Stage: How does or could/would research in your chosen field impact lives of people in our city, region, state, nation, or world? Focus on one and elaborate.

Synthesis Stage: What formal ethical standards exist for my field? What ethical issues impact my field? What work do I need to engage in to prepare for entering my profession when I graduate? (including graduate school, etc.) Am I prepared to make an impact on my workplace and profession?

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