

Western
Technical College

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT | 2023

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INTERIOR DESIGN: AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SUCCESS STORY

Bringing the community and the outside in through beautiful design



Learn more
about the
Nature
Place here!

By **Lauri Hoff**
Marketing Coordinator

Just two years ago, Western announced the completion of the Joyce Wanek Center for Art and Design. The state-of-the-art classroom, located in the Integrated Technology Center, is designed to meet and anticipate the needs of Western's new Interior Design program. Now, the first cohort is graduating, and many already have jobs lined up! A key part of the program's early success is the incorporation of experiential learning from the beginning: both community-based (CBL) and work-based learning (WBL) are woven into the program for an enriched and holistic education.

The novel program provided the opportune time to plan for the seamless integration of experiential learning. Instructor Jennifer Stangl states the program is a comprehensive focus on the main design sectors by term: residential, retail, and commercial design. In the classroom, the subject matter is theoretical—experiential learning brings it to life—the perfect augmentation to classroom teaching.

Work-Based Learning

Many pieces make up the WBL component, and they are strategically spaced throughout the program's two years. WBL consists of trips to local design studios and architecture firms, design companies, architecture tours, and big industry-specific conferences in Chicago and Las Vegas—great learning opportunities that highlight professional excellence with opportunities to network and interact with folks currently thriving in the field. All work-based learning trips and activities are specific to each term's design sector focus. Design professionals from local firms visit the classroom twice per month, depending on the material covered. Additionally, the program includes an internship course, Design Field Experience, which requires each student to establish their own internship to fulfil the necessary credit hours. This internship requires students to apply and practice their working

knowledge on the job! Career Services offers support for this as needed.

Another key aspect of WBL is the thorough career preparation brought to the classroom. Career Services join the class for presentations on exploring career pathways and resource options, preparing

TERM VISITS AND TOURS:

Residential Design

- Curated, La Crosse
- Wisconsin Building Supply Kitchen and Bath, Onalaska
- International Market Square, Minneapolis (many different showroom and firms are housed here)

Retail Design

- Ashley Furniture, Arcadia
- Las Vegas Market, Las Vegas (Industry-specific conference)

Commercial Design

- WisCorps, The Nature Place, La Crosse
- Neocon, Chicago (Industry-specific conference)
- Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations, Onalaska

Capstone Design Projects

Each student selects their own project type and plans their individual visit accordingly.



Learn more about
Interior Design here!



“The Nature Place design was a fun and challenging project for an organization with great values. Working with a real client that has a values-based organization makes you want to think harder and do better. You are more inspired to do your best. It was nice to meet and talk with people about the job and get real feedback.

–Taylor White, Interior Design graduate

resumes and cover letters, interviewing and networking practice, job fair recommendations, setting up a Handshake account for easy job searching, and helpful LinkedIn hacks. An important part of the career pathway exploration includes an introduction to Clifton Strengthsfinder and how to advantageously employ this self-knowledge. It is a purposeful tool for learning about the self, how to naturally communicate, and what makes each student unique. The lessons learned here help students build industry-focused relationships and connect them to personal career goals, especially when used with Handshake.

Finally, the Interior Design showcase takes place at the end of the program and is significant for several reasons. The showcase is a culmination of knowledge learned and a demonstration of how they applied design principles and concepts to real projects. It is also an opportunity to practice public speaking and communicating, both of which are prized in the industry. Holistically, it combines all program aspects—professional development, networking, portfolio building, and peer recognition. Students fully and confidently demonstrate their abilities and knowledge in preparation for successful careers.

Instructors: Connect with Julie or Paul and Grace to establish CBL and WBL in your classroom.

Focus on teaching—the experiential learning team will do the rest!



Community-Based Learning

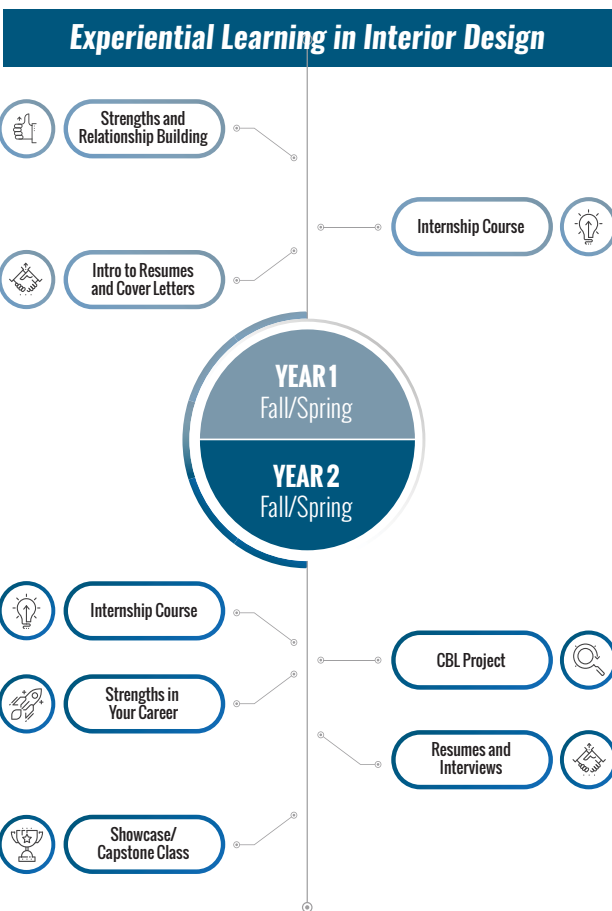
The Nature Place was interested in transforming their communal spaces into a beautiful and functional public community center. This turned out to be the perfect project for the commercial design studio unit—real problems to solve with a small budget!

The design students met with The Nature Place’s Visitor Services Manager Amber Bydynkowski to explore and establish the project’s wants and needs. The goal: Bringing the community and the outside in through design choices. A reimaging of

the large, sunny, open space into different gathering areas, such as a fireplace lounge, a coffee bar, a place for bird watching, and a view of the greenery and plant life, a refreshments area, and overall updates—imagine more spaces to congregate! In other words, design a homey, comfortable place to hang out and enjoy the magnificent view of the marsh and bluffs while considering strict commercial codes.

With a nod to the effectiveness of cross-functional teams, Loren Anderson and his Architectural Technology class created a 3D rendering of the building in Revit that the

Interior Design students could also use. Revit is a commercial building software used by architects, designers, engineers, and contractors to create, edit, and review 3D models in detail. Stangl’s students then used their building model of the atrium to add their design ideas. The students then documented the existing building details and took inside measurements. The students took all of that into consideration along with Bydynkowski’s stated needs and got to work planning and designing. They presented to The Nature Place twice. The first idea phase is called a schematic



“My favorite was our capstone project so I chose a large residential home with unlimited creativity. We had to incorporate fabric and textiles. The unlimited options opened up so many learning oppo

design, which is an encapsulation of the idea phase. Next: discussions happen; feedback is shared. The students work on incorporating tweaks and changes to present new deliverables in a final presentation.

The biggest challenge by far was balancing the needs of commercial design requirements with a limited budget. Unlike residential design, commercial codes are in place to protect the public: sturdy furniture with durable finishes and fire-retardant upholstery, easy to clean surfaces, and many more. Design student Ava Laukant reflects, "Working with an actual client on an actual job was the best part of the program. Listening and talking with the client to see if we could figure out how to satisfy their needs within a set of parameters was challenging and fun to see if you could do it. Also, encountering the reality of budgets is inescapable."

Bydnykowski sums up the project perfectly, "It was incredibly helpful and inspirational to watch the student projects develop into a variety of creative designs for our space. After their final design presentations, we pulled our favorite pieces into an overall plan, which we have incorporated. We are thrilled with this opportunity to collaborate on a real project with Western students. It has been a rewarding experience for us to bring to life a design that has been the culmination of so many people's work, thanks to our partnership with Western. We hope students will come back and visit us to see the impact they have made here."

This collaboration gave students valuable experience through their own work while providing support and professional assistance to a wonderful part of our community.

project. We got to choose our subject, e. I explored and created spaces with include a sustainable element, so I chose exploration of design possibilities rtunities."

– Ava Laukant, Interior Design graduate

ENRICHING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

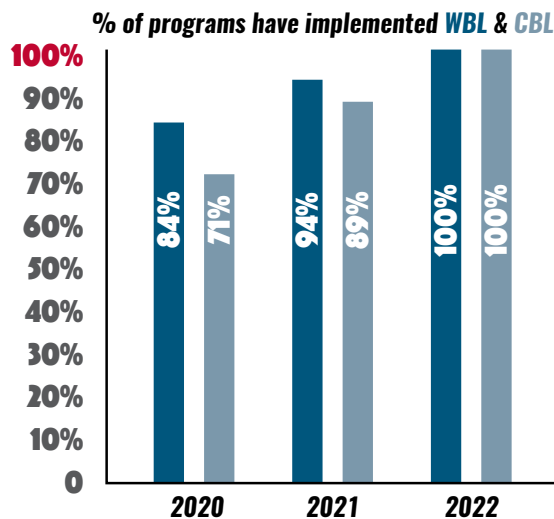
Experiential learning is a holistic learning tool for teaching practical knowledge and skills. **Community-based** and **work-based learning** are two forms of **experiential learning** that offer unique opportunities for our students to gain real-world experience: getting out of the classroom and into the community! Program knowledge is no longer theoretical, but actual!

ALL WESTERN PROGRAMS USE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

As an institution that values the student experience and their overall success as central to the mission, Western's institutional goal has been to implement Experiential Learning into 100% of academic programs: associate degrees and technical diplomas alike. That goal is met a full two years early.

At the core of our mission, Western is about changing lives and growing our communities, WBL (work based learning) connects local employers with Western students in a real work world experience. CBL (community-based learning) helps our community by giving back and instilling civic duty in our students while they learn technical skills.

—Western Technical College President Roger Stanford.



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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

WHAT DOES OUR FUTURE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

Now that we have CBL & WBL infused in 100% of our academic programs with the framework in place, the work enters a new and exciting phase. The future of experiential learning holds enormous potential for new ways of engaging in immersive and personalized experiences. These experiences are designed to equip learners with relevant skills and knowledge needed for success in a changing world.

Best practices and innovative ideas

It is time to focus on developing innovative ideas while gleaning the best practices learned so far and expanding upon them: always tweaking, improving, and updating. For both CBL and WBL, we have created tiered levels and some programs have scaffolded approaches to CBL and WBL which seamlessly build upon one

another as students progress in their program. Ideally, more programs will incorporate scaffolded experiences, building deeper learning and reflection.

Another goal is a thoughtful increase in partnerships and opportunities to emphasize the connection between classroom learning and real-world applications. Future experiential learning initiatives will involve numerous partnership options to provide a more personalized and engaging experience.

We are collaborating closely with instructors to rework CBL and WBL into the expected 7-week curriculum redesign. And ideas we have not thought of yet!



2023

Experiential Learning Annual Report

Western Technical College is proud of its hands-on education—a powerful learning method. Another way to increase student success is by adding work-based and community-based experiences, furthering our efforts to bring learning to life. These experiences cultivate civic professionalism and community generosity.


Western set the goal of embedding experiential learning, both CBL and WBL, in 100% of our degree programs by 2025. We made our goal a two years early, and now even more work begins and we can't wait!

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Western uses the term **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING** to explain the process of learning by doing. By engaging Western students in community-based learning and work-based learning experiences and reflection activities, they are better prepared to accomplish their career goals and be active community members.

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING (CBL) is a fluid and purposeful approach to engagement designed to immerse Western students and faculty in an experience that develops skills, enhances learning, and strengthens the communities they serve.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) allows Western students to apply the technical and employability skills learned in the classroom to the industry that corresponds with their program.



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