Deepening EXPERIENCE

Impact Report 2015-2016 Center for Experiential Learning
I am always moved by Paulo Freire’s statement: “Education does not change the world. Education changes people. People change the world.” From students serving at diverse congregations in our communities and interning at social justice organizations, to students conducting research in hospitals and community agencies, Loyola students engage and deepen their experiences all over Chicago. The pathways Loyola students take to engage their learning vary, but the breadth and depth of their experience is significant. Loyola students change themselves and change the world around them!

Welcome to the 2015-2016 IMPACT annual report from Loyola’s Center for Experiential Learning! This annual report features the narratives of Loyola students, in their own voices, who engaged in multiple forms of experiential learning at Loyola University Chicago. It is the story of the Loyola students’ impact on student learning, community development, and faculty teaching.

The Center for Experiential Learning, in working with faculty instructors and community organizations, facilitates the development of high-impact learning experiences connecting classroom content with real-world experience – a significant element of the Jesuit education. As Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, stated:

“Solidarity is learned through contact rather than concepts. When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is a catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.”

In this IMPACT report, we see how a Loyola student’s “heart is touched by direct experience” through service-learning, academic internships, and undergraduate research, and articulated through learning portfolios. As students connect their new learning in these experiences, they emerge with a new understanding of social justice and new reflections with critical inquiry – leading to solidarity and action. Perhaps their stories will lead you to be “challenged to change.”

In service,

Patrick M. Green, Ed.D.
Director, Center for Experiential Learning
Clinical Instructor of Experiential Learning

“Loyola students change themselves and change the world around them!”
Cristina Rodriguez
Sociology and Anthropology (2017)

Cristina Rodriguez has always been an involved student, but it wasn’t until a semester spent at Loyola’s Vietnam Center her sophomore year that she got her first taste of experiential learning. Volunteering at an orphanage as part of a service-learning sociology class, Cristina learned a great deal and credited it with helping her find the benefit of working with others.

In part because of this experience in Vietnam, Cristina decided to apply for the Social Justice Internship program, where she was accepted and matched with a position in the Immigration and Naturalization department of Catholic Charities. In this role, Cristina worked one-on-one with undocumented individuals, most of whom were victims of abuse or assault, to assemble documents making their case for a visa. This emotional, taxing work immediately struck a chord: “Working with such a marginalized population showed me the importance of using my privilege to be a person with others. My second week there, I knew it was the type of work I was supposed to do. I changed my major and my career goals due to the passion that I developed working there.”

While Cristina had a great initial experience at her internship, she found that her continued improvement as an intern depended greatly on the support of her EXPL 390 academic internship course, saying, “if it were not for the guidance of this class, my experience would not have been as beneficial and effective as it was.” In the spring, Cristina built on the academic element by conducting a research project in conjunction with her internship, studying the experiences of undocumented women. Although her time as a Social Justice Intern has concluded, her work with Catholic Charities has not. “I am very happy to say that I have been invited to return to Catholic Charities as a legal intern for my senior year, and I am excited to also continue my research study on self-empowerment in immigrant women. I have also decided to pursue a graduate degree focused on immigration law.”

“Working with such a marginalized population showed me the importance of using my privilege to be a person with others.”
Meriem Sadoun has shown a commitment to experiential learning throughout her time at Loyola, engaging in service-learning internships, learning portfolios, and undergraduate research. “These experiential learning opportunities were among the highlights of my undergraduate experience. Through these opportunities, I was able to study abroad in three different countries, engage in three different research projects, and hold two internships. I discovered in myself a passion for connecting with people and solving problems through creative research.”

In her last semester of undergraduate study, Meriem connected her personal and academic experiences to serve the Rogers Park community at GirlForward (GF), an organization that works with adolescent refugee girls to provide mentorship, education and leadership opportunities in a supportive community. “I definitely see myself learning more about the countries our clients come from and the refugee resettlement process. My family and I are a refugee family from Algeria, and I was very young at the time. Through GF, I see myself becoming more aware of what it means to be a refugee in this day and age.”

For her work at GirlForward, Meriem received the Loyola University Community Engagement Award for Impact in 2016. Her internship mentor, Ashley Marine, had this to say about Meriem:

“Meriem’s presence has made a significant impact on the individual girls she works with through our after-school center. She uses her knowledge and identity to form strong bonds with individual girls and serves as a role model for them. Meriem has a unique ability to connect the individual experiences of refugee girls she meets with the broader political context occurring in the US regarding refugees. Her presence has helped make the entire staff more thoughtful and empowered to stand up and speak out regarding the rights of those we serve.”

Reflecting upon her path, Meriem saw “a very clear domino effect,” where each experience opened her eyes to new possibilities and deeper resonance. “I believe these experiences have allowed me to get to know myself, and have given me the liberty to explore my career options, and the world. As a first-year student, I was sure my calling was medicine, and I wanted to be a doctor. I realize now that I still want to help people, not with their health, but with the acceptance and appreciation of their identity, and their confidence as a human being.”

After graduating, Meriem is interning with the Muslim American Leadership Alliance (MALA), recording stories with StoryCorps to share the stories of Muslim Americans. “I have learned that I want to do work that makes our communities more inclusive and build people up to embrace who they are.”

Pictured: Meriem Sadoun at her internship with GirlForward, a non-profit organization supporting refugee adolescent girls, and below, presenting at the 2016 Undergraduate Research and Engagement Symposium.
Academic Internships

Academic internships foster experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. Students enroll in a course at Loyola that grounds the internship experience in scholarship in order to receive academic credit. With community partner employers as co-educators, students in academic internship courses engage in real world professional experiences, allowing students to "learn by doing" and reflect upon that learning.

1,280 students enrolled in one of 125 academic internship courses, offered in 31 different disciplines.

492 academic internship community partners

57% non-profit
31% for-profit
12% government

Learning Portfolios by the Numbers

9,071 Learning portfolios created by students through academic and co-curricular courses/programs to facilitate intentional learning, reflection, assessment, and professional development

3,263 Academic artifacts* uploaded to course or program-based ePortfolios

2,545 First-year students started building their Loyola Experience ePortfolio at new student orientation

*An artifact is a piece of evidence included in a Learning Portfolio that demonstrates skills, abilities, values, competencies, or knowledge.

24 students created culminating electronic portfolios, reflecting on their four years at Loyola in the context of the four themes of the Loyola Experience: Community, Commitment, Engagement, and Create the Future.

The internship helped me learn and grow, while the class facilitated my reflections and understanding of my internship.”

31% for-profit
57% non-profit
12% government

1,280 students enrolled in one of 125 academic internship courses, offered in 31 different disciplines.
Undergraduate Research

The Loyola Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (LUROP) includes funded fellowships for mentored research, guides to external research opportunities, travel grants, workshops on research and presentation skills, and a symposium to showcase undergraduate research.

Service-Learning

Service-Learning at Loyola University Chicago is a credit-bearing academic experience that invites students into our surrounding communities in ways that stimulate their academic, civic, social, vocational, moral, ethical, and spiritual growth and development while they contribute to the common good. Each semester approximately 50 faculty members at Loyola facilitate service-learning experiences with their students.

- 2,519 students participated in service-learning courses
- Students provided a total of 113,350 hours of service
- 123 courses offered (summer, fall, spring)
- 31 departments offered service-learning courses

- 90% of students found that the service experience enabled them to work on something of interest to them or that the experience sparked an interest in them.
- 90% of students found that the service experience helped them to clarify their values in addition to working with people who they would not ordinarily encounter.
- 94% of students were able to learn about the broader context of the social issue they worked on through the service experience.
- 91% of students found that the experience provided new/different perspectives about society.
- 90% of students felt better equipped to address problems in urban communities.
Community Partnerships

Mutually beneficial relationships are at the heart of the work of the Center for Experiential Learning, and relationships with community partners form the backbone of Loyola student learning outside the classroom. Students are able to expand their learning beyond campus through meaningful interactions with organizational staff and clients, highlighting the fact that everyone is both teacher and learner. As students help build capacity of our partner organizations, they are able to apply their learning to real-world situations and connect it to the lived experiences of their neighbors.

During 2015-2016, Loyola students worked with 793 organizations across Chicago and around the world for their engaged learning experiences.

“Loyola students are well-motivated, industrious, and reflective.”

“Loyola students remain some of our sharpest interns in both general industry knowledge and ability to put ideas into practice.”

“Personal growth 98%
Ability to work with others 99%
Communication skills 97%
Problem analysis and critical thinking 91%
Workplace skills 94%
Connecting theory with practice 91%

97% of partners are satisfied or very satisfied with their students.
97% of partners said students built organizational capacity.

We are very pleased with the caliber of students sent to us and hope to continue our partnership for a long time.”

“I was thrilled with the student intern we received. She surpassed all of our organization’s expectations and was truly a joy to work with.”

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“Percentage of site supervisors reporting skill development among LUC students in...”
Volunteer Corps.

Andy Greenia
Alumnus (2013)

Loyola alumni continue to deepen their commitment to social justice often through post-graduate service. As part of the Loyola’s Social Justice Internship Grant Program, Andy Greenia participated in a service-learning internship course offered by the Center for Experiential Learning (EXPL 390). Andy worked with the Refugee Resettlement Program at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

“My time working with Catholic Charities gave me invaluable insight into the needs and experiences of a population I otherwise would not have worked alongside. It is the relationships I built through this experience that granted me the ability to begin connecting individual problems to larger systemic issues as my understanding of and my role in this work continued to evolve. As a sociology major, this experience also granted me the opportunity to readily apply my learnings from the classroom toward the efforts of organizations doing work with real-world implications.”

“As the classroom portion of the service-learning experience unfolded, we each learned how to develop a learning portfolio. This practice provided an opportunity to honor those who shaped our experiences as well as reflect upon the ways in which this work could translate into our lives as ‘contemplatives in action.’ In being provided the intentional space to reflect upon my motivations for engaging in this work as a person with many privileged identities, I began to ask myself one question: ‘What is at stake for me?’ In seeking that answer, I decided to return to Detroit after graduation and work as a community organizer engaged in efforts to advocate for justice within the education system.”

Greenia took his social justice activism and applied it to his next post-graduate experience—working in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

There is certainly a strong connection between my CEL experience and career path.”

Alex Minton
Marketing (2019)

Alex Minton, a first-year student majoring in marketing, jumped into the Loyola experience with both feet! He volunteered at the Chicago Children’s Museum (CCM) for a service-learning course and built a learning portfolio to reflect on his experiences. Alex is engaged with the Leadership Minor, an academic program which the Center for Experiential Learning supports.

“During my second semester as a first-year student I was enrolled in Introduction to Leadership Studies (ELPS 125), a service-learning class. My semester at the Chicago Children’s Museum reignited my passion to create opportunities for others on campus in the classroom and the community. As a bi-weekly volunteer one of my favorite exhibits to work in was the Artabounds Studio or the Tinkering Lab because both spaces directly enabled children and their families to unleash their imagination. To be able to serve at a place where I can enable a child to create a robot out of plastic bottles, or see their face light up when they hammer their first nail, is a rewarding feeling. Here on campus that opportunity to create allowed my peers and I to focus on creating spaces in the classroom to explore different aspects of leadership. Ultimately, my semester at the CCM brought me back to my time at my own children’s museum where I realized that you are never too old to imagine your possibilities, create something new, and believe in yourself.”

Alex continued his pathway of engagement by enrolling in an academic internship course over the summer and serving as an Orientation Leader (OL).

“To continue with the theme of creating opportunities for others, my service as an Orientation Leader directly correlates with my time at the museum. As an OL, I view my role like a bridge, being able to connect the Class of 2020 with Loyola’s resources, campus partners, and with the overall community itself.”

“Currently, I am continuing to serve at the Chicago Children’s Museum and continue to work with prospective students through my time as a tour guide, as well as leading first year students in the Loyola 360 November retreat. In the future I plan to get involved with Loyola4Chicago (Loyola community service program) and potentially attend an Alternative Break Immersion to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to serve others.”

Visit Alex’s learning portfolio at: aminton.info

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Undergraduate Research and Engagement Symposium

The Center for Experiential Learning organizes the annual Undergraduate Research and Engagement Symposium. Over 300 Loyola students showcased their research and community engagement projects at this event during Loyola’s 2016 Weekend of Excellence. In addition to research posters and oral presentations, students presented their Learning Portfolios, service-learning projects, and academic internship experiences.

Symposium by the Numbers

- 46 Oral presentations
- 104 Community partners/employers, alumni, faculty, and staff served as evaluators

Pictured: Loyola students present their research posters and projects at the 2016 Undergraduate Research & Engagement Symposium in the Mundelein Auditorium.

I have built a professional, working relationship with a professor that allowed for a deeper connection than a classroom setting provides. I refer to this professor for any professional development advice as well any advice in general. Through my LUROP fellowship, I have concrete support for my competencies that I can display to others.”
Samia Khan
Social Justice Intern

Through the Social Justice Internship Grant program, 10 students each year complete an internship at either Catholic Charities or Misericordia, two of the University’s premier local partner organizations. As a part of the program, students participate in year-round meetings, enroll in the CEL’s academic internship course, EXPL 390, and receive a scholarship, a key part of the Center for Experiential Learning’s efforts to making internships accessible to all students, no matter their financial situation.

Samia Khan served as a Social Justice Intern at Madonna House, a shelter for mothers and children run by Catholic Charities. As a pre-med biochemistry major, the experience was a major change of pace for her. At Madonna House, Samia’s main responsibility was planning and coordinating activities for the residents, a task she found to be mutually beneficial. “It was through these activities that I got the chance to get to know the residents on a personal level. My interaction with the clients and children contributed to my personal development as I built relationships with them based on love and trust.”

As I reflect back on my internship, I can say that my journey has been far from what I initially expected. But, through my internship, I have lived out Loyola’s mission of expanding knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith as I worked closely with the staff and residents of the Madonna House. My internship experience has taught me valuable skills such as teamwork, commitment to service, and simply opened my heart and mind to new experiences. As a science major, what I learned from my internship are things that I would have never learned just by sitting in a class. I know that the knowledge gained from my experience is applicable no matter what I pursue in life. But, the most important takeaway from my internship are things that I would have never learned just by sitting in a class. I know that the knowledge gained from my experience is applicable no matter what I pursue in life. But, the most important takeaway from my internship are things that I would have never learned just by sitting in a class. I know that the knowledge gained from my experience is applicable no matter what I pursue in life. But, the most important takeaway from my internship are things that I would have never learned just by sitting in a class.

After graduation, Samia plans to apply learning from her internship experience to her science education and pursue work in biochemistry until she enters medical school.
Gustavo Arreguin Mendoza
Community-Engaged Academic Internship Program

Made possible through College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), CAS undergraduates with demonstrated financial need in service-learning internships are eligible to apply for a $1,500 award. One of the Spring 2016 recipients, Gustavo Arreguin Mendoza, has cultivated his commitment to social justice through community-based learning and research throughout his undergraduate studies.

“My Jesuit education has taught me to seek learning outside of the classroom and to take a critical approach to the work I do with external organizations. I have learned to look injustice in the eye and to be equipped through the skills and concepts learned in the classroom, to assess and evaluate the operations of international serving organizations.”

Of his academic internship with Solidarity Bridge, Gustavo reflects that it “has been a capstone experience to my degree in International Studies. It has solidified my passion for social services and challenged me to consider how international relations work in terms of service, who is served, and how. Solidarity Bridge is committed to serving Bolivians at a holistic level and this aligns with my interests of doing community work and offering pastoral ministry.”

Gustavo notes that reflection was an essential part of his growth. “I was able to deepen and integrate my faith into the professional and academic experiences during this internship. This, in turn, allowed me to feel more present in the work I carried out. . . [it has] required me to see the world with new eyes, it has put me face-to-face with the realities of the poor and internally transformed me and gently invited me to devote my life to serving in South America.”

After graduation, Gustavo plans to get some experience internally transformed me and gently invited me to devote my life to serving in South America.”

It has solidified my passion for social services and challenged me to consider how international relations work in terms of service, who is served, and how.”

Pictured: Gustavo Arreguin Mendoza at the 2016 Commencement ceremonies.

Austin Tolentino
Social Innovation/Social Entrepreneurship Fellow

Austin Tolentino, Economics and Marketing major in Loyola’s Quinlan School of Business, took the service-learning course, Marketing Research. His service-learning experience connected him to a LUROP fellowship, the Social Innovation/Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship.

“The clients that came to the MARK 311 class included Epic Burger, The Magnificent Mile Association, and Edgewater Chamber of Commerce. Because of the specific nature of working with real clients based in Chicago through Marketing Research, I was better prepared to scrutinize and fine tune the intentions behind the design for my own research when I had sought approval from the IRB to study the community of Threadless.com, a Chicago-based company that crowdsources artistic designs for apparel and products and sells them online. The work in MARK 311 also trained me in using qualitative research methods.”

“The research experiences both with clients and within my independent study impacted me to become more intentional in how I approach the research process from the questions to design to implementation and analysis. So not only do I strive to seek the truth when learning but also to serve those in need by listening for their voices and telling their stories, whether they were the people at Edgewater Chamber of Commerce or the artist community of Threadless.com.”

“Currently, I am conducting research with a doctoral student as part of the Research Mentorship Program fellowship, helping facilitate and conduct sociological research on community organizing in Chicago. Moving forward, I am building off my research on crowdsourcing communal creativity by exploring the relationship between social discourse and civic engagement/entrepreneurship within communities in another Social Innovation/Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship this upcoming academic year.”

Pictured: Austin Tolentino, a member of Loyola’s student-run integrated marketing and communications agency, meets with his fellow student team.

“Ultimately, the experiences have broadened my way of thinking to apply what I do, however big or small, to progress towards goals of sustainability, equity, and social justice.”
The Integrated Course Design workshop provided useful information to support the seamless integration of active learning in my courses. It taught me how to infuse active learning techniques throughout the semester in a way that will boost student enthusiasm, learning, and retention of course content. I’m excited to try the new techniques this fall.”

Robyn Mallett, PhD,
Associate Professor of Psychology

From inspiring me to constantly refine and improve my teaching through new approaches and methods to providing valuable opportunities for my bright undergraduate researchers to present their research on campus and at national conferences, the CEL exemplifies Loyola’s dedication to cura personalis. Everything I have done as an educator and mentor at Loyola has been touched by them over the past five years.”

Kyle Roberts, PhD,
Assistant Professor of History,
Winner of the 2016 Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence

The Center for Experiential Learning supports faculty in the development of high-impact learning courses through one-on-one consultation and educational development programs. The CEL also convenes service-learning and academic internship affinity group meetings throughout the year, bringing faculty and staff together in learning communities to share their experiential learning pedagogy and strategies. The CEL co-sponsored the national workshop on Designing Courses for Significant Learning, led by international consultant, Dr. L. Dee Fink, author of Creating Significant Learning Experiences (2003). The CEL collaborated with the Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy to feature national speakers on diversity and social justice, learning-centered teaching, engaged learning course design, assessment, and critical reflection in the curriculum. In addition, the CEL facilitated 10 faculty development workshops, building the capacity of Loyola’s course instructors to develop engaged learning courses.

Stacy Neier Beran, PhD,
Marketing Instructor
Quinlan School of Business

Faculty Development

The Center for Experiential Learning has deepened my scholarly teaching practice by offering an array of programs and events that constantly challenge me to reassess how, when, and where I engage the hearts and minds of my students. I am, without a doubt, a better instructor through the support of the CEL.”

Stacy Neier Beran, PhD,
Marketing Instructor
Quinlan School of Business
Experiential Learning Courses

The CEL offers a number of experiential learning courses for Loyola students to explore social justice and community development through service-learning (EXPL 290, 292), academic internships (EXPL 390), and undergraduate research experiences (EXPL 391) while developing learning portfolios.

In spring 2016, the CEL collaborated with the Office for International Programs, the Athletics Department, and Campus Ministry, and offered EXPL 292 International Service-Learning, a course created for the LUC Men’s Soccer team which included a 10-day community-based learning experience in Peru over Spring Break.

The course focused on integrating conceptions of service and community development, identifying engagement approaches through asset-based community development, and exploring sport as youth development/community development. The 10-day trip to Lima and Cuzco, Peru, organized with the support of our Jesuit partner university, Universidad Ruz de Montoya, immersed the Loyola athletes in a developing country through community-based work, facilitating soccer lessons with a youth development NGO. The Loyola students interacted with, and learned about, sport as youth development through this NGO, and continued to explore this through four non-profit organizations in Chicago using sports-based youth development to learn how they can “think globally and act locally.” Upon reflection, many of the Loyola students discussed how this eye-opening experience impacted their understanding of how much of the world’s population exists with unequal access to resources, how powerful sports are in terms of development and positive impact on the community, and how many students are interested in learning about other cultures.

Pictured above: Connor Stevenson, Loyola Men’s Soccer player, celebrates with kids while facilitating youth soccer skills sessions in the El Augustino community in Lima, Peru. The members of class worked with a Peruvian NGO dedicated to youth-based sports development.

Engaged Learning at Loyola

The Center for Experiential Learning supports the development, implementation, and assessment of Loyola’s Engaged Learning University Requirement.

Existing research shows that multiple experiences of high impact practices, such as service-learning, academic internships, undergraduate research, and learning portfolios have a positive effect on students’ learning and development. During the 2015-16 academic year, 1,682 students who participated in experiential learning courses did so for the second, third, or even fourth or fifth time. By encountering multiple experiential learning courses on the pathways of their undergraduate studies, these students have repeatedly engaged with the benefits of transformative learning experiences.

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1,682 students participated in multiple experiences

“This class has given me values and instructions for living out my role as a global citizen in the world, and in the process has helped me recognize the importance of my Jesuit education.”

My CEL experience allowed me to gain real-world experience which will allow me to showcase my abilities in my future endeavors.”

Mit Patel (pictured) won a Provost Fellowship award and conducted research entitled “To Airbnb or not Airbnb: Survey Analysis,” with his faculty mentor, Nenad Jukic, Information Systems. In addition to presenting at Loyola’s Undergraduate Research and Engagement Symposium during the Weekend of Excellence, Patel also presented at the 2016 National Conference for Undergraduate Research (NCUR) conference in Asheville, NC. He also took courses that included building a learning portfolio. “It served as an extra-curricular learning experience that involved a deeper understanding of course material and its application to real-life examples.”
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