Can Engaged Scholarship Experiences Improve Student Learning?

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Environmental Resource Management Program
• What is Engaged Scholarship – how do we define it?

• What is Penn State doing to encourage Engaged Scholarship?

• Are students in the Environmental Resource Management major & College of Agricultural Sciences participating in ES experiences?

• How do we determine the benefits of ES?
What is Engaged Scholarship?

• Experiential Learning
• Learning Through Reflection
• High Impact Educational Practices
• Service Learning
• Engaged Learning
**Engaged Scholarship**

*Why do we care?*

Outcomes of an engaged curriculum:
1. Better Problem Solving Skills
2. Increased Global Literacy
3. Career Enhancement
4. Transformative Experiences
5. Stronger Critical Thinking Ability
“Because of Penn State’s commitment to engaged scholarship, members of the University community are working toward creating more opportunities for students to participate in out-of-classroom academic experiences, such as undergraduate research, study abroad, study away, embedded travel courses, community-based learning, service learning, internships, and capstone experiences.”* 

*Penn State’s Council on Engaged Scholarship
“Engaged Scholarship”
Penn State’s definition:

“Out-of-class academic experiences that complement in-class learning”
Penn State’s Commitment to Engaged Scholarship:

“All Penn State undergraduate students would be required to complete an engaged scholarship experience of 0 to 18 credits during their baccalaureate degree program.”*

*Legislation introduced to PSU Faculty Senate, April 2016
Timeline for implementation:

Spring 2016: Legislation introduced to the Faculty Senate to mandate at least one ES experience for every PSU undergraduate

Fall 2016: Implementation Committee develops guidelines and recommendations for academic units

Spring 2017: Implementation Committee shares guidelines/recommendations with Senate and Associate Deans

Fall 2017: Academic units develop ES Plans

Spring 2018: Plans submitted to Senate Curricular Committee for evaluation

Fall 2018: Graduation requirements in place for 2018-19 program year.
Are students in the Environmental Resource Management major & College of Agricultural Sciences participating in ES experiences?

Survey instruments:
1. On-line, College-wide Graduation Survey
   >93.1 of students participate (n = 639, 70%)

2. ERM Senior Exit Survey and Interview
   100% of students participate (n = 41, 60%)
Number of Engaged Scholarship Experiences per ERM Student

- 6 Experiences/Student: 5%
- 5 Experiences/Student: 20%
- 4 Experiences/Student: 12%
- 3 Experiences/Student: 19%
- 2 Experiences/Student: 17%
- 1 Experience/Student: 27%

Total students = 41

Number of Engaged Scholarship Experiences per ERM Student
Categories of Engaged Scholarship Experiences

- Undergraduate Research
- Study Abroad, Study Away, Embedded Courses
- Community Based Learning (includes field based classes)
- Service Learning
- Internships
Cumulative GPA by Number of Engaged Scholarship Experiences

- 1 experience: 3.0
- 2-3 experiences: 3.5 (labeled as 'ab')
- 4-6 experiences: 3.5 (labeled as 'b')

PennState College of Agricultural Sciences
Environmental Resource Management Program
Conclusions:

• Colleges of Agriculture/Natural Resources are engaging students

• Students with a higher number of engaged experiences appear to perform significantly better overall

• Better student performance with increasing ES experiences is not related to incoming ability

• Students participate in ES at various stages of their academic career
Questions:

• How do we ensure that all students are “engaged”?

• Cost/resource considerations – What are the costs for administering an ES “requirement” at the program level?

• How do we assess the quality of ES experiences?